

Old Testament Interpretation and Exposition

Purpose: The purpose of this class is to learn how to interpret the Old Testament. We will look at the various models of Biblical Interpretation and determine the distinguishing marks and demonstrate why we practice a Literal, Historical, and Grammatical method of interpretation. We will learn to find the authorial intent and what the original audience would have understood. Once we have found the meaning of the text we will then learn how to determine whether that text applies to the New Testament believer or not. Once we have found the interpretation we will then learn how to exposit that meaning to others.

Questions to be answered in this study:

- Why should we study and teach the Old Testament?
- Does the Old Testament Apply to the NT Believer?
 - What is the relationship of the NT believer to the OT Scriptures?
- Does every Old Testament passage apply to the NT Believer today?
- What are the rules for interpretation?
 - What is the place of Theology in Interpretation?
- What principles are guiding us through interpretation?
- What are the rules for proper interpretation?
- What Questions Should be asked during each step of the process of Interpretation?
- What are the benefits of practicing a proper hermeneutic?
- What is the place of theology in Bible interpretation?
- What are the various models of interpretation?
- How do the various interpretive models work?
- Where is meaning found?
- How does the NT Believer understand OT Narrative?
- How does the NT Believer understand OT Law?

Key Ideas

Exegesis: Is the process of pulling out the details of the text to determine the meaning of the text. The process of exegesis is concerned about drawing out the meaning of the text from the scriptures so that the meaning stands on its own.

Expository Preaching: Expository preaching is the unfolding of the biblical text using the biblical details extracted from the text. Expository preaching is more than moving chronologically or verse by verse through the Bible. Expository preaching determines the original author's intent and uses the original author's intention as the main purpose of the sermon. To find the original author's intent the expositor uses the application of a literal, historical, grammatical method of interpretation to reveal the structure of the author's argument which is then used as the "teeth" of the expositional message. True expository preaching explains the implication for the ancient audience and then for the modern hearer. The work of an Expositor requires a Spirit filled man to work at revealing the timeless truth of God revealed first

to the original audience and then afresh to the modern audience. The Expositor is effective in his preaching when he uses his gifts, skills, and efforts to bring the ancient message to the modern audience without losing the God given intention of the passage.

Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics determines the methods, techniques, rules, or principles which will best serve in getting at the proper interpretation of any part of the Bible.

“Hermeneutics also concerns itself with understanding the unique roles and relationships between the author, the text and the original or subsequent readers.”¹

“The proper elements in an expository sermon may be summed up as follows:

- *Preaching is **expository** in purpose.* It explains the text.
- *Preaching is **logical** in flow.* It persuades the mind.
- *Preaching is **doctrinal** in content.* It obligates the will.
- *Preaching is **pastoral** in concern.* It feeds the soul.
- *Preaching is **imaginative** in pattern.* It excites the emotion.
- *Preaching is **relevant** in application.* It touches the life.

The task of the expository preacher is to take the mass of raw data from the text and bridge the gap between exegesis and exposition.”

- John MacArthur *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* pg. 289

“Biblical Exposition technically is to expound the author’s main flow of thought with the “teeth” (everything from result clauses, to purpose clause, to all subjunctive ideas) found in the surrounding context.” – TES Syllabus on Hermeneutics

I. Why Study and Teach the OT?

Walt Kaiser suggests four reasons for interpreting the Bible forward rather than backwards. By this he means we do not read the NT back into the OT but rather start from the Old and move forward to understand the New Testament.²

1. To reject the Old Testament as the *prior*, authoritative revelation of God is to reject the Bible’s own basis for determining who is and who is not the Messiah. Jesus located the failure of the Jewish audiences in their failure to believe what Moses wrote. In John 5:46-47 Jesus declared, “If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (NASB). Exactly so! Dismissing the Old Testament and reducing the scope of your study only to the New Testament will logically raise this question: “How can I believe what God has said *en toto* in the New Testament if I tend to not believe or trust what He has said in the

¹ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 59.

² Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament : A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 26-27.

Old?”

2. The New Testament Scriptures base their claim to being authoritative on the Old Testament. That is why Matthew 1 begins with a genealogy that stretches from Genesis to the New Testament.
3. The foundation of Jesus’ teaching was the Old Testament. If any new teaching contradicted the *Tenach* (Jewish acronym for the Old Testament), it had to be rejected, for Deuteronomy 12:32 warned: “See that you do all I commanded you; do not add to it or take away from it.”
4. Paul also based his teaching on the Old Testament. He preached what he had received from the Old Testament scriptures. Said he, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*” (1 Cor. 15:3-4, italics added). But even more definitively, when Paul was on trial for his life, he affirmed, “Now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers” (Acts 26:6 NASB). He concluded by saying, “And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day . . . stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place” (Acts 26:22). His testimony was that he believed “everything that [was] in accordance with the Law, and that [was] written in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14). Even under arrest in Rome, Paul called the Jewish community together to explain what his message was. He saw himself as “testifying to the Kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the prophets from morning to evening” (Acts 28:23, [Kaiser] translation).

THE OT IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

(Originally Presented by Dr. Steve Lawson)³

OT CLAIMS

1. Moses’s Testimony

When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, **He gave Moses the two tablets** of the testimony, tablets of stone, **written by the finger of God** (Exodus 31:18).

but man lives by everything that proceeds **out of the mouth of the LORD** (Deuteronomy 8:3c).

2. David’s Praise

³ This section is adapted from Dr. Steve Lawson’s Lecture outlines for D.Min at TMS. This section comes from lecture seven.

The **words of the LORD** are **pure words**; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times (Psalm 12:6).

The law **of the LORD** is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony **of the LORD** is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts **of the LORD** are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment **of the LORD** is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear **of the LORD** is clean, enduring forever; The judgments **of the LORD** are true; they are righteous altogether (Psalm 19:7-9).

3. **Solomon's Wisdom**

Every word **of God** is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him (Proverbs 30:5).

4. **Jeremiah's Witness**

Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put **My words** in your mouth (Jeremiah 1:9).

"Is not **My word** like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock" (Jeremiah 23:29)?

NT CLAIMS

1. **Jesus's Confirmation**

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did **not** come to **abolish** but to **fulfill**. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until **all is accomplished** (Matthew 5:17-18).

He said to them, "Then how does David **in the Spirit** call Him 'Lord,' saying (Matthew 22:43).

2. **Paul's Assertion**

All Scripture is **inspired by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

and that from childhood you have known the **sacred writings** which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

THE OT COMPRISES THE MAJORITY OF THE BIBLE

77% of the bible

THE OT RECORDS THE CHARACTER OF GOD WHICH IS PERSONIFIED IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. SOVEREIGN CREATOR

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth....Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light (Genesis 1:1, 3).

B. SAVING DELIVERER

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; **He** shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise **Him** on the heel” (Genesis 3:15).

C. BLOOD SACRIFICE

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Genesis 3:21-22).

D. LEVITICAL SYSTEM

'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' (Leviticus 17:11)

E. EXALTED KING

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples (Genesis 49:10).

There will be no end to the increase of **His government** or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:7).

F. VIRGIN BORN

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a **son**, and she will call His name **Immanuel** (Isaiah 7:14).

“But as for you, **Bethlehem** Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, **From the days of eternity**” (Micah 5:2).

G. MIGHTY GOD

For a **child** will be born to us, a **son** will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace**. There will be no end to the increase of **His government** or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6).

Then a **shoot** will spring from the **stem of Jesse**, And a **branch** from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on **Him**, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD (Isaiah 11:1-2).

H. OBEDIENT SERVANT

“Behold, **My Servant**, whom I uphold; **My chosen one** *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon **Him**; **He** will bring forth justice to the nations. “**He** will not cry out or raise *His voice*, Nor make **His voice** heard in the street (Isaiah 42:1-2).

He says, “It is too small a thing that **You** should be **My Servant** To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make **You a light of the nations** So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

I. DYING SAVIOR

(Psalm 22:1, 6-8, 12-18).

But **He was pierced** through for our transgressions, **He was crushed** for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon **Him**, And by **His scourging** we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on **Me whom they have pierced**; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.... In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity (Zechariah 12:10; 13:1).

J. RETURNING JUDGE

But with righteousness He will **judge** the poor, And **decide with fairness** for the afflicted of the earth; And He will **strike the earth** with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will **slay the wicked** (Isaiah 11:4).

For behold, **the LORD** will come in fire And **His chariots** like the whirlwind, To render **His anger** with fury, And **His rebuke** with flames of fire. For **the LORD** will execute judgment by fire And by **His sword** on all flesh, And those slain by **the LORD** will be many (Isaiah 66:15-16).

THE OT IS THE BIBLE JESUS PREACHED

A. JESUS PUBLICALLY READ IT

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED (Luke 4:18).

B. JESUS RESTATED IT

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (Matthew 5:3-6).

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

C. JESUS INTERPRETED IT

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.... “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell. “It was said, ‘WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE’; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-32).

D. JESUS EVANGELIZED WITH IT

And He said to him, “What is **written in the Law**? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE” (Luke 10:26-28).

