

CAPSTONE PROJECT
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INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS

A CHURCH-BASED THEOLOGICAL STUDIES COURSE

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Lesson 1: How Did We Get the Bible? – The Formation of the Canon

Teaching Outline¹

What is the “Canon”?

Key point

- **The formation of the canon did *not* give authority to Scripture. It *recognized* the inherent authority of Scripture.**
- Analogies:
 - Eliud Kipchoge is a great runner. We already know this. Imagine that a government council convened and declared that Kipchoge is a great runner. Their declaration would not *make* him a great runner. It would simply *recognize* what everyone already knew.
 - Mt. Kilimanjaro at sunrise is beautiful. Everyone knows this. Even if the Tanzanian government issued a resolution that Mt. Kilimanjaro is beautiful, that statement would not *make* it beautiful. It’s not like it was ugly before, but it is now suddenly beautiful because of the resolution. The government simply formally recognized what was *already* common knowledge.
- **This is how the formation of the canon worked. Authority was not *given*. It was *recognized*.**

Definition of “Canon”

- What is the “canon”?
 - **Collection of books that we as Christians view as uniquely authoritative. They are inspired by God.** Term first used in mid 300s to describe these books. (Greek word underlying it means measuring stick/rod.)
- What does the word “testament” mean (as in the Old Testament)?
 - **Coming from Latin word that means “covenant.”** Old covenant with Israel and New covenant made by Jesus. Term not used until 200s.

OT Canon

Overview

- 39 books in OT.
- First 5 books called Pentateuch were written by Moses in approximately 1400 BC.
- The last book of the OT was written about 430 BC
- The first book of the NT was written around mid-40s to 50 AD.
 - Almost a 500-year gap between the last OT book and the first NT.
 - Books written during this time include the Apocrypha.
- 27 books in NT.

¹ Most of the following outline is directly dependent on the teaching that I received from Robert Plummer during his hermeneutics class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

- Great exercise is to learn all 66 books in order.

Is the order of the OT books and the chapter and verse divisions part of God's revelation to us?

- No. Old manuscripts were grouped in different ways than we group them today (e.g. law, prophets, writings in Hebrew).
 - When it was translated into Greek, it was categorized by topics (e.g. books of law, history, poetry).
- When the OT was translated into Latin, the major prophets were placed before the minor prophets.
 - The present-day Christian OT follows the Latin Vulgate in order. In content, however, it follows Hebrew manuscripts. We have the same OT as Jews use in synagogues now and the same one used by 1st century Jews.
 - Chapter/verse divisions added much later. Present-day divisions added by Steven Lankton in 1200. He was archbishop of Canterbury. That was Latin vulgate. 100 years later it was added back to Hebrew text.

Why these books and only these books? How do we know that the compilers of the OT chose the correct books? Who decided that these books would be included? How did they decide?

Key point

- **The formation of the canon did not give authority to Scripture. It recognized the inherent authority of Scripture.**

Internal Testimony (Scripture)

- A theological basis for the OT canon:
 - Deut 31:24-26 – Moses as author of the Book of the Law and command to keep it.
 - Deut 18:15-22 – God will raise up a prophet like Moses, and he shall speak what the Lord commands. We must listen to him.
 - Isa 30:8 – Inscribe God's Word in a book so that it may be a witness forever.
 - Dan 9:2 – Daniel references reading God's Word as revealed to Jeremiah.
 - Prov 25:1 – collecting and recording proverbs

Scriptural evidence for a completed/closed OT canon at the time of Christ

- Numerous quotations of and allusions to the OT in the NT (no direct quote to Apocrypha). All 3 components of OT are referenced (law, prophets, writings).
- Luke 11:49-51 - supports idea of closed canon (Jesus following Jewish Canon, saying from first martyr to last (2 Chron 24:22))
- Luke 24:44 - Jesus references 3 divisions of canon and endorses them as fully authoritative from God.
- Church never struggled with canonicity of the OT

External Testimony (History)

- Rabbinic Literature mentions Holy Spirit ceasing to inspire books (e.g. t. Sota 13:3, Babylonian Talmud, Seder Olam Rabbah 30, 1 Macc 9:27)

- LXX translated (recognized as translated in 250 BC, so there was a body of literature considered canon)
- *2 Esdras 14:44-48* or *4 Ezra* – 24 books (speaks of same Canon that we have)
- Josephus (1st century Jewish politician, soldier, and historian), *Contra Apion* 1.38f. (states that Canon has been closed)
- Philo (1st century Jewish philosopher), *De Vita Contemplativa* 25 (never quotes from Apocrypha)
- Greek prologue of Ecclesiasticus (mid-2nd century BC) mentions 3-fold division of OT
- Qumran, *Dead Sea Scrolls (70-135 AD)* – all books in OT found except for Esther. Only 2 from Apocrypha. In Qumran community, commentaries only written on Biblical books, not Apocrypha.
- Council of Jamnia

Conclusions based on above info

- There is very strong internal (Scriptural) and external evidence for accepting the 39 books of the OT canon.

NT Canon

Background and history

1. Oral transmission of the Jesus traditions
 - Bible of early Christians was the LXX and then letters of apostles and then the Gospels. But before Gospels written down, Luke describes (1:1-4) eyewitness material that he recorded.
2. What prevented the Gospel from being corrupted during this oral period?
 - God's divine preservation - In John 14, Jesus tells disciples that the Holy Spirit will bring to their memory the testimonies.
 - Even if we ignore the faith issue, the Rabbinic style of teaching was to pour knowledge into students without missing a drop. Jesus used this style to make memorable teaching.
 - 1st century Jewish culture of memorization was very different from our own
 - Very quickly, stories about Jesus were being translated. Acts 6 describes different language-speaking Jews.
 - Extra-biblical records support reliability of the Jesus traditions. Even secular writings support them.
3. The need for the NT writings
 - Apostles began to die. Peter and Paul executed in mid-60s during the time of Nero.
 - As the Gospel spread to new territories, apostles couldn't be everywhere. They needed an apostolic presence through writing.
 - Churches needed to know what to read during corporate worship. What is for private reading what is for public worship reading?
 - Need to react to heretical claims. In other words, they needed to be able to say "no, this is Scripture."

- Take the different rolled up scrolls and make a “codex” (book) so they could fit more teachings. Needed to decide what was authoritative and authentic.
 - If Romans tried to take the documents, Christians needed to decide what they were willing to die for (e.g. they are holding the 1 copy for their community).
4. The Copying and Distribution of Ancient Manuscripts
- Possibly visiting churches copying NT Scripture and bringing them back to church. Then more copying and distributing.
 - Possibly reasons for later inclusion of 2 and 3 John. Seem to be personal letters. Some churches may have believed they didn’t apply to them, so they didn’t copy the letters and return it to community.
5. A theological basis for the NT Canon
- Jeremiah 31:31-34 -- predicts the day will come when a new covenant will be made
 - Luke 22:20 -- Jesus says he is establishing a new covenant in his blood
 - Deut. 18:15 -- Expectation of a succession of a prophetic voice. The Lord will raise a prophet, and we should listen to him.
 - Heb 1:1-3 -- Long ago God spoke to us through prophets, but now he speaks through His Son.
 - John 14:26 -- Jesus speaking to his original disciples. He promises that the eyewitness testimony they have will be preserved by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will bring to mind all Jesus has taught them and will cause them to remember.
 - 2 Peter 3:15-16 -- Peter refers to Paul’s writings as Scripture.
 - 1 Tim 5:18; Matt 10:10 -- quotation of a Gospel referred to as Scripture (Matt 10:10).
6. Organization of the New Testament books in our Bible
- Gospels (3 synoptics, John).
 - Acts. Luke’s 2nd volume. Describes how early church grew.
 - Paul’s letters. Grouped from longest to shortest. Multiple letters to same community grouped together. Then letters to individuals grouped together in decreasing order of size.
 - Hebrews. Associated with Paul in Canonical debates.
 - Catholic/general epistles (universally written to church rather than individuals). Possibly order of prominence of early Apostles (e.g. James, Peter, John (cf. Gal. 2:9 “pillars”))
 - Revelation. Deals with end times matters; therefore it’s at the end.
7. Chapter and Verse Divisions in the Bible
- Chapter divisions for entire Bible in 1200 created by Steven Lankton, Archbishop of Canterbury
 - NT verse divisions added in 1551 by a French printer. Some divisions are pretty bad. They awkwardly divide paragraphs.
 - Divisions not inspired by God.

Again, remember the key point: **the formation of the canon did not give authority to Scripture. It recognized the inherent authority of Scripture.**

8. The Early Church's Criteria for Canonicity

- Apostolicity -- writing truly written by an apostle (vast majority of books fall in OT and NT fall into this category) or tied closely to an apostle (e.g. Mark, Luke).
- Truthfulness (Deut. 18:20-22)—anything written had to be truthful. God speaks truth, so if what a prophet or apostles says isn't true, it can't be accepted because God is truth.
- Orthodoxy – the early church had a firm understanding of the Gospel. Therefore, any canonical work had to fit within the core of the Christian faith.
 - Faithfulness to previously accepted canonical writings—must have coherency and consistency in books of canon.
 - Amazing when we consider the generations that span the 66 books, the numbers of different authors, settings in which they wrote, situations, different perspectives, yet there is a consistency of teaching throughout entire Bible.
 - One voice transcends all human voices of Scripture: voice of God.
- Confirmed by Christ, prophet, apostle (e.g. Luke 24:44; 2 Pet. 3:16)—OT confirmed by Christ himself
- catholicity (universal) -- the document had to be universally recognized throughout church (not just a local phenomenon).
 - Church usage and recognition was one of the dominant factors that led to recognition of the books of the OT and NT as inspired and authoritative.

9. The Early Church's Recognition of the New Testament Canon

- Paul's Letters
 - instructions to read the letter to the church Col 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27.
 - 2 Pet 3:16: Peter recognized Paul's letters as Scripture ("...as they do the other Scriptures.), and he says that some parts are hard to understand 😊.
 - The letters are authoritative. They are not just for the church that the letter is addressed to but to all churches.
- A Gospel is quoted next to an OT text. Both are introduced as "Scripture": 1 Tim 5:18
- Early Church father quotes from the NT books as authoritative alongside the OT.
- In other words, there is an "implicit canon" in the Apostolic Fathers' use of the NT documents.
- Book of Didache 8:2, 15:3-4 written roughly between AD70-150, use written Gospel as authoritative and quotes Deut. warning readers not to add/subtract to them. Shows early recognition of books of NT as authoritative.

- Ignatius (early 2nd century) names Gospels, apostles, and prophets as authoritative group.
- Polycarp (mid-2nd century) and Second Clement (mid-2nd century) referred to NT passages as authoritative. Shows early acceptance of NT as authoritative.

The Canon Situation by A.D. 200

- Homologoumena – (“Universally Confessed”) – Gospels, Acts, Paul, 1 John, 1 Peter
- Antilegomena – (“Spoken Against”) – James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Hebrews, Revelation. Additional books sometimes included: The Shepherd of Hermas, Didache, 1 Clement, Epistle of Barnabas

The Clarification of the Canon – Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.25 (~AD 325) lists the general consensus as follows:

- Homologoumena – Gospels, Acts, Paul (Hebrews included), 1 Peter, 1 John,
- Antilegomena – James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, Revelation
- Notha – (“Spurious”) – Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, The Apocalypse of Peter, Letter of Barnabas, Didache

Key Documents or Councils:

- Muratorian Canon (~AD 190), in 1740, Cardinal Muratori found a scrapbook of a 7th-8th century monk with an old scrap of paper in it listing: Gospels, Acts, 13 letters of Paul, Jude, 2 Johannine letters, Revelation, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Apocalypse of Peter.
- Festal Letter of Athanasius (AD 367) – first complete listing of our 27 book NT canon that we have.
- Councils of Hippo Regius (393) and Carthage (397) – first councils with full agreement on our current 27-book NT canon.

Why was there some debate among new NT leaders?

- Hebrews was in question because anonymous but accepted bc of the broad consensus of church and its own testimony to the wisdom of God that was communicated through it. Powerful in conveying OT truths that were made clear in light of Christ.
- James—even Martin Luther quarreled early about James because he didn’t like its statement on justification and works. Jude and Revelation discussed as well. In 4th century, church determined these books that they’d recognize as canonical.

The Closing of the Canon—we can be confident that when final book of NT penned, that we have the final authoritative Word of God for His people in this church age.

1. No revelation contrary to the gospel—majority of so-called revelatory books presented in other world religions are automatically disqualified bc they conflict with Gospel of Jesus Christ, the only true Gospel. Therefore, we know it can’t be from God because nothing can be accepted as from God if it conflicts with what God has already said.

2. Jesus is the Final Revelation—Hebrews 1:1 affirms this saying that in these last days God spoke to us in His Son. Revelation did come in Word, but in incarnation of Jesus Christ, we have in physical form the ultimate and final expression of God’s revelation to us. We should not expect a revelation that surpasses Christ. He is the final and full revelation that we have.
3. Jesus commissioned apostles to convey His revelation—what about NT writings that come after Christ? These are writings commissioned by Jesus to convey His revelation to church. If we didn’t have NT, we’d have no record of Jesus. Jesus himself commissioned that this will be the case. John 16, Jesus makes clear he’ll give further revelation to his disciples when they’re ready for it. Jesus says that He has many more things to say to disciples, but they can’t bear them now. But later Spirit comes, he’ll guide them to truth. Statement that more revelation coming is directed to his disciples only who become apostles after Christ’s death. Paul rec’d his own personal revelation from Christ. Therefore Jesus commissioned these apostles to be the ones who would provide the church the authoritative explanation/interpretation of meaning of Jesus’ life. NT doesn’t extend beyond Jesus. They are simply elaboration, interpretation, explanation of ministry of Jesus.
4. Warning not to add or take away from revelation given—when John says in Rev. 22:18 not to add/take away, he is referring to the book of Revelation. But Rev. 1 begins with statement about revelation of Jesus Christ to show to his bondservants things that must soon take place. Therefore, when John says don’t add to or take away from the Revelation of Jesus Christ. His point is that Revelation is the final revelation of Jesus, the last thing that Jesus had to say.

What about the Apocrypha?

1. General Facts about the Apocrypha

Roman Catholic Apocrypha: Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon), 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees

The Greek Orthodox church recognizes these books, but also includes: 1 Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, Psalm 151

They are sometimes bound with OT in later writings because they can be helpful and inspirational. They were never viewed within Judaism as equivalent to or canonical along with Jewish Scriptures, however. It wasn’t until the Reformation that the Catholic church at Council of Trent adopted apocryphal books to their canon. They did this to support their view of indulgences and belief in purgatory. These aren’t taught in Bible, so they used apocryphal books to support their beliefs. Protestants rejected these books.

2. Reasons to Exclude the Apocrypha from the Canon

- Jewish canon of OT excludes them. Jews have never recognized them as canonical even though they wrote them.

