

**CONTEMPORARY
BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS**

by

Glenn W. Giles

December 6, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. Syllabus	3
B. Detailed Lesson Summaries and Outlines	5
Class I: Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics	5
Class II: Introduction Continued	9
Class III: Introduction Continued	13
Class IV: History of Biblical Interpretation	19
Class V: General Hermeneutics	23
Class VI: General Hermeneutics Review and Expansion	27
Class VII: Introduction to Literary Criticism	31
Class VIII: Midterm Exam and Student Presentations	35
Class IX: Special Hermeneutics: Genre, Narrative, and OT Law ...	36
Class X: Special Hermeneutics: Poetry and Wisdom	41
Class XI: Special Hermeneutics: OT and NT Prophecy and Apocalyptic	46
Class XII: Special Hermeneutics: NT: Narrative: Gospels, Parables, Acts	52
Class XIII: Special Hermeneutics: Epistles, NT use of the OT, Dispensational and Covenant Theologies	60
Class XIV: General Principles of Application	77
Class XV: Final Exam	81
Annotated Bibliography	82
Additional Bibliography	88

A. Syllabus:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE EXTENSION: BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: SYLLABUS AND CLASS NOTES

by

Glenn W. Giles

Class Level: College Undergraduate with Junior or Senior Standing

Class Format: Lecture, Class Discussion, Reading Assignments, Student Presentations, Midterm and Final Exams

Course Purpose:

- (1) To increase the student's awareness of various issues involved in biblical hermeneutics and its history
- (2) To increase the student's understanding and ability to properly exegete Scripture
- (3) To increase the student's ability to properly apply scriptural principles to modern day situations

Course Objectives:

- (1) To provide the student with information on proper hermeneutical techniques and methodologies
- (2) To challenge the student to research and report on hermeneutical topics
- (3) To provide the student opportunities for proper exegesis and application of a biblical text.

Course Requirements:

- (1) Attend all 15 classes
- (2) Pass midterm and final examinations
- (3) Complete the assigned reading
- (4) Give an acceptable class presentation on an approved biblical hermeneutical topic dealing with a specific biblical text

Course Textbooks:

- (1) Fee, Gordon D.; and Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- (2) Klein, William W.; Blomberg, Craig L.; and Hubbard, Robert L., Jr.; *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993

Course Outline and Reading Assignments:

- Class I: Introduction to Biblical hermeneutics (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 3-20; Fee and Stuart, 17-32)
- Class II: Introduction Continued (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 81-150)
- Class III: Introduction Continued (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 53-78; Fee and Stuart, 33-53)
- Class IV: History of Biblical Interpretation (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 21-51)
- Class V: General Hermeneutics (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 156-214)
- Class VI: General Hermeneutics Review and Expansion
- Class VII: Introduction to Literary Criticism
- Class VIII: Midterm Exam and Student Presentations
- Class IX: Special Hermeneutics: Genre, Narrative, and OT Law (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 259-284; Fee and Stuart, 89-106, 163-180)
- Class X: Special Hermeneutics: Poetry and Wisdom (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 284-291, 313-322; Fee and Stuart, 205-248)
- Class XI: Special Hermeneutics: OT and NT Prophecy and Apocalyptic (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 292-312, 366-374; Fee and Stuart, 181-204, 249-264)
- Class XII: Special Hermeneutics: NT: Narrative: Gospels, Parables, Acts (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 323-351, 107-162)
- Class XIII: Special Hermeneutics: Epistles, NT use of the OT, Dispensational and Covenant Theologies (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 352-66; Fee and Stuart 55-87)
- Class XIV: General Principles of Application, Student Presentations (Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 377-426)
- Class XV: Final Exam

Each class is 2 hours in length.

B. Detailed Lesson Summaries and Outlines:

Biblical Hermeneutics: Class I: Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics

Preliminary things: Syllabus, Expectations, Grading, Due dates, Discussions.

Class discussion of a present day newspaper headline:

Do you think what you read is true?

What does it mean?

How do you know?

How do you decide these types of things?

What is your method(s) of interpretation?

Is it subconscious?

What is it based on? Feelings? Five senses? Authority? Past trust or distrust?

I. Introduction:

A. “Hermeneutics” is the art and science of interpretation with intended application. “Biblical hermeneutics” is the art and science of coming to understand the message communicated by the *Biblical* text with the intent of correct message appropriation.

1. It is a “science” because it is concerned with the use of rules, principles, and methods for understanding the text that help one come to its intended meaning.
2. It is an “art” because it involves the skillful application of those “rules” in a way that does not distort the true intended communication. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard state it well:

“ . . . human communication cannot be reduced solely to quantifiable and precise rules. No mechanical system of rules will ever help one understand correctly all the implications or nuances in the three words “I love you” as spoken by a teenage girl to her boyfriend, a husband to his wife of twenty-five years, a mother to her child, or a teenage boy to his mint-condition ’54 chevy. . . Adults may think they understand the words “cool” or “radical” (or any popular teen-age word), but without knowing the codes of youth culture, they may be wide of the mark.”¹

B. The domains of hermeneutics: The Scriptural text is a vehicle for *communication*. such there are three domains that must be kept in mind: The author, the text, and the reader. Accordingly, Jeannine Brown writes,

*Scripture’s meaning can be understood as the communicative act of the author that has been inscribed in the text and addressed to the intended audience for purposes of engagement.*²

- a. *Assumptions in this course* from II Tim. 3:16-17, II Pet. 1:20-21, Heb. 4:12 (NIV).

Class discussion of these scriptures in light of the concept of “interpretation”

¹ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 5.

² Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 14.

- 1) “All Scripture” is the entire canonical 66 books of the Bible
- 2) “God-breathed,” all Scripture is spoken or inspired by God, i.e., it is from God.
- 3) “. . . prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
Scripture/prophecy came from God through the Holy Spirit as he worked in the lives of men. God spoke Scripture through men.
- 4) Purpose: “teaching, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”. The goal of the communication is to help men.
- 5) God’s word is powerful, “living and active,” it speaks to us today and transforms lives.

b. *The communication process:*

1. The author, God, *communicates* through men moved by the Holy Spirit via
2. Scripture in the form of the *written text* (encompassing the 66 books of the Bible) to
3. Men for the purpose of achieving a good *relationship* with him and others.

c. *The bi-directional nature of communication.* Hermeneutics thus involves not merely understanding what the text says but it is only truly complete when there is an intended bi-directionally experiential *relationship* developed between the author (God) and the reader. The author communicates to the reader and the reader responds to the author thus completing the communication and relationship process. Without the message being appropriated into the life of the reader, the communication is incomplete and hermeneutics becomes merely intellectual, an impersonal subject/object interaction with the text.³ This bi-directionally personal experiential relationship is encompassed in what I call the *yada’* theology of the Bible.

1. *Yada’* ([דַּע]) is the Hebrew word for “experiential knowledge.” It is a term dealing with relational experience between people and between people and God. The Greek term for “know,” *ginosko*, (ginwvskw) is more an intellectual term. However, when used in the LXX translation of the Hebrew OT, it begins to take on a “relational” aspect in 490 of the 946 times it is used in the OT. *Yada’*, “to know”, deals more with the heart and relationship than just the mind. Hence, the use of the term in the phrase, “Adam *knew* (*yada’*) Eve” (Gen. 4:1).
2. To have us know Him and He us has been God’s desire throughout history and throughout the Bible. God wants to have a loving relationship with man and man with one another and He wants it to come from the heart.
 - a. Matt. 7:21-23: Jesus says, “I never knew you”. Does God

³ Brown, 15.

know you?

b. Two types of knowing: God knowing us and us him. Gal 4:9

c. God wanted people to know him and he did things to help us experience his heart and character

(1). Experience him through his power and might Jer. 16:21 states,

"Therefore I will teach (*yada* ') them--this time I will teach (*yada* ') them my power and might. *Then* they will know (*yada* ') that my name is the LORD".

(2). Experiencing him through his justice and wrath:

Ez. 30:8

"*Then* they will know (*yada* ') that I am the LORD, when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers are crushed".

Here knowledge of God comes through experiencing his character of justice and wrath. This concept of "knowing that I am the LORD" occurs over 65 times in Ezekiel alone indicating relational knowledge coming through experiencing his judgments.

(3). Experiencing his righteousness, justice, loving-kindness and compassion. He also desires to be married to us Hosea 2:19-20

"And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in loving kindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. *Then* you will know (*yada* ') the Lord" (NASB).

(4). Experiencing his provision, faithfulness and mercy:

Hosea 6:2-3 states,

"He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him. So let us know (*yada* '), let us press on to know (*yada* ') the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth" (NASB).

Here knowledge of God is obtained through experiencing Him reviving them and giving them rain. They would not know God however if they did not press on in faithfulness to experience his character. Knowing God comes from experiencing God's faithfulness, mercy, and provision.

(5). Through experiencing the New Covenant.

Jer. 31:34 states,

“No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know (*yada*)’ the LORD,’ because they will all know (*yada*)’ me, from the least of them to the greatest”, declares the LORD. "***For*** I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Emphases mine).

The word “For” here indicates that knowing the LORD comes about as a *result* of a person experiencing the LORD’s forgiveness and his forgetting their sins. Knowing God thus comes by *experiencing* his grace

- d. God wants to “know what was in your ***heart***, whether or not you would keep his commands”, Deut. 8:2
Jesus, with the OT, shows God was concerned with the heart not just outward actions (Matt. 15:8-9). It was the heart which is the source of sin (i.e., the break in good YADA’ with God) (Mk. 7:21). God wants to know our good heart toward him.
 - e. To have God know us and our heart, we must love him.
I Cor. 8:3
 - f. To love God means we must obey Him willingly and without it being a burden, i.e., from the heart. I Jn. 5:3
Our obedience from the heart is our allowing God to experience us. This is how God *knows* us.
 - g. This love means that we are open and “know” (experience) everything about each other and about God. Jesus exemplified this. John 15:9-17
3. This *yada*’ theology seems to unite the whole Bible as it gives the purpose of God throughout the Bible and history. He wants a saving relationship with us. He wants to know us, we to know him, and we to know each other. This concept expresses what is involved at the deepest level in the two greatest commands of loving God and our neighbor.

Class discussion: what happens when there is not a successful bi-directional communication?

Examples: Boy friend and girl friend
Husband and wife
Siblings
God and us

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class II: Introduction Continued

Class discussion: Contemporary newspaper clipping quote or quote from a book.

C. The Goal of Hermeneutics:

1. To “discover the intention of the author,” . . . “the original or intended meaning of the text”⁴, i.e. what the text originally *meant*. It is the *historical* meaning of the text that is the “central objective of hermeneutics.”⁵ Only the original author has the right to determine the intended meaning of what was written. So we must discover that intended meaning through studying his writing(s).

There are however several contemporary meanings of “meaning” with respect to the Biblical text encountered today. Here are five options offered by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard:⁶

- a) “Biblical authors intended *only one sense* (meaning), and this historical sense—what that text would have meant at the time written to its original readers—remains the only legitimate object of exegesis.” We have no liberty to change that meaning in application to today.
- b) “Biblical authors intended to convey *multiple meanings* or levels of meanings in at least some of their writings.” Hence there are many meanings that readers may discover that would be legitimate for today.
- c) “Biblical authors intended only one sense, but that sense need not limit how later readers understand the text since perception always involves a creative interaction between text and reader. Interpretation is a ‘*reader-response*’ enterprise; so later readers . . . may invent meaning never envisioned in the original context.” This is claimed to be legitimate today.
- d) “Biblical authors intended only one sense, but unknown to them the Holy Spirit encoded in the text additional and hidden meaning(s). When NT writers employed OT texts, in places they were drawing out this fuller sense, the *sensus plenior*. Such a process may or may not be repeatable for modern interpreters.”
- e) “Biblical authors intended only one sense, though later readers may employ *creative exegetical techniques* to discover additional valid senses not intended by the original authors”

⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 24.

⁵ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 132.

⁶ From Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 131-32.

such as the methods of midrash, typology, or pesher. These “may or may not be repeatable today.”

For the purposes of this class we will define the “meaning of the text” as

*“that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intention of its author/editor and the probable understanding of that text by its intended reader.”*⁷

2. Discovering what the text *means* for us today so in response we can love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and thus make interpersonal communication with between us and God complete (i.e., we experience God and He us in a positive way). It makes possible proper application of the significance of the original meaning of the text to various situations and circumstances experienced in life today.

D. The Concept of the Hermeneutical Spiral

1. Our interaction with the Biblical message challenges our prior understanding of reality, our world view
2. As we interact with the Biblical message, our understanding changes. This brings up new questions about reality.
3. Once again we interact with the message of the Bible and our view of reality changes.
4. This process is not circular in nature but is a “progressive spiral of development.” It is an “interactive, ongoing, and continuous”⁸ process.

E. The Need for Hermeneutics. To communicate intended meaning from author through a text to a reader necessitates one be on the “same understanding page” as the author. Otherwise, misunderstandings and miscommunications occur.

Illustration 1:

In the 1980’s I was teaching a Sunday School class and asked one of the members to read Gen. 24:64. She read from the KJV. It states: “And Rebekah lifted up her eyes and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel”

After reading the passage the member said, “I did not know they had cigarettes in those days!” She was serious!

This woman’s reading and conclusion showed a total misunderstanding of the passage. It was caused by (1) a misunderstanding of the KJV word “lighted”, (2) a neglect of the term “off” in the context,

⁷ Ibid., 133.

⁸ Ibid., 114. On this Hermeneutical Spiral, see also Osborne, 22-23. He states that this process is a movement “not twirling forever with no ending in sight but moving ever narrower to the meaning of the text and its significance for today.”

and (3) a transportation of the term “camel” in the sense of the Camel brand of cigarettes from today’s culture into the culture and onto the text of Rebekah’s day.

Illustration 2: Many times people string passages together without regard to context. The following (though extreme) can show how dangerous this might be:

a. “Then he (Judas) went away and hanged himself”
(Matt. 27:5b).

b. “Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Lk. 37b)

c. “What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him.
(Jn. 13:27b)

When put together, this could be used as Biblical proof that one should go out and commit suicide and do it quickly by hanging.

Paul tells us that proper understanding of the Word of God is essential to our salvation and the salvation of others. I Tim 4:16 states: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” If we do not understand the Bible properly, our salvation and that of others could be at risk.

Without proper hermeneutics there are gaps in understanding that can lead people to erroneous understandings of God’s word. There are basically five gaps⁹ that cause misunderstandings:

1. Historical time gap. The world of today is much different from the world of the Bible. Most people lack knowledge about the ancient world described in the Bible and thus many times cannot accurately understand the text of the Bible.
2. The cultural gap. Travel methods and vehicles, harvesting tools and methods, housing, monetary system, shepherding experience, marital and burial customs, purity laws, and dress customs are just a few of the cultural differences of our modern world and the ancient Biblical world. These cause us to have a cultural distance which can hinder our understanding of the text when read.
3. Geographical gap. Unless we have a grasp of the geography of the places where events in the Bible took place we don’t have a full understanding of what the event was like. Even terms such as going “up” to Jerusalem or “down” to Jericho are not understood as well unless we understand that they are elevation terms not contemporary “map” terms.
4. The linguistic gap. The Bible was written in the three languages of Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew. No translation perfectly conveys the

⁹ From Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 12-16, and Henry A. Virkler, *Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 19-20.

meaning of any of these original languages. Hence understanding is even hindered in ways through translations.

5. The philosophical gap. There are contrasts between world views and philosophies of various cultures within Bible times and also with modern day world views and philosophies. These can hinder our understanding of the text.

Proper use of hermeneutical tools and methods will help narrow these gaps and facilitate better communication between God (the author) and man (the reader) through the Bible (the text or medium of communication).

**Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class III: Introduction Continued**

Contemporary Newspaper clipping or book quote discussion of hermeneutical gaps. What gaps are involved here?

F. Divisions of Hermeneutics

1. General
 - a. Principles of interpretation that relate to the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation
 - b. Includes topics of “historical-cultural, contextual, lexical-syntactical, and theological analysis.”¹⁰
2. Special
 - a. Rules that apply to specific genres or literary types
 - b. Includes parables, typology, prophecy, poetry, etc.
3. *Analogia Scriptura* (Analogy of Scripture)
 - a. “No single statement or obscure passage of one book can be allowed to set aside a doctrine which is clearly established by many passages” (Milton Terry).¹¹ This is the principle of the obscure being interpreted in the light of the clear.
 - b. Doctrines should not be established on a single passage but on “the basis of all the texts that speak to the issue.”¹² Proof-texting, using one text, to establish doctrine is not to be allowed.
4. Systematic Theology. It works by attempting to systematize the teachings of the whole Bible in a logical way. It is based on Biblical Theology which traces the progressive development of truth (using the categories of the Biblical authors themselves) and how it all fits together. Systematic theology applies man-made grids to the Bible in an attempt to categorize truth in a systematic way so that the entire Bible all makes sense in a coherent manner. Traditionally this is done using the following 10 loci of theology:
 - a. Theology proper: The doctrine of God
 - b. Bibliology: The doctrine of the Bible
 - c. Christology: The doctrine of Christ
 - d. Pneumatology: The doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 - e. Angelology: The doctrine of Angels
 - f. Anthropology: The doctrine of Man
 - g. Harmatology: The doctrine of Sin
 - h. Soteriology: The doctrine of Salvation
 - i. Ecclesiology: The doctrine of the Church

¹⁰ Virkler, 16.

¹¹ Quoted in Osborne, 28.

¹² Ibid, 29.

j. Eschatology: The doctrine of the Last Things.

Examples of Systematic Theologies: Dispensational and Covenant Theologies. More on this later in the course.