But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead’” (Luke 16:31).

A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”.... **You know the commandments**, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER’” (Luke 18:18, 20).

E. JESUS REBUKED WITH IT

And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is* in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND (Luke 8:10).

and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS’ (Luke 13:27).

Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, saying to them, “**It is written**, ‘AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,’ but you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN” (Luke 19:45-46).

F. JESUS EXPLAINED IT

and He said to them, “Thus **it is written**, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

“If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD” (Luke 22:67-69).

G. JESUS THREATENED WITH IT

For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, ‘FALL ON US,’ AND TO THE HILLS, ‘COVER US’ (Luke 23:29-30).

THE OT IS THE BIBLE THE APOSTLES PREACHED

A. ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE' (Acts 2:24-28).

B. IN THE TEMPLE

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, *the one* whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.... Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you..... For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:13, 22, 26).

C. BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

He is the **STONE** WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE **CHIEF CORNER stone** (Acts 4:11).

D. IN THE SYNAGOGUES

Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now **the passage of Scripture** which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH." The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from **this Scripture** he preached Jesus to him (Acts 8:30-35).

E. IN THE COUNCIL

After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. With this the words of the Prophets agree, just

as it is written, ‘AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,’ SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO (Acts 15:13-18).

II. Does the Old Testament apply to the New Testament Believer?

Is the Old Testament Considered Christian Scripture? The OT is viewed in one of four ways:⁴

- A. **The OT is Sub-Christian.** This view is a minority position held by those who do not like the message of the OT and the way God is presented in the OT.
- B. **The OT is Non-Christian.** This view is presented by scholars who read the OT independently of the NT. This view would be held by Jewish scholars. “Leonard Thompson . . . argues that in teaching the Hebrew Scriptures, one should emphasize ‘that Hebrew Scriptures are a complete work and do not need the New Testament to complete them.’”⁵
- C. **The OT is Pre-Christian.** This view teaches that the message of the OT is not a Christian message. It teaches a message and offers a perspective which cannot be reflected in the NT age and therefore it is not for Christian’s today. Among those in this group are those who teach that the OT is for Israel and has no bearing on the NT believer today.
- D. **The OT is Christian Scripture.** This view teaches that the message of the OT reflects the character or nature of the New Testament. That while the message chronologically is before Christ entered the world and built His church it nonetheless is a reflection of the Christian message and is not contrary to NT teaching.

“ . . . [W]e ought to start with continuity of a unified history of redemption which progresses from the old covenant to the new, and a single Scripture consisting of two Testaments.”⁶

Since the Old Testament was taught by Christ and quoted by the Apostles and affirmed as the Word of God, it is proper to conclude that the Old Testament is not only useful to the New Testament believer but also profitable for teaching, correction, reproof, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).

⁴ These ways are drawn from Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament : A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1999), 39-52.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

What is the relationship of the NT believer to the OT Scriptures?

As Christian scripture is the Old Testament binding in application to the New Testament Believer? There are two extremes when it comes to understanding the Old Testament and how it relates to the NT Believer.

- A. There is no relationship between the OT Scripture and the NT Believer.** This view would put a strong emphasis on the discontinuity between the OT and NT.
- Held by classic dispensationalists
 - Taught that the Sermon on the Mount does not apply to the Church but to those who will live in the kingdom at a future point. Good principles but not applicable to the New Testament Believer.
- B. The NT Believer is the replacement of OT Israel therefore the OT is to be read as continually applying to the NT Believer today.** This view would emphasize the continuity between the OT and NT and would seek to find how OT passages apply to the NT Believer.
- Held by covenant Theologians who believe that the Church is the new Israel
 - Many of the Church fathers who interpreted the scriptures allegorically have taken this view.
 - The Church has historically taught that NT Believers have replaced OT Israel

“As House says, “Church fathers saw Christians as the proper inheritors of the Old Testament faith, and saw proof for this in the teachings of Christ when he said, ‘therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it’ (Matt 21:43).”⁷

“The Church also believed it had inherited the covenants of Israel. This was the view of the Epistle of Barnabas: “I further beg of you. . . take heed now to yourselves, and not to be like some, adding largely to your sins, and saying, ‘the covenant is both theirs [Jews] and ours [Christians].’ But they finally lost it.”⁸

- C. The Old Testament is Christian scripture and therefore the teaching of the Old Testament is applicable to the Christian.**
- Jesus quoted from the Old Testament (Matt 4)
 - Jesus called the Old Testament scriptures (Matt 22)
 - Paul called the Old Testament Inspired 2 Tim 3:16-17
 - The OT teaches about the character of God
 - The OT points to the Messiah
 - The OT reveals the plan of God to redeem His people
 - The OT is for our instruction (1 Cor 10:1-6)

⁷ Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? : A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2010), 33.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

III. Does every Old Testament passage apply to the NT Believer today?

Yes and no. Yes the timeless principle is binding to us today. But also no as the application for Israel is not the application for the NT believer. But this does not mean that the Old Testament is not useful for the NT believer.

While a particular OT passage may not directly apply to the NT believer that does not mean that it does not have something to teach the NT believer.

When determining meaning and significance for the NT reader we should ask ourselves these questions:

1. Does this passage teach us something about God?
2. Does this passage teach a direct message to the Nation of Israel?
3. Does this passage teach a universal moral principle?

For the purpose of this class we will seek to demonstrate that the Old Testament should be treated in the same way the New Testament is treated.

- a. Find the Original Author's message
- b. Determine what the original audience would have understood
- c. Determine the timeless truth which applies to all
- d. Make a specific application to what that principle looks like lived out in our present context

IV. What principles are guiding us through interpretation?

In many theological debates between scholars the difference in interpretation comes down to how the various steps of interpretation are weighted and applied. Most commonly debate among brothers comes from a different emphasis in applying the hermeneutical principles. One may put more emphasis on the lexical meaning of a word while another on the syntactical meaning of a word. Particularly in debates where two people are coming from the same hermeneutical camp but see a passage or doctrine differently. On the other hand when we deal with heretics differences are caused by agendas to mislead and use people for their own desires.

We should not believe that interpretation should be easy.

¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness (2 Timothy 2:15-16 NAU)

The Perspicuity of the Scripture does not mean that the scripture is easily interpreted and understood. It means that the message rightly understood is clear and knowable.

Illustration: Forgiveness

Does “just as Christ has forgiven you (Col 3:15; Eph 4:32)” refer to the extent of God’s forgiveness or the example of God’s forgiveness?

Good men are on both sides of this issue. Men who agree on many other doctrines disagree on this point of theology. We may even disagree on the principles which should drive us as we interpret the scriptures.

- **Everyone has a frame of reference that they start with as they interpret the scriptures**
 - Church background
 - Relationships
 - Personal likes and sensibilities
 - Some like conflict
 - Some hate it
 - Some like popularity
 - Some are repulsed by popularity
 - Experiences
 - People you like hold a view so you hold it
 - People you dislike hold a view so you reject it
 - You have been harmed by people who hold a particular view so you reject it
 - Or you have been served and loved by someone who holds a particular view
 - Or a particular view of theology makes life a little easier and cleaner to practice
 - Easy to create rules
 - Rather than explain boundaries
 - God spoke to you
 - You had an intuition (a hunch you should make a particular choice) or a premonition (a bad feeling something was going to happen)
- This frame of reference becomes the basis for how you weigh the information you gather.
- Sometimes we work pulling out data from the scriptures and we make it work together to paint the picture we want. The idea is that we have something we want to say so now it is time to find the verse which says it.
- On the other hand sometimes we pull out data from the scriptures and we seek to determine what it means and what the evidence of scripture supports.
- SGBC seeks to operate with a set of principles which help us to be as objective as possible in our interpretation. Our goal is to be balanced and objective in our interpretive conclusions.
 - Of course those who would disagree with us would seek to show how we were inconsistent and driven by something that made us less than objective
 - This is good for us to work through. Sometimes we are driven by presuppositions and we need to be pressed so that we are not over stating our position. Sometimes our opponents don't get it and they are lashing out to make their position more tolerable.

- You never know until you get to objective facts.

We believe the bible is understood when we get to the propositional truth. This propositional truth by nature is objectively true. That is to say it is true independently of what we think, feel, or experience. It is objectively and verifiably true.

ILLUSTRATION of Complexity of Interpretation

What is this pulpit made of?

- The pulpit is made of wood
 - Majority would agree with this statement
 - Most would in this camp would scoff at the idea of anyone suggesting anything else
- The pulpit is made of nails
 - Some may suggest the hidden nails which keep the wood together make up the pulpit
 - The few in this camp will dig in and defend the integrity and importance of the nails
- The pulpit is made of stain and polyurethane
 - Still few would say without the stain the pulpit does not have its good looks and charms
 - The few in this camp would make it known that the pulpits color makes it inviting to listen to the Word of God

Which view is correct?

How do we quantify the answer to the question, what is this pulpit made of?

Do we go by what we see?