- Recognized at end of OT that prophetic voice ended
- Nowhere in NT is apocrypha is quoted as “As it is written” or “As it was said”. Never explicitly quoted especially not as Scripture
- Clear difference in quality between Apocrypha and OT/NT. Clear factual errors and theological problems (praying for dead). Bizarre stories (sorcery like fish entrails).
- Roman Catholic did not declare it canonical until Council of Trent in 1546. It wasn’t until the Reformation that the Catholic church at Council of Trent adopted apocryphal books to their canon. They did this to support their view of indulgences and belief in purgatory.
- When Jerome was translating the Vulgate in 4th/5th century, he did not want to include Apocrypha because he couldn’t find original Hebrew docs. Under pressure from Augustine put it in there. But later Augustine even recognized that Apocrypha not canonical through his statements to others.

References:

Plummer, Robert L. *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. 40 Questions Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010.

Wegner, Paul D. *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004.

Lesson 2: Challenges that Arise from Translating the Bible

Lesson Outline²

Translate Kiswahili and English passages

- a. Provide some Kiswahili sentences (it can be from anything, even fake conversations).
- b. Translate these passages into literal, “wooden” English. This will result in some awkward English translations. For example, we translate “Unaitwa nani?” as “What is your name?” The literal translation, however, would be “Who are you called?” We don’t say that in English because it would sound awkward. Therefore, we “smooth” it out for English speakers.
- c. This is the challenge of translation. Different languages do not have one-to-one translations for every word.
- d. Language and culture are also inseparable. For example, there are three different words for “rice” in Kiswahili but only one word in English.

Why do we have different translations?

General translation philosophies³

- Dynamic/Functional equivalence (thought-for-thought)
 - E.g. NLT or NIV

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More readable • Priority on conveying meaning; less ambiguity in the meaning of the English • Easy for a non-Christian or new Christian to read and comprehend • Good for public Scripture reading • More interpretation by trained scholars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less correspondence to the form of the original text • More interpretation of the original text • Impossible to trace the same form of a word used by the biblical writers • Often more expansive by using a phrase or sentence to explain a technical term • Not as good for careful Bible study

- Formal or literal equivalence (word-for-word)

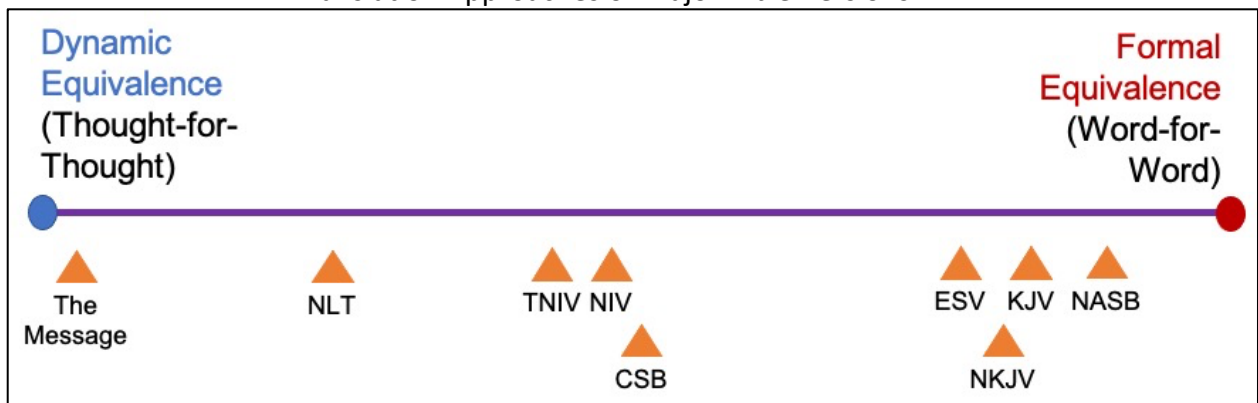
² Most of the following outline is directly dependent on the teaching that I received from Robert Plummer during his hermeneutics class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

³ The comparisons in the following tables are from the article “It’s All Greek to Me” by Clinton Arnold in *Discipleship Journal*, 132, Nov/Dec 2002.

- NASB--may be most literal, word for word translation but is not written in a way that we normally speak in English
- ESV--still formal but more readable than NASB

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-for-word correspondence with the original text • Less interpretation of the original text; less reliance on the translator for an accurate interpretation • Easier to trace the same form of a word used by the biblical writers • More precision by using complex vocabulary and theological terminology • Better for in-depth biblical study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awkward English at times • More ambiguity in the meaning of the English; relies on the reader for more interpretation • More difficult for a non-Christian or new Christian to read and comprehend • Not as good for public Scripture reading • May lead readers to reach wrong interpretive conclusions in a casual reading

Translation Approaches of Major Bible Versions⁴



The challenge: Language is a part of culture, and no two cultures are the same. Language is an expression of our culture

- Translation is not a math equation like $2 = 2$. There are similarities, but no two languages are exact in vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, etc.

Qualities of a good translation

1. Should be based on best Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts. All modern translations do this except for NKJV.
2. Should be based on latest knowledge of languages and culture. That knowledge continues to increase as we look at extra-biblical sources to gain better understanding of the original language and culture (e.g. begotten --> only son)
3. Should be accurate—sometimes most “accurate” translations are not the most readable (e.g. NASB).
4. Should be understandable—e.g. gird a towel vs. wrap a towel around waist

⁴ This diagram is adapted from the article “It’s All Greek to Me” by Clinton Arnold in *Discipleship Journal*, 132, Nov/Dec 2002.

5. Should be contemporary—When the Greek NT was written, it was written into the contemporary language of people. Same with KJV. But that is not how we speak today. (E.g. Charity meant love back then. Today it means to give money to people in need; “suffer” the children meant “allow” or “let”; “let” meant “hinder”)
6. Should be universal—don't limit it to Australian, English, etc. dialect. Make it universal for English speakers.
7. Should be dignified—some literal translations give a sense of distraction and/or are undignified (KJV translates a verse as “one who pisseth against the wall”). This brings a sense of indignity to service. E.g., KJV says close your bowels vs. close your hearts. The literal translation sounds undignified.
8. Should avoid theological bias—Don't introduce personal bias. Printing errors can do this. “Though *shalt* commit adultery”, “Sin *on* more”. There are also “packaging” errors. Marketers sometimes add things like “What do guys really think of girls?” to draw attention to the Bible as if the Word is not enough.

Translation “Controversies”

- Gender neutral pronouns—The NIV’s desire was to make the translation better reflect modern English. For example, instead of simply saying, “Brothers,” the translation would read “Brothers and sisters.” These changes *only* occurred when it was clear that the biblical writer was addressing both men and women. There are *no* instances of the use gender neutral language when the biblical writer was only addressing men or women. The NIV translators left these instances as gender specific. Some have accused the NIV of caving to political/cultural pressure of the day.
- Updated language with new editions of a translation—Translations need to be updated because language is constantly changing. Some have claimed that new editions are “changing” the Bible because certain words are different than before. This isn’t a change to the Bible, however. It is simply updating the translation to reflect the changes in the English language (or any target language).
- New research based on more reliable manuscripts resulting in changes to translations—Translations like the KJV and NKJV do not use the oldest manuscripts like other major English translations do (e.g. NIV, ESV, NET, NASB, etc.). This results in some differences between the KJV/NKJV and other translations.

Which Bible translation should you read?

- It depends on what you’re doing.
 - For devotional reading and/or reading large chunks of Scripture, consider using a more dynamic translation because it better reflects how most people speak.
 - For deep Bible study and examining smaller chunks of Scripture, consider a formal equivalent translation.
- The best translation is the one you’ll read! The most important thing is that you are reading God’s Word. We should not let our churches become divided over which translation is “best.” There is no perfect translation. We are very fortunate, however, to have multiple excellent English translations. This is especially true considering that many, many people across the world *still* do not have access to the Bible in their language.

Lesson 3: What is Hermeneutics? Why is it Important?

Elements of Communication:

Author	Text	Reader
Encoder	Code	Decoder

If one of these elements is missing, communication can't take place.

What determines the meaning of a passage?

The author determines meaning. This is different than what many secular literature scholars would say.

1. Text – Semantic Autonomy of the Text.
 - originally called New Criticism. They treat the text as if it exists independently of the purposes, conscious or unconscious, of the author and also ignores reader. They separate text from everything.
 - problem with this is that text can mean anything. Text is inanimate. It conveys meaning of the thinking person who wrote it. But text in itself cannot mean anything or construct thought by themselves.
2. Reader – "What it means for me. . . "
 - this is what predominates today. Reader, not author, determines/creates meaning regardless of what original author intended. What does it mean to you?
 - dominant approach in broader literary studies (feminist readings, communist, homosexual). Language viewed as a power game or as an attempt to control or place your power on others. Reader should take control of language and use it vs determining what author meant.
 - reader/response approach. Gives credit for how creative reader can be in interpretation (e.g. poetry class). What does it cause person to think about? Unfortunately, we see this in sermons and Bible studies today.
 - this approach leads some people to "re-interpret" verses so they're not offensive. E.g. passages about hell. Problem is Bible doesn't mean whatever I think it does. The meaning is set in time by God.
 - some children's Bible studies teach this approach. We can't do this. We need studies that accurately respect the meaning of the text.
3. Author – "What Paul Meant . . . "
 - What author intended meaning to be. Communication without attempting to understand author is impossible.
 - Even if you disagree with author, you are acknowledging that he had a point. You are just rejecting that point to create your own meaning.
 - Author is determiner of meaning.

- If we could call Paul today and ask him what he mean, he would say "it means..." That is the final meaning. We don't get to change it.
- see this today in interpretation of Constitution (people call it a living document that they can change its meaning without respect to what original authors wanted)

Objections to the Author as the Determiner of Meaning:

1. The Intentional Fallacy -- theory from W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley
 - They claim you can never enter the author's mind and know what he was thinking. But they are confusing mental acts/processes of author and the text he is using to convey meaning.
 - True that we can't know what author is thinking but we do know what we're intending to convey in terms of meaning. That is different than mental processes of author. We can understand what he is intending to convey.
 - when we see an "Exit" sign, we know what it means/conveys even if we don't know what maker of that sign was thinking when he made it.
 - some people are incompetent. How can you know meaning of author if author can be incompetent in conveying their meaning? This assumes that we are incompetent at conveying our meaning. Sort of a cheap shot at authors. While some incompetence certainly exists, we generally give people the benefit of the doubt that they are conveying what they mean. We don't discredit everyone. If we did, we'd have to view ourselves in the same light.
 - important to remember that in Scripture the Holy Spirit prevented authors from being incompetent
2. Radical Historicism or Radical Psychologism
 - The authors lived in a such a different world than us, how can we possibly understand them? But we are understanding people, not other species. They are humans who think and act like us. They didn't have technology, but we share so much across humanity that we can understand them.
 - social structures are different. They live different, but we can still understand them and explain to a different culture what we mean.

The Role of the Author

- communicates a willed meaning, something that he/she wishes to convey
- cannot be changed. Author can later change his mind, but the meaning he/she conveyed at that moment is frozen time
- There is an implication of what author writes.
 - Example from Stein. Eph 5:18: Do not be drunk with wine. What if people were drunk with beer?
 - Paul's "wine" implications (unconscious flows of what author meant). In this case, Paul meant substance abuse not just wine
- **First** determine what author meant. Then determine implications that flow from that into our own setting. But must begin with author meaning.
 - We don't know mental acts. In Eph example, we don't know if people had heard if people were getting drunk.

The Role of the Text

- Shareability of Symbols
 - Semantic range/Norms of Language – *Langue*
 - author must use language that people understand. Example: bring hamburger to class but mean textbook. Unless author explains himself, he must use language people understand.
 - e.g. coke, soda, and pop mean different things in different areas of country
 - Specific meaning/Norms of Utterance – *Parole*
 - what is specific meaning in that particular context?
 - all words have a range of meaning, but when we study, we want the exact meaning, not the range
 - e.g. "cell" - without context, it could mean many things
 - e.g. John 3:16 God loved the world but 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world. The words love and world have ranges of meaning. Love can mean to have great compassion or care for, or could mean lustily longing for. Same word in Greek but different meaning. Our job is to determine specific meaning.
 - helpful tool for understanding specific meaning is a concordance. If you want range of meaning, use dictionary
- Subject Matter
 - details in text irrespective of how author is using those details to convey meaning (e.g. 1st century Palestine, Greek grammar, etc. but these are different than what author is seeking to convey. Sometimes authors use subject matter to convey meaning but it is not meaning itself.)
 - don't get caught up in the subject matter. Focus on learning the meaning.

The Role of the Reader

- Ascertain literary form
 - is it using figurative language, literal language, poetry (more metaphorical; usually set aside differently than other text in modern Bible translations)?
- Ascertain Authorial Meanings of Symbols
 - what is author's meaning conveyed through text?
- Seek Personal Implications and Significance
 - Not "application". Application is a hybrid term. Implication is things that author means even if he is not conscious of it at the time (Paul and wine example). Significance -- will you do it or not?

A Vocabulary for Interpretation

The **meaning** of a text is that pattern of meaning/concepts the author consciously willed to convey by the words or shareable symbols he or she used.

Implications are those meanings in a text of which the author was usually unaware but nevertheless legitimately fall within the pattern of meaning he/she willed.

- E.g. Matthew 5:28: don't look at a woman lustfully. Implication includes video and photo images that didn't exist in Jesus' time
- We discover the implications, **but the author determines the flow of implications.** We need to get his meaning correct or we'll miss his implications
- Deut 6:6-9 We teach God's command to our children, but we don't literally write His commands on our doorstep. The implication is that we do things to show and teach our commitment to The Lord.
- Multiple times, Paul writes to greet one another with a holy kiss. We don't literally kiss. We do this according our culturally appropriate and warm greetings to other Christians

Significance refers to how a reader responds to the meaning of a text.

- Do you do it? Do you do what the Word says?

Subject matter refers to the content or "stuff" talked about in the text.

- Not meaning. It's the stuff talked about in the text.
- E.g., Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). Don't focus on Lot's hospitality. That is subject matter but not what the author is trying to convey.

Understanding refers to the correct mental grasp of the author's meaning.

- Not yet verbalized or written. Remains in mind.
- Has not been expressed yet. Once it's been expressed, it becomes interpretation.

Interpretation refers to the verbal or written expression of a reader's understanding of the author's meaning.

- what happens after understanding is expressed.
- You can have various interpretations of the same meaning. People can have a proper understanding of the meaning but can express that meaning in different ways.
- Understanding is singular. Interpretation can be plural

Mental acts refer to the experiences the author went through when writing the text.

- We don't know these unless the author tells us these things
- Biblical authors are dead and can't refute wrong assumptions of mental acts, so we need to be careful about not speculating on mental acts of author

The **norms of language/semantic range** are the range of meanings allowed by the words (verbal symbols) of a text.

- dictionary definition. The range of meaning of a word
- "Kids sale" range of meaning: baby goats, kids' stuff, kids themselves, sale for kids, etc. Need to narrow the range of meanings to a singular. Need context

The **norms of utterance/specific meaning** is the specific meaning that the author has given to a word, phrase, sentence and the like in a text.

- Be very precise. "The least meaning is the best meaning."