G. Discussion of hermeneutical tools and how to use them:

1. Original Language texts if you have original language proficiency:
 - Hebrew OT=*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
 - Greek NT=United Bible Societies 4th ed. *Greek New Testament*
2. Good original language lexicon, concordance, and Bible dictionary:
 - Hebrew lexicon: Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
 - Greek lexicon: Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*
 - Hebrew concordance: John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament*
 - Greek concordance: Moulton and Geden, *Concordance to the Greek Testament*
 - Hebrew dictionary: William VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*
 - Greek dictionary: Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*
3. A good English translation or translations.
 - a. Understanding the importance of textual criticism.
 - 1) It helps us get back closer to the original text
 - 2) The best translation will be based on the textual study that yields the highest degree of certainty about the original text (i.e., the oldest and best manuscripts). The KJV and NKJV for example are based on late and poorer manuscripts.
 - 3) For example, note the following
 - a) I Cor. 6:20
NKJV: “therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”
TNIV: “Therefore honor God with your bodies”
--“in your spirit” is not found in the oldest and best manuscripts.¹³
 - b) Acts 8:37. Omitted by older manuscripts Aleph, A, B, C. and papyrus P47 (3rd century AD). King James has this verse because it was based on later manuscripts which had included this. One of the earliest manuscripts

¹³ Fee and Stuart, 38.

which include this is dated about the 6th century AD

- c) John 5:3b-4. Not in the earliest mss: P46 (2nd-3rd century), P75 (3rd century), Aleph, B, C, D and others. A (5th century) includes it. KJV has it.
 - d) John 7:53-8:11. Omitted by P66 (2nd-3rd century), p75(3rd century), Aleph, A, B, C, and others. It is included in D (5th or 6th century) Some later mss place it after Luke 21:38, or Lk. 24:53, or Jn. 7:36, or Jn. 21:25. It seems to have been a floating story which some felt should be in the Bible and so placed it there. KJV has it.
 - e) Mark 16:9-20. Not found in the earliest mss. Might have been a lost end or originally in a book that lost its cover (and first and last pages). It is omitted by Aleph and B (4th century mss). Is found in A, C, D (5th and 6th century mss). This ending is a long ending. There also exists a shorter ending. See the NASB
- b. Understanding translation theory
- 1. Formal Equivalence (literal)—KJV, NKJV, NASB, NASU, RSV, NRSV, ESV
 - 2. Dynamic or Functional Equivalence—NIV, TNIV, NAB, NJB, GNB, REB, JB, NLT
 - 3. Free (paraphrase)—NEB, LB, The Message, Phillips
- b. Advantages and disadvantages of each type:
- 1. Formal Equivalence is good when doing word studies but can be very wooden in its language and grammar in that it presents Greek and Hebrew into English sentences and phrases in a way that would never be spoken. The translation can be ambiguous and unclear. While the translation may be faithful to the original language it is not always faithful to the receptor language into which it is translated.
 - 2. A Free translation paraphrases the text and can be fresh and “vivid” in “expressing some old truths”¹⁴ but tend to bring in more of the translator’s own theology and commentary than the original necessarily supports. As such it may not be always faithful to the original text. Also, these paraphrases can be so free and contemporary that they can go out of vogue in one generation.
 - 3. A Dynamic or Functional Equivalent translation. This is

¹⁴ Fee and Stuart, 43.

- probably the best as it attempts to remain “as faithful as possible to *both* the original and receptor languages.”¹⁵
- c. Suggestions: NIV TNIV, NASU, NASB, ESV. Compare and contrast. Use a Study Bible version. For *word* study purposes one generally should use a more literal translation as it “tries to reflect the actual structure of the Biblical language” and “translates key terms with the same English word as often as possible”¹⁶ (such as the NASB, NASV, or ESV). Probably the best translation with an “overall balance between literalness and readability”¹⁷ is the NIV or TNIV.
5. A good Bible Dictionary or Bible Encyclopedia
 - a. *NIDOTTE*
 - b. *NIDNTT*
 - c. IVP or Eerdmans *New Bible Dictionary*
 - d. Merrill C. Tenney’s *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*
 6. A good English concordance

Zondervan’s The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance

Class discussion of the meaning of *porneia* and its translation of “sexual immorality” instead of “fornication” (Mk. 7:21), or even “marital unfaithfulness” instead of “fornication” in Matt. 5:32:

What is the definition of “fornication”?

An example of how to use the sources above for making a decision on this based on diachronic and synchronic word studies:

Diachronic word study: Meaning of a word through time (many generations) in history

Synchronic word study: Meaning of a word at general one point or generation in history.

The following is an e-mail I received recently on the word *porneia* from an evangelist in one of our churches in one of our major cities in the US. How would you have answered it?

Hey there Mr. Glenn,

Hope all is well with you brother. Just a quick bible question. Do you have any idea why the NIV translated *porneia* as *sexual immorality* instead of *fornication*? It seems to make it more vague in explaining just what is meant by it. I have had two people ask me about it--in a manner that they were thinking it might be okay to have sex before marriage, as that is not as against the morals of society today as it may have been then. Yikes. Can you clear up any confusion on that one? Or can you help me understand the meaning of the word more than Vines or Thayer might explain. Is it really clear that it means sexual intercourse outside of marriage? When you get a chance,

¹⁵ Fee and Stuart, 42.

¹⁶ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 78.

¹⁷ Ibid.

please let me know your thoughts, Thanks again,

Major issues:

This involves the following questions and concerns:

Why do you think the NIV translates it sexual immorality?

Why not translate it fornication? What does it really mean? How do we know?

How should morals of society come into the picture?

How do you determine normativity?

Consider its implications in Gal. 5:19

It changes the parameters of sin. How would you study sin differently with someone? How would it affect repentance?

Consider its implications in Matthew 19:9.

If it meant only fornication, how would you understand this verse?

Here is the quick answer I gave him:

Dear _____,

Wow! What is the mind of those in the church coming to? How much will we be influenced by the world? I have become convinced that we need some ethics classes!

Bauer (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other early Christian Literature*, s.v. "*porneia*") says it means "prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse." Moulton and Milligan (*The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. "*porneia*") states: "*Porneia* originally meant 'prostitution,' 'fornication,' but came to be applied to unlawful sexual intercourse generally. It was a wider term than *moicheia*" (adultery) "embracing the idea of 'barter,' 'traffic' in sexual vice, though in the OT there was a tendency to assimilate in some respects the two terms . . ."

Did you look at the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*? *NIDNTT* (vol. 1, pp 497ff) discusses how in classical literature the word group describes "various extra-marital sexual modes of behaviour in so far as they deviate from the accepted social and religious norms (e.g. homosexuality, promiscuity, pedophilia, and especially prostitution)".

In the LXX (Septuagint, OT Greek) it was translated the word in Hebrew (*hnz*) which means "to commit fornication". Brown, Driver, Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*) under *hnz* define it as "commit fornication, be a harlot" (p. 275). Look up fornication in an English dictionary and see what the dictionary gives for that. My dictionary says "Voluntary sexual intercourse between unmarried persons" (*Funk and Wagnalls Standard Encyclopedic Dictionary*, s.v. "fornication").

The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (p. 1123) says this Hebrew word in the **ancient Near Eastern use** meant "commit fornication" in many of the various cultures of the day. **In the OT** it is used mainly in a metaphorical way but is "a broad term for sexual misconduct, including adultery . . . and may at times be synonymous with adultery" . . . "*hnz* has two related but distinct meanings: to fornicate or have illicit sex, and to practice prostitution, i.e., offer sex for hire". **In later Jewish Rabbinic language** the term "is to be understood as including not only prostitution and any kind of extramarital sexual intercourse . . . , but also all marriages between relatives forbidden in Rab. law. . . Incest . . . and all kinds of unnatural sexual intercourse . . . were viewed as fornication (*porneia*)."

In the New Testament it included prostitution and adultery (extramarital sexual intercourse). In Paul the word group "*porne* denotes any kind of illegitimate sexual intercourse." My understanding of "illegitimate" is its connection with marriage which involves the uniting of the

gametes as seems to be indicated by the noun gamos (γᾰμο~) and the verb gameo (γᾰμew). I think when we lose the distinction between marriage and *porneia*, there is no distinction, marriage is dissolved, it is not special. Sex seems to only be legitimate when it is between two married persons (even those who had more than one wife in the OT seemed to need marriage to make legitimate their union). If not, why marry at all? This is the position our world is coming to: Living together without the commitment of marriage. Family is affected too. When God created marriage in Gen 1 it was so that there could be a new family (leaving and cleaving). Sex produces offspring and I think was intended to be offspring in a family, a marriage which has a father and a mother, not just any Tom, Rick, or Harry with Jane, Melissa, or Judy who happen to get together for sex. The fabric of this and every society is at stake here!

My understanding of porneia is as follows:

It originally mainly meant fornication (sex outside of and before marriage) but by the time of Christ it included all types of sexual sin including adultery but never lost the concept of fornication. Its meaning was just broadened. Its semantic range simply enlarged over time, hence the translation "sexual immorality". It in no way suggests that fornication is OK. NO! I have found nowhere that the term lost that meaning but rather gradually gained a greater semantic range.

Again, the sanctity of marriage is at stake here. It is being attacked here in a manner similar to the sanctioning of homosexuality! Why would that not be OK too? What is illicit sex? Is it only when we break human laws? In some societies then rape is OK (e.g., Iraq under Hussein). There is a commitment issue here in the area of sex and it involves the physical act of intercourse (as well as other areas of purity)! What does "purity" mean then? The fact that our laws do not consider it wrong does not mean that it is not. Roman laws I don't think would see sex before marriage as wrong either, but the NT still seems to see it as wrong (otherwise I Cor. 5 might be OK even if it is incest (so what?)). It is still fornication (voluntary sex between two unmarried persons).

There are a lot of other words that lose their meaning if we see sex before marriage as OK including lust (can you have lust if you can have sex with anyone you want?). Why even prostitution is OK then since it is between two consenting adults even if money is involved.

Hope this helps.

Glenn

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class IV: History of Biblical Interpretation

II. History of Biblical Interpretation

A. Jewish Interpretation: Ezra through the end of the first century AD.

1. Targum interpretation: Spawned by Ezra reading the scripture and the Levites translating into Aramaic (Neh. 8:7-8), Targums were translation/interpretation versions of the Hebrew first done orally then eventually written down by scribes.
2. Rabbinic interpretation: *Midrash*. This developed in Judea to encourage Jewish obedience to the OT Torah and other Scriptures.
 - a. *Halakah*: principles and regulations deduced from the OT law
 - b. *Haggadah*: illustrations in the form of stories and proverbs used to highlight Biblical text teaching.
3. Qumranic or *peshet*. Used in Qumran it explained “the eschatological significance of a biblical text” by the Teacher of Righteousness. It was the “hermeneutical key which was supposed to unlock the text as a whole.”¹⁸
4. Hellenistic Judaism: *Allegory*. It is a method that was initially applied to OT Scriptures by Philo of Alexandria.¹⁹ This method sought to find true meaning residing *behind* the words of Scripture in which “the text served as a kind of extended metaphor which pointed to the ideas hidden behind it.”²⁰ It resulted in a method that was highly subjective, arbitrary, and artificial.²¹
6. Jesus’ interpretation as exemplified in the Gospels. Jesus taught that
 - a. Abraham’s faith was to be “archetypal” for Israel²² (Jn. 8:56).
 - b. He also held that he was superior to Abraham (Jn. 8:39-59).
 - c. He himself was the fulfillment of the Scriptures. E.g., Luke 4:16-21; Mt. 11:10; 13:14; 15:8f; Mk. 12:10ff; 14:27 and others. He, thus in a sense, used a *peshet* type of interpretation whereby he himself was the eschatological key to understanding to what the OT pointed.
 - d. He also used *qal wa-homer* which is a method of arguing from a lesser to a greater principle. He uses it at various times when referring to the Old Testament declaring that he was greater than the Sabbath and the Temple. E.g., Matt. 12:3-8.

B. The Apostolic Period: The New Testament Period: 30-100 AD.

1. Christological approach. Understood the OT Christologically (Mt. 21:4, 42; 22:44; Heb. 1:1-14)

¹⁸ Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, (Downer’s Grove, IVP, 1996), 61.

¹⁹ Bray, 82-84.

²⁰ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²² Bray, 62.

2. Literal/contextual approach. Scripture was not to be taken out of context or twisted (Mt. 4:4, 7; 9:13; 12:8; Rom. 12:17-21).
3. Principilization. At times the OT was not taken literally but an underlying universal principle was taken and applied to a different situation. (I Cor. 9:9)
4. Typology. This is the primary way the OT was interpreted by the apostles. They found “represented in OT events, objects and ideas divinely-inspired types (i.e., patterns or symbols) that anticipate God’s activity later in history.”²³ (E.g., Rom. 5:14, Adam as a type).

C. The Patristic Period (100-590)

1. Typology (Barnabas 12:1-7; I Clem 12;7)
2. Allegory (Barnabas 7-8)
3. Midrash (Barnabas 9:8-9)²⁴
4. Orthodox or Traditional interpretation in response to the Gnostics and others began to be established. Bishop authority as the chief officer of each local church develops (seemingly beginning with Ignatius) and he is the one to be obeyed. Later in this period Church Councils established proper doctrine by defining Christian beliefs, establishing apostolic succession, etc. Church tradition became the “ultimate interpreter of the Bible”²⁵
5. Two major schools developed during this time
 - a. School of Alexandria: Origen and Clement, influenced by Philo, followed the *allegorical method*. Each passage could have more than one meaning. Origen taught a three-fold sense of Scripture:
 - 1) literal sense
 - 2) moral sense
 - 3) spiritual sense
 - b. School of Antioch: Theodore and Theodoret, opposed the Alexandrian School and taught the *literal historical-grammatical method* was the correct method to understand Scripture. Each passage “had one plain, simple meaning conveyed by its grammar and words.”²⁶

D. Medieval Church (590-1500)

1. The allegorical method dominated this period (e.g., Song of Songs).
2. Traditional interpretation (views of the fathers passed down) was also a major method (including the “interpretive gloss”)
3. Four fold view of Scripture. Scripture was now seen as having four senses: Note the following with respect to Jerusalem
 - a) Literal: the literal ancient city of Jerusalem
 - b) Allegorical: The Christian Church

²³ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 29.

²⁴ On Points 1-3, see Ibid., 31-33.

²⁵ Ibid., 37.

²⁶ Ibid. 35.

- c) Moral: The faithful soul
- d) Anagogical: the heavenly city²⁷
- 4. Late in this period scholasticism developed championed by Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*). It was a method that concentrated on the text's literal and historical sense. Aquinas "freed theology from its long historical slavery to the allegorical method."²⁸
- E. The Protestant Reformation to Modernism (1500-1800)
 - 1. Luther broke with the method of "traditionalism" claiming "sola scriptura" as well as with allegory. In their place he held that Scripture had one meaning and that it was its historical meaning determined by the rules of grammar and historical context, i.e., the meaning intended by the author. He also read the Bible Christocentrically and typologically.
 - 2. Calvin also rejected allegory and rested his faith on the Bible alone in its plain, simple, literal, historical, author intended sense.
 - 3. Catholic theologians continued traditional interpretation.
- F. Modern to Post-modern (1800-Present)
 - 1. Birth of the Historical Critical Approach: Interpretation based on human reason and a naturalistic world view. Bible not considered God's special revelation but written by human beings. Everything (especially miracles) had to be explained naturalistically (through the laws of physics, biology, and chemistry, evolution, etc.). The supernatural is locked out of interpretation. The Bible is interpretatively approached as any other human book.

Types of methods developed:

 - a) Textual Criticism: attempts to get to the original text by comparing all the available copies
 - b) Source Criticism: attempts to find the source(s) behind the extant documents. (E.g., Wellhausen and the JEDP theory for the OT Pentateuch, the Synoptic Problem in the NT).
 - c) Form Criticism: Stressed oral tradition and transmission behind the written texts of the Bible. Dissected the Bible into small bits of tradition. It atomized the text. Cf. especially Bultmann and his works.
 - d) Redaction Criticism: Studied the editing of the biblical material by individual authors of the individual books. It looks at each book as a whole attempting to determine the theological purpose intended by the human author in putting together and editing the bits and pieces of tradition. It views Bible books as wholes in contrast to Form Criticism.
 - 2. Grammatico-Historical Method:
 - a. Word Studies, context study, historical/cultural studies, archaeology, etc.

²⁷ These four come from Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 38.

²⁸ Ibid., 39.

b. Evangelicals

c. Restoration Movement:

- 1) Tom Olbricht, "Hermeneutics," in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant, and D. Newell Williams, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).
- 2) Eugen Boring, *Disciples and the Bible: A History of Disciples Biblical Interpretation in North America* (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 1997).
3. Literary Criticism: stresses the beauty of the Bible texts from an aesthetic point of view looking at rhetorical devices, poetry, narrative development of plot, characters, structural text components, etc.
4. Sociological Method: Freedom from various types of slavery based on Exodus and other Scriptures
 - a) Feminist Theology
 - b) Liberation Theology
5. Postmodernism: It is skeptical of human objectivity and our ability to know. It does not reject the supernatural but takes a mystical approach to the text. The text is not held to its historical meaning but whatever it means existentially to each individual. Thus one gets a pluralistic view of meaning. There is no one "correct" interpretation. There are many approaches to God and it does not matter as long as you are sincere in your convictions about what you believe. Hence all interpretations are correct.

Class discussion of Postmodernism interpretation today:

Pluralism.

Clinton's meaning of "is."