- Some would say they see wood
- But do they actually see the stain and not the actual wood?

Do we go by weight?

- Do we separate out the wood, stain, and nails and weigh them to determine what the pulpit is made of?

Do we go by value of material?

- Do we assess the material cost of each component to determine which ranks first?
- If we put a gold bar as a plaque on the pulpit could we say the pulpit is made of gold?

You see based on value system, purpose, vantage point, agenda, stubbornness, and drive of someone they will see what they want to see.

- **The work for us is to make the process as objective as possible so that we can distinguish between what is objectively true and what is subjectively determined.**

Objectively we can make at least 6 propositional statements about this pulpit. Some of the statements help us determine answers and some do not.

1. It has wood in it
2. It has nails holding it together
3. It has a stained and sealed finish
4. It had a designer
5. It had a builder
6. It tilts easily

Once we have the propositional truth we then seek to determine objective conclusions. That is we seek to demonstrate a conclusion which best explains all the data.

- We could ask the designer what the pulpit is made of
- We could ask the builder what the pulpit is made of
- We could draw logical deductions from this pulpit and say that if it was made of plastic it would be machine manufactured and therefore would not easily tip and therefore it must be made of wood.
- We could take into account the various components in the pulpit and make a statement like this:

The SGBC fellowship hall pulpit is made of wood and held together by nails. The wood in the pulpit has been stained and sealed to give it a polished and presentable presentation. The designer, who is also the builder, labored carefully to present this pulpit to the Church.

- Now even in this statement we have facts, or statements of facts, which are added.
- Facts which come from historical background
 - I know the designer
 - I know the builder
 - I know the two roles were fulfilled by the same person
 - I know the work that went into building this pulpit for the church
 - I used that background information to help explain the significance of this pulpit

**** This illustrates for us the significance and difficulties of bible interpretation**

- **Various vantage points and purposes drive people to see answers to the basic questions differently**

Therefore we must be careful to make the process of Bible Study as objective as possible. This is not to say that we cannot have logical deductions, necessary conclusions, and implications as part of our understanding. **It is to say that we cannot treat these things as the objective truth of God's Word.**

Before we get to the subjective explanation let us make sure we do the objective investigation. Once that is concluded, then we can explain what all the pieces mean and from there draw conclusions and implications. On the other hand if we rely on the subjective explanation to determine what the objective investigation should yield then we know our investigation is anything but objective. It is driven by presuppositions which are determining meaning.

In all bible study then we are driven by these basic questions to help us maintain objectivity:

- What are the facts the author intended to communicate?
- How do these facts relate to each other and the message of scripture as a whole?
- How do these facts shape our perspective of God or how we live before God?

In order to maintain objectivity in Bible interpretation we should be governed by these values:

1. **Continuity** - We should maintain a message which does not contradict the teaching of the rest of scripture. This is not to say that if our interpretation contradicts we have to change it. It is to say we have not finished our work until the message is in harmony.
 - a. Jesus praying keep us from temptation Matt 6:13 is not going to contradict James 1:2 when we consider all joy when we face temptation.
2. **Clarity** – We should seek the clear and natural meaning of the text. We strive for the clearest and most natural reading. This clarity is found by allowing the immediate context of the passage to present the details necessary to answer the questions brought out in interpretation. The immediate context provides the best context for explanation of meaning. Seek natural and normal meaning. We seek normal use of words and grammar. We want to be careful we when we use grammatical nuances in our interpretation. We should be cautious to take up a system which causes us to invent categories the scriptures do not speak of.
3. **Consistency** – We should be able to consistently apply the truth. A position that we are unable to uphold or encourage others to apply is a position which we should not land on. The person who believes head coverings are for today but will not have his wife wear one is either a weak exegete or a poor leader at home. If it is right and is what God has instructed then God’s people must follow it. If we cannot naturally and rightly apply it then we should consider wither it is God’s message. If indeed it is then lead and apply the truth. Difficulty of application does not mean something is not true. But we must not develop a theology we do not intend to practice.

MacArthur Adds:

First, the relation between using hermeneutics (rules of interpretation) and doing exegesis and exposition needs to be kept in mind. MacArthur articulates the steps:⁹

1. Use the true text, God's Word, as closely as you can responsibly determine it by consulting specialists on textual criticism.
2. Employ the science of hermeneutics, with its interpretive principles.
3. Let these principles expose the meaning of a passage (i.e., do an exegetical study of the text) as a person follows prescribed rules in playing a game. Exegesis, then, is the application of hermeneutical principles to decide what a text says and means in its own historical, theological, contextual, literary, and cultural setting. The meaning thus obtained will be in agreement with other related Scriptures.
4. Preach the exposition that flows from this process. Make conspicuous the true and essential original meaning and apply this meaning to present needs of hearers in their own cultural situation.

V. What are the rules for proper interpretation?

We are seeking authorial intent. The author had one meaning unless clearly evidenced by context that his point had multiple meanings.

IE double entendre: It is cold in here

- a. Could mean physically cold
- b. Could also mean I am getting a cold reception

“The only proper place to begin, then, is with the human author who claimed to obtain his meaning from being in the heavenly council of God. We do not attempt, however, to get at the author's psychological state of mind or anything of that sort. Rather, what we attempt to do is to understand the human author's use of words in the context of his life and times, literary genres, and theological givens.”¹⁰

These rules or steps help to make the process of interpretation as objective as possible.

Goals in Bible Interpretation

- 1. Determine the meaning of the text**
 - a. The meaning of the scripture is the scripture**
 - b. The text properly understood is the authoritative message of God**
- 2. Commit to upholding the Clarity of Scripture**
 - a. Seek the plain meaning**

⁹ John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word Pub., 1992), 120.

¹⁰ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 51.

- b. Seek the normal meaning
 - c. Seek the natural meaning
3. Objectively handling the Word of God
- a. Seek to remove bias
 - b. Seek to put aside presuppositions
 - c. Seek to set aside theological agendas

Dale Ralph Davis Suggests asking of the text:¹¹

Why? (Intention)
 Where? (Context)
 How? (Structure)
 What? (Content)
 So What? (Application)

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR EXEGESIS¹²

1. Be a Spiritually Prepared Interpreter.
- a. Proper exegesis requires that you be saved (1 Cor 2:14-16).
 - b. Have a reverence for God's Word (2 Timothy 3:15)
 - c. Have a Hunger to be fed by it (1 Peter 2:2)
 - d. Be diligent (Acts 17:11)
 - e. Be filled by the Spirit & saturated by the word (Col 3:16)
 - f. Pray
 - g. Be humble
 - h. Be willing to obey
 - i. Be dependent upon the Holy Spirit's illumination.
2. Approach the Text with Biblical Presuppositions – Implications of the Bible as Context.
- a. Keep in mind that the Bible is a Divine Book
 - 1) Presuppose the God of Scripture
 - 2) See the 66 book Canon as His full Special Revelation
 - 3) View it as Inspired, Inerrant, & Authoritative.
 - 4) Assume that it will be a unified body of teachings that must be harmonized.
 - 5) Remember that God intends Scripture to communicate, not obscure, truth. Therefore, there will be an external clarity arrived at through the principles of interpretation and an internal clarity by the Holy Spirit so that the believer sees it as the truth of God.

¹¹ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Flesh : How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2006), 3-8.

¹² This section is taken from the The Expositor's Seminary's class BE501 Hermeneutics.

- 6) In light of these facts one must approach Scripture with the following principles:

i. Scripture Interprets\Explains Scripture

Each individual scripture should be compared with the entirety of Scripture to bring it into harmony with the whole.

ii. Analogy of Faith

“No single statement or obscure passage of one book can be allowed to set aside a doctrine which is clearly established by many passages” (Milton Terry, 579).

iii. Progressive Revelation

God has revealed himself in stages to His people. Later Scriptures add to what God has given in earlier portions

iv. Allow for Mystery

While the Scriptures are clear in what they present, the content of the presentation is often hard to understand.

v. Recognize Accommodation of revelation.

- b. Keep in mind that the Bible Is a Human Book. Therefore it must be understood that certain things must be understood before the author’s intended meaning can be understood:

- 1) Historical Context
- 2) Purpose in writing
- 3) Structure of the book
- 4) Immediate Context
 - i. Grammar and syntax of the language used.
 - ii. Meaning of author’s words.
 - iii. Light from related books or similar passages of Scripture.

- c. Keep in mind that the Bible Presents a Context.

- 1) Be familiar with the Bible’s flow of history.
- 2) Be familiar with the Bible’s General Themes.
 - a. The character & attributes of God
 - b. The tragedy of sin
 - c. The blessings of faith & obedience
 - d. The need for and provision of Christ as Savior

e. The ultimate destinies of man and the universe.

3. Be aware of the significance of the testament in which the passage appears.

Read the Bible
Read Bible survey & history books.

4. Make yourself familiar with the corpus of the author's writings along with his style of writing & vocabulary (Use Introductions to the NT & OT; Commentaries; Nigel Turner's *Styles of NT Writers*).

