

Guidelines for Biblical Exegesis (Scriptures II) **2009-2010**

Exegesis is the systematic attempt to discover the meaning of a passage of Scripture. It involves the application of specific steps of inquiry into the message of a passage, culminating in an application of that message to today's situation.

General Procedure

Select a passage of Scripture from a list to be provided by the instructor.

Repeatedly read the entire book or letter in which the passage is found **before** opening a commentary or reference book. This will enable you to obtain a sense of the passage's meaning in its literary context before encountering the voices of others. Write down all questions that come to mind as you read the passage. These questions should help guide your research.

Read your specific passage in at least three modern translations (NRSV, NASB, NIV, NJB). Note any differences among the translations. Are they significant or merely differences in wording? (Commentaries may be addressed concerning any significant differences.) Avoid the use of paraphrases such as The Message or The Living Bible.

Address the question of the passage's literary form or genre. Is it poetry or prose, allegory, apocalyptic, etc.? Identification of the type of material in the text is of importance for its interpretation. For example, apocalyptic literature is not approached in the same way as Hebrew poetry. Certain interpretative questions may be appropriately asked of each. For example, to ask how the horn of a beast can contain human eyes and a mouth betrays a lack of knowledge concerning the nature of apocalyptic literature as presented in Daniel 7:8. Concerning genre, biblical exegete Richard A. Burridge states: "Genre forms a kind of 'contract' or agreement, often unspoken or unwritten, or even unconscious, between an author and a reader, by which the author sets out to write according to a whole set of expectations and conventions and we agree to read or to interpret the work using the same conventions, giving us an idea of what we might expect to find." In a work on the interpretation of Hebrews, Andrew H. Trotter writes: "We all naturally, usually instinctively, interpret various communications we receive every day with different sets of hermeneutical [interpretative] rules." As he indicates, for example, we look at OT poetry with very different eyes than those with which we read newspaper reports.

Examine introductory issues (authorship, date, audience, etc.) relating to the book or letter in which a passage is found. These matters should be briefly addressed in the paper. Particularly note any distinctive themes or emphases that characterize the book. For example, Luke is sometimes referred to as a gospel of prayer due to a stress on its importance in the life of Jesus. Nine prayers of Jesus are found in Luke. Only two of these are found elsewhere in the gospels.

Examine the literary context of the passage. Particularly focus on the immediate context or what events or discussions (information) precede and follow the passage of Scripture under investigation. For example, consider the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-35. What question (10:29) prompts Jesus' telling of this story? What question (10:36) immediately

follows the story? How does the story relate to these questions? How have the questions changed?

Concerning literary context, in addition, explore how the verse or passage fits into the broader section of the document in which it is found. For example, if studying the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12, it would be important to note that they are of part of the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. The Sermon on the Mount is itself part of an even broader structure as evidenced in the gospel of Matthew as a whole.

Consider the situation in life (*Sitz im Leben*) of the passage found within the book or letter. In terms of the gospels, scholars recognize the original oral nature of Jesus' teachings within his earthly ministry (the life setting of Jesus). Jesus did and said many things. This information was cherished and preserved by early Christians following his death and resurrection. It was used in a variety of settings such as preaching and teaching in early Christian communities before there were written gospels (the life setting of the early church). In time, Jesus' teachings and activities took written form as they addressed the needs and concerns of early Christian communities as they lived out their lives in the later part of the first century (the life setting of the Evangelist).

Interpretative questions deriving from these differing situations or settings in life involve the meaning of a saying or story as recounted by Jesus himself to diverse early first century audiences, the meaning of a saying or story to the Christian community that preserved it, and the meaning of the the saying or story to the Evangelist acting as pastor to a later first century audience. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35) was spoken by the earthly Jesus to an early first century audience, recounted in oral form in the preaching and teaching of early Christian communities, and presented in written form by the Evangelist Luke as he addressed a late first century audience. Keeping in mind the variety of life settings, retain focus on the text as we now have it. For example, when Jesus tells a parable to his disciples involving workers in a vineyard, the story and its details should be firstly understood in its early first century context as recounted in Matthew 20:1-16. Only then should other interpretative questions be addressed.

Concerning Paul and other New Testament authors' writings, attempt to know as much as possible about their life situations and diverse audiences in the religiously and philosophically pluralistic Greco-Roman world.

Note and research any cultural practices, concepts, etc., which may be unclear to a present day audience. In addition, note any practices or teachings which would have seemed abnormal or unusual to the original first century audience. (To do this, one must have some idea of the norms or generally accepted practices and ideas in the first century world.) For example, is there anything shocking in Jesus' parable of "the Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-35), or do things turn out much as his audience would have expected?

Identify significant words, phrases, or concepts in the passage that need further study such as "sin," "salvation," "justification," "holy and acceptable to God," "the "righteousness of God," "the fullness of time," "the hour has come," and "love your enemies." Determine the most likely

meaning of the selected term or concept as used in the passage. Pay close attention to the literary context (surrounding discussion) in which the word or phrase is found. Words take on their precise meanings in particular literary contexts. Examine functions of various parts of speech, verb tenses, and sentence structure or syntax.