- Words mean what they meant in the culture at that time/historical context
- Etymological fallacy--false thinking that if you know origin of word, you know meaning of word. Not true. "Nice" comes from a Latin word meaning "ignorant", but people today do mean that people are ignorant when they describe others as nice.
- Root word fallacies

Robert Stein offers this example:

Perhaps the classic example of this issue is found in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, where Alice and Humpty Dumpty have the following conversation:

"There's glory for you!"

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't--till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knockdown argument for you!"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knockdown argument,'" Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master--that's all."

There is a sense in which Humpty Dumpty is correct. He can make a word mean whatever he wants it to mean. But--and this is critical--if he wants to communicate his meaning to others, he must submit himself to the semantic range of possibilities allowed by the language he shares with his hearers. He can create a new word or a new meaning for an old word, of course, but if he wants to communicate his meaning, he must explain such an unusual usage. Thus Alice, too, is correct. Whether he likes it or not, if Humpty Dumpty desires to communicate, he cannot arbitrarily create unique meanings for words unless he informs his hearers/readers that he has done so. For communication to take place an author's text must possess shareability; that is, the meaning of the symbols of the text must fall within the semantic range of the language or code shared with the intended readers.⁵

Literary genre refers to the literary form used by the author and the rules governing that form.

- Different rules, things that are assumed in poetry, proverbs, historical narratives, etc.

⁵ Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011), 50.

- We make these decisions unconsciously, but we need to be aware of it. E.g., If a child says “I’m starving” or “I have a ton of homework”, you don’t call him a liar. You understand it’s a figurative expression, hyperbole to communicate deep emotional content.
- We understand and do this all the time, but it can be difficult with Bible since it’s a different culture and time.

Context refers to the willed meaning that an author gives to the literary materials surrounding the text.

Terminology as it relates to the elements of communication

Meaning

- primarily related to author

Implications

- primarily related to author

Significance

- primarily related to reader

Subject matter

- primarily related to text because it’s stuff in text that doesn’t have anything to do with author’s intended meaning

Understanding

- primarily related to reader

Interpretation

- primarily related to reader

Mental acts

- primarily related to author

Norms of language

- primarily related to text. Author can’t control possible range of meaning of a word. That’s related to the language of the day.

Norms of utterance

- primarily related to author

Literary genre

- primarily related to text. Author doesn’t create new genres but submits himself to the genres that are available to him.

Context

- primarily related to author. He determines the willed meaning prior and after the specific writing

Practice Exercises⁶

1. What does Acts teach us in this chapter about the early church?
 - a. Subject matter. Luke and his willed meaning are not the focus of the statement. The center of attention is information about the early church.
2. Oh, now I know what Paul meant.
 - a. Understanding. The statement involves having arrived at a correct cognitive grasp of Paul's meaning.
3. Although Paul only told Timothy that women should dress modestly and not wear pearls (1 Tim. 2:9), he probably would also accept the view that women should not wear large amounts of any kind of expensive jewelry.
 - a. Implications. This states an inference or sub-meaning of the willed principle of Paul's meaning.
4. What Paul means in Galatians 3:1–6 is that since the Galatians had received the Holy Spirit, the earnest of their salvation, by faith, this proves that God had already accepted them and there was therefore no need for them to be circumcised.
 - a. Interpretation. This is a verbal expression of the speaker's cognitive understanding of Paul's meaning.
5. Evidently, Paul was thinking of his past background as a Pharisee when he wrote this.
 - a. Mental acts. This is a hypothetical reconstruction of Paul's thinking process as he was writing.
6. This passage cannot mean what you are suggesting because the present participle in the text cannot be interpreted in this manner.
 - a. Semantic range. This deals with the range of possible meanings the participle can have in this context and the way it interacts with other words to shape the overall meaning of the sentence.
7. What Jesus meant when he said, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things are God's,' (Mark 12:17) is that you and I should obey our government and pay our taxes.
 - a. Subject matter. Although the word meant is used in this statement, it does not involve meaning as defined in this chapter, for Jesus is not the author of this text. The author who wrote the text is the evangelist Mark. The statement involves the subject matter of the text (i.e., Jesus and his teachings). What the author Mark meant by the Greek words he wrote in Mark 12:17 involves the meaning of the text. What Jesus meant by the Aramaic words he spoke in AD 30 involves the subject matter of the teachings of the historical Jesus (or Meaning).
8. This passage was not meant to be interpreted literally but figuratively.
 - a. Literary genre. The statement involves the rules of a particular genre (perhaps poetry, proverbs, or prophecy), and that genre involves exaggerated or figurative language in this passage.
9. From Paul's use of the term elsewhere it is clear that it also means 'to declare righteous' here in Romans 3.

⁶ These exercises are taken from Stein, 54.

- a. Specific meaning. The statement involves proceeding from the possibilities or semantic range of a specific term contained in the statement to its specific meaning. It does so by investigating how Paul uses the term elsewhere (the context). It is also possible that the speaker is thinking of the context.
- 10. Moses probably was not thinking of this, but it seems to be applicable.
 - a. Implications. The speaker is seeking to understand a possible unconscious meaning or inference that Moses was unaware of but that fits with his willed principle.
- 11. Our text tells us that Jesus performed his first miracle in Cana of Galilee.
 - a. Subject matter. In this statement we are not seeking to understand what John meant by telling this story about Jesus but stating that in the life and ministry of Jesus this was his first miracle.
- 12. What this passage tells us is that Jesus is also able to forgive our sins if we put our faith in him.
 - a. Implications, significance, or subject matter. If the statement appeals primarily to the understanding (i.e., it is cognitive in intent), it is an implication. If it deals with the will (i.e., it is volitional in intent) and refers to a response of the speaker, it involves significance. If it refers primarily to the teachings of the historical Jesus, it involves subject matter. An additional statement or two is needed to be more specific.
- 13. The word Paul uses in this text can mean a number of different things.
 - a. Semantic range. The statement refers to the possible meanings of the symbols (words) found in the text.
- 14. What we find in 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 is an early church creed concerning the resurrection that Paul is quoting.
 - a. Subject matter or genre. This is best described as a reference to the subject matter of this passage. No mention is made of Paul and what he meant by this early church creed. This could also be referring, however, to this material being in the genre of an early church creed and that it should be interpreted accordingly.
- 15. What Paul says here is interesting, but I do not think that it has any value for us today.
 - a. Significance (it's a negative significance. The reader's yes or no). The statement involves an evaluation (that it has no value) of one's understanding (that it is interesting) of what Paul meant by the text.

References

Much of this lesson is directly dependent on chapter 2 of *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

Stein, Robert H. *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011.

The content and examples of root word fallacies are adapted from *Exegetical Fallacies*:

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2nd ed. Carlisle, U.K.: Grand Rapids, Mich: Paternoster; Baker Books, 1996.

Lesson 4: Miracles, Exaggeration, and Idioms

Teaching Outline

Review of specific meaning

- Need to know more than what the dictionary says (that's what it means today)
- Need to know how the biblical writer is using the word
- E.g., mystery, woman, brothers, son

Approaches to the Miraculous in Scripture⁷

1. The Supernatural Approach – **The Christian approach to miracles in Scripture**
 - a. The event(s) really took place.
 - b. The event(s) happened as recorded.
 - c. The text proclaims a divine event.
 - d. Since God performed this event, the search for a natural cause is irrelevant.
 - e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum denied. Openness in history maintained.
 - Closed cause-effect continuum believes that the universe is closed. Everything can be traced back through cause and effect. Therefore, you can never have a divine intervention that upsets that cause/effect. We reject this idea.
 - We maintain openness in history. God can intervene as He chooses and there are things in history that cannot be explained by cause-effect. God can intervene within the cause-effect system.
 - f. The intention of the text (the author's meaning) is maintained.
2. The Rationalist Approach – Its popularity peaked in 1800s. This approach believes that miracles can't happen, but our "reason" can figure out what "misguided" 1st-century believers really saw
 - a. Presupposition – The event(s) could not have taken place.
 - Make judgments based on their experience in life, how they function in reality
 - b. The event(s) happened differently than recorded.
 - c. The text contains a natural event behind it.
 - Jesus not walking on water. It was foggy and he was on a sand bar, so the people were mistaken.
 - Feeding the 5000 was just sharing.
 - Transfiguration--disciples were tired and the sun was coming up, so it was hard to see.

⁷ The rest of this outline is directly dependent on the teaching that I received from Robert Plummer during his hermeneutics class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Not all quoted material appears in quotations. See also Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010).

- Resurrection—Jesus swooned on cross and was revived in the damp tomb.
 - d. The natural cause of this event can and should be learned.
 - e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed.
 - f. The intention of the text (the author's meaning) is not maintained.
3. The Mythical Approach – a genre assertion. Not intended as a historical narrative. They are designed to be myths. It's actually a truth-value assertion (trying to find some value in something you believe not true (e.g. their parents/grandparents built these churches, must be some way to still find value, so we'll treat it as myth)
- a. The event(s) could not have taken place (cf. 2[a] above).
 - This clouds the judgement of the adherents to this view. They cannot possibly understand the event or its meaning if they do not believe it took place.
 - b. The text proclaims a divine event (cf. 1[c] above).
 - Not a miracle, it's just a story that tells us something about the divine or encapsulates certain truths.
 - c. The search for a natural cause is irrelevant (cf. 1[d]).
 - Not divine or natural. It's a myth, a story that tells us something about some human need and the divine response. It encapsulates certain truths.
 - d. There is neither a divine nor natural cause since the text proclaims a myth.
 - It's a myth, a story that tells us something about some human need and the divine response. It encapsulates certain truths.
 - e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed.
 - God doesn't break into history.
 - f. The "deeper" intention of the text (the author's meaning) is maintained.
 - Gospel writers trying to convey the "hope" that comes from the resurrection story but not actually happened.

Kinds of language

Referential:

- Descriptive -- purpose of describing
- Informational -- passes on information like a mechanics manual
- Scientific -- language of a medical diagnosis
- Stenographic -- language of a stenographer, reporting
- Non-Emotional -- clear, exact conveyance of information (e.g. historical narrative)

Commissive: e.g., language of Psalms "My heart cries out for the living God"

- Decision-evoking
- Feeling-eliciting
- Affective
- Emotional

Referential and commissive can overlap. E.g., Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. had an ongoing ticker of number of people killed. Conveyed numbers but also evoked emotion.

Idioms

E.g., Don't bite off more than you can chew. The ball is in your court.

Difficult to Interpret

- need to have a shared cultural understanding that it's not to be interpreted literally.

How to Detect:

- Found frequently
- Cannot be interpreted literally in context

Malachi 1:2-3

- Love/Hate--language of preference/choice. Love more/less

Romans 9:13

- Love/Hate--used to describe election

Deuteronomy 21:15-17

- 2 wives--one loved, one hated. Means loved more/less

Proverbs 13:24

- discipline of rod (hate child) means love child more

Luke 14:26

- Jesus: If anyone comes to me and doesn't hate his own mother...
- Not saying literally hate. Idiom for loving more and loving less.
- Parallel passage in Matthew uses dynamic/sense of it and says "love me more."

Idioms are good examples of the fact that "meaning" is determined not by what words mean in and of themselves but what the author wills by those words.

Exaggeration

- Hyperbole -- Stein's terminology is that the language is literally impossible
- Overstatement
 - Stein's definition is could literally be done but not intended to be done that way
 - Exceptions are not stated but are implied. To state them would lead people to focus on the exceptions and the statement would not be as memorable

Recognizing Exaggeration in the Teachings of Jesus

1. The Statement is Literally Impossible

- Matthew 7:3-5 -- speck/plank in eye
 - Matthew 6:2-4 -- don't let left hand know what your right hand is doing
 - Matt. 23:23-24 -- strain a gnat/swallow a camel
2. The Statement Conflicts with What Jesus Says Elsewhere
 - Luke 14:26 -- hate mother/father/own life but in Mark 7:10 Jesus says honor father/mother
 - Matthew 6:6 -- go in room and pray secretly. Not a blanket command for all prayer. Verse 9 Jesus instructs disciples to prayer with a corporate prayer (another example is before feeding the 5000).
 3. The Statement Conflicts with the Behavior and Actions of Jesus Elsewhere
 - Luke 14:26 -- hate parents but Jesus cares for his own mother and while on cross instructs John to care for his mother
 - Matthew 10:34 -- didn't come to bring peace but a sword but elsewhere says blessed are the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9)
 - Matthew 5:33-37 -- do not swear at all but Jesus testifies under oath in Matt 26:64. Point of this teaching was to show there are no levels of truthfulness (e.g., fingers crossed)
 4. The Statement Conflicts with the Teachings of the Old Testament*
 - Luke 14:26 conflicts with 5th commandment to love our parents
 - * We will discuss later how to interpret the commands of the OT. There are many commands that we no longer follow.
 5. The Statement Conflicts with the Teachings of the New Testament
 - Matt 5:33 do not swear an oath but Gal. 1:20 Paul swears an oath in a letter of Scripture. Same in Phil. 1:8.
 - As Christians, we want our words to be promised as a signed/notarized document. Don't create levels of truthfulness in our language (e.g. I'll be back. / *promise*)
 6. The Statement is Interpreted by the Evangelist in a Non-Literal Way
 - Matt. 5:42 -- give to anyone who begs from you. do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. 2nd Thess. 3:10 says if anyone will not work, people will not eat
 - Luke 14:26 uses "hate" but Matt. 10:37 says "loves father and mother more than me..."
 - Matt. 10:34 where Jesus didn't come to bring peace but a sword. He doesn't stop there. He goes onto say Jesus said that families will be set against each other because of allegiance to Jesus, which gives us more info on how we should understand
 - Mark 10:11 says whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. But Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 same teaching repeated with an exception clause (adultery or sexual immorality). 1 Cor 7:15-16 appears to include abandonment as exception clause to divorce.

7. The Statement is Not Always Literally Fulfilled in Practice
 - Mark 13:2 -- Jesus looks at Temple complex and says not one stone will be left over. Problem is that in Israel part of the retaining wall is still standing. It was fulfilled but not literally every stone taken off each other.
 - Matt 7:7-8 -- No exceptions given to ask, and you shall receive, but end of 1 John says to pray according to God's will. James 4:3 says you ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives. Obviously, not all prayers will be answered. Jesus making an emotional appeal to come to God. Pointing out all exceptions would detract from the appeal.

8. The Statement's Literal Fulfillment Would Not Achieve the Desired Goal
 - Matthew 5:29-30 -- tear out right eye, cut off hand. If someone was lusting, tearing out eye does not solve the lust issue. Mind and heart still filled with images and can lust as blind person.

9. The Statement Uses a Particular Literary Form Prone to Exaggeration
 - Proverbs often have exceptions. E.g., He who takes sword will perish by sword.
 - Poetry and idioms are not to be taken literally.

10. The Statement Uses Idiomatic Language that No Longer Bears its Literal Meaning
 - Matt 13:41-42 -- Throwing weeds into fire and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. That stands for great pain and regret. It's an idiomatic expression.
 - Judgment language of darkness and fire. Can't have both but is an idiomatic expression about the pain and suffering of hell being far greater than we can imagine.