Newspaper innuendos:

Campus examples:

Societal examples:

**Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class V: General Hermeneutics**

- III. General Hermeneutics: Understanding the he Literary and Historical Context
- A. Study via the spiral of contextual meaning: A Bird's eye view
1. Word for Word: Every word is important. Don't miss even one!
 - a. Know what each word means with reference to its meaning in the day it was written. Be careful not to superimpose modern day meaning on it if it is different than the meaning it had in Biblical times or if it does not fit the context. Get a good Bible dictionary and look up the meaning of the word. Get a good concordance and study how the word is used in the Bible.
 - b. Know how each word functions in the sentence
 2. Phrase for Phrase: Every word has meaning shaped by the words around them
 - a. Understand each phrase and its meaning
 - b. Know how that phrase functions in the sentence
 3. Sentence for Sentence: Every sentence has a complete thought and message
 - a. Understand the whole sentence.
 - b. Determine how your present sentence affects other sentences surrounding it.
 4. Paragraph by paragraph: Every paragraph makes a context
 - a. Understand the context and how the sentences and phrases and words fit into that context. What is the message that is being attempted to be communicated in that paragraph/context?
 - b. How does your verse function in the paragraph?
 - c. Don't understand the meaning of the words and phrases and sentences differently than the context. (I.e., don't take the words out of context)
 5. Chapter by Chapter: Every chapter makes a bigger context of the whole book
 - a. Understand the larger chapter context.
 - b. How does your verse fit into it?
 6. Book by Book/Author by Author/Audience by Audience: Each book of the Bible has its own overall message(s), partakes of its own author's writing personality, and has specific audience(s)
 - a. Understand the message of the passage in light of the whole book. How does the whole context of the book influence the message of the verse you are looking at?
 - b. Take note of the author. What was the author's intent? For example, Matthew may have a different perspective than Luke and use different words to communicate the same truth. What did the author want to communicate and in what way may he have done it specific to his personality and vocabulary?

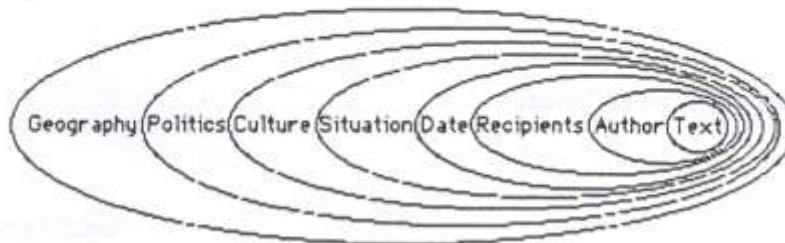
- c. Take note of the audience to which the book was written: Was it a Jewish audience, a Gentile or a Christian audience? How would they have understood the message as presented from their perspective? How would that affect the meaning of the verse you are studying?
 - d. Take note of the backgrounds of the book and culture of the day. How would that affect the understanding of this book and its verses?
 - 7. Genre by Genre: There are different “types” of literature in the Bible. Understanding the specific genre can affect the meaning of the text.
 - a. Understand what type of genre the verse/phrase/sentence/chapter/book is imbedded in.
 - b. How does this affect the meaning of the verse as understood so far?
 - 8. Testament by Testament: The Old and New Testaments have different and similar messages. The New fulfills the Old and the Old foreshadows the New.
 - a. Be aware of which testament your text is in.
 - b. How that may shape the understanding and application of that text to your life.
 - 9. Bible as a whole: The *whole* Bible is God’s word.
 - a. Understand the verse/passage in light of the whole message of the Bible about God and His will for you.
 - b. Take note of the meaning of the text you are studying in light of all of the above.
 - 10. Determine the will (heart) of God for your life having considered all of the above, what it means in your life situation, and apply that meaning of the text to your life.
- B. Study the Literary context. The “intended meaning of any passage is the meaning that is consistent with the sense of the literary context in which it occurs”²⁹ because
- 1. “Context provides flow-of-thought.” Meaning determined must not violate the flow-of-thought. If it does, one is taking the verse out of context.
 - 2. “Context provides accurate meaning of words” because most words have more than one meaning.
 - 3. “Context delineates correct relationships among units.” Thus a correct interpretation will be consistent with the larger units of sentences, paragraphs, etc.
- C. Study the Historical Context
- 1. This context is important because the Bible is rooted in history. It is the account of God’s acts in history. It is HiStory.
 - 2. Aspects of historical context:
 - a. The author. If we can determine the Biblical book author it can help us in understanding the meaning or continuity of meaning of the writing. (E.g., Luke-Acts, I & II Corinthians, etc.).

²⁹ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 156. The following three points in the text here also come from p. 156.

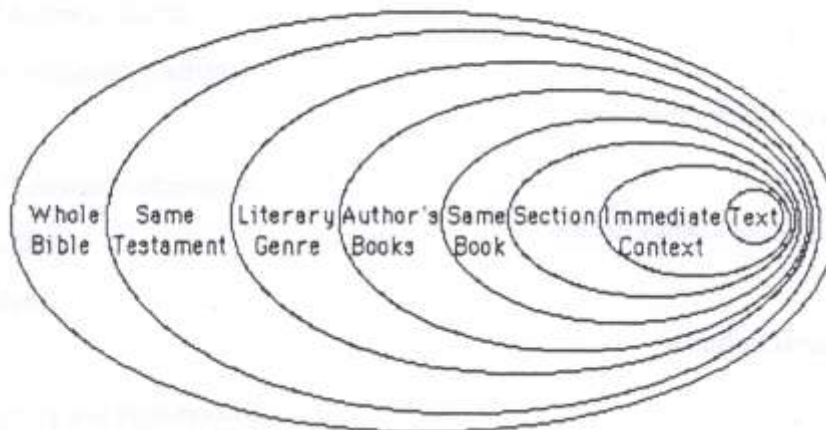
- b. The Recipients. Determining this can help in understanding the meaning.
- c. The date of writing. This can help in understanding what is going on historically
- d. The situation. This will help in understanding.
- e. The Culture. The more one knows about the cultural setting of the Bible (e.g., Ps. 23 and the agrarian culture of the day), it can help in understanding the message of the passage
- f. The Political situation. E.g., the Jewish concept of the political messiah and their misunderstanding of Jesus mission and the concept of the “kingdom” (e.g., Jn. 6:15; Matt. 21:43).

Charts on Historical and Literary Contexts³⁰:

Historical Context



Literary Context



³⁰ From David L. Turner, *Supplemental Materials for Biblical Hermeneutics*, (Newburg, IN: Trinity Book Store, 1997), 10.

Class discussion of the meaning of the phrase “sharing of your faith” in Philemon 6 using the above method:

What does “sharing of your faith” mean here? Evangelism?

Why does the NASB translate it “fellowship of your faith?” Christian Brother relationship?

How would you go about finding the best meaning?

THE MEANING OF PHILEMON 6: The Need for Synchronic Word Studies

Principles of Interpretation: Philemon 6,

Discover the Greek word for “sharing.” It is “*koinonia*.” It is a *koinonia* of faith.

How should this be translated?

- A. Study the use of the word in the New Testament: First by studying how it is used by the author (i.e., all of Paul’s writings). Second, see how it is used in the rest of the NT. What different meanings/connotations does it have? Of whom or what is it usually used? Is it used of God and Christian only? Or is it used of those who are outside of the faith?
- B. Look up the word in a couple of *koine* Greek lexicons.
- C. Expand your study to include its use in other *koine* Greek works, such as Church Fathers and the LXX.
- D. Look up the word in a couple of Greek theological dictionaries
- E. Look at several different English translations to see how they translate it.
- F. Who is the audience here? Is it written to a Christian or non-Christian?
- G. What is the cultural context of Philemon? How did society look upon slavery then? Does that affect your understanding of the book?
- H. What was the punishment in that day for a run away slave?
- I. Look at the context in which it is found once again.
- J. Look at the sentence(s) before and after verse 6. What is their context? Who are they speaking about? Christians or non-Christians?
- K. Look at the paragraph, then the surrounding paragraphs, and finally the book itself.
- L The context will determine what aspect of the semantic range of meaning should be assigned to the word and its use in the present passage under consideration.
- M. Look at several commentaries to see how they interpret it.
- N. Note how *koinonia* is used in Paul exclusively for Christian/Christian and Christian/God relationships. Note also that the context here in Philemon is not evangelism, but Paul urging Philemon to accept Onesimus as a Christian brother. Both the use of the word in Paul (and the NT as a whole) and the immediate and broader context (i.e., the whole book of Philemon) dictate a translation of the term as “fellowship” within the family of God, not evangelism.
- O. Is this principle transferable to us today? What was Paul’s intent in this verse? How does that apply (or does it) to you in your life?

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class VI: General Hermeneutics Review and Expansion

IV. General Hermeneutics: Review and Expansion:

- A. Definition: Art and Science of Interpretation
- B. Two aspects: Exegesis (reading out from the text) and Application (two-way communication)
- C. Some more general rules for Hermeneutics:
 - 1. The goal of hermeneutics is to “enable interpreters to arrive at *the meaning of the text that the biblical writers . . . intended their readers to understand*”³¹ and then correctly apply it to their lives and the lives of others.
 - 2. Basic rule: “. . . a text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers”³². This is why it is so important to do good exegesis first. It acts as the objective point of control for how the text can be understood for us today.
- D. Some general rules for exegesis with respect to prose writing:³³ For a correct interpretation and accurate understanding of the text (exegesis) one must discover and understand:

1. The obvious sense of the *literary* context

The context is the material that comes immediately before and after the passage under consideration. “The context of a sentence is its paragraph, the context of a paragraph is the series of paragraphs that precede and follow it, and the context of a chapter is the surrounding chapters”³⁴ and the context of the chapters is the whole book. The context of the book is the NT and the context of the NT is how it fits into the whole Bible. It must all fit together as a whole and be consistent. Hence to interpret a passage in its literary context, one must examine the following different concentric circles of context:³⁵

- a. the immediate context (the text, the immediate context, the section). This is the center circle.
- b. the book context
- c. the author’s corpus of writings context
- d. the same testament (OT or NT) context
- e. the whole Bible context

³¹ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 97.

³² Fee and Stuart, 74.

³³ These general rules are in large part from Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 156.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

Study of the context provides “flow-of-thought”, accurate meaning of words, and correct relationships of the parts with the whole.

2. The facts of the *historical-cultural* context. “*The correct interpretation of a biblical passage will be consistent with the historical-cultural background of the passage*”.³⁶ ***The passage cannot mean something that it could not have meant in that day.*** Familiarize yourself with the culture and setting of the day by reading Bible background books. This context involves several aspects:

- a. the immediate text
- b. the author of the text
- c. the recipients of the text
- d. the date the text was written
- e. the situation surrounding the text
- f. the culture (i.e. Greco-Roman, Jewish, both, or other)
- g. the political situation behind the text
- h. the geography behind the text.

3. The normal meaning of the words in the context: “*The correct interpretation of Scripture is the meaning required by the normal meaning of the words in the context in which they occur*”.³⁷ Words are the smallest units of meaning. Each word represents an idea. Several words put together gives clearer shape to that idea. Words are the building blocks of meaning. To do correct exegesis, one must understand the following:

- a. Words have a range of meaning.
- b. Words can have overlap of meaning with other words and thus have synonymous aspects within their total range of meaning.

Class discussion and study of “love” (agapao and phileo) in Jn. 21

- c. Word meanings change over time. They do not remain fixed. E.g., KJV I Thes. 4:15 and the word “prevent.”

Class discussion:

1. The meaning of “charity” in I Cor. 13 in the KJV.
2. The Biblical meaning of love (in our day is different than in Bible times). In the Bible Love=loyalty more than “feelings.”

³⁶ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 172.

³⁷ Ibid., 183.

d. Word meanings may include a figurative aspect. They are not always literal. E.g., “dog” in Phil. 3:2).

4. How to do word studies:

- a. Select words to study and do a detailed analysis
- b. Determine the range of meaning for the word by looking it up in a concordance and see how it is used everywhere in the Bible, look it up in Bible dictionaries, original Greek or Hebrew lexicons, theological dictionaries, Greek dictionaries of common use of the term of the day (Moulton and Milligan),³⁸ etc.
- c. Select the meaning that best fits the context. Context must ultimately be what narrows down the best specific nuance of meaning of the term. *“The use of a word in a specific context constitutes the single most crucial criterion for the meaning of a word”*.³⁹ Note for example the term “battery.” The word by itself can mean many things including an electrical device, military installation, criminal charge, a pitcher and catcher team. It is therefore absolutely necessary that one do word studies to understand the meaning of a text. Without it one does not know the semantic range or possible meanings of the passage. It is also absolutely necessary that one allow the context to be the final determiner of the part of the semantic meaning range of the word that is correct in its use in that context. A word will only have one of its meanings in each context and that is the meaning to be discovered.

Don’t attempt to force on the text an anachronistic meaning of a word. E.g., the term for sin and the archery definition of “missing the mark”

4. The grammar and syntax: Determine the proper grammatical relationship between the words. Seek to understand grammar better especially original language grammar. Understand nouns, verbs (e.g., different moods imperative, indicative, subjunctive, etc.), connectives (e.g., so that, for, therefore, although, also etc.), pronouns (you singular and you plural), reflexives (yourself), reciprocal (one another), etc. These all work together to give meaning. Eg., Matt. 28:19.

Class practice:

Diagram a sentence to see how it all fits together.

³⁸ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

³⁹ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 199.

Eph. 2:8-9
I Pet. 3:20b-21

5. The priority of the original languages. Some meaning is lost in every translation.⁴⁰ Seek out original language meaning.
6. The analogical character of the Bible. That is, “as God’s revelation, the Bible must necessarily accommodate itself to the finite mind of man. The interpreter must beware of an overly literal interpretation of such phrases as ‘the hand of God’ or ‘God changed his mind.’” Also attempt to allow the Bible to fit together as a unit recognizing its unity and diversity.
7. Interpretation needs to be according to the narrower context before the wider. It is commonly agreed that Scripture should be used to interpret Scripture. However, it needs to be understood that a term or passage must be interpreted first in its immediate context before it is studied in light of its broader application to the Bible as a whole.

This last point is very important. One needs to allow the smallest units to build the whole. It is the many trees that make up a forest. Each of those trees, however, needs to express itself in its own way to make a picture of the true forest. Otherwise one might have a presupposed idea of a tree or trees and make all trees the same and see the forest out of trees that are all the same. This would lead to a coloring of the true picture. By the same token we do not want to get myopic and see only one tree and not the forest. It takes both but I contend that discovering the individual tree takes precedent as it becomes the ground for the meaning of the text.

8. Interpret each biblical passage according to the literary laws of its genre. We will begin discussing this next class.

⁴⁰ Summary points 5-8 and the quotations noted are from Grant R. Osborne and Stephen B. Woodward, *Handbook for Bible Study*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 151-155.

**Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class VII: Introduction to Literary Criticism**

V. Literary Criticism

Class discussion on “What is literature?” and the different literature types in today’s world and how they are evaluated by people in society and in the educational system. Bring in a novel, poetry, prose, etc.

A. Literary criticism: Looking at the Bible as Literature.

In Literary Criticism the Bible is studied as a story, viewing the whole of the narrative without atomizing it with respect to the text’s sources or editing. From this point of view, the Bible can be seen as a mix of two general types of texts:⁴¹

1. Expository, explanatory, or directive texts. These would include texts that give direction or explanation more on an abstract level. E.g., the 10 commandments in Exodus 20 or the lists of sins in Gal. 5:19-21 or Paul’s directions in the Pastoral Epistles. These texts are found in literature types such as law, narrative, and epistle.
2. Literature texts.⁴² These are texts that engage the creativity and imagination of both the writer, and involves the intellect, emotion, and imagination of the reader. This is found in various literature types such as poetry, narratives, and parables. E.g., the parable of the Good Samaritan, Lk. 10:30-36.
 - a. The most important thing about literary texts is that “its subject matter is human experience, not abstract ideas”⁴³
 - b. “Literature *incarnates* its meanings as concretely as possible” as it “presents an experience” instead of simply telling “about that experience.”⁴⁴

It is important to understand this latter (b) aspect of the Bible as it engages our life experience and helps us to gain experiential knowledge of God, the world, and one another. It will help us to incarnate the “*yada*” theology of the Bible so that our faith is not merely intellectual but experiential.

3. Thirteen Rules in reading the Bible as Literature to engage in it as a matter of human experience and not merely abstract ideas:⁴⁵
 - a. “Look upon biblical stories as an invitation to share an experience, as vividly and concretely as possible, with the characters in the story.” Be an active and involved reader.

⁴¹ Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature and Get More Out of It*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 12.

⁴² Literature is defined by Ryken in a restricted sense of “the types of writing that are often called ‘imaginative literature’ or ‘creative writing’” (p. 12).

⁴³ Ryken, 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

⁴⁵ The 13 following rules come from Ryken, 33-73.

- b. “Pay close attention to every detail of setting that a storyteller puts into a story, and if setting has an important role, analyze how it contributes to the story.” Try to experience with the characters the physical, temporal, and cultural setting. E.g., Ruth and Boaz
- c. “Use every relevant detail in a story to get to know the characters as fully as possible.” Experience how the characters are portrayed, their description, responses, thoughts and words, view of themselves, and their actions as clues to their character. E.g., Cain’s statement to God about not being his brother’s keeper, Saul saying David is more righteous than he (I Sam. 24:17), David and Bathsheba, Ananias and Sapphira, Joseph and his resistance and statements about sexual temptation, Abraham’s exercise of faith and faithlessness toward God.
- d. “Identify the exact nature of the plot conflicts in a story, noting how they develop and are finally resolved.” “Plot” is the arrangement of events/conflicts for the whole story. Attempt to identify with the type of conflicts in the story: Physical (food/water, ailments, survival, Job, etc.), character (Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Jesus and the Pharisees, etc.), moral/spiritual (Jezebel seizing Naboth’s vineyard, Nathan and his confrontation with David, etc.).
- e. “In reading or discussing the stories of the Bible, analyze exactly how the narrative generates interest, curiosity, or suspense.” What is it about the story progression that arouses your curiosity? (E.g., Joseph and his brothers, Paul’s journey to Rome in Acts.) What do you experience? How does that experience help you understand the text?
- f. “Look upon the protagonist’s experiment in living as a comment about a significant aspect of human life and values.” A protagonist is the central character of the story. Antagonists are those people or forces that are against the protagonist. Does it teach something by a positive or negative example? Is the protagonist a representative of the human race or part of it? E.g., Solomon’s description in Ecclesiastes.
- g. “Analyze in detail the unity of the story, noting how each episode relates to the overriding framework(s) and how the episodes relate to each other in the unfolding progress of the story.” Look at where the story begins and ends, its various scenes and episodes, the hero, the plots, and the coherence of the story. Chart the progress of the story and see how it develops. E.g., the life of David in Samuel and Kings.
- h. “Identify the exact nature of the tests that protagonists undergo or the choices they make, observing how the story is structured around these tests or choices and noting how leading themes of the story are related to testing and choice.” Look at how the

protagonist is tested (e.g., Abraham and Isaac). Look for physical or courage tests, resourcefulness tests, mental/psychological tests, moral/spiritual tests, and note the protagonist's crucial choices when at crossroads of life. Experience as much as possible what the protagonist goes through. (E.g., David and Goliath, Sampson and Delilah, Jesus' temptation by Satan).