5. Review the implications of the type of literature in which the passage appears.

Sandy, D. Brent, and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds. *Cracking Old Testament Codes*.
Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

6. Familiarize yourself with the Historical Background of the book.

Read commentaries, Bible Handbooks & Dictionaries, Biblical Introductions

7. Make sure you have the right text.

English translations
Greek or Hebrew
Textual apparatus
Textual Criticism books (Comparing versions, manuscripts, lectionaries, fathers, etc).

8. Read the book through making observations (See Appendix A)

9. Develop an outline or structure diagram of the whole book to understand the argument and flow of thought.

10. Determine how your passage fits into the book's purpose, argument, and flow of thought.

11. Prepare a tentative translation.

Look up all words in a lexicon that you are not sure of their range of meaning.
Read over and over the text & translation to see if they convey the same impression.

12. Diagram the passage to see syntactical relationships.

13. Read a few good exegetical commentaries (make observations).

14. Based upon your translation, reading, diagram and reading a few good commentaries, compile a list of words to be studied, grammatical relationships and nuances needed to be decided upon, questions to be answered, and problems to be solved.

15. Analyze significant grammatical issues.

16. Study key words & wordings.

17. **Solve problems based upon grammar, word study, historical background, context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, etc.**

18. **Synthesize the information obtained into an explanation of the passage verse-by-verse, phrase-by-phrase, word-by-word.**

19. **Outline the text syntactically**

An exegetical outline gives me what the text is presenting

A Homiletical Outline gives me the principle it is teaching

20. **Principlize the text**

- **Major Points**
- **Important Themes**
- **Important Doctrine**

21. **Apply the text to construct theology & to apply to Christian Living.**

By implications, we mean every way in which the Scriptures confront and expose wrong thinking, errant convictions, unholy motivations, and idolatrous affections.

Hermeneutical Axioms

1. **Check your sources** – check and double check. Use reliable sources and stay away from novel interpretive conclusions

2. **Verify** – prove your case by verifying it with the message of the rest of the scripture

3. **Regulate** – allow the scriptures to be the final authority. Resist the urge to depend upon experience to help determine conclusion or meaning of a text.

Another Method of Interpretation by Douglas Steward¹³

1.1 Text

1.1.1 Confirm the limits of the passage – where does it begin and where does it end?

1.1.2 Compare the versions – determine different words or phrases used in the different versions

1.1.3 Reconstruct and annotate the text – determine the original text

1.2 Translation

1.2.1 Prepare a translation of the text

1.2.2 Check the text against your translation

1.2.3 Revise the translation as needed

¹³ Douglas K. Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis : A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 5-31.

1.2.4 Provide a finished translation

1.3 Grammatical Data

1.3.1 Analyze the significant grammatical issues

1.3.2 Analyze the orthography (spelling style) and morphology (form of words) – indicates dates and place of writing

1.4 Lexical Data

1.4.1 Explain all words and concepts that are not obvious

1.4.2 Concentrate on the most important concepts, words, and wordings

1.4.3 Do “Word Studies” (really, concept studies) of the most crucial words or wordings

1.4.4 Identify any special semantic features – semantics is the relationship between content and meaning. Show how contextual use limits or defines lexical meaning. Example model.

1.5 Form

1.5.1 Identify the literary genre

1.5.2 Identify the specific literary type – if it is narrative is it historical narrative or autobiographical ect

1.5.3 Look for subcategories – other genres within the main pericope

1.5.4 Suggest a life setting – describe the context this kind of passage would be used – for example a funeral dirge

1.5.5 Analyze the completeness of the form – is the passage consistent or does it use various kinds of genre

1.5.6 Be alert to partial and broken forms – ie drift from narrative to didactic

1.6 Structure

1.6.1 Outline the passage

1.6.2 Look for patterns

1.6.3 Organize your discussion of structure according to descending units of size – paragraphs, to verses, to sentences, to clauses, to words.

1.6.4 Evaluate the intentionality of the minor patterns – did the author seek to present the data in a specific way? IE selecting a particular verbal root? Or seek to show a parallel between other writers by phrasing in the same way.

1.6.5 Analyze according to genre

1.7 Historical Context

1.7.1 Research historical background

1.7.2 Research the social setting

1.7.3 Research the historical foreground – what came after the events in this book?

1.7.4 Research the geographical setting

1.7.5 Date of the passage

1.8 Literary Context

1.8.1 Examine the literary function – is this passage a part of a bigger story or does it contain the whole of the lesson?

1.8.2 Examine the placement of the text

- 1.8.3 Analyze the detail – is it comprehensive teaching or selected details?
- 1.8.4 Analyze the Authorship

1.9 Biblical Context

- 1.9.1 Analyze the use of the passage elsewhere in scripture – is this verse used or referenced by other biblical authors?
- 1.9.2 Analyze the passage relation to the rest of the scriptures
- 1.9.3 Analyze the passages import for understanding scripture – what hinges on the teaching of this passage?

1.10 Theology

- 1.10.1 Locate the passage theologically
- 1.10.2 Identify the specific issues raised or solved by the passage
- 1.10.3 Analyze the theological contribution of the passage

1.11 Application

- 1.11.1 List the life issues
- 1.11.2 Clarify the nature of the application (does it inform or direct?)
- 1.11.3 Clarify the possible areas of application (faith or action)
- 1.11.4 Identify the audience of the application (direct audience and corporate audience)
- 1.11.5 Establish the categories of the application (personal, interpersonal, church, home, work, government)
- 1.11.6 Determine the time and the focus of the application
- 1.11.7 Fix the limits of the application

1.12 Secondary Literature

- 1.12.1 Investigate commentaries and other writings on the passage to see what was learned
- 1.12.2 Compare and adjust
- 1.12.3 Apply your discoveries in your conclusions

Exegetical Methodology from John MacArthur¹⁴

- 1. Observation
- 2. Interpretation

- a. Bridge the Language Gap
- b. Bridge the Cultural Gap
- c. Bridge the Geographical Gap
- e. Bridge the Historical Gap

- 3. Application

- a. Are there examples to follow?
- b. Are there commands to obey?
- c. Are there errors to avoid?

¹⁴ John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 209-222.

- d. Are there sins to forsake?
- e. Are there promises to claim?
- f. Are there new thoughts about God?
- g. Are there principles to live by?

What the Process Looks Like:

- a. Read the book
- b. Read the passage
- c. Find the main point
- d. Organize the passage
- e. Analyze the Structure
- f. Put together the Exegetical Outline
- g. Add illustrations

VI. What Questions Should be asked during each step of the process of Interpretation?¹⁵

1. Historical Analysis

- a. Who wrote the book?
- b. To whom was it sent?
- c. What was the relationship that existed between author and readers?
- d. What was the historical situation that occasioned the writing of the book?
- e. Where was the author when writing?
- f. Where did the readers live?

2. Literary Analysis

- a. What is the unit of thought? (verse, paragraph, chapter, or book?)
- b. What Genre is used?
- c. What linguistic markers are used?

3. Textual Analysis

- a. Which reading is the oldest?
- b. Which reading is the most geographically widespread?
- c. Which reading is supported by the majority of text types?
- d. Which reading can best be attributed to scribal error?
- e. Which reading best conforms to the author's style and thought?

4. Lexical Analysis

- a. What are the word's possible meanings?
- b. Which meaning best fits the context?

¹⁵ Daniel L. Akin, David Lewis Allen, and Ned Lee Mathews, *Text-Driven Preaching : God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2010), 135-59.

- c. How does the author use the same word in other places?
- d. Does the word have any synonyms or antonyms that help to define its meaning?

5. Syntactical Analysis

- a. Are there any difficult grammatical constructions?
- b. What is the main verbal idea?
- c. Are there any grammatical features which will challenge your translation?

6. Structural Analysis

- a. What are the independent clauses?
- b. What are the dependent clauses?
- c. Can you restate the author's argument in your own words?

7. Rhetorical Analysis

- a. How does the author make his point?
- b. What figures of speech are used?
- c. Is there alliteration or repetition of words?
- d. Is there omission of words or phrases?
- e. Is there a chiasm?
- f. Is there a paronomasia? (an intentional play on two similar-sounding words)

8. Tradition Analysis (How did Luke acquire his info?)

- a. Is there a tradition or basis for the message given?
- b. How has the material been gathered together?

9. Theological Analysis

- a. How does this passage relate to the rest of the scripture's teaching on the same subject?
- b. Does the interpretation of this passage contradict the teaching of another passage?
- c. Does the rest of God's word add to the doctrine taught in the passage in question?

10. Homiletical Analysis

- a. How should the information gathered be presented?
- b. What is the main idea?
- c. What is the interrogative driving the message?
- d. What is the key word?

VII. What are the benefits of practicing a proper hermeneutic?¹⁶

1. Good hermeneutics assists the biblical scholar in discovering the author's intended meaning. It helps the human interpreter defer to the human and divine author.
2. Good hermeneutics will assist the bible scholar in considering every aspect of the text and its context. The goal is to find the intended meaning of the text and this singular meaning is the message the author intended to communicate to his readers.
3. Good hermeneutics force the interpreter to consider all the data before he moves into application of the truth.