11. The Statement Uses All-Inclusive and Universal Language
 - Sometimes there is *poetic license* (i.e. adding figurative language that shouldn't be taken literally). Mark 9:23 "all things are possible for one who believes". "All things" is universal language.
 - Luke 6:30 -- Give to everyone who begs from you. Qualification in 2 Thess. makes it clear that this is not to be taken literally for "everyone."
 - Col 1:23 -- Gospel proclaimed to every creature under heaven. If that's case, why continue to proclaim it? It's hyperbolic language.

References

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- Plummer, Robert L. *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. 40 Questions Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010.

Lesson 5: Interpreting Poetry, Songs, and Psalms

Teaching Outline⁸

Genre

- Literary form used by the author and the rules governing that form

Literary Genres in the Bible⁹

Genre	Sample Texts
Historical Narrative	Genesis; Mark
Genealogy	1 Chronicles 1-9; Matthew 1:1-17
Exaggeration/Hyperbole	Matthew 5:29-30; 23:24
Prophecy	Isaiah; Malachi
Poetry	Joel; Amos (also prophecy)
Covenant	Genesis 17:1-4; Joshua 24:1-28
Proverbs/Wisdom Literature	Proverbs; Job
Psalms and Songs	Exodus 15:1-18; Psalms
Letters/Epistles	1 Corinthians; 2 Peter
Apocalypse	Daniel; Revelation

Poetic Literature

The Difference Between Prose and Poetry

Modern translations often show poetry by indented typeset.

Poetic license—adding figurative language that shouldn't be taken literally

- Exodus 14 (prose) and 15 (poetry) — same account told in different genre
- Judges 4 (prose) and 5 (poetry) — same account told in different genre

The Form of Hebrew Poetry

Rhythm of sound and rhythm of thought¹⁰

- Rhythm of sound is the regular pattern of stressed or unstressed syllables in Hebrew poetry. It may also be the repetition of sounds.
- Rhythm of thought or sense is the balancing of ideas in a structured or systematic form.

⁸ Much of the following outline is directly dependent on the teaching that I received from Robert Plummer during his hermeneutics class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

⁹ This table is from Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 187.

¹⁰ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Publishing House, 2009), 383.

1. Metrical Patterns
 - rhythm, stress of syllables
 - Psalm 113 has 14 lines divided by syllables

2. Parallelism (Robert Loth ~1750 developed the below terms) – the structuring of lines in such a way that they exhibit patterns of literary symmetry and balance. Parallelism is a distinguishing feature between poetry and prose.
 - Synonymous Parallelism
 - 2nd poetic line repeats 1st line with little or no added meaning (Psa. 9:8)
 - We see this in the NT as well.
 - E.g. Jesus says, “Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be open to you” (Luke 11:9). These are not 3 separate things
 - Synthetic Parallelism
 - 2nd poetic line elaborates on 1st line further defining or providing additional information (subcategories such as step parallelism) (Isa. 48:21)
 - NT example: Luke 6:27-28 “Love your enemies...bless...pray...”
 - Antithetical Parallelism
 - 2nd poetic line is in contrast or opposite to 1st line (Psa. 37:16)
 - NT example: Matt. 5:2-11 (“Blessed”) vs. Matt. 23:13-36 (“Woe”)
 - Non-Parallelism
 - just has certain stress and syllable patterns but not parallelism

3. Poetic Language and Imagery
 - Paronomasia—pun or play on words (“ripe fruit” and “time is ripe”)
 - Alliteration—repetition of same consonant sounds
 - Acrostics—each line begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Psalm 119)
 - Assonance—repetition of vowel sounds
 - Figurative language—simile, metaphor

Hermeneutical Principles

1. Note the strophic (stanza) patterns of the poem or hymn.
 - E.g., plea for help, statement of truth, complaint
2. Group parallel lines.
 - Walk a fine line between synonymous and synthetic parallels
3. Study the metaphorical language.
 - Try to summarize the metaphors as propositional truths. This is difficult because many modern cultures prefer non-figurative language.

Songs in the Bible

Introductory Information:

- Songs are the theology of the church. Pastors should be involved in selecting the songs.
- Purpose of theology is worship. We learn who God is and then rejoice publicly in what we know about God with songs.
- Book of James says that when we have joy we are to direct our attention and praise to God.
- We want to express ourselves and cries for help to God in biblical ways. The songs show us how to do that.

Different Kinds of Songs in the Bible:¹¹

- War Songs
 - Exodus 17:16
 - Judges 7:18, 20
 - Numbers 10:35-36
 - Exodus 15:1-18 [victory song of Moses – among best known]
 - Judges 5 [victory song of Deborah – among best known]
 - Numbers 21:27-30 [victory song over Moabites]
 - 1 Samuel 18:7; 21:11; 29:5 ["Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands"]

Osborne: “[Most of these songs] dwell rapturously upon the hand of God stretched out against the enemies of Israel. The glory belongs to Yahweh, who shares the spoils and the honor with his people.”

- Love Songs
 - Song of Solomon, 5 different interpretations:
 1. Judaism and the early church – allegory of the mystical love of God for his people or Christ for the church.
 2. Some modern scholars – a postexilic midrash on divine love (similar to #1)
 3. A drama of a maiden and her lover
 4. Most modern critics – see no structural development. It is a collection of secular love songs, perhaps modeled on praise hymns.
 5. The book uses love imagery for purposes of cultic ritual and was used in the festivals of Israel.

(I favor option #3) – literal maiden and lover. Solomon and lover. Image of rustic shepherd and king relate to David and by extension to Solomon as well.

The Psalms

Largest “book” of Bible: 5 different books

- Psalms 1-41, ends in verse 13 with doxology
- Psalms 42-72, ends with benediction in verses 18-19

¹¹ Much of the following outline is directly dependent on Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2006). Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

- Psalms 73-89, ends with benediction in verse 52
- Psalms 90-106, verse 48 benediction
- Psalms 107-150, ends with 150th Psalm

There are titles affixed to some of psalms

- 73 explicitly by David
- 12 by Asaph
- 11 by the sons of Korah
- 2 by Solomon

Lament Psalms.

- The most common type of psalm. Depending on how you classify them, there are 48-60 of them. They give us a model of how to call out to God in times of stress.
- Songs that agonize over a particular situation and petition God for help.
- Individual laments (Pss 3; 5-7; 13; 17; 22; 25-28; 31; 38-40; 42-43; 51; 54-57; 69-71; 120; 139; 142)
- Corporate laments (Pss 9; 12; 44; 58; 60; 74; 79-80; 94; 137)
- Two by David outside the Psalms – 2 Samuel 1:17-27 for Saul and Jonathan; 2 Sam 3:33-34 for Abner.
- Seven Common themes in the structure of a lament noted by Hayes (Stein¹² lists 5, extra two denoted by *)
 1. **Address to God** – Ps 22:1 “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” often with a confession of faith, Ps 71:1, “In you, O Yahweh, I have taken refuge; may I never be put to shame.
 2. **Description of Distress**, often highly figurative (57:4, I am in the midst of lions ... whose teeth are spears and arrows”, at times presented as concern regarding himself (69:2, “I sink in the miry depths” or even as a complaint against God (44:9, “yet you have rejected and humiliated us”)
 3. **Plea for Redemption**, both for deliverance (3:7a, “Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God!”) and the defeat of his enemies (3:7b, “For you have struck all my enemies on the jaw; you have broken the teeth of the wicked”)
 4. **Statement of Confidence or Trust in Yahweh** (12:7, “O Yahweh, you will preserve us; you will protect us from this generation forever”)
 5. ***Confession of Sin** (25:11b, Pardon my guilt, for it is great”) or affirmation of innocence (17:3-5, “you have tested me and found nothing . . . I have avoided the paths of the violent . . . my feet have not slipped”)
 6. **A Vow or Pledge** to do certain things if God grants the request (56:12, “I must present vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you”, often involving a reminder to God of his covenant commitments (74:18, “Remember this, O Lord”)
 7. ***Conclusion**, which may be in the form of praise (57:11, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth”) or restatement of the request (80:19, “Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved”)

¹² Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011).

Only a few psalms contain ALL these elements. Nevertheless, these do constitute the basic lament.

Osborne: "The value of such psalms for every believer is obvious. Whether one is ill (Ps. 6; 13; 31; 38; 39; 88; 102), beset by enemies (3; 9; 10; 13; 35; 52-57; 62; 69; 86; 109; 120; 139) or aware of sin (25; 38; 39; 41; 51), the lament psalms offer not only encouragement but models for prayer. Many have claimed that one should pray them directly; I agree but prefer to meditate, contextualize and then pray these psalms as they reflect upon my situation."

Hymns or Praise Songs – Directly celebrate the joy of worshipping YHWH.

1. Calling upon YHWH (Ps 139:1, "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.")
2. A call to worship (111:1, "I will extol the Lord with all my heart")
3. A motivation clause praising YHWH and giving the reasons for worship, often centering upon God's attributes and deeds (111:2, "Glorious and majestic are his deeds")
4. A conclusion repeating the call to praise, often including a series of blessings (111:10, "to him belongs eternal praise")

Fee and Stuart note 3 specific kinds of hymns:

1. Yahweh is praised as Creator (Ps. 8; 19; 104; 148)
2. Yahweh is praised as protector and benefactor of Israel (66; 100; 111; 114; 149)
3. Yahweh is praised as Lord of history (33; 103; 113; 117; 145-47)

Other hymns:

1. Some go into detail regarding God as in control of history by recapitulating the great salvation events in the life of Israel (78; 105-6; 135-36).
2. The Hallel psalms (113-18) formed a special part of the Passover celebration and were also a regular part of the synagogue service.

Thanksgiving Hymns – Thanking God for answers to specific prayers. If the lament is the "before" of spiritual trust songs, the thanksgiving hymn is the "after" – like 2 bookends. Like the lament, we have individual thanksgiving hymns (18; 30; 32; 34; 40; 66; 92; 103; 116; 118; 138) and corporate (65; 67; 75; 107; 124; 136). Another example – after Jonah's deliverance (Jonah 2:2-9).

- In addition to thanking God for his deliverance, such psalms regularly pledge future fidelity and worship to God (18:49, "Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O Yahweh") and specifically give the glory to Yahweh for the defeat of the psalmist's enemies (18:39, "You gave me strength for battle; you subdued my adversaries") or his recovery from illness (30:3, "O Lord, you raised my soul from Sheol; you rescued me from those who descend to the grave).
- 6 structural elements to a Thanksgiving song.
 1. Invitation to give thanks or to praise YHWH, Ps 30:1, 4
 2. Account of trouble and salvation, Ps 18:3-19
 3. Praises of Yahweh, acknowledging his saving work, Ps 18:46-48
 4. Offertory formula at the presentation of sacrifice (Ps 118:19-21)
 5. Blessings over participants in the ceremony (Ps 22:26)

6. Exhortation (Ps 32:8-9)

Songs of Celebration and Affirmation – hymns that celebrate God’s covenant relationship with the king and the nation.

1. Royal Psalms – The coronation psalms (2; 72; 101; 110) and enthronement psalms (24; 29; 47; 93; 95-99) were written to depict the implications of the accession to the throne, with its ritual crowning, swearing in before Yahweh, anointing with oil and receiving the homage of the people. The enthronement psalms may have gone beyond the single coronation to encompass an annual ceremony celebrating the kingship.
2. **Songs of Zion** – praises God for his gift of Jerusalem, the Holy City.

Wisdom and Didactic Psalms (1; 36; 37; 49; 73; 119; 127; 128; 133) parallel Proverbs in the celebration of wisdom as God’s great gift to his people and its connection to the Word and Torah.

Imprecatory Psalms (12; 35; 52; 57-59; 60; 69; 70; 83; 109; 137; 140) – lament psalms where the writer’s anger and desire for vindication are especially prominent.

- imprecatory means cursing (Psalm 137 is an especially strong example)
- often times psalmist is speaking for the nation
- God was revealing Himself through the nation of Israel. Need to read in context in this.
- These may give us a model of how to pour out the injustice that has been committed against us, ask for vindication but at same time trust God for His ultimate justice and setting things right

Penitential Psalms – Psalms of repentance where the psalmist comes to God in repentance of his sin. Pss 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130

Suggestions for interpreting the Psalms:

1. Note the sub-genre of the psalm, consider the original setting (as best as you can determine).
2. Be aware of figurative language (poetry)
3. Be aware the psalm may give general guidance or only part of the story (proverbs)

Group Activity

Label the psalm/song

- 1 –
- 13 –
- 21 –
- 48 –
- 51 –
- 95 –

137 -
Luke 1:51-53 (type of parallelism)

Group Activity Answers:

Label the Psalm:

1 – wisdom (reads like a proverb)

13 – lament

21 – royal psalm

48 – psalm of Zion

51 – penitential psalm

95- hymn

137 – imprecatory

Luke 1:51-53 (type of parallelism) -- synthetic

References

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Lesson 6: Interpreting Historical Narrative and Proverbs

Teaching Outline¹³

Historical Narrative

Purpose

- Lead the reader to submit to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- Narratives record many facts (e.g. locations, names), but they are not simply history books or entertainment.
- Scripture—including historical narratives—is intended to give people wisdom so that they come to a saving knowledge of Christ (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15)
- Historical narratives are effective because they are memorable and evoke strong emotion. This often makes narrative very persuasive.
- Many people—especially skeptical listeners—often have an easier time listening to the indirect nature of narrative versus a speech.
- People are often more willing to hearing a story that illustrates God’s grace than an abstract discussion.¹⁴

Clues for Interpreting Narrative

- Context: any individual narrative should be interpreted in light of the whole account
- Thematic statements: the author or narrator sometimes provides a thematic statement that reveals the theme of the work
 - Luke 1:1-4 “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, *that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*”
 - “When Luke’s Gospel and the book of Acts are read in the light of this preface, it appears that Luke is writing to provide reassurance to believers about the nature of the events surrounding Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, the spread of the message about Jesus, and the nature of God’s people following Jesus’ ascension. He is providing assurance that these events really are the work of God, that God really has been accomplishing his purposes, that Jesus really is who he said he was, and that believers in Jesus really are the true people of God. All of this is especially important in the light of the rejection and persecution faced by these believers, not the least of which came

¹³ Much of the following outline is directly dependent on the teaching that I received from Robert Plummer during his hermeneutics class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

¹⁴ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 192.

from those who also claimed to belong to the heritage of God's people and who read the same Bible."¹⁵

- John 20:30-31 – Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
- Repetition: E.g. Judges 3:7-9; 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25
- Authorial/editorial/narrator comments: the author or narrator gives clues to his reader of how to interpret a text
 - Mark 5:1-20 “I, Mark, have told you this story about the healing of this demon-possessed man because...”
 - Mark 5:1-20 should be interpreted by such editorial comments as Mark 1:1, 34; 3:11-12
 - 1:1 The opening verse of the Gospel introduces Jesus as “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”
 - In 1:34, Mark adds the comment that “he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.” This indicates that one must pay careful attention to what the demons say about Jesus. They are, in Mark's Gospel, “reliable spokesmen” whose testimony is to be believed (Cf. 3:11-12).
 - Immediate context of miracle stories show Jesus' power, which show who he is. 4:35-5:43
 - In 4:53-5:43 Mark gives a series of miracle stories in which he shows Jesus' power: over nature (4:35-41); the demonic (5:1-20); disease (5:25-34); and even death (5:21-24, 35-43). All these serve to show who Jesus is (cf. 4:41).
 - Within the story itself we find: a demoniac confession in 5:7 – “Jesus, Son of the Most High God” (note the direct discourse: like parables, direct discourse is important); a detailed description of the strength of the demon in 5:3-5 (note that the stronger the demon the stronger must be the one who overcomes him; cf. also the great number of swine which are destroyed); that Jesus' exorcism results in awe and wonder (5:15 and 20).
 - “I, Mark, have told you this story about the healing of this demon-possessed man because...**I want you to know that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God who possessed power over the demons and Satan, himself.**”
- Location of the passage within the overall book. Why did the author place the passage here?
 - E.g. Markan sandwiches. The middle passage gives the theological purpose.