Upon investigation, what appears to be the primary message of the passage? How does this message relate to the overarching themes of the letter or book? How does the message fit into the broader biblical or theological context of the Old and New Testaments? What is the relationship between the passage and the broader area of Christian theology? For example, what message may be ascertained from the parable of the Good Samaritan? How does this message fit within the broader concerns and structure of Luke's gospel? How does this message fit within the broader context of the Old and New Testaments? How does this message fit within the broader context of Christian theology? What is said about God, humanity, and their relationship with one another?

Identify modern life issues for yourself and your target audience that are parallel to life issues in the ancient situation that is confronted by the text. What is the significance of the message or messages found within the text for our present life situation as individuals and as members of the Christian community? For example, what is the significance of the parable of the "Good Samaritan" for life in the twenty-first century?

Format for Exegesis Papers

Introduction

-Indicate the passage to be studied.

-Provide a statement of methodology.

-Treat introductory issues such as authorship, audience, place of writing, destination, dating for the document, the situation in life (Sitz-im-Leben) of the document as a whole. (What was occurring in the life of the Evangelist or other author and community being addressed?)

-Identify the genre and sub-genre of the text (ex. a parable within a gospel, a hymn within a letter).

-Indicate major emphases of the work (themes).

Body

-Discuss the broad literary context or portion of the work in which the text is found.

-Discuss the immediate context of the passage -- events or discussions that immediately precede and follow the passage.

-Analyze the passage itself by performing a verse-by-verse analysis which pays close attention to the flow thought in the text. Describe the situation in life reflected in the text itself (ex., the Sitz-im-Leben of Jesus and his audience). Do necessary word studies (secular use, canonical use, use by the author in multiple works, and specific use in the passage under investigation). Examine cultural practices and concepts (particularly note any item or idea in your passage which appears to go against cultural norms -- ex., having a Samaritan be the hero in a story). Note differences among translations (textual criticism). Do synoptic comparisons. Note rhetorical devices and figures of speech, etc.

-Attempt to ascertain the meaning of the passage in its historical and literary context and make an explicit statement of your findings. Relate these findings to the major emphases or themes of the work as previously indicated in the introductory portion of the paper. How do these findings relate to the broader message of the Bible?

Conclusion

– Attempt to determine the original application of the message that was intended by the author. How does the author seemingly want the audience to respond?

– Consider whether or not the original application is transferable across time and space or is historically and culturally bound.

– If the specific application is historically and culturally bound, consider any principle reflected by the text that transcends time and culture and is reflected elsewhere in Scripture, albeit in different forms.

– What does this cross-cultural principle have to say to us as we live out our lives in the context of the community of faith and broader human community?

-Consider and discuss the relevance of what the text says for our understanding of God, ourselves, and our relationship with him.

For a further discussion of issues relating to application, see the “Model for Applicational Interpretation” in Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard’s Introduction to Biblical Interpretation.

Depending on the student’s major, the form for the paper will conform to the standards established by the APA or MLA style guides. Regardless of which writing style is used (MLA or APA), page numbers must be included in notation.

Resources

Discussions Relating to the Exegetical and Hermeneutical Process (Beginning works in Biblical interpretation)

Carson, D. A. Exegetical Fallacies, 2nd ed.

Erickson, Richard J. A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 3rd ed.

Gorman, Michael J. Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers

Hayes, John H. and Carl R. Holladay, Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook, 3rd ed.

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

Metzger, Bruce M. The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions

Mickelsen, A. Berkeley and Alvera M., Understanding Scripture: How to Read and Understand the Bible

Ryken, Leland, How to Read the Bible as Literature

Stein, Robert H., A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules

_____. Interpreting Puzzling Texts in the New Testament

Concordances (Helpful for the location of specific terms and concepts in the Old and New Testaments)

Goodrick, E. and J. R. Kohlenberger, eds. The NIV Exhaustive Concordance

Kohlenberger, J. R., ed. The NRSV Concordance Unabridged

The New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance

Strong, J. Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

Young, R. Analytical Concordance to the Bible

Language and Word Studies (In-depth study of terms and concepts in the Old and New Testaments)

Aland, K., Synopsis of the Four Gospels

Brown, Colin. New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.