VIII. What is the place of theology in Bible interpretation?

1. Some see Theology as part of the interpretive process
 - a. They would teach that Scripture interpreting scripture means that we take the clear passages and use them to interpret the more difficult passages
 - b. Theology is used to explain passages which do not make sense
 - c. Or Theology is used to add a fuller and broader meaning
2. Saving Grace Bible Church teaches that Theology provides a tool to check our interpretive conclusions
 - a. The idea that Scripture interprets Scripture means that the meaning of a given passage is consistent with the teaching of the whole of scripture.
 - b. Therefore the scripture will not contradict itself
 - c. Theology acts as a checking principle to determine if we have concluded correctly or not.
 - d. Theology is a servant to the text as it explains the teaching of the scriptures as a whole. But it is not a master over the text telling the text what it must mean.

IX. What are the various models of interpretation?

1. Allegorical Interpretation

“Historian Charles Dargan notes, ‘While [Origen] was not, strictly speaking, the originator of [the allegorical] method, he is perhaps more responsible than anyone else for giving it dignity and enabling it to fasten such a tremendous grip on the pulpit of all ages.’”¹⁷

¹⁶ Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Nelson Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2011), 13.

¹⁷ Akin, *Engaging Exposition*, 19.

“The proponents of allegorical preaching taught that deeper, spiritual meanings were hidden beneath the literal words of Scripture. These hidden meanings contained the truth of Scripture and could be discovered through the study of the biblical texts.”¹⁸

“Allegorical interpretation enables preachers to move beyond the literal, historical meaning of a passage to a supposed deeper sense. From the third century to the sixteenth, it was the primary method of preaching Christ from the Old Testament. Although some of the Church father as Irenaeus and Tertullian tried to stem the tide, in the long run the allegorical method won out.”¹⁹

Those who hold to an Allegorical Interpretation would not deny a literal hermeneutic. They would in fact even encourage the use. But they would conclude that we would not stop at just a literal sense. We must go to a fuller meaning.

“Goppelt, too, states that there is more to understanding the OT texts than just gathering facts from the grammatical-historical method: ‘The typological use of the OT in the NT has always provided an example of a more profound interpretation of the OT and has motivated the search for a meaning that goes beyond the literal grammatical-historical explanation.’”²⁰

The allegorical method of interpretation was developed to defend the Old Testament scriptures from the likes of 1st Century heretics like Marcion who contrasted the grace and mercy of the NT against the brutal killing and judgment found in the OT.

“Marcion was a literalist. With his rigid literal interpretation he could show inconsistencies between the Old Testament and the New and reject the Old. The rival church he started forced the Christian church into substantiating that the Old Testament is indeed a Christian book, and that it speaks of Jesus Christ. And . . . the easiest way to demonstrate the presence of Christ in the Old Testament is the allegorical method.”²¹

Example of Allegorical Interpretation

“Around A.D. 96, Bishop Clement of Rome wrote a pastoral letter to the church in Corinth. At one point he retells the story of Rahab in Jericho. The spies told her to prepare a sign: “She should hang a red cord from her house. By this they made it manifest that redemption for all who believe and hope in God will come through the blood of the Lord. You see, beloved, how there was not only faith but prophecy in this woman.” This kind of allegorical interpretation was subsequently repeated by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, and many other Christian preachers.”²²

Problems with Allegorical Interpretation

The problem with this view is that it is limited to the imagination of the interpreter. If the interpreter could imagine a connection within this system of interpretation as long as it ties into

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 70.

²⁰ Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel*, 88.

²¹ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 71.

²² Ibid., 72.

theological themes it is considered valid. One can take the flowing waters of Egypt and make a connecting to the living waters Jesus promises. Secondly, it tends to put more credit in the interpreter's ability to make connections than the scripture before them. Since it is not the Author's intended meaning but rather what Spiritual insights the interpreter can find. Thirdly, it is rare that two interpreters will come to the exact same conclusion from the same text.

2. Typological Interpretation

“Typological exegesis is the search for linkages between events, persons or things within the historical framework of revelation, whereas allegorism is the search for a secondary and hidden meaning underlying the primary and obvious meaning of a narrative.”²³ - K.J. Woollcombe as quoted by Sidney Greidanus.²⁴

This view lead the Church to push for finding the literal sense of the text. But it allowed for a spiritual sense to be found within the literal meaning of the text. “This relationship expresses a double meaning: the one intended by the author (the literal sense) and the one which points forward to and finds its fulfillment in the messianic age.”²⁵

We are not saying there are no types in the scriptures. We are teaching that we will allow the clear teaching of scripture to bring out those types for us. When the scripture authors make the connection we affirm the use of types.

Problems with Typological Interpretation

“[T]ypological interpretation faces the danger of degenerating into typologizing, that is, overextending the use of typology by searching for types in rather incidental details in the text. . . . some samples . . . Joseph's obedience in looking for his brothers is a prophetic type of Christ's obedience; his sale to the Ishmaelites prefigures Christ being sold by Judas; Jacob's wrestling at Peniel prefigures Christ's wrestling at Calvary; Naomi's care for Ruth foreshadows Christ's care for His people; the homage the women paid David prefigures the homage baby Jesus received in Bethlehem.”²⁶ At best these are similar ideas but are not types as they are not drawn upon by the NT authors as types.

3. Theological Method

This method of interpretation has many flavors of which many overlap. That is someone who is historical redemptive could also hold to a Christological Hermeneutic since the themes overlap and the Christological Hermeneutic is an extension of the Historical Redemptive Hermeneutic.

Basically the Theological method will add to the process of interpretation theology as an interpretive tool. It could be Reformed theology, Calvinistic or Arminian Theology, Charismatic Theology, ect.

²³ Ibid., 91.

²⁴ Ibid., 92.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 97.

a. Historical Redemptive –

They see the work of God to redeem man as the major theme through which all the scriptures should be interpreted. The Redemptive Historical method of interpretation seeks to determine how every passage goes back to God's redemptive plan. This method takes many flavors but at its core the Theological idea of redemption is woven into every interpretation.

b. Christological Hermeneutic

The Christological Hermeneutic is concerned about seeing Christ in the Old Testament. While it has sprung out of and in many cases has become the defining practice of the Historical Redemptive Hermeneutic the practice has moved into other groups as well. Allegorists will practice a Christological Hermeneutic within their system for example. The movement spectrums from Christ is contained in the OT, so it is up to us to find where, to Christ is in every passage and every verse.

Abraham Kuruvilla explains:

“According to Mohler, one should preach the cross in every sermon, no matter the text. “As Charles Spurgeon expressed this so eloquently, preach the Word, place it in its canonical context, and ‘make a bee-line to the cross.’” It is often claimed that the pattern of the apostolic preaching validates a Christocentric approach: the apostles were “constantly preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” While this may certainly be true of most (though not all) of the *recorded* sermons available to us in the NT, one should be careful about creating a comprehensive apostolic hermeneutical model out of scant data. The sermons we have in the NT are but few in number, and all of them, without exception, are evangelistic – of course, they *would* be presenting the gospel: ‘the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.’”²⁷

Kuruvilla quotes from page 96 of Al Mohler's book He Is Not Silent:

“Mohler's remarks typify the Christological tendencies of [Redemptive Historical] interpreters: ‘Every single text of Scripture points to Christ. He is the Lord of all, and therefore He is the Lord of the Scripture too. From Moses to the prophets, He is the focus of every single word of the Bible. Every verse of scripture finds its fulfillment in Him, and every story in the Bible ends with Him.’”²⁸

How does it work?

Sidney Greidanus explains in his book Preaching Christ from the Old Testament that Christ can be seen in every passage in various ways:

1. **The way of Redemptive-Historical Progression** – this is the idea where OT passages are linked to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Themes, events, people, and

²⁷ Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! : A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 246.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

circumstances of redemptive history are used to point forward to Jesus Christ.

2. **The way of Promise fulfillment** – this is the idea of something promised in the Old Testament and then fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Matt 2:15 for example explains how Christ escaped into Egypt to fulfill that out of Egypt I will call my son (Hosea 11:1).
3. **The way of Typology** – this is the idea of analogy used to point to Christ. The whale in Jonah being seen as a type of Christ as it delivers Jonah from death.
4. **The way of Analogy** – this is the idea of making parallel or analogous connections. For example seeking the basket Moses was floated on as analogous to the Ark which delivered Noah.
5. **The way of Longitudinal Themes** – this is the idea that God gradually unfolds His themes and as He does they point forward to Christ. The example would be the Psalms recording praise for victories by Israel's kings while they have yet received victory. This would be anticipating the victory of the messiah.²⁹
6. **The way of contrast** – this is the idea of contrasting events in OT text to the teaching in the NT to demonstrate the more excellent way found in Christ.

With this method of interpretation a passage has not yielded its fullest meaning until you have found how that passage relates to Christ.