Mark 5:21-43

A. Jairus begs Jesus to save his daughter (5:21-24)

B. Woman with a discharge of blood for 12 years (5:25-34)

A. Jesus raises the girl from the dead (she was 12 years old) (5:35-43)

¹⁵ Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 27 (Nottingham, England: Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2011), 19–20.

Mark 11:12-21

- A. Jesus curses the fig tree (11:12-14)
- B. Jesus cleanses the temple (11:15-19)
- A. The fig tree withers away (11:20-21)

- Other Markan sandwiches:
 - 3:20-3:35
 - 4:1-20
 - 6:7-30
 - 14:1-11
 - 14:17-31
 - 14:53-72
 - 15:40-16:8

Prescriptive vs. Descriptive¹⁶

- Luke 2:7: And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.
 - Is the point of this verse to instruct parents to put their babies in cribs? (Prescriptive)
 - Or, is it emphasizing (through description) our Savior's humble beginnings?
- Luke 11:7 describes children sleeping in their father's bed with him.
 - Even this is not prescriptive. It is simply a detail in the parable.

Proverbial Literature

Proverb: a subset of wisdom literature; a brief piece of advice, observation, admonition, or prohibition. Proverbs are not *universal* truths. They are statements that are *generally* true when they are applied at the right time and under the correct circumstances. They do not guarantee results, but they offer the best path to a desired conclusion.¹⁷

- Biblical proverbs call us to action: to respond to God in faith and obedience.¹⁸
- Proverbs 3:9-10 – vats/barns are full. General rule: Yes, when people gave generously, they were blessed, but there are exceptions. Some generous Christians have died of hunger/poverty.
- Proverbs 10:3-4 – It is possible to have a lazy person who is rich. But as a general rule, people who are lazy are poor. People who are diligent have things.
- Proverbs 13:21 – General rule: Sinners experience misfortune, and righteous have prosperity.
- Proverbs 15:1 – possible a gentle answer will stir up anger but is generally true
- Proverbs 22:16 – general rule: people who oppress the poor will be punished
- Matthew 26:52 – generally, people who live violently, die violently.
- Luke 16:10 – faithful in little, faithful in much. Dishonest in little, dishonest in much

¹⁶ I owe this example to Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 193.

¹⁷ Tremper Longman and Mark L. Strauss, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018), 160.

¹⁸ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 238.

- 1 Corinthians 15:33 – epistolary proverb: Bad company corrupts good character. Exception: Jesus hung out with sinners but maintained his righteousness. But as a general rule, Christians who spend consistent time with people of bad character will be negatively influenced.

Proverbs that appear to conflict one another¹⁹

- Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5 – Should we answer a fool²⁰ or not?
 - Circumstantial nature of proverbs affirms the truth of both. Depending on how the fool responds to a rebuke, one of these proverbs will apply.

Proverbs that have **NO** exception²¹

- These are essentially promises.
- Proverbs that discuss the nature of God.
- Proverbs 11:1 – Since God is righteous, he never condones cheating in business.
- Proverbs 6:16-19 – God always finds these things detestable.

Proverbs that suggest God’s intervention beyond our life on earth²²

- 10:2, 11:4, 11:7, 12:28, 15:24

The Problem of Job

Universalizing general truth

- Job 4:7-9 – Since you are perishing, you are not innocent.
- Job 5:15 – God saves the needy.
- Job 8:3-7 – Your circumstances are due to sin.

The problem of Job’s comforters

- They misunderstand proverb as promise instead of general truth.
- They were wrong in their assessment of Job. They thought that Job was being punished for sinfulness.
- Proverbs are not promises. They are general truths.

Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon/Song of Songs

- One must read all of Ecclesiastes to understand the meaning of the book. It concludes with a call for the reader to fear God and keep his commandments because will bring every deed into judgment—good or evil (Eccl. 12:13-14).
- Song of Solomon/Song of Songs is wisdom literature and poetic song. It is “a divinely inspired stamp of approval on the emotional physical joys shared within marriage.”²³

Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon help prevent us from misinterpreting the biblical proverbs.

¹⁹ This example is from Plummer, 237.

²⁰ A fool is an unbeliever who ignores God and follows self.

²¹ Plummer, 238.

²² Plummer, 239.

²³ Plummer, 240.

References

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Lesson 7: Interpreting Letters/Epistles

Teaching Outline

Overview

- 21 of the 27 books in the NT are letters/epistles.
- Written to give instruction and encouragement.
- Applicable to all Christians in every age.

Structure²⁴

- General outlines of letters
 1. Identification of the sender and recipient.
 - a. Ideas introduced in a letter's introduction often appear as significant themes later in the letter.
 - b. Conclusions often summarize those themes.
 2. Thanksgiving and/or prayer
 3. Body of the letter
- Not all letters contain the above sections.
 - When a letter deviates from this structure, it can be helpful to ask why that deviation occurred.
 - E.g. Hebrews omits the author. Galatians omits the thanksgiving.
- Diatribe
 - Debate or conversation with an imaginary opponent and/or a response to a rhetorical question. The fictitious person represents a view that the author is trying to correct.²⁵
 - E.g. Rom. 9:19-24

Occasional Nature of Letters²⁶

- Epistles were written to specific people in specific situations (i.e. they address specific "occasions").
- Nonetheless, the letters are timeless and have significance for all Christians of every time period.
 - Col. 4:15—Paul commands that the letter be read to others who are not the original recipients (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:2 "...with all those in every place...").
 - Even letters to individuals hint that the broader church should hear and follow the letters' instructions (Philemon 2; 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22; Titus 3:15).

²⁴ This section is adapted from Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 279–80.

²⁵ Cf. Plummer, 281; Tremper Longman and Mark L. Strauss, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018), 58.

²⁶ This section is adapted from Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 282.

Discourse Analysis

- Units of thought such as paragraphs or larger sections.
- Modern Bibles often provide section headers. Compare several different versions to help you, but analyze the data for yourself.
- Discourse analysis²⁷ steps (see the following tracing reference sheet and the example of how to trace a passage by Thomas Schreiner)
 1. Identify propositions (a proposition is “an assertion or statement about something”²⁸).
 2. Determine how the propositions relate to one another.
 3. Analyze these relationships to understand the author’s arguments within the letter.

Analyzing Individual Verses and Words

- Investigative reporter approach²⁹
 - Ask who, what, where, when, why, and how?
- Emphasize different words in the verse.
 - For **God** so loved the world...
 - For God so **loved** the world...
 - For God so loved the **world**...
- Word studies
 - Determine the author’s specific meaning of a word, not the range of meaning.
 - Use a concordance and compare several different translations.
 - Pay close attention to theologically packed words such as righteousness, justice, grace, etc.

Significance

- Respond to the main point of the passage.

References

Longman, Tremper, and Mark L. Strauss. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018.

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Schreiner, Thomas R. *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011.

²⁷ The following steps, examples, and material is based directly on what I learned from Thomas Schreiner while I was his student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and from his excellent book *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011).

²⁸ Schreiner, 99.

²⁹ I was taught this approach and the following one (emphasize different words) by Donald Whitney while I was his student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Participant Handout: Tracing Reference Sheet

Tracing Reference Sheet

Adapted from *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* by Thomas R. Schreiner 2nd ed.

Coordinating Relationships

Category	Detail	Conjunctions	Symbol
Series	Two or more propositions where each makes its own independent contribution	and, moreover, furthermore, likewise, neither....nor	S
Progression	Each proposition is a step toward a climax	then, and, moreover, furthermore, neither...nor	P
Alternative	Expresses different possibilities arising from a situation	or, but, while, on the one hand....on the other hand	A

Subordinate Relationships

Support by Restatement

Category	Detail	Conjunctions	Symbol
Action Manner	The statement of an action followed by the way it is carried out	by, in that, through	Ac/Mn
Comparison	A statement/action further explained by comparison of what it is like.	just as, even as, like, as...so	Cf
Negative-Positive	Two alternatives are given: One is denied while the other is affirmed.	not, but	-/+
Idea-Explanation	A clarifying statement to the main proposition	that is, for	Id/Exp
Question Answer	The question is stated and an answer is given (directly or indirectly)	(context)	Q/A

Support by Distinct Statement

Category	Detail	Conjunctions	Symbol
Ground	A statement is made, and the reason is given for it	for, because, since	G
Inference	Second sentence draws inference from the first	therefore, wherefore, consequently, for this reason	. ..
Action-Result	Expresses relationship between action and consequence or result	so that, that, with the result that	Ac/Res
Action-Purpose	An action to accomplish a certain outcome	in order that, that, to the end that, lest	Ac/Pur
Conditional	The causing action is potential only	If... then, if, provided that, except	If/Th
Temporal	The time period in which the main action is carried out.	when, whenever, after, before	T
Locative	Place where the action occurs or is operative	where, wherever	L
Bilateral	Supports two other propositions, one preceding and one following	for, because, since, therefore, wherefore,	BL
Double Ground	Main point is in the middle, reasons for it are before and after it.	for, because, since, therefore, wherefore	DG

Support by Contrary Statement

Category	Detail	Conjunctions	Symbol
Concessive	Indicates the main clause stands, even though there are conditions that one could expect the opposite	although, yet, though, nevertheless, but, except	Csv
Situation-Response	Relationship between situation and a response to it, emphasis on response	(in Narrative- John 2:11 for example)	Sit/R

contact Aaron Young ay256@cairn.edu with any recommendations/corrections.

Participant Handout: Example of Discourse Analysis/Tracing

by Tom Schreiner

Biblearc.com

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

		NASB		
	Id	-	26a	For consider your calling, brethren,
	Ac		26b	that there were not many wise
	Exp	-	26c	according to the flesh,
		S	26d	not many mighty,
		Ac	27a	not many noble;
	Pur		27b	but God has chosen the foolish things of the world
	Ac	+	27c	to shame the wise,
	S		27d	and God has chosen the weak things of the world
	Ac		28a	to shame the things which are strong,
	Pur		28b	and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not,
	Ac		29	so that He may nullify the things that are,
	Pur		30a	so that no man may boast before God.
	Ac	Id	30b	But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus,
	Exp	Id	30c	who became to us wisdom from God,
	Pur	Exp	31	and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
				so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Lesson 8: Interpreting Parables

Teaching Outline³⁰

Overview

- Parables are expanded analogies. They are “comparisons or contrasts *used to explain or convince*. Parables by their very nature seek to make a rhetorical point.”³¹
- “The parables of Jesus presuppose the kingdom they seek to disclose. Imagine having only the stories of Jesus and no sense of their referent.”³² The parable of the prodigal son moves us because we know that it illustrates God’s mercy and reception of sinful people and contrasts that reception with a self-righteous attitude toward those who they believe are beneath them (e.g. sinners).³³
- 50-100 parables in the Gospels depending on whether you count the same parable across Gospels multiple times or count it as one.
- About 1/3 of Jesus’ teachings is in parables.

Purpose

1. To illustrate truths
 - Luke 10:25 – Good Samaritan is an answer to the question “Who is my neighbor?” That is an invalid question because it implies that some are neighbors, and some are not. Jesus corrects him with a parable showing that we should treat everyone as our neighbor.
2. To conceal truths from those who are hostile.
 - Mark 4:10-12 – To Jesus’ followers, truth has been given. To everyone else, it’s a parable to them. Their already-hard hearts are hardened.
3. To disarm listeners
 - 2 Sam. 12 – Nathan tells a story of a farmer and a lamb in response to David sleeping with Bathsheba.
4. Jesus’ intimate followers receive interpretations and further insights into parables
 - Mark 4:10-12 – followers received secrets into Kingdom.

History of Interpretation

1. Allegorical Interpretation
 - Allegory: Where 1:1 correspondence for each thing (e.g. In *Pilgrim’s Progress*, every character, place, and thing has a symbolic representation)

³⁰ Much of the following outline is directly dependent on the teaching that I received from Robert Plummer during his hermeneutics class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Not all quoted material appears in quotations. See also Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 265–77.

³¹ Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 2.

³² Snodgrass, 2.

³³ Snodgrass, 2.

- Dominant interpretation throughout church history, but it is extremely misguided.

Allegorical interpretations of the parable of the good Samaritan

Clement of Alexandria

- Good Samaritan = Neighbor = Christ
- Thieves = Rulers of Darkness
- Wounds = Fears, Lusts, Passions, Pains, Deceits
- Wine = Blood of David's Vine
- Oil = Compassion of the Father
- Binding of Wounds = Love, Faith, and Hope

Origen

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem from which he is going = Paradise
- Jericho = this world
- Robbers = hostile influences and enemies such as mentioned in John 10:8
- Wounds = disobedience or sins
- Priests = Law
- Levite = Prophets
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Beast = Body of Christ
- Inn = Church
- Two Denarii = Knowledge of the Father and Son
- Innkeeper = Angels in charge of the church
- Return of the Good Samaritan = Second Coming of Christ

Augustine

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem from which he was going = City of heavenly peace
- Jericho = the moon which signifies our mortality
- Robbers = Devil and his angels
- Stripping him = Taking away his immortality
- Beating him = Persuading him to sin
- Leaving him half-dead = Due to sin he was half-dead spiritually, but half alive due to his knowledge of God
- Priest = Priesthood of Old Testament (Law)
- Levite = Ministry of the Old Testament (Prophets)
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Binding of wounds = Restraint of sin
- Oil = Comfort of good hope
- Wine = Exhortation to spirited work
- Beast = Body of Christ
- Inn = Church
- Two denarii = two commandments of love

- Innkeeper = Apostle Paul
- Return of the Good Samaritan = Christ's Resurrection

Luther

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam and all mankind
- Robbers = Devils who robbed and wounded us
- Priests = Fathers (Noah, Abraham) before Moses
- Levite = Priesthood of the Old Testament
- Good Samaritan = Lord Jesus Christ
- Oil/Wine = Whole gospel from beginning to end
- Oil = Grace
- Wine = Cross the Christian is called to bear
- Beast = Christ the Lord
- Inn = Christianity in the World (Church)
- Innkeeper = Preacher of the Word of God

Archbishop Trench

- Man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem = Heavenly city
- Jericho = Profane city, a city under a curse
- Robbers = Devil and his angels
- Stripping him = Stripping him of his original robe of righteousness
- Leaving him half-dead = Mortal, but having a divine spark
- Priest and the Levite = Inability of the Law to Save
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Binding of Wounds = Sacraments which heal the soul
- Oil = Anointing of the Holy Spirit
- Wine = Blood of Christ's passion
- Walking along the beast = Christ's became poor on our behalf
- Inn = Church
- Two denarii = All gifts and graces, sacraments, powers of healing or remission of sins
- Whatever more you spend = Reward for righteous service

2. Adolf Jülicher and the end of Allegorical Interpretation

- 1888 wrote 2-volume work "The Parable Talks of Jesus" where he rejects concept of allegorical interpretation of Parable
- Weakness was that he made some liberal interpretations like Matt. 25 parables of servants with 3 talents. He says the meaning is that reward is only earned by performance. He doesn't realize that this is part of Jesus' eschatological discourse and is talking about how we'll be accountable on judgment day for what we've been given
- Appreciate that he rejects allegorical interpretation, but he also doesn't allow for the allegorical stock imagery or the few times that Jesus provided allegorical parables such as in Mark 4. He would say that the early church inserted this and that Jesus spoke in pure parables.