- i. "Pay attention to the changes that occur between the beginning and the end of a story, noting carefully the precise ways in which character change and the causes of those transformations." Note changes in fortune or situation or change of character. (E.g., Adam and Eve through Gen. 1-3, Ahab in I Ki. 21). What do they teach?

- j. "Be alert for the presence of foils, dramatic irony, and poetic justice in biblical narrative, both for what they add to your response to the story and what they contribute to the meaning."

A "foil" is something that "sets off" or "heightens what is most important in a story." E.g., Ruth and Orpah, Abraham and Lot, Rachael and Leah, Mary and Martha.

"Dramatic Irony" is what occurs when the "reader knows something that a character in the story does not know." E.g., Job where the reader knows that Satan, not God, is the cause of Job's suffering. Dramatic irony "hooks" the reader and causes them to "recognize a discrepancy" in the story and helps teach some meaning about life.

Poetic justice is found in narrative stories where good characters experience an reward and bad ones punishment (e.g., Haman). It teaches God's goodness and his justice.

- k. "Assume that the storyteller has included every detail for a purpose, and do not hesitate to reflect on how the story is affected by the inclusion of a detail as compared with the effect if the detail were omitted". Repetition can be a guide to the meaning of the story. E.g., Jesus talking to the Pharisees about "learning what it means that God desires mercy, not sacrifice" in Mat. 9:13, 12:7, and 23:23 and the overall Jewish-leader polemic.
- l. "Look upon the conclusion of a story as an implied comment on (evaluation of) the characters and events that the story has presented." E.g., Matt. 28:19-20; Peter in Jn. 21; Lot in Gen. 13 and 19; Ruth and her choice to follow God; King Saul and his choice to disobey God and do it his way.
- m. "Pay attention to how a story influences your approval and disapproval of events and characters, and formulate a statement of what the story means on the basis of this approval pattern."

E.g., Note Naboth and his desire not to sell his vineyard (I Ki. 21:3); Ahab and his pouting and childishness (I Ki. 21:4), Jezebel and her lack of moral sensitivity (I Ki. 21:5-16).

B. The Bible as a Whole Narrative

1. While there are individual books and stories in the Bible that tell stories and give moral principles and directives, there is a need to see the whole Bible as a narrative, a meta or mega narrative. All of its 66 books are telling one story so we must understand the relationship of the parts to the whole. It is a narrative of the past, present, and future acts of God depicting his *relationship* with man, man's relationship with God, and man's relationship with other men. It involves the concept of "yada'," and *yada'* theology.
2. There are four "archetypal" themes that form the Bible narrative foundation for its story:
 - a. Creation
 - b. Fall
 - c. Redemption
 - d. Consummation
3. With respect to hermeneutics and interpretation, this meta-narrative needs to be understood as a whole. Hence special problems need to be addressed and solutions found or the Bible becomes atomistic and just a jumble of historical stories and moral statements. There must be unity in diversity. Note for example the following special problems:
 - a. How do I & II Chronicles harmonize with I & II Samuel and I & II Kings or does they need to harmonize?
 - b. How do Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John harmonize or do they need to harmonize?
4. The Bible needs to be seen as a progression of God's whole revelation.

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class VIII: Midterm Exam and Student Reports (To Be Determined).

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class IX: Special Hermeneutics: Genre, Narrative, and OT Law

VI. Special Hermeneutics: Genre

A. Genre definition: “a literary type”. There are many different literary types in the Bible including the following:

1. Narrative
2. Gospel
3. Law
4. Poetry/Psalms
5. Wisdom
6. Prophecy
7. Epistle
8. Apocalyptic
9. Parable
10. Symbols and Figures of Speech

B. Understanding how each genre functions and how it was to be understood helps tremendously in understanding the message behind it.

E.g., Revelation as 3 types (1:1=apocalyptic, 1:3=prophecy, 1:4-5=letter or epistle).

VII. Special Hermeneutics: OT Narratives

A. Definition: Narratives are “stories—purposeful stories retelling the historical events of the past that are intended to give meaning and direction for a given people in the present.” It is ultimately God’s story not just ours.

B. Content of OT: 40% of the OT is narrative

C. Biblical narrative is quite selective in its content: E.g., Gen. 1-11 covers several 1000s of years or more while chapters 12-50 covers several 100 years.

D. Narratives can be cyclical. E.g., Judges follows a cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, deliverance, sin etc.

E. Consists of all⁴⁶ of:

1. Genesis
2. Joshua
3. Judges
4. Ruth
5. I & II Sam
6. I & II Kings
7. I & II Chronicles
8. Ezra

⁴⁶ The “all” and “part” OT narrative lists comes from Fee and Stuart, 89.

- 9. Nehemiah
- 10. Esther
- F. Consists of parts of:
 - 1. Exodus
 - 2. Numbers
 - 3. Deuteronomy
 - 4. Job
 - 5. Isaiah
 - 6. Jeremiah
 - 7. Daniel
 - 8. Jonah
 - 9. Haggai
- G. Principles of Interpretation of OT narratives:⁴⁷
 - 1. An OT narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine
 - 2. An OT narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.
 - 3. Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen in every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral application.
 - 4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.
 - 5. Most of the characters in OT narratives are far from perfect—as are their actions as well
 - 6. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge this on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in Scripture
 - 7. All narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (c.f. John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know
 - 8. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific, limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere in other ways
 - 9. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives
 - 10. I would add to this that we can glean inspiration from narratives if we look for the **heart** of God, the **heart** of a godly character, or the **heart** of the writer using the previously stated Literary Criticism principles.

VIII. Special Hermeneutics: OT Law (“Torah” in Hebrew)

- A. OT Law: OT books primarily concerned with Law are Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

⁴⁷ These (#1-9) are from Fee and Stuart, 106.

B. The OT Laws were “covenant stipulations” *for Israel* (note especially Deut. 4:30; 7:9-13)

C. Definitions:⁴⁸

1. Laws (plural): There are more than 600 specific laws or commands in the OT the Israelites were to keep as indications of their faithfulness to Yahweh
2. Law (singular): To refer to the specific laws in a collective manner (Matt. 5:18).
3. Law (singular): To refer to the Pentateuch as a whole or the Law of Moses as a whole (Josh. 1:8; Lk. 24:25, 44)
4. Law (singular): Can refer to the whole OT “religious system” (Rom. 3:10-18 (quoting from Psalms and Isaiah); Jn. 10:34 (quoting Ps. 82).
5. Law(s): “nomos” (in the singular or plural) in the NT can refer to any rule principle or command (Rom 7:21-25)
6. Law: NT has various usages: The law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), the law of faith (Rom. 3:27); the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus (Rom 82), law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2); the law of liberty (James 1:25).

Here we will be looking at law as the specific commands in the OT.

D. Three-fold division of the law held by some Christians:⁴⁹

1. Moral/ethical law. This refers to laws concerning moral choice based on the character and nature of God. These are said to never change and are in force for us today.
2. Civil/governmental law. Laws referring to responsibility of the rulers of the OT theocracy to do things as God directs. These are said to not be in force today.
3. Ritual/ceremonial law: These are laws that regulate activities in the Temple with its sacrifices, days of worship, Sabbaths, etc. These are said to not be in force today.
4. Critique: This division seems helpful in determining what is continuous in the OT law for today (e.g., the nature of God) but the division is difficult to justify and seems to be an arbitrary modern day division. This is because we have no indication that the Jews under the OT covenant ever divided it up this way nor does the NT divide it up this way.
5. Understanding the term “law” affects how we understand the NT statement that we are not under law but under grace. Rom. 6:14

Class discussion: What does Rom. 6:14 mean? What law is it talking about? What does Matt. 5: 17-20 mean?

E. Two types of law in the OT:

1. Casuistic Law which is noted by and “if ... then” grammatical structure

⁴⁸ From Fee and Stuart, 164.

⁴⁹ Fee and Stuart, 167-169 hold to this division and its applicability or non-applicability to today.

- and includes “case law”. It is law that deals with case by case *specific situations* that occur (e.g., Ex. 21:18-19 dealing with injury as a result of a fight; Deut. 25:1-3, individual specific laws)
2. Apodictic Law which is “absolute law”. This deals with laws that are unconditional and categorical such as commands and prohibitions, (e.g. The 10 Commandments; Deut. 25:4).⁵⁰ Unlike casuistic law, apodictic law is not exhaustive, or situational, but is “paradigmatic,” meaning that it sets “*a standard by an example* rather than by mentioning every possible circumstance.”⁵¹ It is “intended as a reliable guide with general applicability—not technical description of all possible conditions one could imagine.”⁵²

F. Law in Salvation History

1. OT law purpose:
 - a) To preserve Israel as a unique nation on earth, God’s special holy people to testify of him to all nations (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 14:2; 28:9-10).
 - b) To reveal sin and trespasses (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19-29).
2. OT had a grace basis. Note how many times God had mercy on them in their disobedience when Moses cried out for them to God.
3. Ultimately, God does not just want obedience, but to experience our hearts (Deut. 8:2).
4. Luther’s law/grace and faith/works dichotomy.

G. Principles of Law interpretation: Fee and Stewart (p. 180) give the following (1-6) dos and don’t principles of interpretation to use with respect to our reading of OT Law:

1. Do see the OT law as God’s fully inspired Word *for* you.
Don’t see the OT law as God’s direct command *to* you.
2. Do see the OT law as the basis for the old covenant, and therefore for Israel’s history.
Don’t see the OT law as binding on Christians in the new covenant except where specifically renewed
3. Do see God’s justice, love, and high standards revealed in the OT law.
Don’t forget to see that God’s mercy is made equal to the severity of the standards
4. Do see OT law as a paradigm—providing examples for the full range of expected behavior.
Don’t see the OT law as complete. It is not technically comprehensive
5. Do remember that the *essence* of the law (the Ten

⁵⁰ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 274-277.

⁵¹ Fee and Stuart, 171.

⁵² Ibid., 171-172.

Commandments and the two chief laws) is repeated in the prophets and renewed in the New Testament

Don't expect the OT *law* to be cited frequently by the prophets or the New Testament

6. Do see the Old Testament law as a generous gift to Israel, bringing much blessing when obeyed

Don't see the OT law as a grouping of arbitrary, annoying regulations limiting people's freedom

7. I might add to this that it is important to understand that the OT Law functioned to
 - (1) reveal the heart and character of God (Lev. 20:7)
 - (2) describe what was necessary to be holy like God (Lev. 11:44-45)
 - (3) reveal the covenant stipulations for a loving, loyal, and fearing relationship between God and Israel (Ex. 34:10-14, Deut. 5:30-6:3),
 - (4) what it takes to be his treasured possession (Deut. 7:6),
 - (5) and to reveal what would be necessary for them as a nation to be a witness to God to other nations of His wisdom, righteousness, and nearness to his people (Deut. 5:5-8).

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class X: Special Hermeneutics: Poetry and Wisdom

IX. Hermeneutics of the Poetry (Psalms) and Wisdom Books

A. Interpreting OT Poetry

One third of the entire Bible is poetry. It is concentrated in the book of Psalms, Job, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations but is scattered throughout the other books (including in the NT in Lk. 1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:29-32; Rev. 5:9-10; 15:3-4).

1. Characteristics of OT poetry:⁵³

- a. Lacks rhyme (sound alike words) of English poetry but uses imagination
- b. Does have parallelism in that the second line often restates the first line.
 - 1) Synonymous parallelism: Second line restates the first line thought in a complementary manner, e.g., Ps. 2:4; 1:5.
 - 2) Antithetic parallelism: Second line contrasts with the thought of the first line or states the truth of the first in a negative way, e.g., Ps. 1:6; Job 3:6.
 - 3) Climatic parallelism: Here the second line completes the meaning of the first line by repeating the first thought then supplementing it with additional material, e.g., Ps. 29:1
 - 4) Synthetic parallelism (it is debated whether this is a true parallelism): Here the second line develops the thought of the first without repeating any portion of the first, e.g., Ps. 23:3 and 104:5.
- c. Poetic parts are identified in some Bibles by being set apart in a special way in an individual line and indented format. For example note Ps. 2:4-6:

The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."
- d. Is rich in imagery. "Poetry is a language of images." E.g., Ps. 104:1ff
- e. Is rich in figures of speech
 - 1) Metaphor: Draws a correspondence between two things

⁵³ Much of this material comes from Ryken, 87-107.

using the word “is.” E.g., “The Lord God is a sun and shield.” (Ps. 84:11).

- 2) Simile: Draws a “correspondence between two things” by using the terms “like” or “as.” “Your tongue . . . is like a sharpened razor.” (Ps 52:2).
- 3) Symbol: Is a “concrete image that points to or embodies other meanings.” E.g., “Light is shed upon the righteous.” (Ps. 97:11). Here “light” is the symbol.
- 4) Allusion: This is a “reference to past literature or history.” E.g., “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.” (Ps. 33:6).
- 5) Apostrophe: Is a “direct address to someone or something absent as though the person or thing were present and capable of listening.” E.g., “Lift up your heads, O you gates.” (Ps. 24:7).
- 6) Personification: “Treating something non-human (and frequently inanimate) as though it were a human capable of acting or responding.” E.g., “Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy.” (Ps. 96:12).
- 7) Hyperbole: “Conscious exaggeration for the sake of effect.” E.g., “All night long I flood my bed with weeping.” (Ps. 6:6).
- 8) Anthropomorphism: “. . . the portrayal of deity in human terms” E.g., “. . . though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.” (Ps. 37:4)

f. Some Hebrew alphabetic acrostics occur: E.g., Ps. 119

2. Interpretation principles:

- a. “poetry is a language of images that the reader must experience as a series of imagined sensory situations.”⁵⁴ To understand poetry as it is intended we must experience it visually.
- b. “whenever you find a statement that compares one thing to another, first meditate on the literal or physical half of the comparison and then analyze how many correspondences can appropriately be drawn between that situation and the subject of the poem.”⁵⁵
- c. “Interpret as figurative any statement that does not make sense at a literal level in the context in which it appears.”⁵⁶
- d. Study the historical context if there is one. E.g., David and Bathsheba and Ps. 32; Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea and Ps. 90. Also look at Near Eastern parallels to see if

⁵⁴ Ryken, 91.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 102.

they might shed light upon the poetry. “The occasion on which ancient Israel used a psalm constitutes its historical context.”⁵⁷ Was it private or public liturgical worship or prayer or instruction?

- e. Study the literary context: Each Psalm “serves as its own literary context.”⁵⁸ One needs to look at the whole Psalm or work. E.g., the Song of Solomon needs to be seen in its entirety as a love poem not an allegory about God’s love for his people. Compare to ancient near eastern love poems.
 - f. Study the structure of the poem, its figures of speech, and its development of thought, and main point to determine what is being said and how it applies to us today.
 - g. “Apply corporate texts to the Christian community and individual texts to the Christian individual.”⁵⁹
3. Types of Psalms: Discovered through Form Critical analysis.
- a. Lament Psalms, individual (3; 22; 31; 39; 42; 57; 71; 88; 120; 139; 142) and corporate (12; 44; 80; 94; 137)
 - b. Thanksgiving Psalms, community (65; 67; 75; 107; 124; 136) and individual (18; 30; 32; 34; 40; 66; 92; 116; 118; 138)
 - c. Praise Psalms (8; 19; 33; 66; 100; 103; 104; 111; 113; 114; 117; 145-150)
 - d. Recitals of Salvation History (God’s saving acts) (78; 105; 106; 135-136)
 - e. Celebrations of Covenant Renewal (50; 81; 89; 132; including kingship/royal psalms: 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 101; 110; 144)
 - f. Wisdom Psalms (36; 37; 49; 73; 112; 127; 128; 133)
 - g. Trust Psalms (11; 16; 23; 27; 62; 63; 91; 121; 125; 131)
 - h. Imprecatory Psalms (Psalms which “contain verbalizations to God of anger at others” expressed “*to and through* God verbally”⁶⁰. They are “appeals to God to pour out His wrath upon the psalmist’s enemies”⁶¹. (Parts of Psalms. 7; 12; 35; 58; 59; 69; 70; 83; 109; 137; 139; 140)
 - i. Messianic Psalms (Parts of Psalms 2; 8; 16; 22; 35; 40; 41; 45; 68; 69; 72; 89; 102; 109; 110; 118)

B. Interpreting OT Wisdom.

- 1. Class Discussion: “What is wisdom?” “How is it manifested?”

⁵⁷ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 290.

⁵⁸ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 290.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁶⁰ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 220, hereafter noted as *Book by Book*.

⁶¹ Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 452.