It becomes a grid through which every passage is filtered through to determine the meaning of the passage.³⁰

Out of this genre of interpretation comes gospel centered hermeneutics and cross centered hermeneutics. Again starting with a literal historical grammatical interpretation they add the theological component of the gospel or the cross to filter the interpretation. It is attractive because at the heart of our salvation is the gospel, the cross, and Christ and no one would deny these teachings.

The question is, must we use these theological ideas to determine meaning of scripture? If so where do we stop? When should we use a theological or pneumatological hermeneutic?

Critical Response to Christological Hermeneutic:

Walt Kaiser Jr. Comments on the Christological Hermeneutic:

“Ralph Dale Davis, whose works on the Historical books in particular I have appreciated for the breath of their theology and their adherence to the authorial teaching in each, correctly argued that not every verse, every word, or every story in the earlier testament focused on Christ alone. Instead he argued:

²⁹ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 222.

³⁰ For a full explanation see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, chapter 6.

[T]he whole Old Testament bears witness to Christ; and, the Old Testament does not bear witness only to Christ I think Jesus is teaching that all parts of the Old Testament testify to the Messiah in His suffering and glory, but I do not think Jesus is saying every Old Testament passage/text bears witness to Him. . . . [Jesus] did not say that every passage spoke of Him (v 44). Therefore, I do not feel compelled to make every Old Testament (narrative) passage point to Christ in some way because I do not think Christ Himself requires it. (*The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative*, pp. 134-35.).”³¹

4. Literal, Historical, Grammatical

The Literal, Historical, Grammatical approach is concerned about determining what the Spirit filled original author intended to communicate and what the original audience would have understood. By understanding the words used, the way in which those words were used, the historical context, the style of writing, and the purposes and themes of the human author the modern interpreter can determine what God’s meaning is to His people.

The process of interpretation which takes into account the literal meaning of the text. By this we mean that the scriptures are to be taken literally unless contextually and grammatically the text points to other details. This view does not mean that metaphors and similes are taken literally. The context will evidence how the passage is to be viewed. But we start with a literal or plain interpretation.

Historical takes into account the historical context. The time of writing and the circumstances of the writing of the scriptures.

Grammatical takes into the account the words used and the syntactical relationship to each other. We pay attention to the main verbal idea with all its subordinating and coordinating clauses.

X. How do these interpretive models work?

Illustration of these models at work in the story of David and Goliath³²

(This entire section is an excerpt from Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching E-Book)

“Some who advocate for a Christ-centered approach to interpreting Scripture talk about the concept of redemptive-historical, or Christocentric interpretation. Which, according to Sidney Greidanus, asks the question: What does this passage mean, not just in the immediate context, but in the context of the whole Bible, and specifically in light of Christ (See *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 230-236)?”

³¹ Walt Kaiser’s comments on the Christological Hermeneutic in David Murray Daniel Block, Walt Kaiser, Bryan Chapell *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching E-Book*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Life Way Press, 2013), 16.

³² Selections taken from *ibid*. This entire section is an excerpt from Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching E-Book.

Interestingly enough, I have found that while many pastors argue for the importance of Christ-centeredness, there is disagreement on what it should look like. Charles Spurgeon aptly illustrates what seems to be a popular caricature of Christ-centered hermeneutics, making a bee-line to the cross:

“I have never yet found a text that has not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one; I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.”

What is the biblical and theological basis for this type of Christ-centered hermeneutics?

What should we do with David and Goliath?

At the very beginning of the discussion Akin argued that the main points of most Old Testament stories understood in a moralistic framework end up as something like “Be brave like David”, referring to his encounter with Goliath. Akin echoed the argument Sidney Greidanus made in his book *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*.

“...we may not isolate this narrative from the flow of redemptive history and hold David up to the congregation as a hero whose courage we should imitate in fighting our individual Goliaths. Instead, we should endeavor to discover the meaning of this narrative in the context of the whole of redemptive history.” (238)

For Greidanus, and many in the Christ-centered movement, the story of David and Goliath is about much more than Israel’s story, and David, God’s anointed king, delivering Israel and securing her safety in the Promised Land. At a higher level, this is a story about the Lord defeating the enemy of His people through His servant David.

However, perhaps there is a call to be brave in the narrative? Or does the call to be brave require that people read themselves into the narrative? How do we teach or preach a story like that in a way that’s helpful? In our panel discussion Trevin Wax commented on this very point:

“I think you can pull courageous principles for living from David and Goliath. I think you can find moral example in David. But there is something else there. Going back to the context of the story, you have the people of Israel being oppressed. You have the enemy of God that’s there and the king is AWOL. He’s not where he’s supposed to be. Then, you have David who has been anointed king, but he’s still under the radar. He comes and slays this giant. God uses this very ordinary person that no one would expect. So, with David and Goliath, you see that God keeps His covenant promises to His people by raising up an unlikely savior.

I think we need to use that as a picture to show this is the way God works. That helps people understand this is the way God works. When you are preaching the New Testament you can say, look God did this in the Old Testament, too.

David is a picture of Christ in the future, but you wouldn't want to press it to the point that people would leave with the idea that the story is only about Jesus or that the story doesn't have its immediate context."

With that, I turned to Jonathan Akin and asked where he would go with the story of David and Goliath, and how he would preach it?

"If somebody were to ask me is David and Goliath about the courage to face your enemies, I would say yes. Now, the problem is that I think a strict approach to historical grammatical method in homiletics flattens the text. I'm going to argue that misses something. You cannot jump from David to your church member. There's one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, so this text applies to me in Christ or outside of Christ. But, it's mediated through Christ. So, how do you preach that?"

Akin then told the story of David and Goliath from a Christ-centered perspective:

"You have the anointed one of God who receives the Spirit, goes out into the wilderness where an enemy is presenting himself before the people of God, 40 days and 40 nights. He crushes the enemy's head. In the Hebrew text it describes the enemy as wearing snake armor. That sure sounds familiar doesn't it?

Jesus is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit. Out in the wilderness, the serpent is presenting himself 40 days and 40 nights. Then, Jesus withstands the temptation to bypass the cross and in doing that crushes the serpent's head. In Revelation 12, how do we overcome the evil one? Through the blood of the Lamb. That's the instrumentality by which the evil one is defeated.

So, the way I would preach David and Goliath is to start with, first and foremost, we are not David. We are the Israelites who are cowering in fear in the corner because we can't face the giant on our own. We can't beat our enemies on our own. So, we need a David to stand in our place and to defeat our enemies. But then what happens after that? David slings the rock that crushed the enemy's head. Then, David takes his sword and cuts his head off. Their enemies run. The Israelite army pursues.

That's how I would preach that. You can face your enemies and you have the courage to face your enemies, but you only do that once you recognize, as Jerry Vines says, we don't fight for victory in the Christian life we fight from victory. So, it's a picture of sanctification, but a sanctification that is based on what Jesus has done in saving us."

At this point Eric Hankins spoke up and acknowledged that he was uncomfortable with Jonathan's hermeneutic because he thought it drifted from typology to allegory. And we've all heard of the expression: "one man's typology is another man's allegory." So, I asked Eric to clarify.

"In the reading I did in preparation for today, a lot of the scholars speak of the historical rootedness of typology. That it is history. It's not symbolism. It's not allegory. It's looking for historical patterns that can be gleaned from the Old Testament text. I'm more

comfortable saying the plot of the David and Goliath story is about a savior who stands before the enemy and acts and saves. I'm less comfortable with the snakeskin and the head. I think we should be very careful about moving into the specifics so that this is this and that is that. Then it becomes allegorical.”

Jonathan Akin quickly responded by stating that everything he said was rooted in history, and then stated “I think you cross into allegory when you start saying the five stones represent this and that.”

Conclusion

Now, I think all of us would agree that the story of David and Goliath is not about David and his rocks. When we pay attention to the details and the context of David and Goliath, we see that this is not primarily a morality tale about courage in the face of one's giants.

At the same time, we want to avoid turning it into an allegory, in which every detail represents a spiritual truth. Out of curiosity, I wanted to see how other writers, teachers, and preachers handled this text from a Christ-centered perspective. While there was a lot of similarity, interestingly enough, the focal points were different.

Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*: For Williams, the narrative fits within the theme of God exalts the weak and humbles the proud. The account of young David and Goliath shows us how God can turn the humble trust of a shepherd boy into victory over a giant ego. (45-46)

Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*: Goldsworthy paints a picture of David standing alone as the one in the place of many, and through him God works salvation for Israel. He writes, “It is a saving event in which the chosen mediator wins the victory, while the ordinary people stand by until they can share in the fruits of the saviors’ victory. Preparation is thus made for the gospel events in which God’s Christ (Anointed One) wins the victory over sin and death on behalf of his people.” (86)

XI. Where is meaning found?

In the process of Biblical interpretation many disagree on how we get to the meaning of the text or where the meaning of the text is found. Some say meaning is found behind the text, others say meaning is found in the text, or in front of the text. Every method of interpretation is going to fall into one of these categories.

Behind the Text

Those who believe meaning is found behind the text say that meaning is determined by understanding the historical and geographical context of the writing. You find meaning by reconstructing the historical setting of the text.