3. Dodd and Jeremias – Noting that parables must be interpreted in their first-century life setting
 - Said that we need to understand parables as people in 1st-century Palestine would

4. Redaction criticism – How is the parable to be understood in the context of the individual Gospels?
 - e.g. Matt 25 part of Jesus' eschatological discourse
 - Luke 10:25, Luke writes that Jesus was responding to the question of "Who is my neighbor?" That helps us interpret the parable
 - Redaction (editing) criticism (careful study) -- it's a careful study of the editing of the parables.
 - How have Gospel writers edited and grouped this material, introduced it, concluded it to help us understand and interpret these individual parables?
 - Redaction criticism can be heavily speculative. Too much focus on the editing and grouping of the material—especially when it is speculative—can distract and/or lead the reader to miss the meaning of the text.

4 periods

1. Jesus-500 – allegorical exegesis/interpretation dominated
2. 500-1500 – allegorical exegesis continues to dominate and is even furthered (literal, moral, spiritual, and now heavenly meaning)
3. Reformation-modern period – first interpretation of the Good Samaritan parable that does not say the Samaritan was Christ was by John Calvin. Luther also criticized allegorical interpretation (even though he didn't follow this all the time). Reformation was successful in breaking a long tradition of allegorizing the entire Bible. Yet, post reformation, allegory still continued with Jesus' parables
4. 1888-now – allegorical exegesis is almost universally recognized as not being a valid way to interpret parables.

How to detect the presence of allegory:

1. Would *Jesus' audience* have attributed meaning to these details?
 - a. Would imagery be obvious enough to those people (e.g. people today seeing imagery of elephant and donkey talking).
 - b. E.g. Mark 12:1-12 – Man building a tower, winepress, etc. Then read Isaiah 5:1-16. Realize that Jesus' audience knew their OT. Isaiah's text is nearly identical to Mark. God interprets the vineyard in Isaiah as being the house of Israel. Original audience would have heard it this way, and they would have understood that they have been unfaithful stewards.

2. Would the *Evangelist's audience* have attributed meaning to these details?

Suggestions for Interpreting Parables

1. Parables generally teach **one** main point.
 - Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should be content with seeking to understand the *one main point* of the parable. One should not seek allegorical significance in the details of a parable unless *it is absolutely necessary* (e.g. if Jesus provides level of allegorical explanation, or if the stock imagery is so overwhelmingly obvious that we're drawn to it).
 - Craig Blomberg suggests three possible themes of parables:
 1. graciousness of God
 2. demands of discipleship and
 3. danger of disobedience.
 - Rob Plummer says that parables may have 1, 2, or all 3 themes.

Stock Imagery in Jesus' Parables³⁴

Stock Image	Significance	Example
Father	God	Luke 15:11-32
Master	God	Mark 12:1-11
Judge	God	Luke 18:1-8
Shepherd	God	Matt. 18:12-14
King	God	Matt. 18:23-35
Son	Israel, a follower of God	Luke 15:11-32
Vineyard	Israel	Matt. 21:33-41
Vine	Israel or God's people	John 15:5
Fig Tree	Israel	Mark 11:13
Sheep	God's people	Matt. 25:31-46
Servant	Follower of God	Matt. 25:14-30
Enemy	The devil	Matt. 13:24-30
Harvest	Judgment	Matt. 13:24-30
Wedding Feast	Messianic banquet, the coming age	Matt. 25:1-13

2. Jesus did not teach his parables to 21st-century Christians but to 1st-century Jews. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to understand the situation-in-life in which the parable was uttered.
3. The Evangelists were interested in interpreting the parables for their readers. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to understand the situation-in-life of the Evangelist and his unique understanding of the parable.
 - E.g., In the prodigal son, Luke introduces the parable with information about people muttering about Jesus, and he includes it with other parables. Luke is explaining the parable to us.

³⁴ This table is from Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 275.

4. The parables as uttered by Jesus and recorded by the Evangelists are the Word of God. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to ascertain what God is saying today through this parable.
5. Suggested steps:
 - Seek the main point of the parables.
 - Seek to understand what Jesus meant.
 - Seek to understand what the Evangelist meant.
 - Seek to understand what God is teaching us by the parable today.

Rules for arriving at the main point of the parable:

- Who are the two main characters of the parable?
- What occurs in direct discourse/dialogue?
- Who/what gets the most space/press?
- What comes at the end? (The rule of end stress)

E.g. Parable of the treasure in field is not about real estate ethics. It's saying that the Kingdom of Heaven is worth everything.

E.g. Parable of the ten virgins and lamps is not a lesson about not sharing with someone in need. The point is to be ready at all times for when the Lord comes. Being prepared is living in faithful obedience to him.

E.g. Luke 16:1 – Parable of shrewd steward does not teach us to be dishonest in business. This is a striking end to the story is to make a major point: Do we see judgment coming, and are we prepared for it? This earthly man saw earthly judgment coming, and he prepared for it. Are we preparing for final judgment?

Practice Questions

Practice Question #1:

In Matthew, chapter 13, we read:

⁴⁴ The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Give some guidelines or suggestions for interpreting this parable accurately. Tie your discussion directly to the parable above.

Answer:

To understand the parable above, we should interpret it under the following guidelines along with examining the authorial/editorial comment, the ending of the parable, and the parable's context.

1. Seek to understand the parable's main point. Parables generally have just one meaning.
 - a. The point of the parable is to show that the kingdom of heaven is infinitely more valuable and precious than anything we can conceive in this world. We understand this by examining the ending, "... then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." That language reveals that we should joyfully give up all worldly possessions and pleasures for the sake of the entering and eternally dwelling in the kingdom of heaven.
2. Seek to understand what Jesus is teaching with the parable.
 - a. Jesus uses this parable to explain the abstract concept of the kingdom of heaven in concrete terms that his disciples can understand. When he says, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." Jesus gives us a tremendous clue into what he is teaching. This authorial comment straightforwardly signals that Jesus is about to describe the kingdom of heaven. Jesus uses a simile to describe the Kingdom as a "treasure," which provides an image that Jesus' audience would easily understand. Jesus then uses the language in the 2nd sentence to shock his disciples with a memorable teaching. He says that the "treasure" of the kingdom of heaven is so valuable that it is not only worth selling all earthly possessions for, but that they should also take joy in doing so.
3. Seek to understand what the Evangelist is teaching with the parable.
 - a. The Evangelist places this parable in the context of other parables that teach about the kingdom of heaven. Doing so provides us with multiple examples of how the kingdom of heaven is so valuable that we should joyfully surrender anything on earth that prevents us from attaining it. Matthew's repetition of this theme via multiple parables reinforces the meaning he is seeking to convey in the text.
4. Seek to understand what God is teaching us with parable today.
 - a. God's teaching through the parable rings just as true today as it did to the 1st-century Jews. Many of us have far more possessions than Jesus' disciples did. Many modern cultures are also obsessed with the notion that materialism and wealth bring happiness. The second sentence in the parable, however, refutes this idea. We learn that the kingdom of heaven is more valuable than all earthly pleasures not only from a material perspective, but also from an emotional standpoint. The description of the man selling his possessions in "his joy" demonstrates that the kingdom of heaven and eternity with God will bring true happiness that infinitely exceeds our worldly conception of joy.

Practice Question #2:

Read and interpret Luke 15:11-32 (hint: this is a rare example of a parable having more than one main point). Discuss the significance (i.e. how readers should respond) of this parable. Follow the four steps listed in question #1 to help you interpret the parable.

Example of how to teach others to interpret parables:

In Matthew, chapter 13, we read:

³¹ [Jesus] told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

Guidelines or suggestions for interpreting this parable accurately:

To interpret parables, we must remember that they generally have only one meaning. To arrive at that meaning, we should seek to understand what Jesus meant, what the evangelist meant, and what God is teaching us today through this parable.

We should also try to understand the meaning of this parable by completing this statement, "I, Matthew, have included this parable in order to ..." Lastly, we should examine the context, ending of the parable, authorial comments or summaries, specific meaning of words, figurative language, thematic statements, the amount of "press" dedicated to a topic, and how authoritative the speaker is.

In this passage, since Jesus is the speaker, we know that the parable is authoritative. From verse 31, we learn that the passage is about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus then uses figurative language (a simile as evidenced by the word "like") to describe the kingdom of heaven. Jesus does not mean that the kingdom is literally a seed or plant. Jesus uses the figurative language to teach how the kingdom of heaven will grow (v. 32).

To further understand the parable's meaning, we must examine its context. If we look at the passages immediately before and after these verses, we will be able to determine Jesus' audience (who is "them" in verse 31?). We should also be able to determine why Matthew included this parable and why he placed it in this specific spot in his Gospel. The immediate context will help us determine why Jesus is teaching about the kingdom of heaven here (is he responding to a question, is he correcting someone, etc.?) and what he has said elsewhere about the subject.

These two verses do not contain comments or summaries from Matthew, nor do they include thematic statements. These elements may be present in the verses before/after vv. 31-32, however. If these statements are present in the context, they will also help the reader accurately interpret the meaning of the parable.

References

Plummer, Robert L. *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. 40 Questions Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010.

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Lesson 9: How to Read the OT in Light of Jesus Christ

Teaching Outline

Christians must read the OT differently than others do

- Luke 24:27 — Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures...He told them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.
 - Every part of the OT points to the person and work of Christ. This does not mean, however, that every verse is exclusively about Jesus.
- The OT books are not simply stories to be read on their own. Seek to see how they point to the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Typology/type — “a person, place, or event from the OT that anticipates or foreshadows someone or something in the NT, particularly the coming of Christ. The fulfillment is often referred to as the antitype.”³⁵

Jesus repeats Israel’s history—examples from the Gospel of Matthew³⁶

- Matthew 2:1-12
 - Herod is a false king who orders the killing of others.
 - The religious elite (2:4) do not recognize the Messiah, but the Gentile wise men do (2:2).
- Throughout Matthew (and all the Gospels), Israel rejects the Messiah.
- The plot of Matthew shows that this history of rejection is consistent with Israel’s entire history. (Stephen makes this same point in his speech in Acts 7.)
 - Jesus comes as the new Moses, and but they resist him. Israel did the same to Moses.
 - Moses as a type of Christ
 - Hostile king orders the murder of children
 - Moses flees and then returns to rescue his people. Jesus flees to Egypt and then returns to his people.
 - Israel led into the desert. Jesus led into the desert wilderness to be tempted.
 - Moses gives law from Mount Sinai. Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount.

³⁵ Tremper Longman and Mark L. Strauss, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018), 194.

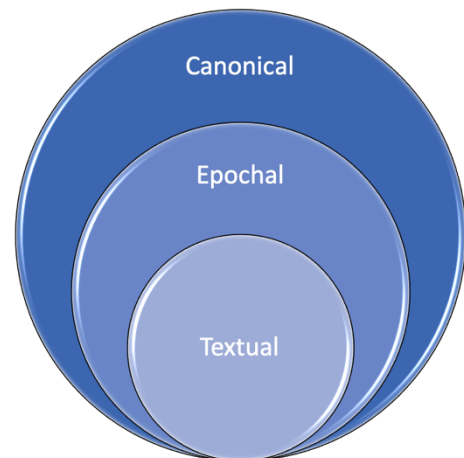
³⁶ Much of this section is directly dependent on the teaching that I received from Jonathan Pennington during his Greek Exegesis of Matthew class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

- Jesus comes as a greater David, but the leaders of Israel resist him. They did the same to David.
- Jesus teaches with a wisdom greater than Solomon, but many in Israel refuse him just as they did with the house of David.
- Jesus is a prophet like Elisha, offering life to Israel, but many prefer Herod-Ahab; as they did in the time of Elisha.
- Jesus is a prophet like Jeremiah, and like Jeremiah, is a suffering prophet.
- By rejecting these servants, Israel was rejecting the Lord who sent them.
- Matthew’s Gospel presents the good news that the God of Israel refuses to let Israel’s rejection stand.
 - When Israel has done her worst and demanded that her Messiah be nailed to a Roman cross, still God will not let Israel have the final say. He raises Jesus from the Dead.

How to read OT passages

The “Layered” Hermeneutical Approach³⁷

Three Horizons of Biblical Interpretation — A theological reading that incorporates a grammatical-historical-literary-canonical method of interpretation and reads each biblical text within its threefold context:



1. Textual—Begin with the specific text and the immediate context.
2. Epochal—Study texts in light of where they are located in God’s unfolding plan. Scripture is a progressive revelation. How do the *parts* of God’s plan fit into the *whole*? Texts do not come to us in a vacuum. They are embedded in a larger context of what has come *before* them in reference to God’s redemptive actions and plan.
3. Canonical—Read texts in terms of what comes *after* them. Scripture is *God’s Word* and is a *unified* revelation. Texts must be understood in relation to the entire canon.

Remember, the Bible is fundamentally about **God**, not about people. Yes, Scripture talks about people, but it talks about them as the moral beings that God created. We must first ask what the passage teaches about God. *Then*, we may ask how we should respond in relation to what we just learned about God.

A Common Pattern: Preparatory Word → Divine Act → Interpretive Word

³⁷ This information is drawn from Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 136–45.

“Scripture is, as a written text in its final form, God’s own divine interpretation, through human authors, of his own redemptive acts, which carries with it a true interpretation of his redemptive plan.”³⁸

“In fact, word and act often follow a general order in Scripture: first comes a preparatory word, then the divine act, and finally the interpretive word. For example, in the giving of the old covenant, we first see a preparatory word (Exodus 19), then the divine act of giving the law (Exodus 20), and finally an interpretative explanation of the law (Exodus 21–23; 25–31). This same order may be observed of the Bible as a whole. The Old Testament is the predictive word that anticipates greater realities tied to the coming of Yahweh and his Messiah, the Gospels give the account of the redemptive revelatory fact of the coming of God the Son incarnate, and the remainder of the New Testament unpacks the final interpretation of not only who the Son is but also the full implications of what he has achieved in the inauguration of the new covenant era and the fulfillment of the prophetic word.”³⁹

Examples

- Think of OT citations as 1st-century hyperlinks. We should “click” to the contexts of those verses and not limit our analysis to the quoted material.
- Matthew 11:2-6⁴⁰—Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he sent a message through his disciples and asked him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” Jesus replied to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: **The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news,** and blessed is the one who isn’t offended by me.”
 - 2-3: John is having a crisis of faith. Jesus is being kind to people. There is no destruction or judgment yet.
 - 4-5: There are quotes from Isaiah, but it’s also a table of contents of what’s happened so far (Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1-2).
 - Jesus is saying to John that if you’re expecting judgment, think of Isaiah. In that book, God’s justice restores those who need help *and* those who need punishment. John is probably more heavily weighting the latter. He didn’t understand that God’s justice will be broken into two parts where the Messiah is the suffering lamb and conquering king.
 - The gospel is the coming of the Kingdom of God. It comes slowly and often in waves (Jesus, Pentecost) but we’re all looking toward final wave of Kingdom coming.
 - This is also a good practical example for us. We need to know our OT to fully understand Jesus’ teaching and works.