2. OT wisdom is concentrated in Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.
3. In our world there has been a tremendous increase in knowledge in the last 300 years (especially in the last 100) but not much increase in wisdom.
4. Wisdom involves the purposeful and willful, skillful, and ethical application of cognitive to corporate society and ones own individual life. Cf., I Cor. 1:18ff; 8:1-3 and the development of pride; James 3:13-17 and the distinction between earthly and divine wisdom. Wisdom is the skillful application of truth to life and ministry and not mere abstract or intellectual theory.
5. Wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD, Prov. 9:10, and it is given to those who ask for it, James 1:5.
6. Proverbs can have special structural forms: E.g., alphabetical acrostic found in Prov. 31:10-31
7. Interpretation principles⁶²
 - a. Proverbs are often parabolic (i.e., figurative pointing beyond themselves to something else)
 - b. Proverbs are intensely practical, not theoretically theological.
 - c. Proverbs are worded to be memorable, not technically precise. “No proverb is so perfectly worded that it can stand up to the unreasonable demand that it apply in every situation every time.”⁶³
 - d. Proverbs are not designed to support selfish behavior—just the opposite! You cannot practice the proverbs without denying yourself.
 - e. Proverbs are not legal guarantees from God but poetic guidelines for good behavior. “Proverbs teach probable truth, not absolute truth.”⁶⁴ E.g., Prov. 13:11; 14:23; 22:26-27; 22:6.
 - f. Proverbs must be read as a collection and compared and balanced with others and the rest of Scripture since they give only a small nugget of truth not the whole of Scriptural truth.
 - g. Proverbs strongly reflecting ancient culture may need sensible “translation” so as not to lose their meaning. E.g., Prov. 25:24: What is a “corner of the roof?”
 - h. Proverbs may use highly specific language, exaggeration, or any of a variety of literary techniques to make their point.
 - i. Proverbs give good advice for wise approaches to certain aspects of life but are not exhaustive in their coverage.
 - j. Wrongly used, proverbs may justify a crass, materialistic

⁶² From Fee and Stuart, 237-240.

⁶³ Ibid., 238.

⁶⁴ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 315.

lifestyle, e.g., holding to Prov. 10:4 without looking at 11:4 and 15:16. Rightly used, proverbs will provide practical advice for daily living.

- k. Proverbs are compressed parables, similes, metaphors, and allegory. They present a compression or crystallization of a life experience, a single intended “point of comparison or principle of truth.”⁶⁵
- l. Be aware of the historical context (if there is one) and the cultural situation. Knowledge of ancient Hebrew culture can shed light upon the understanding of the wisdom. E.g., Job is a wisdom critique of the idea that if you are righteous nothing bad will happen to you, Job. 1:1, 8; 2:3, 10.
- n. Interpret the parts in light of the whole. E.g., Job’s friend’s dialogues need to be seen in light of the whole book. If done so then one sees that their statements are not necessarily true and thus not to be wisdom for us today. In Ecclesiastes nearly only the last two verses (12:13-14) present the correct view of life. (Exceptions might be 2:24-26; 3:10-15; 5:1-7, 18-20). Thus the context of the whole is important in understanding and applying the part. It must be remembered that Ecclesiastes is a realistic portrayal of life in the midst of a twisted world.

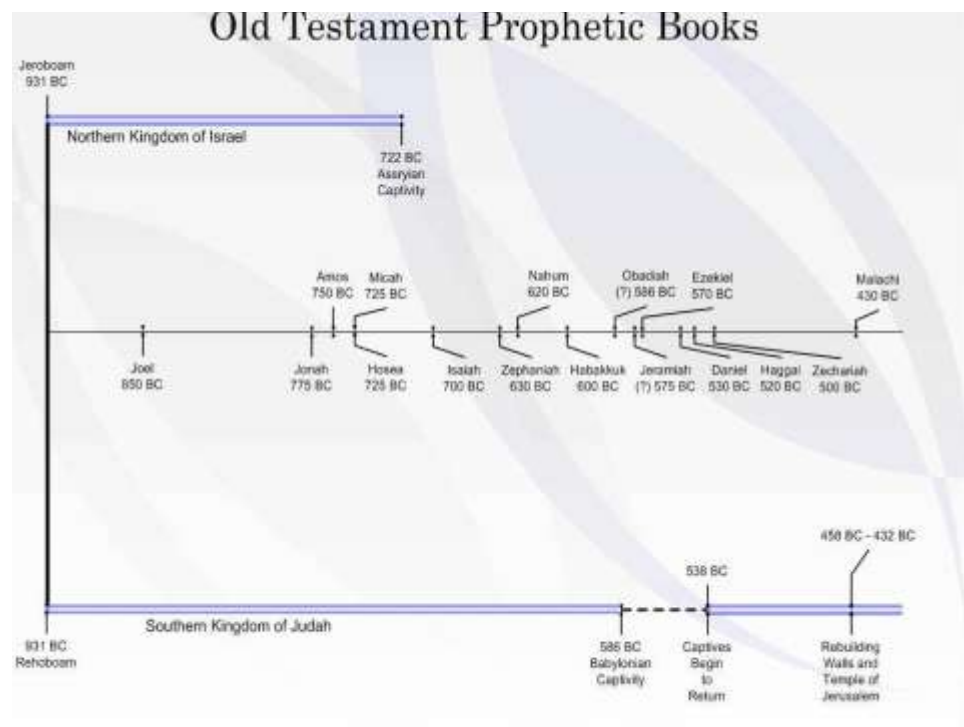
⁶⁵ Virkler, 162.

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class XI: Special Hermeneutics: OT and NT Prophecy and Apocalyptic

X. Biblical Hermeneutics of OT and NT Prophecy and Apocalyptic

A. OT & NT Prophecy Interpretation:

1. The Prophetic books are comprised of the 12 Minor Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation.
2. There were prophets who did not write books in the OT: Miriam, Debra, Samuel, Nathan, Saul, Elijah, Elisha. Also in the NT: Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, Agabus, Philip's 4 daughters
3. There were pre and post exilic prophets: Note the timeline below:



2. OT prophet's main task was to proclaim God's word to their contemporaries. They were preachers who preached several different types of sermons. These include prophecies of:
 - a. disaster
 - b. salvation or prophetic promise
 - c. woes or judgment
 - d. dirges or doom
 - e. hymns
 - f. liturgy (2 or more speakers participate in response to one another)

- g. disputations (speaker attempts to persuade the audience of a truth),
 - h. lawsuit (speaker speaks as if Israel is on trial accused of a crime)
 - i. prophecy against foreign nations
 - j. visions-oracle report
 - k. and narrative prophecy (including symbolic actions (Hos. 1:2-9)).
3. Interpretive principles: Things to keep in mind when interpreting prophecy:⁶⁶
- a. The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators. They spoke God's words to bring people back to obeying God and His covenant. The prophets announced both blessings and warnings. Blessings for obedience and warnings of punishment for continued disobedience.
 - b. The prophets' message was not their own, but God's. They were his mouth pieces
 - c. The prophets were God's direct representatives. As such they held a type of "societal office". "They were like ambassadors from the heavenly court who relayed the divine sovereign's will to the people. The prophets were, on their own, neither radical social reformers nor innovative religious thinkers. The social reforms and the religious thought that God wished to impart to the people had already been revealed in the covenantal law." The words of the prophets were not "merely God's Word as the prophet saw it but God's Word as God wished the prophet to present it. The prophet does not act or speak independently of God."
 - d. The prophets' message is unoriginal. The essential content of what they presented was the essential content of the "original Mosaic covenant's warnings and promises."
 - e. When reading prophets, "think oracles". Oracles were juxtaposed often with each other without indications of when one began or another oracle ended.
 - f. Understand the "nature" of prophecy⁶⁷
 - 1) Prophets were more forth-tellers than fore-tellers. That is, the message they spoke was intended mainly for the people of their day or the immediate future than for a people of the distant future (estimated at 90% that day vs. 10% future). There can be a mixture in a

⁶⁶ Gleaned from Fee and Stuart, 184-189.

⁶⁷ Much of this section is gleaned from Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 302-306.

prophecy of future things and present things, e.g., Is. 2:1-4 (future), 2:5-9 (present), 2:10-11 (future). This is seen possibly in the NT also in Matt. 24:2-31 (future?), 24:31-46 (present). (Cf., also II Pet. 3:10-14; I Jn. 3:2-3; Rev. 1:3 and 3b).

- 2) Prophets had a “telescopic view” of the future, e.g., Is. 9:6-7 and the birth of Jesus, i.e., sometimes there is a blend of several events into one prophecy
- 3) Prophecy can have two fulfillments, one near the time of the prophet and one in the distant future, e.g., II Sam. 7:12-16 where a son is promised to be king. This was fulfilled by Solomon and Jesus.
- 4) Prophecies are conditional, e.g., Jonah and the Ninevites.
- 5) There can be literal or spiritual fulfillments of prophecies, e.g., Literal: God gave Israel the land (Joshua), Spiritual: John the Baptist as Elijah (Mal. 4:6 and Matt. 11:14).
- 6) It can be poetic using symbolic speech, figures, images, etc.
- 7) Oracular: It contains collected oracles or sermons not necessarily chronologically written down. (Cf. oracles in Is. 1:1; 2:1; 6:1; 7:7; 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1).
- 8) Understand that OT prophets looked forward to Christ even though they saw it only dimly (I Pet. 1:10-12). Pay especial attention to the Messianic portions of the OT as revealed in the NT.
- 9) The clarity of the text determines the degree of confidence we may hold in its interpretation. The clearer the text the greater the certainty of what it means.⁶⁸
- 10) The Bible itself is the best guide to the interpretation of prophecy
- 11) Unless the NT indicates otherwise, the student should relate OT prophecies about Israel and Zion to those whose fulfillment the NT specifically teaches, in most cases it is fulfilled spiritually in the Church.
- 12) Strive to understand the text’s major points rather than all of its symbolic details

⁶⁸ Notes 9ff here are gleaned from Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 310-11.

13) Read the longer prophetic books in small sections (i.e., a context of verses, a whole chapter, or several chapters) as God did not intend the prophets to be read through at one setting. Focus on the major points of each section. “Think Oracles.”⁶⁹

B. OT and NT Apocalyptic Interpretation:

1. Apocalyptic genre is found in the OT in Daniel, and parts of Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Isaiah (and perhaps Zachariah). In the NT it is found in the book of Revelation, Matt. 24-25, II Thes. 2, and II Pet. 3.
2. Apocalyptic characteristics:⁷⁰
 - a. The writer tends to choose some great man of the past (e.g., Enoch or Moses and make him the hero of the book.
 - b. This hero often takes a journey, accompanied by a celestial guide who shows him interesting sights and comments on them.
 - c. Information is often communicated through visions
 - d. The visions often make use of strange, even enigmatic, symbolism
 - e. The visions are often pessimistic with regard to the possibility that human intervention will take care of the present situation.
 - f. The visions usually end with God’s bringing the present state of affairs to a cataclysmic end and establishing a better situation.
 - g. The apocalyptic writer often uses a pseudonym, claiming to write in the name of his chosen hero. (Not the case with Rev., Dan., and others in the Bible).
 - h. The writer often takes past history and rewrites it as if it were prophecy. (Not the case with Dan and Rev.).
 - i. The focus of apocalyptic is on comforting and sustaining the “righteous remnant.” God shall intervene and bring salvation.
 - j. Dualism: A battle between good and evil.
 - k. Determinism of history: History is linear and is going somewhere determined by God.
4. Apocalyptic compared with prophecy:
 - a. Apocalyptic has more extravagant symbolism
 - b. Apocalyptic is more oriented to the future
 - c. Apocalyptic is more pessimistic
5. Interpretive principles of Apocalyptic:
 - a. Its chief characteristic is symbolism. Realize symbols in apocalyptic are used to give a *heightened dramatic effect* and may not possess an independent meaning in every detail. See the big picture. Focus on the forest not the trees.

⁶⁹ Fee and Stewart, 193.

⁷⁰ Letters a-i are from Virkler, 192.

- b. Understand symbols and how they were used in the culture of the day. Be in tune with what they meant in the day. But do not assume that that is what they mean in the text under consideration.
 - c. Symbols are symbolic rather than pictorial. They are to be interpreted rather than visualized.
 - d. Pay attention to the historical and literary contexts.
 - e. Do not assume that a symbol will mean the same thing each time it appears (cf., Rev. 6:2 and 19:11). Is the “white horse” the same in both?
 - f. Study the way the Bible itself interprets its symbols: Rev. 1:20; 5:6-8; 13:18; 19:8; 17:9-18.
 - g. Study the context and find out what the symbol was originally meant to teach. From the context note the frequency of the symbol and the distribution of the symbol and allow the context to determine and control the symbol’s meaning.
 - h. See how the apocalyptic text fits into the big picture of Biblical theology and eschatology.
 - i. Realize our human limitations in understanding.
6. A look at Revelation

Class Discussion: How has Revelation/apocalyptic been interpreted today? What do you think about the “Left Behind Series?”

- a. It has been interpreted in various ways
 - 1) Preterist School—The book is a description of the struggles of the church limited to the first century with nothing much about the future
 - 2) Idealist School—Stresses the timelessness of the book. Symbols are taken to mean God’s people will be vindicated in the end, i.e., “We win!”
 - 3) Continuous Historical View—the book is a description of the history of Western Civilization. The entire book, not just chapters 2 and 3, give a view of history.
 - 4) Futuristic View—the book is a book of the end times. Only the first 3 chapters are concerned with the time it was written. The rest deal with the end times.
 - 5) Best view is probably a mixture of Preterist and Futurist as it was written to the people of the day yet talks about end time also.
- b. It is a mixed Genre: Rev. 1:1-5
 - 1) Apocalyptic
 - 2) Prophecy
 - 3) Letter or Epistle
- c. Some literary and symbolism characteristics
 - 1) Cyclical aspect of seals, trumpets, and bowls. Seem

to be an upward intensifying spiral rather than a linear progression of events.

- 2) Numerology and its meaning, 2, 3, 7, 10, 12, 1000, 144,000. Structure of sevens: 7 churches, 7 spirits of God, 7 angels, 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls
- 3) Animals, jewels, colors. What do they mean? Study OT and OT backgrounds to enlighten their meaning.

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class XII: Special Hermeneutics: NT: Narrative: Gospels, Parables, Acts

XI: Biblical Hermeneutics of Interpreting NT Narrative: Gospels, Parables, Acts

A. Gospels

1. Form a unique literary genre
2. Might be best described as “theological biographies”⁷¹ as they tell of
 - a. selected aspects of the life of Christ (including his words and deeds) as
 - b. one sent from God who fulfills God’s promises in the OT.
3. They consist of
 - a. narratives of Jesus’ life and
 - b. large blocks of his sayings or teachings
 - c. note how Matthew’s gospel, for instance, is woven around 5 discourses (sermons, saying or teaching sections): (1) chapters 5-7; (2) chapter 10; (3) chapter 13; (4) chapter 18 and (5) chapters 24-25.
4. All four are witnesses about Jesus and have been called “memoirs of the apostles” by Justin Martyr.⁷² Each gospel gives a view of Jesus from a different perspective.
5. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called “synoptic gospels” (syn = same, optic = see, i.e., see the same) because they have many verbal parallels (many times with exact Greek wording) in the accounts throughout these gospels. These accounts vary in their presentation of the material and these variations have become known as the “synoptic problem.” How could Jesus have said different things in what seems to be the same setting or how could one gospel depict one thing in a narrative and the others something different? E.g., cf., Mk. 1:11 and Lk. 3:22 with Mt. 3:17 (“You are my son whom I love” vs. “This is my son whom I love”).
6. This also has led to a search for which Gospel was first and was copied from by the others. Some say Mark was first and used by Matthew and Luke which explains the exact wording in Matthew with Luke and with Mark. Others claim Matthew was earliest which they say can explain the exact wording. John has some parallels with the other gospels but not any where near to the same extent.
7. Gospel Interpretive Principles:
 - a. Read and Think Horizontally. That is to read and compare parallel accounts in each gospel to get a synopsis of the account from each gospel’s perspective. Compare

⁷¹ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 325.

⁷² Fee and Stuart, 130.

similarities, differences and specific emphases each gospel writer presents with respect to Jesus' actions and teachings. E.g.,

- 1) Matthew is unique in stressing that the parable of the wicked tenants is about the rule of God being taken away from Israel and given to the Church.
- 2) Luke in many of his accounts stresses Jesus' concern for sinners, Gentiles, Samaritans, tax-collectors, prostitutes, women, and the poor, those looked down upon by society in general.

You may allow one gospel to inform another but should not allow it to cover up or hide the distinctives of another. Each Gospel has unique aspects of the one story. As Fee and Stuart entitle their chapter on the Gospels: "One Story, Many Dimensions."⁷³

- b. Read and think vertically (i.e., study each gospel passage in light of its own historical and literary context of the gospel the passage is found). Since each gospel has its own special distinctives, this vertical reading should take priority over the horizontal. This will allow the interpreter to understand how the passage is used in its own setting first before comparing it to its use in the other gospels.

Horizontal and vertical reading and thinking is a type of redaction critical assessment which highlights how each gospel writer put his gospel together with its own distinctives and emphases.

- c. Consider each gospel's intended audience if possible. Each gospel's emphases can give a clue toward this. E.g., Matthew and his anti-Jewish-leader polemic.
- d. "Recognize that the disciples in the Gospels represent believers in any age"⁷⁴ and not confined for instance to Jews or full time Christian leaders.
- e. Understand the idea of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' ministry. "One dare not think he or she can properly interpret the gospels without a clear understanding of the concept of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus."⁷⁵
 - 1) this age and the age to come
 - 2) the overlapping of the ages, the now and the not yet
 - 3) Inaugurated eschatology (the end times has started with

⁷³ 127.

⁷⁴ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 332.

⁷⁵ Fee and Stuart, 145.

Jesus)

4) Jesus' miracles, casting out demons, etc., were all signs of the end, that the end had begun during his ministry (Lk. 11:20; Mt. 11:2-6; Lk. 17:20-21)

5) Jesus brought righteousness, peace, health, salvation, eternal life. These are experienced now only in part. At the consummation of the Kingdom of God they will be experienced in their full measure.

f. Remember that Jesus is the central character and focus of each Gospel.

g. Recognize that there are several different genres within the gospel genre and interpret each according to its specific sub-genre type. Note for example, the following genres⁷⁶ within the gospel genre:

- 1) annunciation stories
- 2) nativity stories
- 3) vocation or calling stories
- 4) recognition stories
- 5) witness or testimony stories
- 6) conflict or controversy stories
- 7) encounter stories
- 8) pronouncement stories
- 9) miracle stories
- 10) discourses/sermons
- 11) sayings
- 12) passion stories
- 13) parables

B. Parables

1. Definition: Parables “are extended comparisons whereby an earthly story conveys a heavenly meaning.”⁷⁷ They are “stories with varying degrees of allegorical meaning not a separate genre from allegory.”⁷⁸ They have allegorical elements but are not allegories but parables.⁷⁹ Parables are one of the main genres in the Gospels but are found throughout the Bible (e.g., II Sam. 12:1-7; Jud. 9:7-15; Isa. 5:2-6.).

