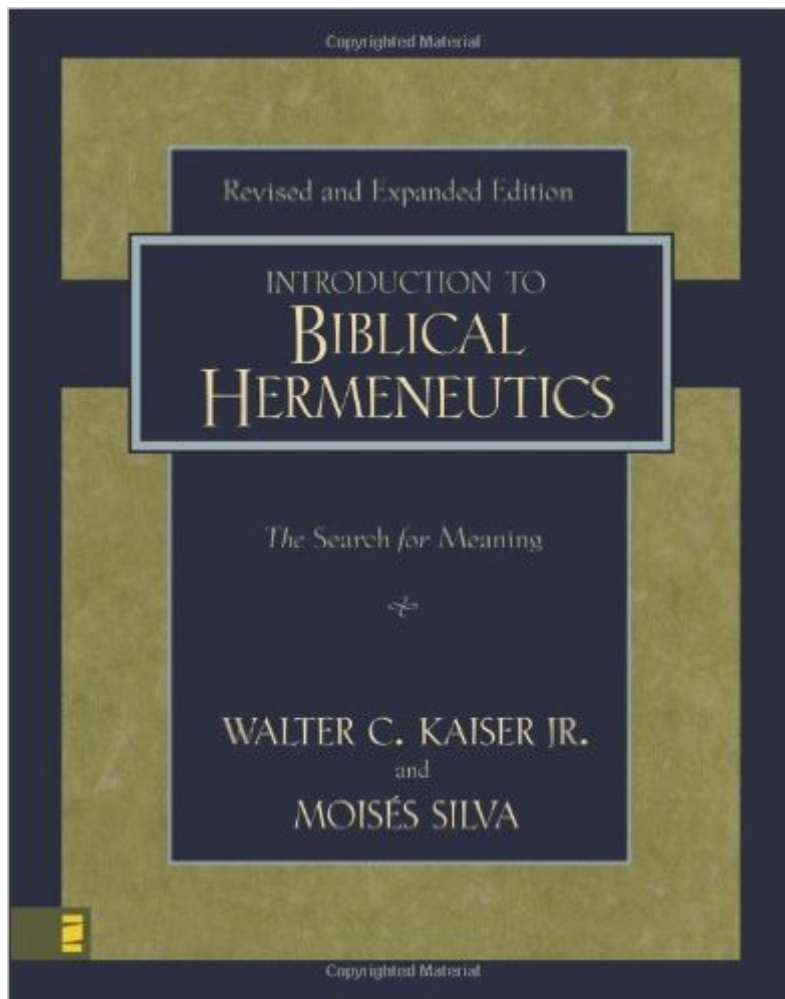


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Introduction To Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search For Meaning



Synopsis

Since its publication in 1994, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* has become a standard text for a generation of students, pastors, and serious lay readers. This second edition has been substantially updated and expanded, allowing the authors to fine-tune and enrich their discussions on fundamental interpretive topics. In addition, four new chapters have been included that address more recent controversial issues: • The role of biblical theology in interpretation • How to deal with contemporary questions not directly addressed in the Bible • The New Testament's use of the Old Testament • The role of history in interpretation The book retains the unique aspect of being written by two scholars who hold differing viewpoints on many issues, making for vibrant, thought-provoking dialogue. What they do agree on, however, is the authority of Scripture, the relevance of personal Bible study to life, and why these things matter.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moises Silva is an excellent starting point for an investigation into all of the elements involved in Biblical hermeneutics (i.e. Biblical interpretation, as Silva so straightforwardly defines the term in the opening chapter). The book is divided into four major parts (each part contains multiple chapters) which progressively build on one another; the interaction between the co-authors, as they take turns writing individual chapters, is remarkable. Kaiser and Silva do not always agree on all points, but the respectful interplay between their sometimes differing outlooks provides an example of what true scholarship is all about. The four parts of the book have the following headings: 1) The Search for Meaning: Initial Directions (which includes

general background information); 2) Understanding the Text: Meaning in Literary Genres; 3) Responding to the Text: Meaning and Application; and 4) The Search for Meaning: Further Challenges (which includes chapters on both the history of interpretation and contemporary approaches to interpretation). The best thing about this book is that it is not so much a treatise on scholarly interpretation (though it certainly is scholarly), but that it attempts to help the reader to learn both how to interpret the Bible and then how to apply that interpretation to life. As the jacket copy of the book states, "In a culture that prizes individuality and personal freedom, the primary question is no longer 'Is it true?' but rather 'Does it matter?' Hence, the question of relevancy has taken precedence over the question 'What does the text mean?'"

For those wanting to know how one does proper hermeneutics this book is a good place to start. The authors (Walter Kaiser and Moises Silva) are conservative evangelical scholars and write from that perspective. Kaiser (who is a champion of multiple applications from a single text) and Silva (a traditional Reformed scholar) join together to help lay people and teachers on this important subject. Not only is this book good for seminarians who want to get a taste of hermeneutical methods, it also has a lot of practical applications for the laity who want to know how to read the Bible properly for personal devotion and life. Kaiser and Silva both avoid dry intellectualism, and write from a pastoral perspective too. Most of the chapters are good (especially Kaiser's), and most people will find this work very readable. However, I do have one concern over this book. It is a chapter written by Silva (Chapter 14: "The Case for Calvinistic Hermeneutics"). He contends that "proper exegesis should be informed by theological reflection. To put it in the most shocking way possible: my theological system should tell me how to exegete" (p. 261). True, Reformed theology's strength lies in its consistency, logic, coherence, and history. However, this can be its downfall also (by the way, I am a Calvinist too). For instance, most in the Reformed tradition argue that Israel and the Church lie in continuity. Therefore, Israel as an ethnic body has no future in God's redemptive program. This leads them to reinterpret certain passages that speak of a national conversion of Israel near the Parousia (cf. Romans 11:26) to mean "spiritual Israel" (or the Church) or a "remnant" throughout history. Another example is Revelation 20.

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