Individual or Group Practice

- Read Genesis 3:1-24 and Matthew 4:1-11.

³⁸ Gentry and Wellum, 134.

³⁹ Gentry and Wellum, 133.

⁴⁰ I owe this example to Jonathan Pennington, my professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

- Using the following table (make a blank one for student handouts), fill out the Temptations, Responses to Temptations, and Results sections for Adam and Jesus.

Adam	Jesus
<i>Temptations</i>	
Tempting the body (v. 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fruit good for food and pleasing to eye 	Tempting the body (Matt. 4:2-3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 40 days without food and hungry ● Turn stone to become bread
Appealing to pride (v. 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You will be like God 	Appealing to pride (Matt. 4:8-9) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Showed him all the kingdoms of the world ● Worship me and it will be yours
Creating doubt (v. 1, 4-5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did God actually say... ● You will not surely die... ● Eat of it and your eyes will be opened 	Creating doubt (Matt. 4:5-6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you are the Son of God... ● Throw yourself down...
<i>Responses to temptations</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Misquoted God ● Believed Satan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quoted Scripture ● Believed God
<i>Results</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Curse on serpent, curse on Eve, curse on Adam ● God sent Adam out of the Garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Devil departed

Consequences in light of ***all*** Scripture (canonical level)

- We must see consequences as the Bible describes them, not just as a story.
- Rom. 5:12-14. (Paul will finish his thought later.)
 - Paul breaks off his comparison to speak about the sin of Adam.
 - V. 13 shows that the sin occurred before the Law. So, **all humanity** is implicated in Adam's sin.
- Vv. 15-17 give us a hint of the comparison.
 - Compare "one/many" effects of Adam and Jesus.
- Vv. 18-21 – Now we understand the enormity of Adam's sin from a Christian perspective.
 - One man's disobedience led to "condemnation for all men."
 - Explanation of federal headship.
 - Some don't like guilt through Adam's federal headship, but federal headship also gives us salvation in Christ because Jesus is our federal head.

- V. 19 “one man’s obedience...” gives us a much better understanding of Gen. 3:15

Pointing to Christ

Gen. 3:15

- Rest of the Bible is about how this promise comes true
- God also tells us how he will fix things.

Matt. 4:1-11

- Jesus repeats the history of God’s people. This is a “fixing of Adam’s fall” and also Israel’s.
 - Note the parallels with Deut. quotes and wilderness experience.

Jesus doesn’t simply *repeat* history and fulfill prophecy. He goes beyond and is infinitely more.

- God will renew everything through Jesus.
- 1 Cor. 15:42-49 shows the importance of reading the OT in light of Christ. We see how all of Scripture is one unified story centered on Jesus Christ.

References

Gentry, Peter J., and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. 2nd edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.

Longman, Tremper, and Mark L. Strauss. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018.

Lesson 10: Covenant Form and Laws

Teaching Outline

What is a covenant and why is it important?

Covenant: “an agreement between two parties making binding, official, and permanent a relationship of faithful, loyal love, obedience, and trust. Not a business contract or marketplace agreement.”⁴¹

- Covenants or treaties that are identical or similar to those in the OT were common in the ancient Near East.
- Two types are especially noteworthy.⁴²
 - Suzerain-vassal treaty
 - Diplomatic treaty between a great king and vassals (a person in a subordinate position)
 - Focus was to reinforce the interests of the king by arguments from history and oaths of loyalty on the part of the vassals, backed up by divine sanctions
 - Obligation is from the vassal to his master.
 - Protects the rights of the master.⁴³
 - Royal charter or land grant
 - Involved a grant of property or a privileged office such as priest or royalty given as a favor by a king or god.
 - Focus was on honor and the interpersonal relationship
 - Obligation is of the master to his servant
 - Protects the rights of the servant⁴⁴
- While there are similarities (and differences) between OT covenants and ancient Near Eastern treaties, they are not identical. The OT covenants often bear features of both suzerain treaties and grants.
 - People often make the mistake of forcing the Bible into categories like genre or historical documents. While there are similarities, the differences are crucial. These differences show the *biblical* meaning.
 - Suzerain-vassal treaties are sometimes categorized as conditional-bilateral.
 - Royal grants are sometimes categorized as unconditional-unilateral.
 - This strict categorization is inadequate because the biblical covenants contain elements of both.

⁴¹ Peter J. Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*, Kindle Edition (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017).

⁴² This section is adapted from Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 194–95. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

⁴³ M. Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient near East,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90, no. 2 (April 1970): 185, <https://doi.org/10.2307/598135>; cited in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 195.

⁴⁴ Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient near East,” 185; cited in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 195.

- This tension within the covenants is important because it is only resolved in Christ.
 - God is the promise maker *and* keeper.
- At the heart of the covenants between God and his people is the “*relationship between parties characterized by faithfulness and loyalty in love.*”⁴⁵
 - God chooses to enter into relationship with his creatures, and he always shows himself to be faithful in those relationships. He is the faithful partner even though his people continually fail.
 - God always remains true to himself, his character, and his word. That is why we can hope and trust in him.
 - God unilaterally guarantees that his promises will never fail.
 - At the same time, the biblical covenants demand an obedient, human covenant partner. Therefore, there is a conditional/bilateral aspect to the covenants.

Example of a typical covenant form:⁴⁶

Preamble	Ex. 20:2a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maker of covenant identifies himself 	
Historical Prologue	Ex. 20:2b
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maker of covenant speaks of prior relationship with the people with whom he is making a covenant 	
Stipulations	Ex. 20:3-17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expectations upon the people with whom the covenant is being made • expectations for us • God elected his people in his grace and then told them how to live as his people. (i.e. You are my people...here’s how to live.) God did NOT say “do these things and <i>then</i> you’ll be my people. 	
Provision for Continual Reading of the Covenant	Ex. 24:7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • covenant to be read repeatedly 	
List of Witnesses	Ex. 19:8; 24:3, 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • witnessed to by others (sometimes symbolic: this rock is a witness to...) • this is a public agreement 	
Blessing & Cursing	Ex. 20:5-6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consequences of being obedient or disobedient 	
Oath	Ex. 24:3, 7

⁴⁵ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 203.

⁴⁶ I received this outline from Rob Plummer, professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, USA.

Which laws do we follow today?⁴⁷

Some say that Christians determine what is morally binding by dividing the law into 3 categories:

1. Ethical
 - a. Don't commit adultery, don't steal, etc.
 - b. These reflect the eternal nature and character of God
2. Cultic regulations
 - a. Related to the temple (e.g. sacrifices)
3. Civil laws (e.g. cities of refuge)
 - a. Governmental system was theistic. We no longer live in this type of system. We have a secular court system.

People who follow these distinctions say that we follow the ethical laws, but the cultic and civil laws have been fulfilled.

- Problems with this 3-part distinction:
 1. Texts such as Gal. 5:3 and James 2:8-13 say that breaking one part of the law is breaking the whole law. Heb. 7:11 also says that when there is a new priesthood, there is a change in the whole covenant, not just part of it.
 2. Scripture teaches that the law-covenant was temporary. It served many purposes but ultimately pointed to fulfillment in Christ.
 3. Many laws reflect more than one category. How do we decide which category to place it in? (e.g. Are laws against homosexuality civil or moral? What about picking up sticks on the Sabbath?)
- As a result, it is difficult to separate the law into 3 parts and claim that only the moral laws apply to us today.

Therefore, all Scripture is for our ethical instruction, but not all Scripture applies to us in the same way. (e.g. sacrificial system)

- The law-covenant is still Scripture. It teaches us about God's plan of redemption, it makes us understand salvation in Christ, and it instructs us how to live wisely in the world as God's new covenant people.
- We must now apply the law's ethical instruction to us through the lens of the new covenant, which Christ inaugurated.
- We determine what is morally binding on us today by appealing to all of Scripture viewed through the lens of the new covenant.

Applying the OT Law-Covenant to Today

- Interpret the covenant through the three "hermeneutical layers."
- Ask if OT commands are tied to creation, whether they are tied solely to the old era (e.g. food laws), and how they are fulfilled in the NT.
- E.g. sacrificial system, food laws, capital punishments in the OT.

⁴⁷ This section is directly dependent on Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 937–44. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

- We no longer follow the sacrificial system, but it is still instructive. It teaches us about our sin, shows us God’s holy demand and gracious provision, and reveals our need for someone greater than ourselves.
- Food laws no longer apply to us directly, but they are *instructive* for us. We must think through why God gave them in the OT *and* how they are fulfilled in Christ. Then we will discover that their primary purpose was to separate God’s people from the nations and to instruct them about their need for an internal heart transformation. Though these purposes have ended in Christ, we, as new covenant believers are still instructed by them. It was the theological and practical implications of these very issues that the Jerusalem Council had to resolve. Otherwise, the entire gospel was at stake (Acts 10-11; 15; Rom. 14:1-15:13; Gal. 1:6-10).
- The Decalogue (Ten Commandments):
 - “It too must be applied in a similar manner, that is, by locating it in its covenantal location and then applying it to us in light of Christ. So, for example, as we read the opening preamble (Ex. 20:1–2), we are keenly aware of its covenantal location, yet it is now applied to us in light of God’s unfolding plan of redemption culminated in Christ. Unlike Israel, we have not been redeemed from our bondage to Egypt, but in a far greater way, we have been redeemed from that which the exodus (along with the prophets [Isaiah 11; 42; 53]), typologically pointed forward to, namely, our exodus deliverance from sin in Christ’s cross (Luke 9:31). Then as we apply each commandment in light of our redemption in Christ, we discover that there is a greater incentive, obligation, and demand on us to have no other gods before us (Ex. 20:3) and to honor the great name of our triune God (Ex. 20:7). In one sense, the moral demand has not changed; in another sense, it is greater in Christ.”⁴⁸
 - “As we approach the Sabbath command (Ex. 20:8–11), once again, we apply it in exactly the same way. In thinking through the Sabbath’s covenantal location—that which looks back to the covenantal rest at creation (Gen. 2:1–3), a day to be obeyed by Israel under the law and a day that typologically pointed forward to a greater rest to come (Psalm 95; cf. Matt. 11:28–30; Heb. 3:7–5:13)—it is now applied to us in light of its fulfillment, namely, Christ, who has achieved for us salvation rest. All the other commandments (Ex. 20:12–17) are applied in the same way.”⁴⁹

References

Gentry, Peter J. *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*. Kindle Edition. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017.

⁴⁸ Gentry and Wellum, 949–50.

⁴⁹ Gentry and Wellum, 950.

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Lesson 11: How to Understand Biblical Prophecy

Teaching Outline

What is prophecy, and what is its purpose?⁵⁰

- “Everything in the prophets is based upon the covenant made between God and Israel during the exodus from Egypt, especially the expression or form of the covenant as it is found in the book of Deuteronomy.”⁵¹
- The word *Torah* is better translated as *direction* or *instruction*, not *law*.
- “The Torah, then, is unlike any law code in the ancient Near East or even today. It is a set of instructions for living, set in the context and framework of a covenant relationship. The Torah is God instructing his children as a father in a family or as a husband in a marriage relationship—a relationship of faithfulness, loyalty, love, trust, and obedience. It is not a code of laws or requirements that are imposed generally upon human society by an impersonal authority.”⁵²
- God is bound to Israel by a covenant relationship. This covenant, made at Sinai, instructs people on how to have a right relationship with God, how to treat each other in genuinely human ways, and how to be good stewards of the earth.
- *Social justice* is a term used by the prophets as a way of summarizing all the different instructions of the covenant. Social justice is comprised of detailed instructions in the covenant for treating others in a genuinely human way.
 - Prophets expose the social injustice in Israel and announce the curses of the covenant and impending punishment based on the principal of retributive justice. They are thus calling the people back to the covenant relationship. If they don’t return, they will face destruction of their world as they know it.
- **The most important part of the message of the biblical prophets has nothing to do with predicting the future.**
 - The majority of their message is about proclaiming a message that explains how the word of God, which was *already revealed and received in the past*, applies to present circumstances and situations.
 - E.g. The prediction that Israel would be exiled and judged for disobedience to the covenant did not require anything special beyond reading and preaching Deuteronomy, which was given long ago.

Purpose of Future Predictions in the OT Prophets⁵³

1. Distinguish the true God from false gods.

⁵⁰ This section is directly dependent on chapter 1 of Peter J. Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*, Kindle Edition (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017). Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

⁵¹ Gentry, Location 150 of 3232.

⁵² Gentry, Location 308 of 3232.

⁵³ This section is directly dependent on chapter 2 of Gentry. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

- a. Isaiah sought to discredit the false gods worshipped by Israel by proving that they are not gods.
 - b. A test that proves deity is the ability to predict and *control* the future.
2. Validation of the prophet
- a. God raised up prophets to make known his will for both individuals and for the nation of Israel as a whole.
 - b. Two tests for determining if a prophet was true or fake: (1) a true prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh. Those speaking in the name of other gods must be put to death. (2) If what the prophet predicted came to pass, he was a true prophet. If not, he was a false prophet.
 - c. Biblical prophets gave predictions to demonstrate publicly that only Yahweh knows and determines future events.
 - d. Predictions about the future were made known publicly and written down at a specific date and time as well as attested publicly or verified by witnesses. When these predictions came true, people would see that Yahweh was indeed able to predict and determine the future.
3. Verifying predictions of the future
- a. A prophet made predictions that would happen in the near future. When those came true, he was validated as one who speaks for Yahweh.
 - b. Therefore, when the prophet spoke about events that would happen in the distant future or at some unknown point in the future, the prophet's hearers could trust that he was indeed speaking for Yahweh.
4. Explaining the exile for later generations
- a. Without the messages of the prophets, the people may have concluded that the gods of the nations were more powerful than Yahweh.
 - b. Predictions were necessary so that when God brought the Assyrians and the Babylonians against his own people for violating the covenant, the people of Israel would draw the correct conclusions.
5. Deliverance takes time
- a. The messages of the prophets were written down to bring comfort and encouragement during the long, weary years while God worked out his purposes and plan of salvation.
6. Yahweh is sovereign
- a. Prediction of the future demonstrates the sovereignty of Yahweh over the nations.
 - b. The people of Judah and Jerusalem were not the only people who needed to see proof that Yahweh knows and predicts the future. The nations needed to see it as well.
 - c. E.g. It wasn't the Assyrians' military strength that brought down Israel. It was solely due to Israel's sin and covenant violation. The Assyrians were simply instruments in the hands of God who is sovereign over *all* nations.