2. Characteristics of Parables:⁸⁰

- a. Vividness and realism. No fantasy but real “lifelikeness,” e.g., planting and harvesting, baking bread, tending sheep, responding to an invitation, etc.
- b. Secular stories
- c. Simple action and plot
- d. Suspense, the wounded man on the road side in the good Samaritan

⁷⁶ From Ryken, 137.

⁷⁷ This definition comes from my Biblical Hermeneutics class notes by David L. Turner.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Fee and Stuart, 154.

⁸⁰ From Ryken, 139-45.

- e. Heightened foils or contrasts, e.g., the rich man and Lazarus
 - f. Repetition, e.g., 3 bad soils.
 - g. Uses “end stress, e.g., fertile soil with abundant harvest comes last.
 - h. Appeal to human psychological archetypes such as master and servant, the elder and younger brother in the Prodigal Son parable.
 - i. Artistic (“narrative art”)
3. Interpretive history:
- a. Pre-modern: parables were understood as allegories and had almost innumerable points
E.g., Augustine and his interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Nearly every little detail had a hidden or mystery meaning.⁸¹ Augustine believed that a 3 fold, bodily, soulful, and spiritual meanings could be found
 - b. Early Modern: Adolph Julicher: Parable has only one main *ethical or moral* point for Christians today. This was found to be too restrictive for story telling genre.
 - c. Later Modern: C. H. Dodd and J. Jeremias. Looked at the *Sitz im Leben*, i.e., the original “setting in life” of the parable. They felt parables needed to be understood in their original historical cultural setting. But they believed that the church had modified and created that setting in which we find the parables. Hence while the parable could be interpreted in the setting found in the gospel text it was not necessarily the actual real historical text but one created by the gospel writer.
 - d. Common interpretations today
 - 1) New Hermeneutic. This is a liberal skeptical anti-historical view that says we cannot find an accurate historical critical meaning in the parables in its original context. So it stresses the 20th and 21st century context. The parables are to be understood subjectively and mean different *legitimate* things to different people (i.e. polyvalence).
 - 2) Structuralism: Social Science impact on Parable study:
It is an attempt to see the inner structure of the human mind in the parables, i.e., to find out how the human mind works. See parables coming across as binary polar opposites of good and evil or light and darkness, etc.
 - 3) Grammatical historical exegesis: Evangelical and conservative understanding
2. Interpretative Principles:
- a. Understand “story” genre. Listen to the parable as a story, get a wider view and don’t try to exegetically smother it with over exegetical sophistication. It is intended to be simple!
 - b. Attempt to discover if the parable has one main point or several. Allow the context to dictate how many points are intended by Jesus.
 - c. Consider the dual settings of the parable

⁸¹ See Fee and Stuart, 150.

- 1) the historical context of Jesus' life and culture
 - 2) the literary context of the early church and how the gospel writer adapted the parable to fit the needs of his intended audience. This context should be our main concern.
- d. Consider "each parable from the perspective of each of the main characters."⁸² For instance the parable of the Prodigal Son can be understood from the perspective of the father, the prodigal, and the older brother.
- e. Try to determine how the original hearers would have identified with the story
- 1) Look for the "shock" element in his parables and try to apply it to today's situations. E.g., the shock behind the good Samaritan or the woman at the well.
 - 2) Look for an "end stress." E.g., consider the repetition and end stress in the parable of the lost sheep, coin, and son (Lk. 15:3-32, Cf., Nathan's statement, "You are the Man!"). Note the end stress of each individual parable here and then the effect of the repetition of all three.
- f. Translate the main point(s) discovered into our lives today. Consider retelling the parable in "modern garb to recreate the effect it would have had on its original audience."⁸³

C. Acts: Hermeneutics: Acts as narrative *and* theological history.

Class Discussion: How would you determine what should be intended as normative from the Acts narrative?

1. Acts and obligatory/normative historical precedent:

Although some scholars, such as Fee and Stuart, believe that, with respect to the interpretation of narratives such as Acts, "*Unless Scripture explicitly tells us we must do something, what is only narrated or described does not function in a normative (i.e., obligatory) way . . .*"⁸⁴, this does not seem a necessary assumption as the book of Acts is not just narrative history *but* theological history. God is the God of history (it is His story) and has worked in and used history to teach about himself and his ways. Fee and Stuart's assumption does not seem to take this well enough into account. Their assumption also seems to contradict 2 Tim. 3:16 ("*all Scripture is useful. . .*"). The Bible itself teaches that historical narratives contain normativity⁸⁵ for us today (for instance I Cor. 10:11 which states, "These things happened as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come", see also Rom. 15:4). Moreover, the book of Hebrews teaches that events and personal examples are major ways God speaks to us today (e.g., the person

⁸² Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (338).

⁸³ Ibid., 340.

⁸⁴ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to read the Bible For All its Worth, 3rd ed* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 118-119.

⁸⁵ I am defining "normativity" as principles or precedents that are to be followed in all times and in all cultures.

and historical event of Jesus speaks in Heb. 1:1ff, Moses speaks, the people hardening their hearts speak, the event of Melchizedek speaks, the Temple speaks, the acts of the people of faith speak (Heb. 11)) and all of these are understood to speak in a normative way by that author. The speeches in the book of Acts themselves seem to indicate that narrative Biblical history can be normative. Stephen uses narrative history to convince the Jews that they were a “stiffnecked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears” (Acts. 7:51). Peter uses an event of David’s death and burial and his statement in the Psalms as pointing without question to Jesus since David did not resurrect (Acts 2). The question therefore would seem not to be whether normativity exists in Biblical narratives but how to determine what aspects of those narrative accounts are normative.

2. Normativity in Acts determined by consistent repeated pattern:

William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. reject Fee and Stuart’s statement quoted above and state that one principle they feel should be used to determine normativity is

. . . to study the entire book to determine if specific events form a consistent pattern throughout or if the positive models Luke presents vary from one situation to another. The former will suggest that Luke was emphasizing a normative, consistent principle; the latter, that applications may change from one time and place to the next”⁸⁶.

In applying Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard’s criterion of “consistent pattern” in Acts with respect to individual “conversion” descriptions, I see the following:⁸⁷

Individual	Heard the word	Believed	Was Baptized	Rejoiced
Simon Acts 8:4-13	X	X	X	
Ethiopian Acts 8:34-39	X		X	X
Saul Acts 9:1-19	X		X	
Cornelius Acts 10	X		X	
Lydia Acts 16:11-15	X	X	X	
Phillipian Jailer Acts 16:25-36	X	X	X	X
Those of the Baptism of				

⁸⁶ *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 1993), 350.

⁸⁷ Here, I simply picked those things that seemed to be indicated more explicitly in the text. This is not to say that there was not other things present such as repentance, but only that it was not explicitly noted.

John Acts 19:1-7	X	X	X	
---------------------	---	---	---	--

In using this criterion of consistency one sees that hearing the word and being baptized were included in all of the *individual* conversions⁸⁸ and thus would be a normative aspect of conversion in the *narrative portions* of Acts. This normativity from the narrative portions would not exclude belief, repentance, or rejoicing⁸⁹, but merely not positively affirm them. Preaching and baptism seem then to be the major events recorded normatively in a more consistent manner than the other aspects of conversion.⁹⁰

3. Normativity in Acts determined by speeches/sermons/teachings of Christian leaders.

I personally would add another criterion to what is normative in the Book of Acts. Since Acts is an inspired *theological* history of the work of the Holy Spirit, I would take the *speeches* and *words* of the Lord/God, an angel, the Apostles and other Christian leaders who were being led by the Spirit to be didactic in nature and normative in the principles those speeches teach. Assuming the accuracy of Luke's record (as it is inspired) and his emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, their words would seem to indicate normative *principles* from which we can determine normative practice⁹¹. This would, include but not be limited to, Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2), Stephen's speech (Acts 7), Peter's speech to the household of Cornelius (10:28ff); his explanation of it (11:5ff), the issues of salvation at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), Paul's speech at Athens (17:16ff), etc.

4. Examples of questionable historical precedents in Acts:

From all the points above *questionable* historical precedent in the book of Acts would seem to include but not be limited to passages such as:

- a. Acts 1:15-26, the choosing of another apostle to replace one who was

⁸⁸ Of course there were several other places in Acts in which people as a larger group(s) were said to have become believers and followers (note the people in Athens who became Christians, Acts 17). But we are here looking at specific examples that go into some detail about those individual conversions. This would seem to allow for the application of the criterion to specific individuals. Apollos is another possible conversion (there is debate on this as he was just taught more accurately and may not have undergone a conversion).

⁸⁹ Of course these things might be assumed. Here however, we are only looking at things that are explicitly stated in the text.

⁹⁰ One note of possible importance is the fact that two of these conversions explicitly mention rejoicing after baptism. It is kind of interesting to me that that might fit into the concept that they felt they were right with God at the point of baptism and their response was joy.

⁹¹ Here one would need to determine cultural and non-cultural aspects of those materials and sift out *principles* that are normative. For instance, one would not need to limit ones help to widows to be only Greek widows (Acts 6) but any widow in the church. Also, the manner of taking care of them listed in Acts 6 may not be the only way to do so, but the normative principle would be for the leaders of a church to set up a way to make it happen.

no longer with them. Although this passage includes statements by Peter, the passage seems to be limited to a replacement for Judas, those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus and his resurrection, and were with him from John's Baptism on. It is also noteworthy that this event is not repeated after the death of apostle James in Acts 12:2.

- b. Acts 2:42-47, where the believers were together every day in the Temple and were selling their possessions to help those in need. Although it would not be wrong to meet every day in the Temple, we do not see this pattern repeated through out Acts. The Gospel was not tied to the Temple. Sharing possessions and being devoted to the apostle's teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer could be supported by other passages with this passage as illustrative but normativity would not necessarily be established here. If it were so, then one would be expected to meet everyday in the Temple.
- c. Acts 27, where Paul journeys to Rome. Surely we are not called to follow Paul in all his travels and do a pilgrimage to Rome or Macedonia. Paul's missionary journeys are repeated but not in exact fashion.

5. Interpretive Principles:

- a. Understand Acts as theological history. Don't make a dichotomy between history and theology when reading Acts.
- b. Apply Luke 1:1-4 to Acts in addition to Luke
- c. Think vertically. Note the sequence, context, development of the narrative, and persons involved in each section. E.g., note the "we" sections where Luke seems to be a participant. There is no horizontal way to think of Acts since there is no parallel account.
- d. Note that Acts 1:8 seems to be "theologically programmatic for Luke's purposes."⁹² Hence, it outlines God's theological plan covered in Acts: Mission to the Jews (Acts 1:1-12:24) and the mission to the Gentile (Acts 12:25-28:31). God is taking history somewhere.
- e. Note the importance of Pentecost (Acts 2) and how it sets the tone for the rest of the book.
- f. Use grammatical-historical exegetical techniques
- g. Determine normative *principles* to be applied to your life today from (1) the consistent repeated patterns in narrative and (2) the teaching in Christian leader's sermons and speeches in Acts.

⁹² Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 345.

Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class XIII: Special Hermeneutics: Epistles, NT use of the OT,
Dispensational and Covenant Theologies

XII: Special Hermeneutics: Epistles, NT Use of OT, Dispensational and Covenant Theologies

A. Hermeneutics of Epistle or Letter Genre.

1. Epistles: Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, I & II & III John, Jude, Revelation.
2. Structure: 5 Parts
 - a. Prescript: Salutation or greeting usually containing the following in order
 - 1) Author's name
 - 2) Readers or recipients
 - 3) Initial greeting to them
 - b. Proem: short preface containing a combination of thanksgiving and prayer
 - c. Introduction: Transitional material, small talk, ice breaking remarks
 - d. Body: Main message and purpose
 - e. Greeting and Farewell: Author sends greeting to people, makes various statements to others, concluding prayer
E.g., Romans has all 5 of these.
3. Interpretative Principles
 - a. Find the occasion of the letter. Each one addresses specific problems in the church, some urgent (I Corinthians, Hebrews) some not so urgent (I Timothy, Titus, Philippians), some very general in tone (Ephesians, Romans).
 - b. Determine the historical context: who wrote the letter, who the audience is, and what the issues were.
 - c. Study its literary context: Think paragraphs, see the flow of the letter.
 - d. Think about the Biblical Theology involved: i.e., note Petrine, Pauline, and Johannine distinctives.
 - e. Interpret problem texts in light of other more clear texts. E.g., I Cor. 15:29 and baptism for the dead.
 - f. Application rules:⁹³
 - 1) "A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers"
 - 2) "Whenever we share comparable particulars (i.e., similar specific life situations) with the first-century hearers, God's Word to us is the same as his Word to them."
 - 3) When there are less comparable particulars, determine what is

⁹³1 and 2 are from Fee and Stuart,

culturally bound and what is non-culturally bound (i.e., universal).
Apply non-culturally bound principles to today.

B. Special Hermeneutics: New Testament Use of the Old Testament

1. The New is in the Old concealed and the Old is in the New revealed.
2. About 10% of the NT is comprised of OT quotations or allusions.
3. 30 of the 39 OT books are cited in the NT
4. So it is not an obscure or trivial thing
5. Purpose of NT quotations of the OT
 - a. Authoritative use for argument: Matt 4:4,7,10
 - b. Predictive use: Matt. 2:4-6/Micah 5:2
 - c. Typological: Matt. 2:14/Hos. 11:1
6. Expansion on Typological use: OT Typology, Foreshadows, Symbols, and Prefigures: The concept of “The New is in the Old concealed and the Old is in the New revealed”. OT Typology, foreshadows, symbols, and prefigures show this to be the case. Overview⁹⁴
 - a. Terminology
 - 1) Type and antitype
 - a) A “type” is something (person or thing) that is a symbol of something (person or thing) to appear in the future.
 - b) “Antitype” is that “something” (person or thing) which does appear in the future
 - 2) Foreshadow: A foreshadow “is an object, an event, a person or a situation which stands for or represents something of greater significance which is to come in the future”
 - 3) A “symbol” is something that stands for something else John Oakes states, “The basic difference between a symbol and a foreshadow is that a symbol represents something which is presently real, while a foreshadow represents something which lies in the future. A symbol is a representation which a foreshadow is an anticipation”.
 - 4) “To prefigure means to represent symbolically an object, concept or idea in the future. The distinction between a foreshadow and a prefigure is that, in general, in a prefigure, the thing anticipated by the prefigure has an almost exact correspondence, whereas a foreshadow represents a concept larger or broader than the original”

b. Historical Prefigures: Scriptures relating to this

⁹⁴ I am indebted to Dr. John Oakes, *From Shadow to Reality: A Study of the Relationship Between the Old and New Testament* (Newton Upper Falls: Mass: IPI, 2005) for the quotations and much of the content of this section on typology.

“everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (I Cor. 10:11).

1) Adam a prefigure of Christ

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did *Adam, who was a pattern (typos in Greek= type) of the one to come*. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. *Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:12-19, my emphasis).*

Adam is the type, Jesus the antitype. Notice the similarities and differences. Not everything in types and antitypes necessarily correspond exactly

2) Noah and the Flood: Salvation through water.

“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison *who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him (I Pet. 3: 18-22, emphasis mine).*

Context topic: Salvation

Noah's flood water=symbol or type

Christian baptism=what was symbolized or antitype

3) Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael

a) Abraham the father of all who believe

“Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. *So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised (Rom. 4:9-12, emphasis mine).*

Abraham=a type through his faith

Any one saved through faith in Jesus=antitype

b) Isaac and Ishmael

“Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is

written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. *These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants.* One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. (Gal. 4: 21-26, emphasis mine)

Ishmael=type

The nation of Israel, the Old Covenant, natural descendants from Abraham, non people of God, Hagar's children=antitype

Isaac=child of promise, type of the true people of God, the church

Disciples of Jesus=antitype, Sarah's children, children of promise

c) Isaac a type of Christ: Gen. 22:1-19

Isaac=type

Christ=antitype

Some similarities:

- (1) Both involved a donkey
- (2) Both only sons
- (3) Both offered as a sacrifice
- (4) Both carried wood of the sacrifice
- (5) Both involved a third day
- (6) God provides the lamb
- (7) Both bound on the wood
- (8). Abraham is father, God is Father, both sacrifice sons
- (9) Both offered on "region of Moriah"
- (10) God intervenes in both situations

4) Sodom and Gomorrah, symbols of the future judgment and punishment of the wicked.

"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from

heaven and destroyed them all. "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed." (Luke 17:28-30)

"if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly" (II Pet. 2:6)

5) Salvation, Slavery and Sin

Salvation from slavery in Egypt through water by Moses=type

Salvation from sin through water by Jesus=antitype (I Cor. 10:1-4)

6) Promised Land and Heaven

Entering the Promised Land by Joshua=type

Entering Heaven through Jesus=antitype (Heb. 4:6-11)

c. Prefigures of the Messiah

1) Adam: Rom. 5:18-19

2) Melchizedek: Heb. 7:1-22, both priests but not Levites

3) Moses: Deut 18:17-19; Moses on Mt. Sinai receives Law in Deut 5, Jesus preaches NT principles in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7. Baptism into Moses, Baptism into Christ. Moses leads people out of slavery in Egypt, Jesus out of slavery to sin. Moses called to leave Egypt, Jesus is called out of Egypt

4) Joshua: Joshua brings people into the Promised Land, Jesus into true rest in Heaven (Heb. 4:8-11)

5) David: Jesus is the Son of David (Matt. 22:41-45)

6) Jonah: 3 days and 3 nights

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. (Matt. 12:40-41)

d. The Tabernacle and Temple prefigures the Heavenly Sanctuary

"Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. *They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.* This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is

mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises” (Heb. 8:3-6, emphases mine).