Bullinger, E. W., Figures of Speech Used in the Bible

Earl, R. Word Meanings in the NT

Mounce, William D., gen.ed. Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words

Richardson, A Theological Wordbook of the Bible

Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures in the NT

Vincent, Word Studies in the NT

Vine's Complete Expository of Old and New Testament Words

Winter, Ralph D. and Roberta H. Winter, The Word Study New Testament (Use in conjunction with The Word Study Concordance ed. by George Wigram and Ralph P. Winter)

Bibliographic Study Guides (Helpful for identifying resources for New Testament Studies)

Carson, D. A., New Testament Commentary Survey. 4th ed.
Danker, F. W., An Introductory Bibliography for the Study of Scripture
_____. Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study, Rev. ed.
Scholer, David M., A Basic Bibliographic Guide for NT Exegesis

Standard Commentaries (Helpful for introductory issues, literary and historical questions, cultural practices, textual questions relating to the Greek New Testament, theological insights of relevance for present application of ancient texts to modern society)

Anchor Bible
The IVP New Testament Commentary Series
New Century Bible
The New International Bible Commentary
New International Commentary on the New Testament
The New Interpreter's Bible
Sacra Pagina
Tyndale New Testament Commentary
Wesleyan Bible Commentary
Word Biblical Commentary

Avoid Biblical Illustrator, Pulpit Commentary, Speaker's Bible, Hailev's Handbook, Matthew Henry's Commentary, An Exposition of the Whole Bible

Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, and Atlases (Helpful for introductory issues, cultural practices, historical backgrounds and surveys, location of regions and cities, Greco-Roman religions and philosophies)

Anchor Bible Dictionary, 6 vols., Freedman, D. N., ed.
Atlas of the Bible and Christianity, Dowley, Tim, ed.
The Cambridge Companion to the Bible, Kee, Howard Clark et al., eds.
Concise Bible Atlas: A Geographical Survey of Bible History, Laney, J. Carl
Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, 2 vols., Hayes, John H., ed.
Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels
Dictionary of New Testament Background, Evans, Craig A. and Stanley E. Porter, eds.
Dictionary of Paul and His Letters
Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Development
Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, 3 vols. Collins, John, J. ed.
Handbook of Life in Bible Times, Thompson, J. A.
The Harper Atlas of the Bible, Pritchard, James B., ed.
Harper's Bible Dictionary, Achtemeier, P. J., ed.

Harper's Encyclopedia of Bible Life, Madeline S. and J. Lane Miller
Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters. McKim, K. Donald, ed.
The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 4 vols., Bromiley, G. W., Rev.ed.
Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 Volumes plus a Supplementary Volume
Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary, Rousseau, John J. and Rami Arav
The Macmillan Bible Atlas, Aharoni, Yohanan and Michael Avi-Yonah, eds.
The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology, Blaiklock, Edward M. and R. K. Harrison, eds.
The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd ed.
Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies, Patzia, Arthur G. and Anthony J. Petrotta
A Student's Dictionary for Biblical and Theological Studies, Huey, F. B. and Bruce Corley
Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 5 vols., Tenney, M. C., ed.

Selected Topics (Helpful for in-depth treatment of specific topics, historical backgrounds and surveys, and cultural practices)

The Canon of Scripture, F. F. Bruce
The Christians as the Romans Saw Them, Robert L. Wilken
The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ. Emil Schurer, 5 Volumes
The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Craig S. Keener
The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul, Wayne Meeks
Gnosticism, Robert M. Grant
Introducing the Apocrypha, David A. deSilva
Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, Joachim Jeremias
Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus, Marcel Simon
The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible, Paul Wegner
The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction, Brevard Childs
The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 B.C.-100 A.D., D. S. Russell
The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Ralph Gower
The New Testament in Its Social Environment, John E. Staumbaugh and David L. Balch
The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 2 vols., James H. Charlesworth, ed.
The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts, Ron Cameron
Paganism in the Roman Empire, Ramsay MacMullen
Philo of Alexandria, Samuel Sandmel
The World of the New Testament, Sean Freyne
The World of the Old Testament, A. S. Van der Woude

Introductions to the New Testament (Helpful for introductory issues and themes)

Barr, David, New Testament Story: An Introduction
Brown, Raymond E. An Introduction to the New Testament
Carson, D. A., Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, An Introduction to the New Testament

Collins, Raymond F. Introduction to the New Testament
Gundry, R. A Survey of the New Testament, Rev. ed.
Guthrie, Donald, New Testament Introduction, 4th ed.
Harris, Stephen L., The New Testament: A Student's Introduction, 5th ed.
Johnson, Luke T., The Writings of the New Testament: An Introduction
Kee, Howard Clark, Franklin W. Young, and Karlfried Froelich, Understanding the New Testament, 4th ed.
Kummel, Werner Georg, Introduction to the New Testament
Ladd, George Eldon, A Theology of the New Testament
Marshall, I. Howard, New Testament Theology
Martin, R. P., New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students, 2 vols.
Richardson, Alan, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament
Spivey, Robert A. and D. Moody Smith, Anatomy of the New Testament, 5th ed.
Varughese, Alex, ed. , Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith

Periodicals and Journals (In-depth treatment of selected topics and texts)

Tools for accessing:

Religion Index One: Periodicals

Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works

A selection of resources with common abbreviations:

Biblical Archaeologist (BA)
Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR)
Biblical Theology Bulletin (BTB)
Expository Times (ExpT)
Evangelical Quarterly (EvQ)
Interpretation (Int)
Journal for the Study of the New Testament (JSNT)
Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL)
New Testament Studies (NTS)
Novum Testamentum (NovT)
Westminster Theological Journal (WTJ)