Example of this kind of interpretation would be N.T. Wright's use of 2nd Temple Judaism to redefine the contemporary understanding of Justification. By finding the historical backdrop meaning of the text is found.

In Front of the Text

Those who believe meaning is found in front of the text say that meaning is determined by how the reader responds to the message. As they read and respond to the truth presented they have found the intended meaning. This is otherwise called reader response. How does this passage make you feel or what does it mean to you are questions often asked by those who hold this view.

In the Text

Those who believe meaning is found in the text seek to analyze the text to determine from the text what the author intended to communicate by analyzing his writing.

In light of people trying to find meaning to the scriptures in many places this exhortation from Walk Kaiser is appropriate:

“It is high time that teachers and preachers return to the basics once again. Whereas many had thought that the teaching of the Word in a straightforward exposition was not too dated to be effective, it is time to repent and change the menu on the table of the teachings that we spread for the general populace, as well as for the people of God. Let us covenant before God that we will be faithful to the Word of God, longing only to see in evidence the power the Word promises. Let us determine not to cater merely to the current appetites of the pew or join the fashions of the day with what is in vogue as far as proclamation methods are concerned. . . . Only then will a new and unique power be seen in the Church as God shows us anew the power of himself in His Word!”³³

XII. How does the NT Believer understand OT Law?

“The problem with many Christian's concept of law is that it implies formal regulations, often with ritual associations, to which the Old Testament community was subjected if they wished to attain favor with God.”³⁴

“God's law was meant to be a light on one's path; it was to point a person in the direction he or she should go.”

³³ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

Things to Remember when studying passages on the Law:

1. **The Law is related to promise:** Obey and you will be blessed. Disobey and you will be cursed. Obey and you will live. Disobey and you will die.

It is also important to note that the concept of promise preceded God's giving of the Law. God promised a posterity or a "seed," 2) He promised to dwell among His people 3) He promised land, 4) He promised all the nations of the Earth will be blessed (Gen 3:15; 9:27; and 12:1-3).

Kaiser states:

"How, then, did promise relate to [Law]? It was always a relationship that emphasized the priority of promise over law. Therefore, just as the patriarchal promises preceded the giving of the law on Sinai, so belief, faith, and redemption had to be the context for any obedience to the directions that God gave at Sinai."³⁵

2. **The Law is taught in the context of narrative:** The Old Testament flows with Narrative in which we find the Law of God.

Kaiser notes that in the context of grace, flowing from the biblical narrative the law was given:

"Thus, as each command was preceded and made in the context of promise for the patriarchs, so the call for obedience in the Mosaic law was never the condition for inaugurating the covenant of for its maintenance. The Ten Commandments were given in the context of grace, for the God who issued the commands was the God who had just redeemed Israel from the land of Egypt. Thus, the law was no less a gift from God and was rightly celebrated as a gift in Psalm 1:2; 19:7-11; and all of 119. To the Psalmists, the law was sweeter than honey and more desirable than much fine gold! Promise did not oppose God's law, for both promise and law came from the same covenant making God. Neither did law provide a separate means, not even a hypothetical means, for obtaining salvation. Instead, the law provided a means for maintaining fellowship with God."³⁶

3. **The Law is a reflection of God's Character:** It was given to Israel to direct them to live like God and reflect God in this world.

"But at the heart of the legal legislation was the moral law of God that was based on the character of God. Since God is immutable, so are those laws that point to His nature and character. He is truth itself; accordingly, lying is always wrong. God is Holy; therefore, we should be as holy as He is. That was the standard then, and it serves as the standard for the present times as well."³⁷

"The Law wasn't – and isn't – there to make us busy keeping rules so we won't get into trouble; it's there because through it God's people were brought into relationship with Him"³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., 141.

³⁶ Ibid., 143.

³⁷ Ibid., 145.

³⁸ Scott M. Gibson, *Preaching the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2006), 90.

4. **Understand that the Law is not prescriptive as much as it is descriptive:** The law describes what Love for God and others looks like. The law is not an exhaustive explanation of right and wrong.

“What the Law continues to do for us is to give us principles about what God expects in human behavior, principles that are hugely helpful in guiding us as we respond to the Holy Spirit’s leading to follow Christ.”³⁹ – Douglas K. Stuart

There is no way that the 613 OT commands could possibly cover every circumstance or situation than man will face. The number of people, circumstances, and variables means that every scenario could not possibly be covered under these 613 commands. Therefore the Law should not be seen as an exhaustive law code but rather as descriptive of what God’s moral law looks like when it is practiced. Stuart explains:

“... biblical law is *paradigmatic*, and that from it principles for living in obedience to God are to be derived.”⁴⁰

“In other words, judges in a court case looked to law codes for *examples of the sort of justice that should prevail*. They still made their own decisions and gave forth their own rulings – using law codes as *models*, not as specific prescriptions, of how to rule judiciously.”⁴¹

By this he means to say that the Law should be seen as providing examples of crimes and examples of punishment for those crimes. So that when someone commits a similar crime they will also face a similar punishment. This helps keep the crime and the punishment equal. It also protects from unfair penalties whether too lenient or too harsh.

“God’s revealed covenant law to Israel was paradigmatic. No Israelite could say, “The Law says I must make restitution for stolen oxen or sheep (Exod. 22:1) but I stole your goat; I don’t have to pay you back,” or “The law says that anyone who attacks his father or mother must be put to death (Ex 21:15) but I attacked my grandmother, so I shouldn’t be punished,” or “The law says that certain penalties apply for hitting someone with a fist or stone (Ex 21:18), but I kicked my neighbor with my foot and hit him with a piece of wood, so I shouldn’t be punished.” Such arguments would have insulted the intelligence of all concerned and made no impact on those rendering judgments.”⁴²

“Properly understood, two laws do indeed sum up everything in the entire legal corpus of the Old Testament. So do ten laws (The Ten Words/Commandments); so do all 613. The numbers go no higher, nor would they need to.”⁴³

Therefore when we come across Old Testament Law we first, seek to understand the principle being presented. Second, we evaluate how it either demonstrates a love for God or a love for our

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁴¹ Ibid., 95.

⁴² Ibid., 96.

⁴³ Ibid.

neighbor. Third, we evaluate the application for Israel. Fourth, we determine how that principle applies to the NT Believer.

5. **What is binding on the Christian is the principle of the Law not the specific application of the Law to Israel:** By this we mean to say the timeless truth is eternally binding. How that truth applied to Israel is not.

For example in the law of a parapet around the roof of a house (Deut 22:8). This is a civil law given to Israel. Does it have a binding message from the NT Believer? Yes! The eternally binding principle is that we are to protect people from being injured on our property. The specific application for Israel was to build a parapet around the roof of their house so no one falls off. The character of love revealed is that we are to love others by protecting them from anything on our property which could kill them. The specific application for the NT believer is to guard against serious dangers on your property by taking reasonable steps to secure others from being injured or possibly killed. We learn from this command how to love others. We do not follow this command because we are the New Israel and are still under the Mosaic Covenant. We love God and we follow the pattern of God's love to His people.

XIII. How does the NT Believer understand OT Narrative?

In order to understand Narrative you must find the central elements of the story. These elements include:

1) Scene

- Stick to the general rule that scene changes only when time or place changes
- Scene has two or more characters. Remember that in any scene God may be present in some form (providence, purpose, Word, ect)
- Start by marking the scene of the story

Example in Ruth:

Ruth Chapter 1

Scene 1: Elimelech and Naomi facing continued difficulties in Moab after experiencing difficulties in Bethlehem.

Scene 2: Naomi seeking to return with Ruth to Bethlehem after the death of her husband and two sons.

Ruth Chapter 2

Scene 1: Naomi and Ruth at home

Scene 2: Ruth at the Field of Boaz

Scene 3: Ruth returns home to Naomi

Ruth Chapter 3

Scene 1: Naomi and Ruth at home

Scene 2: Ruth visits Boaz at night in his field

Scene 3: Ruth returns home to report to Naomi

Ruth Chapter 4

Scene 1: Boaz in the Courts

Scene 2: Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi at home and in the community

2) **Plot** – The plot gives the movement of the story.

- The plot line is going to have a beginning middle and end.
- Plots could be simple or complex

Example of a Complex Plot line:

- Life of Joseph from favored son to leader in Egypt
- Sold into slavery
- Thrown into Prison falsely
- Forgotten while in prison
- Delivered by God because God gave him the ability to interpret dreams
- Raised up to deliver the very brothers who sold him into slavery

Example of a simple plot line with a twist:

Jonah Chapter 1

- A. God Call
- B. Jonah Runs
- C. God Chases
- D. Jonah is Caught

Jonah Chapter 2

- A. Jonah Regrets
- B. God Restores

Jonah Chapter 3

- A. Jonah repents and preaches
- B. Nineveh Repents
- C. God Restores

Jonah Chapter 4

- A. Jonah is Angry
- B. God rebukes

- In the plot line typically you can find the “classic pyramid pattern.”⁴⁴
- This is the idea that all stories reach a crisis point and then come to a resolution

3) Point of View – Refers to the perspective from which the story is told.