7. The word of Yahweh is trustworthy
 - a. Prediction of the future proves that the word of Yahweh is trustworthy. Therefore, his people should believe his promises and threats in the covenant.
 - b. Analogy: As in a marriage, two people cannot continue in an intimate relationship of love when one does not believe or trust the other.
 - c. The prophets wrote their messages as proof of the reliability of the word of Yahweh for later generations.
- All of the above shows that prediction of the future is fundamental to the focus on calling Israel to account for covenant violation since idolatry is at the heart of covenant violation and because a key distinction between false gods and Yahweh is the ability to announce and control the future.

Is Jonah a false prophet?⁵⁴

Problem:

- Jonah 3:4, 10
- Jonah said that in 40 days, the city would be destroyed, but God spared the city after the people repented. Does mean that Jonah's prophecy didn't come true, and he is therefore a false prophet?

Solution: know the rules of prophecy

- Jeremiah 18:7-10 (cf. Jonah 4:1-2)
- Genres have understood rules.
- God says that he will destroy a city. If that city repents, however, God will spare it. If people heed God's judgment and repent, God will withhold the judgment.
 - Otherwise, what's the point of announcing the judgment?
- Same holds true when God promises good things. If a city doesn't do what he says, he won't give them the good things.
- Example: Parents tell their children, "Kids, we're going out to eat. We'll go wherever you want, and you can eat whatever you want." But it's understood/assumed that this must be within reason.
- Jonah had this assumption, and so did the people of Nineveh.

The language of prophecy

- Language of prophecy is often figurative/symbolic.
- We understand the *meaning* literally but not the *language*.
 - E.g. Jesus says to gouge out your right eye. We don't do this literally, but we follow the *meaning* literally.
- Many modern cultures use very precise/scientific language. In ancient Israel, they were more focused on the image. Therefore, we see more figurative language.
- This figurative language is very memorable and evokes strong emotions.

⁵⁴ The "Is Jonah a false prophet?" and "The language of prophecy" sections are directly dependent on lecture notes I received from Rob Plummer, professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, USA.

- E.g. “I’m annoyed by you” vs. “If you come back, I will set you on fire.”

Prophecies that are not straightforward prophetic prediction⁵⁵

1. In some cases, the NT authors use OT language or images in rhetorical fashion—without attempting to link the OT language and NT events in a clear, logical fashion.
 - a. E.g., using language from the OT in a preaching fashion. Jesus talks about angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. He is not saying he’s the fulfillment of Jacob’s ladder dream. He is using language rhetorically.
2. There may be a blending of more than one event in the prophecy.
 - a. We should look for explicit statements in the original prediction and for later progressive revelation to clarify this distinction.
 - b. Matthew 1:22-23 quotes Isaiah 7:11, 8:1, 8:18, 9:6. The virgin will give birth to a son and name him Immanuel. But this appears to have been fulfilled in ~700b.c. There are 2 events being described, but they’re laid on top of each other. Later verses talk about the Messiah.
3. The authors of Scripture had a concept of “Corporate Solidarity.” The individual is often representative of the community and vice versa.
 - a. This is why a king can represent the community.
 - b. In Joshua, the king sinned, and the entire nation suffered.
 - c. We believe this idea because we believe that Jesus died for all of us. One death represented all of Christians. This was very common thinking in ancient Israel. Jesus takes on the titles of Israel to show he takes the people onto himself.
4. The biblical authors had a presupposition that historical events came about because of God’s divine purposes and sovereignty over history.
 - a. They knew they were on the trajectory of God’s redemptive plan, but they didn’t know where they were on the “staircase” of history.
 - b. Typological approach to Scripture: There are types/anticipations and further reflections of those anticipations until we reach the final climax of those anticipations.
 - c. 3 assumptions of typological interpretation in the NT
 1. A continuity of God’s dealings with Israel so that earlier events foreshadow later ones.
 2. A prospective aspect to God’s dealings with Israel so that earlier deliverance and judgment is incomplete.
 3. The arrival of salvation and the fulfillment of God’s purposes in Jesus.
 - Quotation of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15. Hosea is talking about events in his day. He uses language of the exodus to describe what’s happening because he knows God works in the same way. It looks like it’s all over, but Hosea says “No, look how God worked in the past.”

⁵⁵ This section is directly dependent on the teaching and lecture notes that I received from Rob Plummer. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

- Matthew is at the top of the “staircase” and is saying, “It’s not all over because Joseph will not be stuck in Egypt and unable to fulfill the Messianic promise.”
 - Hosea didn’t realize the stairstep he was on would be repeated in a later step. That is what happened with Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt and God bringing them back to fulfill the Messianic promise.
 - It’s not just individual prophecies, but all redemptive history is prophetic. It helps us understand when psalms are quoted in NT. They seem to be about David, but they are applied to Jesus because Jesus is the ultimate King of Israel.
5. The NT authors understood themselves as living in days of eschatological fulfillment. They believed that they were at the top of the staircase. They didn’t think that there was more revelation after them.
 6. The NT authors (like most of Judaism) assumed that the Scriptures were Christological (i.e. pointing to the Messiah).
 7. The range of meaning of the word “fulfill” in the biblical languages is broader than our modern English usage.
 - a. Typological correspondence (connection) between one historical period and another.
 - b. Corresponding of phrases, illustrations, or events between one historical period to another.
 - c. Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience. He knew that his readers could look back at his quotes.
 - d. This understanding of “fulfill” gives us a great depth of appreciation of the way God is the Lord of all of history.

The importance of repetition in Hebrew literature

- Hebrew literature’s typical pattern is to consider topics in a recursive (i.e. progressively repetitive manner).⁵⁶
 - This style is very different than our modern way of writing.
- Hebrew writers would begin describing a topic and develop it from a particular perspective. They would then end that conversation only to take up the same topic *again* but this time, from *a different perspective*.
- It is like looking at an object from different angles. All these different views combine to form the full picture.
- E.g. Exodus 14 and 15 give prose and poetic accounts of crossing the Red Sea. Also see Judges 4 and 5.
 - Many people mistakenly claim that the narratives in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-3:24 are from different sources. That is wrong because the same account told through different methods is “the chief characteristic and method of how a *single author* communicates.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Gentry, Location 610 of 3232.

⁵⁷ Gentry, Location 636 of 3232.

- Chiasm⁵⁸: a pattern in Hebrew literature where the author describes a topic through a crossing pattern (like the left side of the letter X). The top half of the section is mirrored in the bottom half. It resembles a pattern like this:

a b c d [e'] d' c' b' a'

- The middle part may not have a parallel and therefore stand out from the rest. It is often the main point of emphasis.
- Chiasms can appear in a single poetic line, a long discourse, or any size in between.
- Isaiah 33:13-24 is a good example of a chiastic structure⁵⁹:

A The People of the New Zion	13-16
B Zion's King: Land Possessed, Enemies Gone	17-19
C Zion's Safety and Security	20
B' Zion's King: Land Possessed, Enemies Gone	21-23
A' The People of the New Zion	24

- Recognizing the recursive style and chiastic patterns of Hebrew literature is essential to correctly interpreting the biblical prophets.
- The recursive pattern of writing is often found across entire books.
 - Isaiah “develops its plot structure by presenting the central them of the transformation of Zion seven times.”⁶⁰ The book can be divided into seven distinct discourses. In each discourse, Isaiah develops the topic of how we get from a corrupt Jerusalem in the first creation to a transformed Zion in a new creation.⁶¹
 - The Book of Isaiah: From Zion in the Old Creation to Zion in the New⁶²
 1. The judgment and transformation of Zion, Part 1 (1:2-2:4)
 2. The judgment and transformation of Zion, Part 2 (2:5-4:6)
 3. The judgment of the vineyard and the coming king (5:1-12:6)
 4. The city of man vs. the city of God (13:1-27:13)
 5. Trusting the nations vs. trusting the word of YHWH (28:1-37:38)
 6. Comfort and redemption for Zion and the world (38:1-55:13)
 7. The servants of YHWH and the New Creation (56:1-66:24)
 - The book of Revelation can also be divided into a seven-discourse recursive pattern.
- *Practice exercise: Identify the chiastic patter in Isaiah 6:10.*

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Gentry, Peter J. *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*. Kindle Edition. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017.

⁵⁸ Tremper Longman and Mark L. Strauss, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018), 35.

⁵⁹ The following table is from Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*, Location 702 of 3232.

⁶⁰ Gentry, Location 770 of 3232.

⁶¹ Gentry, Location 789 of 3232.

⁶² This is taken from chart 3.1 in Gentry.

Longman, Tremper, and Mark L. Strauss. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018.

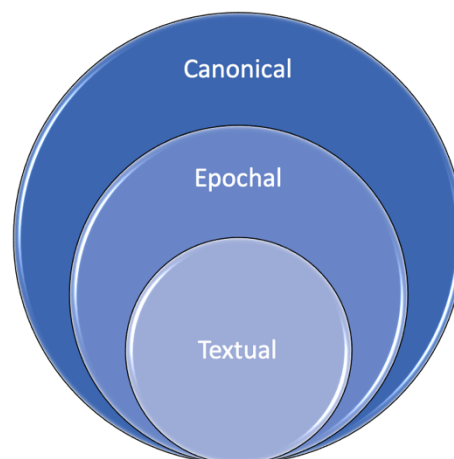
Lesson 12: A “Whole Bible” Approach: Interpretation Exercises

Teaching Outline

Covenant Heads

1. Creation (Adam)
2. Noah
3. Abraham
4. Israel (Moses)
5. David
6. Jesus

“In these covenant heads, Adam’s role continues, and each one anticipates Christ, who by his obedience secures our redemption.”⁶³



Understanding God’s moral will through a “whole Bible” approach to interpretation

“We need to begin in creation and then think through how sin has distorted God’s order, walk through the covenants, and discover how God’s redemptive promise will restore and transform the created order—a reality that has now been realized in Christ. At every stage in redemptive history, the covenants reflect God’s moral demands, thus explaining why we expect and find a continuity of moral demands across the canon. But earlier covenants on their own do not provide a complete and binding guide for Christian morality...Due to Christ’s work, *as covenants*, they have been fulfilled. *As Scripture*, all the covenants...are instructive for us...But applying specific ethical instruction must be done by a “whole Bible” reading viewed in Christ...”⁶⁴

- All of the covenants are fulfilled in Christ. Christ has also inaugurated a new covenant, under which all Christians are bound. Therefore, we must view Scripture through Christ and the new covenant.
- We can follow this basic pattern⁶⁵
 1. Look to creation as our starting point.
 2. Determine what the Law and the Prophets teach us about God’s original plan and purpose for his creation and people.
 3. Examine how the Law and the Prophets show us how sin has corrupted and fractured God’s original plan and purpose.

⁶³ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 151.

⁶⁴ Gentry and Wellum, 945.

⁶⁵ Adapted from Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics* (Kingsford, N.S.W.: Matthias Media, 2002), 78 as cited in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 955.

4. Ask how Christ and the new covenant have shown us a glimpse of what the redeemed creation will look like.
5. All of the above leads us to discern what is right and good according to the will and character of God.

Practice Exercises

1. Is bestiality a sin? Exod. 22:19 says “Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.” If it is a sin, why don’t we put to death those who commit bestiality? Also, why do we sow our fields with two different seeds? Or, why do we wear clothes made from two kinds of material? Lev. 19:19 forbids both of these. If we follow the commands about bestiality, why don’t we follow the commands of about seeds and clothing?

Apply our process:⁶⁶

- Begin in creation.
- Consider how sin has corrupted God’s design.
- Walk through the covenants.
- Determine how God’s promise to restore and transform creation through Christ.

We learn God’s plan for human sexuality in creation (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15-25).⁶⁷ By creating humans as male and female, God designed human sexuality to function within the permanent, covenant relationship of heterosexual marriage (Matt. 19:4-9). Therefore, all misuse and corruption of human sexuality—including bestiality—are distortions of God’s intent for his creation. After the fall (Gen. 3), all sexual corruptions are introduced. It is true that in earlier stages of redemptive history, a non-standard/non-normative behavior is occasionally permitted (e.g., polygamy). When we view this issue against God’s creation order and in light of the Christ-Church relationship, however (as well through the teaching of Jesus Christ himself (Matt. 19:4-9)), polygamy is never seen as God’s standard or as normative. That is why in the inauguration of the new covenant, polygamy is no longer acceptable. God’s creation standard is reaffirmed and must be lived out in the church.

While the Mosaic law explicitly forbids specific sexual distortions (Lev. 18:1-30), all its prohibitions simply unpack the “one flesh” ideal of creation. Additionally, since the law-covenant is prophetic, it anticipates a greater righteousness to come. That is why the ethical demand of the new covenant is greater. The prophets also speak of a day when God will transform his people so that his new covenant people will become covenant keepers, not breakers (Jer. 31:-31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27). This is what Jesus addresses in his teaching on kingdom in his sermon on the mount. In Christ’s coming and work, the new covenant has arrived. By the regenerating work of the Spirit, those who enter God’s kingdom are united to Christ and thus freed from

⁶⁶ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 945.

⁶⁷ This paragraph and the following one are directly dependent on Gentry and Wellum, 946–47. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

Adam and the old era. In Christ, individuals and the church are the “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:8-10, 11-21). This is why we live out what it means to be God’s new creation even though we still live between the time of the first creation and the consummation of the new heavens and earth. Therefore, the New Testament calls the church to proper use of sexuality by grounding it both in creation and in who we are in Christ. This is also why God’s moral demand on us today is greater—greater in restoring us to what we were created to be in the first place and in calling us to live now as God’s new-creation people.

2. Apply our hermeneutical process to respond to the question, “Why is homosexuality a sin?” The verses mentioned in question #1 will help you. Also read Eph. 5:28-33.
3. Apply our hermeneutical process to answer the questions, “Is abortion permissible? What about infanticide and euthanasia/assisted suicide?”

We are created as God’s image bearers (Gen. 1:26-28). Therefore, human life is precious (cf. Gen. 9:6).⁶⁸ Sinful, inhumane treatment of others is a result of the fall. The law-covenant forbids and punishes strife, anger, murder, and other behaviors, but these rules are the outworking of who we are as God’s created beings. Jesus teaches us that God’s intent from the beginning was for his image bearers to love God and their neighbors, which is what all of Scripture emphasizes (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:34-40). In the new covenant age, the full intent of how we are to love as God’s people is realized in a greater way. This is why Jesus stresses that it is not merely murder, adultery, or lying that are forbidden but our very hateful, self-gratifying heart and attitude toward each other (Matt. 5:21-48).

God demands that his people love him and one another. The law-covenant demanded this, but it also anticipated something more. In Christ, what the old covenant anticipated is now here. This is what led Paul to say that love *fulfills* the law (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). A love that is governed by God’s will and our renewal in Christ through the Spirit fulfills the law. We can now apply this understanding of humans and love to ethical issues such as abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia. While each issue involves other matters, a sanctity-of-life ethic is foundational to a Christian ethic and is consistent in *all of Scripture*.

References

- Gentry, Peter J., and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. 2nd edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.
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⁶⁸ The following is directly dependent on Gentry and Wellum, 947–48. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.