“It was necessary, then, for the *copies of the heavenly things* to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence*” (Heb. 9:23-24, emphases mine)

- 1) The Tabernacle and Temple was the place where God dwelt among his people. In the NT God dwells in the Body of Christ

Tabernacle and Temple=types
The Church, the Body of Christ=antitype

“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you” (I Cor. 3:16)

- 2) Sacrifices on the Bronze altar

Tabernacle sacrifices for sin=type
Sacrifice of Jesus Christ=antitype

“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, *he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made*, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Heb. 9:11-14, emphases mine)

- 3) The Laver was used to wash priests' hands before coming into the presence of God. Sinners must be baptized before they can come into the presence of God in the NT (Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21).

Laver=type
Baptism=antitype

4) The Curtain.

A curtain or veil separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place in the Temple. This curtain “represented for the Jews their separation from God”. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies through the curtain on the Day of Atonement and this was done only once a year.

When Jesus died on the cross this curtain was ripped in two from top to bottom:

“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom”. (Matt. 27:50-51)

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 10:19-22).

Curtain=type
Christ’s body=antitype

5) The Priesthood

“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 2:5)

“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen” (Rev. 1:5c-6)

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

Priests=type
Christians=antitype

6) The High Priest

“ . . . but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever” (Heb. 7:24-28).

OT High Priest=type
Jesus, NT High Priest=antitype

e. Old and New Covenants/Law and Gospel

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4).

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:12-14).

“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Heb 9:15).

Old Covenant/Law=shadow
New Covenant/Gospel=reality

f. OT Feasts

1) Passover (Lk 22:7-16; I Cor. 5:7-8; 11:23-26)

Passover=type
Lord’s Supper=antitype

2) First Fruits (Lev. 23:9-11; I Cor. 15:20-21; Col. 1:18)

This feast was celebrated in anticipation of the first fruit of the harvest. Jesus’ resurrection is considered “the first fruits” (I Cor. 15:20-21)

First grain/first fruit of harvest=type
Jesus’ resurrection/first fruit of life=antitype

Anticipated great harvest=type
Anticipated resurrection=antitype

3) Feast of Pentecost. This was a celebration of the harvest 50 days after Passover (Lev. 23:15-17; Acts 2)

Celebration of the physical harvest=foreshadow
Spiritual harvest/beginning of the church=reality

4) Day of Atonement. High Priest enters Holy of Holies and sprinkles blood of sacrifices on the mercy seat for the atonement of the sins of the people (Lev. 16:11-19,34; Heb. 9:11-14)

Sacrifice and sprinkling of blood of bull and goat=type
Jesus’ blood=antitype

g. The Sabbath (Heb. 4:3-11, Col. 2:16-17)

“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ”. (Col. 2:16-17).

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:9-11)

OT Sabbath rest=type
NT Sabbath (eternal rest)=antitype

h. Kingship

David is the model King of the OT Israel=type
Jesus is the King of Kings of NT Church=antitype

i. Limits and Cautions of Typology and Prefigure Interpretation

- 1) Modern day approaches to typological interpretation:
 - a) Rationalists: These deny any typology. They tend to be liberals who deny the activity of God in history. It is an anti-supernatural view.
 - b) Hyper-typology or pan-typology. Excessive view. Nearly everything (including the minutest detail) is a type. This basically becomes allegorization with no justification for the types seen. No historical or textual control. This is a surrender to subjectivity. Allegory traditionally has little use for history and attempts to go behind historical fact to find “deeper meaning” by speculation into the atomistic details of the trivial parts of the text.
 - c) Strict/Innate. Only what the NT specifically states is a type is to be considered a type. We cannot infer others.
 - d) Moderate view. Since there is no explicit statement that limits types to only types stated explicitly by the NT as types, we are somewhat free to see others (especially in view of general texts such as I Cor. 10:6, 11; Rom. 15:4; Heb. 5:8-11)
- 2) Principles of Typology interpretation:
 - a) OT type/NT antitype correspondence is not one-to-one but rather there is a heightening, an eschatological aspect, and an intensification.
 - b) *Not everything in a type will necessarily be found or indicated in the antitype (e.g., Adam and Christ) so we should not attempt to force the details.*
 - c) It is best to error on the conservative side and *only make typological interpretations where the NT does so either specifically or generally (see moderate*

view above). Sometimes it is general and sometimes specific. But since we are not inspired it would seem wise to not read into the Bible intended typological points unless expressed by the text itself. When this is not done, one tends to go into allegory where there is no control on what meaning one might find in the text and no way of justifying intended meaning

d) *Need to see a historical development* in the type antitype between the testaments. There needs to be some type of historical flow and historical interrelatedness from OT to NT

7. Method for studying the NT use of the OT:

- a. Begin with the NT context and determine how the author uses it in that context
- b. Then study the OT quotation in its OT context and determine its meaning there and compare the OT use with the NT use and determine the connection between the two.
- c. Study the OT original language from the LXX, MT, and DSS and compare with the NT Greek
- d. Look at the hermeneutical use of the OT in the NT. Attempt to see if it fits into one of the three uses: authority for argument, predictive, or typology.
- e. Look at the theological use of the OT. What is the doctrinal point the NT author sees in common between the two testaments?
- f. Determine the application of that passage to the church today.
A Test case: Deut. 25:4 in I Cor. 9:9

C. Unifying Systematic Theologies: Dispensational and Covenant Theologies

1. Introduction:

- a. NT unity is agreed to be Christ. Christ binds everything together
- b. OT unity is disputed. Various theologies including Promise Theology, Witness Theology, Rulership of God Theology, Communion between Man and God Theology, Canonical Theology, Holiness of God Theology, History of Religions Theology, JEDP (Evolution) Theology, etc.

2. Systematic Theologies in Unifying the Testaments: General Observations:

- a. Danger of Systematic Theology:
Forcing a “system” or “grid” on the Scripture may make it mean what it does not mean. We must always allow the Bible to revise our understanding of the whole and not

make the whole fit into our already determined theology.
This theology can impose of our thoughts on the Bible.

b. Beauty of Biblical Theology:

Biblical Theology as I am defining it allows the Bible to continue to speak from itself to mold our thoughts about the whole Bible and how it should fit together. This theology when done correctly will allow the Bible to impose its thoughts upon us.

3. Covenant Theology: Began with Scottish Theologians David Dickson and James Durham in 1650 in the publication *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* and further developed by Jonathan Edwards in 1738 in his sermon on Hebrews 13:8.

a. Bases its theology on three covenants

1) Covenant of Redemption:

- (a) parties: God the Father and God the Son (second Adam)
- (b) Time: Eternity past, before time began
- (c) Terms: As a reward for Jesus' obedience, the Father will give the elect (chosen people) to the Son to save.
- (d) Major Scriptures: Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21, 45; Zech 6:13; Lk. 22:29; Jn. 6:37-40; etc.

2) Covenant of Works

- (a) Parties: God and Man (the First Adam)
- (b) Time: Beginning of the world, in the Garden of Eden
- (c) Terms: Man must obey God's law perfectly in order to inherit eternal life
- (d) Main Scriptures: Gen. 2; Hos. 6:7

3) Covenant of Grace

- (a) Parties: God and Man
- (b) Time: After man's first sin
- (c) Terms: Man must trust in Christ for salvation, based on His finished work on the cross
- (d) Main Scriptures: Gen. 3:15; Gen. 4-5 (two lines, Cain and Seth); Gen. 9 (Noah, Shem continued the seed of the woman); all the NT

b. Characteristics and Problems:

- 1) This theology forces an extreme continuance of themes and sees very little discontinuity between the covenants. It can excessively carry the old order over into the new.

- 2) It sees NT baptism the same as OT circumcision and since circumcision was done to infants in the OT, baptism should be done with infants of Christians also
 - 3) It sees the Church in the Old Testament people of God. As such it did not fully begin on Pentecost. There is an OT church and a NT church.
4. Dispensational Theology: This concept began with Pierre Poiret (1647-1719) in his *Divine Economy* where he outlined seven dispensations, but was formally systematized by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and further developed by C. I. Scofield (1909) (see the Scofield Bible) and others.
- a. Bases its theology normally on 7 dispensations:
 - 1) Dispensation of Innocence
 - Time: Creation to the Fall: Gen. 1:1-3:6
 - 2) Dispensation of Conscience
 - From the Fall to Noah: Gen 3:7-6:8
 - Adam as federal head of human race seals the destiny of his posterity upon his disobedience. Hence the need for a Savior
 - 3) Dispensation of Human Government (Gen. 6:9-11:32)
 - Beginning with Noah (Government begins with Gen. 9:6)
 - Ends with the Promise to Abraham 12:1
 - 4) Dispensation of Promise (Gen 12-Ex. 19)
 - God promises Abraham to become a great nation and inherit the land
 - 5) Dispensation of Law (Ex. 19-the Cross/Pentecost)
 - 6) Dispensation of Grace (the Church age)
 - From Pentecost to the Pretribulational Rapture of the church and the return of Christ to set up his literal kingdom on earth
 - 7) Dispensation of the Kingdom of God
 - literal physical 1000 year reign of Christ on earth in his Kingdom
 - b. Characteristics and Problems:
 - 1) It excessively stresses diversity and discontinuity between time periods of history. There is a sharp distinction between issues such as law and grace, and Israel and the Church.
 - 2) The church is not part of the Kingdom of God but a “parenthesis” in God’s plan (i.e. called plan B) when the Jews rejected Jesus. OT prophecies of the Kingdom should not be seen as given to the church as it is a different dispensation. For example, the

Sermon on the Mount is for the future kingdom not for us today as the church. Rather those promises are reserved for the coming physical kingdom of God on earth, the 1000 year literal reign of Christ in Jerusalem.

3) Such a sharp distinction in dispensations, leads to the accusation that OT Israel had a different way of salvation than those in the NT. That would mean there are two ways of salvation, one of works and one of grace. Most Dispensationalists would deny this charge, however.

5. Synthesis: Many theologians see problems inherent to both extreme positions and see a moderating view as necessary. Hence, today, there are Progressive (or Refined) Dispensationalists (holding to a trans-dispensational continuity of history) and New Covenant Theology theologians attempting to forge a middle ground. Members of the Restoration Movement tend to follow more a covenant theme (but not a full orbbed Covenant or Reformed Theology, nor do we follow Calvinistic TULIP⁹⁵ Theology for salvation) because that is not what we feel the Bible does. We attempt to let the Bible itself express its own themes and theology and not impose a system upon it from outside. The Bible does speak about covenants but does not use the term “dispensations.” While there are some time dispensations revealed in the Bible (i.e., being under the Law in the OT and not under it in the NT), there does not seem to be the sharp discontinuous (and disjunctive) characteristic revealed in these time periods as Dispensationalists claim. Nor is there as much continuity in scripture from covenant to covenant as the Covenant theologians claim. The major issues to be dealt with are (1) the people of God, (2) law and grace, (3) the Kingdom of God, and (4) the relationship of the church with the OT covenants.

I am presently looking at yada’/ginosko theology (a theology of the bi-directional communication of God’s and man’s positive heart toward one another accomplishing the restoration of their relationship) as a unifying theology of the entire Bible. In this theology covenants and dispensations (if these terms are used) depict in part how one can experience the heart of God and how God can experience the heart of man in a salvific relationally healing way. OT Promise Theology is also encompassed in yada’/ginosko theology in that the promises and their fulfillments depict the communication of the heart of God to man so man can know or experience that heart of God with the hope on God’s part

⁹⁵ Calvinistic TULIP theology bases salvation around their TULIP acrostic. T=total depravity, U=unconditional election, L=limited atonement, I=irrestable grace, P=perseverance of the saints (i.e. once saved always saved).

that he may experience in a salvific way the heart of man in return.

The following are some of the major covenants of the OT⁹⁶:

- a. Noahic: Gen. 9:8-17. Royal Grant by a king
(normally perpetual and unconditional, but the servant's heirs benefited from it only as they continued their father's loyalty and service)⁹⁷
This was an unconditional divine promise to never destroy all the earth life again by a flood. The covenant sign was the rainbow.
- b. Abrahamic A: 15:9-21. Royal Grant (unconditional)
Unconditional divine promise to fulfill the grant of land (God "cut" a covenant with Abraham, vs. 17-18).
Abrahamic B: 17:1-27. Suzerain-vassal (conditional), regulating the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings. The vassal must "love" his suzerain and give total loyalty to the suzerain and the suzerain pledged protection of the subject's realm and dynasty. This covenant by the suzerain was conditional based on the vassal's faithfulness and loyalty to him.
Conditional (*as for me, as for you*) divine pledge to be Abraham's God and the God of his descendants. The condition was total consecration to the Lord.
The covenant sign was circumcision.
- c. Sinaitic: Exodus 19-24. Suzerain-vassal (conditional)
A conditional divine pledge to the Israel's God (as her Protector and Guarantor of her blessed destiny): the condition: Israel's total consecration to the Lord as his people (his kingdom) who live by his rule/law and serve his purposes in history.
- d. Phinehas: Num. 25:10-13. Royal Grant (unconditional)
An unconditional divine promise to maintain the family of Phinehas in a "lasting priesthood"
(implicitly a pledge to Israel to provide her forever with a faithful priesthood)
- e. Davidic: 2 Sam. 7:5-16. Royal Grant
An unconditional divine promise to establish and maintain the Davidic dynasty on the throne of Israel

⁹⁶ Much of this is taken from the *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 23.

⁹⁷ Both royal Grant and Suzerain-vassal covenants/treaties were common in the Ancient Near Eastern world

(implicitly a pledge to Israel) to provide her forever with a godly king like David and through that dynasty to do for her what he had done through David—bring her into rest in the promised land (I Ki. 4:20-21; 5:3-4)

f. New Covenant: Jer. 31:31-34. Royal Grant

An unconditional divine promise to unfaithful Israel to forgive her sins and establish his relationship with her on a new basis of writing his law “on their hearts”—a covenant of pure grace.

6. Exhortation: Let us seek to let the Bible itself determine its divisions and its way of unity so we can be a “workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

**Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class XIV: General Principles of Application**

XIII. General Principles of Application:

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (pages 401-426) layout some general principles for application of Scripture to today. These include the following steps from their book:⁹⁸

- A. “Determine the original application(s) intended by the passage.” Ask questions such as, “What did the biblical author of a given passage want his hearers or readers to do? What was the intended response to the text? Is there a command to obey, an example to follow or to avoid, a promise to claim, a warning to heed, a teaching to act on (even if not phrased as a direct command), a truth to believe?”
- B. “Evaluate the level of specificity of those applications. Are they transferable across time and space to other audiences?” To do this ask the following series of questions:
1. “*Does the text present a broad theological or moral principle or does it give a specific manifestation of such a principle, which Scripture elsewhere embodies in one or more different forms?*” For example note the 10 commandments minus the Sabbath command in Ex. 20:2-17.
 2. “*Does the larger context of the book in which the passage appears limit the application in any way or does it promote a more universal application?*” Eg., Jesus words to Peter that he would have to die for his faith (Jn. 21: 18-19) in context shows that his words were meant for Peter alone and not necessarily generalized to anyone else.
 3. “*Does subsequent revelation limit the application of a particular passage even if the book in which it appears does not?*” E.g., the Sabbath command of the OT in light of Hebrews.
 4. “*Is the specific teaching ‘contradicted’ elsewhere in ways that show it was limited to exceptional situations?*” Eg., God’s call to Abraham to sacrifice his child is not a general principle for us today. Nor is it a general principle for us to follow God’s call to Hosea (1:2) to “take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness.”
 5. “*Are cultural conditions mentioned in Scripture or assumed by its*

⁹⁸ I am indebted to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (pages 401-426) for most of the material in this section.

authors that make it inappropriate always to apply a given text in the same way?” How about the veils or long hair on women and short hair on men (I Cor. 11:2-16)? Keys to this involve the terms “disgrace” in verse 6 and the “very nature of things” (verse 14).

The authors state (p. 414-14),

Paul, raised a devout Jew, knew of one major category of Jewish man who was praised by God for never cutting his hair—the Nazirite (Numb. 6:1-21). Paul himself had practiced such vows on a temporary basis (Acts 18:18). So “the nature of things” in I Cor. 11:14 must mean something like “the common custom throughout the first-century Greco-Roman world,” which in turn explains why all the churches of that time had adopted this practice (v. 16) . . . The best research suggests that long hair (perhaps resembling an external head covering) on a man likely made him appear too much like Roman priests officiating at certain pagan rituals. Once again, if long hair is inextricably bound up with non-Christian religious practice in some modern culture, then it, too, should remain taboo. But if not, then hair style with God is not a moral issue.

6. *“Is the particular cultural form expressed in the biblical text present today, and if so does it have the same significance as it did then?”* E.g., “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (I Thes 5:26). How should that be understood today in our culture? “In the Middle East . . . men commonly greet other men with a kiss on each cheek. In the republics of the former Soviet Union it is common for men to kiss other men on their mouths. The ancient biblical practice most resembled modern Middle-Eastern behavior, i.e., same-sex kissing on the cheek. No sexual connotations were associated with it; it was the acceptable convention for greeting a good friend warmly.”

It might be similar to our giving hugs or giving warm handshakes. But one would not necessarily be disobeying the scripture by not giving the other person a kiss.

7. *“Is the rationale for the application rooted in a creation ordinance, in the character of God, or in part of his redemptive plan for humanity?”* E.g., I Tim 2:11-14 and the issue of women not teaching or exercising authority over man seems to be rooted in creation and thus would be normative as it is crosscultural.
8. *“Is the command or application at variance with standard cultural norms of the day?”* If so, it likely indicates a “transcultural or timeless mandate”. For example the authors state (p. 418):

. . . in the Greco-Roman world few voices were as blunt and sweeping in their condemnation of homosexuality (or, for that matter, of heterosexual sin) as Paul’s in Rom. 1: 18-32. In this case he adopted a far more counter cultural stance in his day than is held even today in an age of

increasingly visible and vocal gay-rights lobbies. This makes it unlikely that Paul's views were in any way intended to be limited to first-century Roman society."