- Usually the Narrator tells and determines the vantage point of the story
- 1 Kings 17 allows the widow at Zarephath to give the vantage point of the story (1Kings 17:24) “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the Word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.”
- “Thus the point of view supplies the lens through which the reader, interpreter, and expositor may relate to the acts or events of each scene” Kaiser, pg 67.
- We must look for the point of view the human author tried to express. In most cases this can be determined.
- We want to guard against inserting our own point of view. We do not want to project ourselves and our experiences onto the text.
- For example perform a psychological analysis

4) Characterization – determine the characters of the story and how they are presented

Joseph – mistreated and exalted

Naomi – difficulties, depression, and deliverance

Jonah – Angry prophet bitter at God for His love towards the wicked

- Notice how the text characterizes the parties in the story
- Is the character presented as a fool, king, coward, hero, heroin, wicked, righteous, ect

“Richard Bowman notes that character in the Biblical Narratives is set forth in four different ways:

1. through a character’s own actions and his or her interactions with other characters
2. through a character’s own speeches,
3. through the speeches of other characters about a specific character, and
4. through the narrator’s specific comments about a character.”⁴⁵

- Also seek to determine if the character is static or dynamic. Does the character change? Then he is dynamic if not he is static.

⁴⁴ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 66.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

5) Setting – determine the place and time of the characters.

- Find the historical setting of the story
- Setting helps to point to customs and practices which give the reader understanding of what is taking place

6) Dialogue – Is often used in Hebrew Narrative

- Narrative prose is indirect while teaching or didactic prose is direct
- Two important notes on interpreting Narrative:⁴⁶

Note the place where the dialogue is first introduced, for that often is the important moment in revealing the character of the speaker – perhaps even more important than in the substance of what is said!

Note also where the narrator has chosen to introduce dialogue instead of narration. That rhythm of moving back and forth between narration and dialogue is part of the effect that is being created. And in the sharp exchange between the characters, light will be shed on the relationship of the characters to God and to each other.

7) Key Words – Words are often repeated in the Narrative for emphasis

- Look for repeating words
- Look for unique words
- Look for words that are not familiar
- Look for play on words
- Example see 2 Samuel 7 and God's use of house when David sought to build a house for God

8) Structure – notice the arrangement of the parts

- This is best done by diagramming the text to see the flow of thought
- Find the structure leading up to the climax and then the resolution
- Determine if the narrative fits into a larger structure or wither it stands on its own
- Joseph being sold into slavery fits into a bigger story line
- Joseph being falsely accused of immorality fits into a bigger story
- Joseph's story culminates in how God used him to deliver his family from the famine

9) Stylistic Device – Look for the various methods and devices used to get the story across.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 72.

- Use of Repetition
- Use of Narrator – Notice the first 5 verses of Ruth set the tone for the whole book
- Use of Omissions – parts of the story or character left out. Notice the difference between the Writer of Kings and Chronicles in relationship to David and his troubles.
- Chiasm – Hebrew device paralleling ideas leading up to a main idea.
 - Seen in a, b, c, b, a style
 - A- God is good
 - B- God is good all the time
 - C – God’s goodness is seen in his daily meeting our needs
 - B – God is good every day
 - A – God is very good

Example:

“Exodus 2:1-10. Exodus 1, of course, ends on a tense note. Pharaoh has been frustrated one way or another in Exodus 1 in his mission of decimating Israel; so, at last, he authorizes all his people as deputies and decrees that every Hebrew baby boy is to be chunked into the Nile (1:22). So what will happen in the case of this particular Hebrew couple (2:1)? The whole account follows a sort of chiastic pattern:

Mother, vv. 2-3
 Sister, v.4
 Daughter of Pharaoh, vv. 5-6
 Sister, vv. 7-8
 Mother, vv. 9-10⁴⁷

- Irony – Elijah used this device to rebuke the Baal prophets (1 Kings 18)

10) Textual Makers – today there is a strong push for discourse analysis, syntactical analysis, analytical analysis, or advanced plot analysis.

The idea is that we can determine the flow of thought or the central idea by finding key words or phrases used by a particular author. Basically these textual makers show emphasis, or change of purpose, or bigger themes.

The discipline seeks to find patterns in the text to determine how the author is communicating his message. In discourse analysis the interpreter works his way through the text analyzing the verbal forms and their relationships to the clauses. The idea is to find a pattern and notice where the discourse changes in the verbal form.

⁴⁷ Dale Davis, *Word Became Flesh*, 27-28.

See Appendix A in Steven Mathewson's Book *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* for a detailed explanation.⁴⁸

In this work Mathewson demonstrates how you would chart every verbal form and then spot the change in verbal tense. These changes would then be the focus of your study. What is the authoring trying to communicate with the change in tense?

In light of the newness of the discipline the warning of Joel James is important to keep in mind:

“Outlining a story with textual markers is an effective way to retell God's story. **The weakness of textual markers is that they may not sum up the theology of the story as well as a plural noun summary.** Therefore, if you use textual markers, make sure that you highlight the author's theological lesson at appropriate points during the sermon. Ultimately, whether you use a plural noun summary or textual markers, retell God's story and teach the theological lesson intended by the author: that's preaching narrative the way God would preach it.”⁴⁹

Appendix A

Observations of Ruth Chapter 1

A. Observations

1. The time of the events in this book is when the judges governed (vs. 1).
2. A famine in the land drove Elimelech and his family to depart to Moab (vss. 1, 2).

⁴⁸ Be warned this is a detailed evaluation of discourse analysis and requires a working knowledge of the Hebrew text. Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 227-55.

⁴⁹ Joel James, *Expository Studying*, ch 10.

3. The name of Elimelech's wife was Naomi and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah (vs. 2).
4. Elimelech died while in Moab leaving behind Naomi and her two sons (vs. 3).
5. Mahlon and Chilion married Moabite women (vs. 4).
6. The names of the women who married Naomi's sons were Orpah and Ruth (vs. 4).
7. The boys lived in Moab for at least ten years before they died (vs. 5).
8. Between the family having to leave their land because of famine and the death of her husband and sons, Naomi had a life of great turmoil. (vss. 1, 3, 5).
9. Naomi hears God has visited His people by giving them food so she sets to return to her land (vs. 6).
10. She left for Judah with her two daughters-in-law (vs. 7).
11. Naomi blesses her daughters-in-law and gives them freedom to seek new husbands (vss. 8, 9).
12. Naomi's daughters-in-law were resolved to return with her to her land (vs. 10).
13. Naomi describes to her daughters-in-law that there is no reason for them to follow her to her land. She is not married. She cannot bear new sons for them to marry and even if she could they could not be expected to wait for the children to grow up (vss. 11-13)
14. Naomi viewed the hand of the Lord as being against her (vs. 13).
15. Upon hearing Naomi's plea, Orpah kissed Naomi while Ruth clung to her (vs. 14).
16. Orpah left and returned to her people and Naomi pleads again with Ruth to do the same (vs. 15).
17. Ruth responds with resolve to follow Naomi wherever she goes, to stay wherever she stays, to embrace whoever she embraces, to worship the deity she worships, and to die where she dies (vss. 16, 17).
18. Naomi saw Ruth's resolve and made no more pleas for her to return to Moab (vs. 18).
19. Ruth and Naomi returned to the land of Bethlehem (vs. 19).
20. While the people rejoiced over Naomi's return Naomi grieved over the heavy handed treatment she had received while she was gone (vss. 19-21).

B. Interpretive Questions

1. What is the land in verse 1? Is it Bethlehem or the entire land of Israel?
2. Did Naomi and her sons live in the land 10 years after the death of Elimelech or a total of ten years before they died? (Vs 5)
3. In verse 6 did Naomi seek to return to experience God's favor again or because she heard God was favorable?
4. Why did Naomi send her daughters-in-law back to their mother's house? Were their fathers dead or was this a gentle way of saying turn back to your natural mother?

5. In verse 9 when “they” lifted up their voices and wept does this refer to all three ladies or the two daughters-in-law?
6. In verse 13 why did Naomi describe her difficulties as being harder for her than for her daughters-in-law?
7. Was the hand of God against Naomi? Or was this Naomi’s perspective because of all the difficulties she was facing? (vs. 13)
8. Was Ruth willing to become a worshipper of YHWH like Naomi (vs 16)?
9. Did Naomi view her difficulties as God’s judgment against her? (vs. 21)
10. Why did the author mention the arrival of the two women being at the beginning of the barley harvest? (Vs. 22)

C. Applications

1. I should recognize that God moves in calamity and is able to direct me even through difficult circumstances.
2. It is easy to think God is against you when circumstances are not going your way therefore I should work carefully to make sure I am seeing the circumstances from God’s perspective.
3. I need to see that often what is best for us is manifested when we seek the best for others.
4. I should work to see that God is at work even in an untimely death.
5. I must be able to see that often my inability to rejoice with others is rooted in my failure to see beyond my own circumstances.

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