9. "Does the passage contain an explicit or implicit condition that limits its application?" Matt. 7:7 needs to be understood in accordance with Matt. 6:10 and James 5:15 with James 4:15. "In these larger contexts of Jesus' and James' teaching, we learn about the most important condition of all for God to answer prayer according to human desires: it must first be in accordance with his will (Mt. 6:10; Jas. 4:15)."

C. "If they are not transferable across time and space to other audiences, identify one or more broader cross-cultural principles that the specific elements of the text reflect." For example, Gen. 22 would not mean that we should sacrifice our children but that we should "Trust in God's sovereignty".

D. "Find appropriate applications for today that embody those principles." To do this you must know your culture and the culture of those to whom you preach and teach.

E. "Remember the role of the Holy Spirit". The authors summarize this point as follows:

1. The Holy Spirit does not give new revelation on a par with Scripture.
2. He does not guarantee that our interpretations are infallible.
3. He does not give one person new insights that no one else has.
4. Many non-Christians can apply sound hermeneutics to understand the meaning of Scripture; without the Spirit, however, they refuse to apply it adequately to their lives.
5. Understanding is not the exclusive domain of biblical scholars.
6. Spiritual devotion on the part of the interpreter is crucial.
7. Lack of spiritual preparation can hinder correct interpretation.
8. There is no substitute for diligent study.
9. The Spirit does not rule out study helps.
10. He does not override common sense and logic.
11. The Spirit's role in hermeneutics is part of the process of illumination.
12. He does not normally give sudden intuitive flashes.
13. He does not make all of the Bible equally clear.
14. He does not ensure comprehensive understanding:⁹⁹

F. Another set of questions to consider in application:¹⁰⁰

1. How does the passage fit into God's overall character and plan? I.e., how does it fit into the unity of the Bible and the character of God? If it is contrary to the character of God and his overall plan, it is most probably not an applicable point.
2. Is the passage a didactic or illustrative passage? This is a genre question

⁹⁹ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 426.

¹⁰⁰ From David Turner's class notes.

- that will help in determining the principle that is taught and whether it should be applied.
3. How does the passage fit into the literary context? Our application of the passage must be consistent with the passage's own application in its own larger setting. It cannot mean today what it did not mean then.
 4. What is the specific application point or points of the passage?
 5. How does this applicational point we have hypothesized find reinforcement elsewhere in Scripture? This can safeguard against subjective misuse of the passage and how it fits into the *whole* counsel of God. Always interpret the unclear passage by the clear passage(s).
 6. Have we analyzed our audience and thought through where our people are when we preach or teach? We cannot appropriately apply a passage to our listeners (or to ourselves) if we do not know where they are (or where we truly are) spiritually.
 7. We need to determine to what *extent* there are comparable particulars between the text we are looking at and the situation(s) of people we are preaching to. Is the principle or passage only partially applicable?
 8. Determine if there is a normative practical or normative principle being taught in the text either explicitly or implicitly. What is culturally bound and what is not? Apply the non-culturally bound principles.
 9. What is the Christological perspective? How can we preach Christ from this passage? (Luke 24:44). Jesus is the fulfillment of the Scriptures!
 10. What is the *enduring* principle? With the Bible context as the standard, transfer spiritual, moral, or theological principles found in the Bible and that have relevance for contemporary people into today's context, not visa versa.

G. Class Discussion on Application Questions above.

H. Student Presentations

I. Review of the Course. Questions and Answers.

**Biblical Hermeneutics:
Class XV: Final Exam (To Be Determined)**

Annotated Bibliography

Brown, Jeannine K. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Dr. Brown's *advanced* level book approaches Scriptural interpretation and meaning as a "communicative act." She proposes a balanced communication model for interpreting the Bible. Her proposal is written as the following: "*Scripture's meaning can be understood as the communicative act of the author that has been inscribed in the text and addressed to the intended audience for purposes of engagement*". Dr. Brown critiques the tendency of the history of hermeneutical discussions to focus on only one of the three domains of interpretation, i.e., author, text, or reader. She proposes to incorporate all three aspects in a more balanced way to affect what she believes to be (and what seems to be her thesis) a better and more full understanding of the text, a model in which "communication is inherently interpersonal" and dialogical in nature. She seems to have supported her thesis well.

In developing her proposal and thesis she discusses both (1) *theoretical perspectives* on Scripture as communication and (2) *practical guidance* for interpretation of Scripture as communication. With respect to *theoretical perspectives* Dr. Brown traces the recent (last 300 years or so) history of Scriptural interpretation as having individual foci of understanding the mind of the author, then understanding the text itself, and then a focus on "reader-centered view points." She then draws "affirmations" (i.e. the best aspects) about meaning from each of these three foci in forming her proposed communication model. With respect to her section on *practical guidance* for interpretation, Dr. Brown discusses each of the following also from the perspective of *communication*: Genre, biblical language, biblical social world analysis, literary context, intertextuality and canon, and incarnational contextualization. Dr. Brown is to be commended for documenting the need for biblical interpretation to involve whole persons in interpersonal communication (i.e., that of the Biblical writer, God, and that of the reader) through the written text in a balanced manner.

Corley, Bruce; Lemke, Steve W.; and Lovejoy, Grant I. *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*. Second Edition. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002.

Corley, Lemke, and Lovejoy, with the help of twenty-four other scholars have in this book created a hermeneutics textbook which they feel covers "all the bases" for *beginning* seminary students. The four basic areas of hermeneutics to be covered are: (1) philosophical presuppositions, (2) the history of biblical

interpretation, (3) the actual practice of interpretation, and (4) the use of the resulting insights in the ministries of preaching and missions.

The authors have indeed created a text that does cover these bases. This anthology textbook is divided into five parts. Part One discusses the proper approach to Scripture in the Grammatical-Historical method tradition as well as inductive Bible study methods. Part Two discusses biblical hermeneutics in history. Part Three discusses the authority, inspiration and language of Scripture, including textual criticism and different translations. Part Four discusses genres of Scripture, including law, OT narrative, lyrics of wisdom and poetic literature, prophecy, gospel narrative, Acts narrative, epistles, and apocalyptic. Part Five discusses the proper application of exegetical results in developing sermons.

Fee, Gordon D.; and Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

In writing this superb *intermediate* level book on understanding and applying the Bible, Fee and Stuart determined that it would not be “just another book.” They tailored it to be unique in (1) its basic concern and focus on the understanding and application of genre, (2) striking a balance between “*studying* each genre of Scripture” and “intelligent *reading* of Scripture”, (3) upholding the concept that seminary education and seminary professors need not be seen as a “*hindrance* to understanding the Bible,” but that the Bible can be understood and is intended to be obeyed by both scholars and non-scholars, (4) and in its wrestling with “questions of application” by taking what is discovered as a biblical text’s original meaning toward determining what it means in today’s world.

In accomplishing their goals, Fee and Stuart divide their study into two tasks: (1) exegesis (i.e., determining the original meaning of the text) and (2) hermeneutics (using the narrow sense of the term, i.e., what the text means today). In keeping with the text’s main focus (i.e., genre studies), the following types of literature in the Bible are discussed extensively: Epistles, OT narratives, Acts, gospel, parable, law, prophecy, Psalms, wisdom, and Revelation. Guidelines for both the tasks of exegesis and hermeneutics are presented for each genre type.

_____, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

A companion volume to Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, this text for the *intermediate* level student attempts to *apply* the genre study principles of the former book to *each individual book* of the Bible. Its goal is “to help people become better *readers* of Scripture” and to see how each book fits in with the others to form “the great narrative of Scripture.” That narrative of Scripture, God’s story, can be divided into four great chapters: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.

Fee and Stuart successfully accomplish their task by discussing each book of the Bible in three major sections: (1) an overview section of the entire book helping the student get the big picture, (2) a specific exegetical and hermeneutical

advice section for reading the book, and (3) a “walk through” the book section showing not only its content but also how each part fits in with the others and how the book as a whole fits in with the great narrative of Scripture.

Klein, William W.; Bomberg, Craig L.; and Hubbard, Robert L., Jr.; *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993.

In this excellent comprehensive *advanced* level book, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard incorporate insights from “philosophy, linguistics, the social sciences, and literary criticism” to “advance the practice of biblical interpretation . . . in this generation” with a special emphasis on *how* to interpret Scripture. The authors’ goal is to help answer such questions as “How are we to learn what the Bible says?”, “How do we mine its resources?”, “What are we to learn and how are we to respond?”, and “Can we know if we have understood the message correctly?” The authors firmly believe that Christians must not only know what God’s Word says but also be able to be obedient to it by putting it into practice in today’s world.

In accomplishing the goal set forth, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard successfully tackle the issues in five parts. Part I, “The Need for Hermeneutics,” defines hermeneutics (as both a science and an art for interpretation), deal with the role of the interpreter, the meaning of the message, and some of the challenges to Bible interpretation. Part I also presents a brief history of interpretation, and a discussion of the canon and different Bible translations. Part II addresses the role of the interpreter and the goal of interpretation. Part III expounds on understanding literature, looking at general rules of hermeneutics for both prose as well as poetry. Part IV discusses different genres in the OT (narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, and wisdom) and the NT (gospel, Acts, epistle, and revelation). Part V contains a study on the “Fruits of Interpretation” including the use of the Bible today in the corporate church body life in worship, teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and spiritual formation. Perhaps the book’s greatest strengths lie in its discussion of the general rules of hermeneutics for prose writing and its excellent chapter on hermeneutical rules for application in its discussion of four steps for legitimate application.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Second Edition. Downers Grove: IVP, 2006.

In this comprehensive *advanced* level textbook on biblical hermeneutics, Dr. Osborne advances and supports his thesis that hermeneutics should be understood and approached as a spiral from the text to the context, i.e., a spiral “from its original meaning to its contextualization or significance for the church today.” This is to be seen in contradistinction to the concept of the “hermeneutical circle” which has been proposed by others in the past. Dr. Osborn’s thesis advances that concept of a “spiral” (in the form of a “cone”) which allows for an open-ended movement “from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the reader.” This allows the student of the Word to spiral upward nearer and nearer and

narrower and narrower to a full understanding of the intended meaning of the text and its intended application in today's world.

Dr. Osborne develops his thesis by discussing ten stages in the process of interpretation: (1) charting the book and paragraphs under consideration, (2) making a line diagram of the passage, (3) studying the grammar, (4) doing a semantical study, (5) doing a syntactical study, (6) looking at backgrounds of the passage, (7) considering Biblical theology, (8) considering historical theology, (9) considering systematic theology, (10) and contextualizing the text to today's world. Methodologically Osborne discusses these ten stages in three parts: (1) general hermeneutics (including context, grammar, semantics, syntax, and historical and cultural backgrounds), (2) genre analysis (including OT law, narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, apocalyptic, parable, epistle, the Old Testament in the New Testament), and (3) applied hermeneutics (including biblical and systematic theologies and homiletics). In applying all of these principles in one's continuing study of the biblical text, the student of the Scripture spirals from text to meaning to fuller understanding and more appropriate application.

Ryken, Leland. *How to Read the Bible as Literature and Get More Out of It*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

In this *intermediate* level book, Dr. Ryken expounds and develops support for his thesis that "the literary approach is one necessary way to read and interpret the Bible, an approach that has been unjustifiably neglected." Ryken defines "literature" as that writing within the Bible that is "imaginative" or "creative." In this respect he sees the Bible as consisting of both non-literary (texts that are explanatory or expository) as well as literary (texts that contain imaginative or creative writings) elements. The literature (literary) elements are to be *experienced* by the reader and not simply understood in abstract form as has been the emphasis in Biblical hermeneutics of the past. Reading the Bible as literature does not dismiss traditional hermeneutics but is to be an extension of the Grammatico-Historical method which "incarnates" the meaning of Scripture as concretely and experientially as possible. The reader is to "experience" as well as cognitively understand Biblical truth "intellectually, emotionally, and imaginatively," i.e. experience the whole of reality. To this end, Ryken writes his book. He intends "to make the methods of literary criticism more accessible to anyone who reads and studies the Bible."

In successfully accomplishing his goal, Ryken discusses (1) the nature and types of Biblical stories and 13 literary rules for experiencing those Biblical stories, (2) the nature and types of biblical poetry and several rules for experiencing this type of literature, (3) the nature and experience of proverbs (4) the nature and experience of the gospels and parables, (5) how to understand epistles, (6) understanding and experiencing visionary literature, and finally (7) affectively experiencing the literary unity of the Bible as a whole. This is a very important book addressing the need and giving tools for an *experiential*, as opposed to a merely abstract, purely intellectual, understanding of the Bible.

Sterrett, T. Norton. *How to Understand Your Bible*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1974.

In this work, Sterrett has prepared an excellent *beginners* level handbook for correctly understanding the Bible. While many handbooks overlook the necessary heart to approach the Bible, Sterrett begins his discussion with some excellent *prerequisites* of the interpreter in understanding the Bible. These include having a heart that is new, hungry, obedient, disciplined, and teachable. He then grounds his discussion on the Bible as God's Word, the unified Bible as its own best interpreter, and the assumption that its language is "mainly normal human language" capable of being understood by normal human beings with the help of the Holy Spirit and one's "honest, intelligent and obedient response." Hence his thesis is that "you can understand God's truth" if you follow what he outlines in this book.

Sterrett develops this thesis by discussing the use of the right tools (i.e., study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, notebooks, concordances, and commentaries), study of grammatical and syntactical elements, literary forms, and principles of interpretation. He divides the discussion of the principles of interpretation into *general* and *special* principles. *General* principles include discussions of context, definitions of words, grammar, authorial intent, backgrounds (historical, geographical, and cultural), and the principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. *Special* principles include discussions of figures of speech (such as metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, apostrophe, personification, hyperbole, interrogation, and irony), symbols, types, parables and allegories, Hebrew idioms, characteristics of Hebrew poetry (parallelism, imagery, and hyperbolic language), the nature of prophecy, the concept and formation of doctrine, and the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Sterrett concludes his discussion with a chapter on appropriate personal application correctly insisting that "true understanding comes only when a person responds to the claims God makes upon him through the Word." Human response is necessary to a true understanding of God's word. He insists that "we must beware of treating the Bible as just another branch of human knowledge to be studied in the same way others are studied."

Stibbs, Alan. *How To Understand Your Bible*. Revised Edition. Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1976.

In this small yet fairly comprehensive handbook Alan Stibbs presents a well articulated *beginners* guide for understanding the Scriptures. Stibbs approaches the goal of understanding of God's word from the perspective that it takes prayer, hard work, and persistence. Understanding is not something that comes through osmosis but growth through diligent hard work and an active seeking on the part of the student. The purpose of his book based on II Tim. 2:15

is: “to give some basic guidance and practical suggestions to those who are prepared to join the school of biblical understanding.”

Stibbs accomplishes his goal and purpose using six succinct chapters: (1) using the Bible properly, (2) getting at the true text, (3) understanding its context, (4) understanding the passage in detail, (5) understanding the passage in relation to the whole Bible, and (6) a practical chapter on the Bible and Christian living. Stibbs’ chapter 5 on understanding the passage in relation to the whole Bible is particularly helpful. In that chapter he outlines 12 important guidelines:

1. Recognize the divine inspiration of Scripture.
2. Recognize the unity of the biblical revelation, and aim to keep in harmony with its general tenor.
3. Compare one scripture with another and allow one scripture to check the interpretation of the other.
4. Interpret the obscure by the clear, and the partial reference by the more complete one.
5. Interpret the OT in relation to the New and its fulfillment in Christ, especially in gaining understanding of the nature of prophecy and typology.
6. Regard Christ in his two comings as the main subject of Scripture.
7. Recognize that the main purpose of all Scripture is to reveal God’s ways with men.
8. Recognize that truth is many-sided and we need to accept the inevitable paradoxes that are involved in understanding infinite truth.
9. Recognize the limits of what God has revealed: He has not revealed everything.
10. Recognize that our understanding is limited. Our understanding is finite.
11. Respect the judgement of other Christians, particularly the consensus of the church.
12. Remember to seek the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

Virkler, Henry A. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. Reprint Edition, 2002.

In this helpful *intermediate* level textbook, Virkler states his goal to give “the reader not only an understanding of the principles of proper biblical interpretation, but also the ability to apply those principles in sermon preparation or personal Bible study.” More specifically, Virkler had designed this book to make a contribution specifically in the area of translating hermeneutical theory into *practical* exegetical steps for the interpretation of the Bible.

In accomplishing his goal, the author has provided specific helpful “life-like” exegetical exercises (which he calls “brain teasers”) for students to hone their skills in the application of the hermeneutical theories they are learning. The hermeneutical topics discussed include (1) historical, cultural, and contextual analysis, (2) lexical and syntactical analysis, (3) theological analysis, (4) analysis of special literary types (including similes, metaphors,

proverbs, parables, allegories, types, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature), (5) and application of the biblical message, especially with respect to the concept of principlization in transcultural application.

Additional Bibliography

- Bray, Gerald. *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present*. Downer's Grove, IVP, 1996.
- Cate, Robert L. *How to Interpret the Bible*. Nashville: Broadman, 1983.
- Duvall, J. Scott; and Hays, J. Daniel. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2006.
- Inch, Morris A.; and Bullock, C. Hassell. *The Literature and Meaning of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.
- Johnson, Elliott E. *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1990.
- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr.; and Silva, Moises. *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
- Kearley, F. Furman; Myers, Edward P.; and Hadley, Timothy D. *Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practice: Studies in Honor of Jack Pearl Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.
- Lim, Johnson T. K. *A Strategy for Reading Biblical Texts*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002.
- McCartney, Dan; and Clayton, Charles. *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Wheaton: Bridgepoint, 1994.
- McKnight, Scot, Editor. *Introducing New Testament Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- McQuay, Earl P. *Keys to Interpreting the Bible*. Nashville: Broadman, 1993.
- McQuilkin, Robertson. *Understanding and Applying the Bible*. Chicago: Moody, 1992.
- Mickelsen, A. Berkeley. *Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

Oakes, John M. *From Shadow to Reality: A Study on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testament*. Newton Upper Falls, MA: IPI, 2005.

Tate, W. Randolph. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991.