

FORUM ELECTIVE CLASS

How to Read and Understand the Bible





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Sovereign Hope Church
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Todd L. Miles

I. Introduction

II. Inspiration

A. Texts

1. **2 Tim 3:16.**
2. **1 Cor 2:12-13.**
3. **2 Peter 1:20-21.**

B. Definition

1. Inspiration is that concurrent act of our holy God and a human author (fallen) whereby the Holy Spirit so moves the human author that God gets exactly what he wants without destroying or overwhelming the personality of the human author. The result is text that is simultaneously and fully both divine and human.
2. **Axiom: Your convictions on Inspiration will guide the way that you read and use the Bible.**

C. Implications

1. Inspiration is not dictation
2. There is no book like the Bible.
3. The Bible is thoroughly and absolutely the Word of God
4. The Bible is absolutely a human book

III. Read the Bible

- A. America is biblically illiterate.
- B. But the problem is not just familiarity with Scripture.

- C. Read 4 chapters a day and you will get through the whole thing.
- D. **Axiom: Faithful Bible interpreters must be fervent Bible readers.**

IV. The Bible Tells a Story

- A. Recognize that the Bible, from beginning to end, tells the story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.
- B. The Bible comes to us as a story with a definite plot line.
- C. So you know the story of Scripture? Are you aware of how it all fits together?

V. Context, Context, Context

A. Immediate Context

- 1. Look at **Matthew 18:20**.

B. Biblical Theological Context

- 1. There is a progress to revelation.
 - a. **Lev 11:3, 7?**
 - b. **Deut 22:8?**
 - c. **Lev 19:19?**
- 2. **Axiom: There is a progress to revelation and redemptive history. Pay attention to it!**
- 3. David and Goliath – **1 Sam 17**.

C. Historical Cultural Context

- 1. Historical-cultural context is any information about the historical setting or the cultural setting that is necessary and/or helpful to understand the passage.

2. **Axiom: The first and best place to look for historical-cultural context is in the Bible itself.**
3. **Rev 3:14-22.**
4. **Matt 25:1-13**
5. **Axiom: For the interpretation of any biblical text to be valid, it must be consistent with the historical-cultural context.**

VI. Pay Attention to Genre

A. What is Genre?

- a. **Axiom: A genre is a type of literature with the rules that govern its interpretation**

B. Narrative

1. What is Biblical Narrative
 - a. **Axiom: A biblical narrative is not merely a record of what happened, but it is also the divine interpretation of what happened.**
 - b. Narratives have to be selective.
2. Why Narrative?
3. Clues for Interpreting Narrative
 - a. **Axiom: Interpreting narrative rests on identifying setting, characters, and plot, and the principle of selectivity.**
4. **Matthew 4:1-11**
5. **Joshua 5:13-15**

6. **Genesis 19**

C. Poetry

1. Definition

- a. Interpretive presentation of human experience in artistic form. It typically seeks to elicit an emotive response.
- b. **Axiom: The purpose of poetry is to evoke emotion.**

2. Interpreting Poetry

- a. Read **Judges 4:17-22** and **5:24-30**.

3. Characteristics

- a. **Axiom #20: Biblical poetry is dominated by parallelism and figurative language.**

(a) **Isa 1:3.**

(b) **Prov 17:4.**

(c) **Ps 103:2-3.**

(d) **Ps 1:1-2.**

4. The Psalms are lyrical, meant to be sung.

5. Structure

- a. Strophe

(1) **Ps 136.**

(2) **Ps 42:5, 11; Ps 43:5**

D. Keys to interpreting the Psalms.

1. Important to Recognize -

2. Look for:

- a. Structure
 - b. Figurative Imagery and Figures of Speech
- 3. Principles for interpretation

E. Prophecy

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Why is Prophetic literature so hard to understand?
- 3. The Nature of the Prophetic Role
 - a. **Axiom: Prophecy is direct discourse from God to man mediated through the prophet.**
 - b. **Axiom : The prophet was more of a forth-teller than a fore-teller.**
 - (1) **Read Duet 28**
 - (2) **Amos 4:1-3**
- 4. The Nature of the Prophetic Message
 - a. **Axiom: The key to understanding the prophetic genre is understanding the Covenants (particularly the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New Covenants), Deut 28 and 30, and Jer 18.**
- 5. How to understand - some tips
 - a. Pay attention to context
 - b. Find a map if you are unfamiliar with the geography
 - c. Isolate the speech - find the equivalent of the paragraph
 - d. Do not let your contemporary situation control the text

- e. Where are we at in Redemptive History? 21st Century America is NOT Old Covenant Israel!

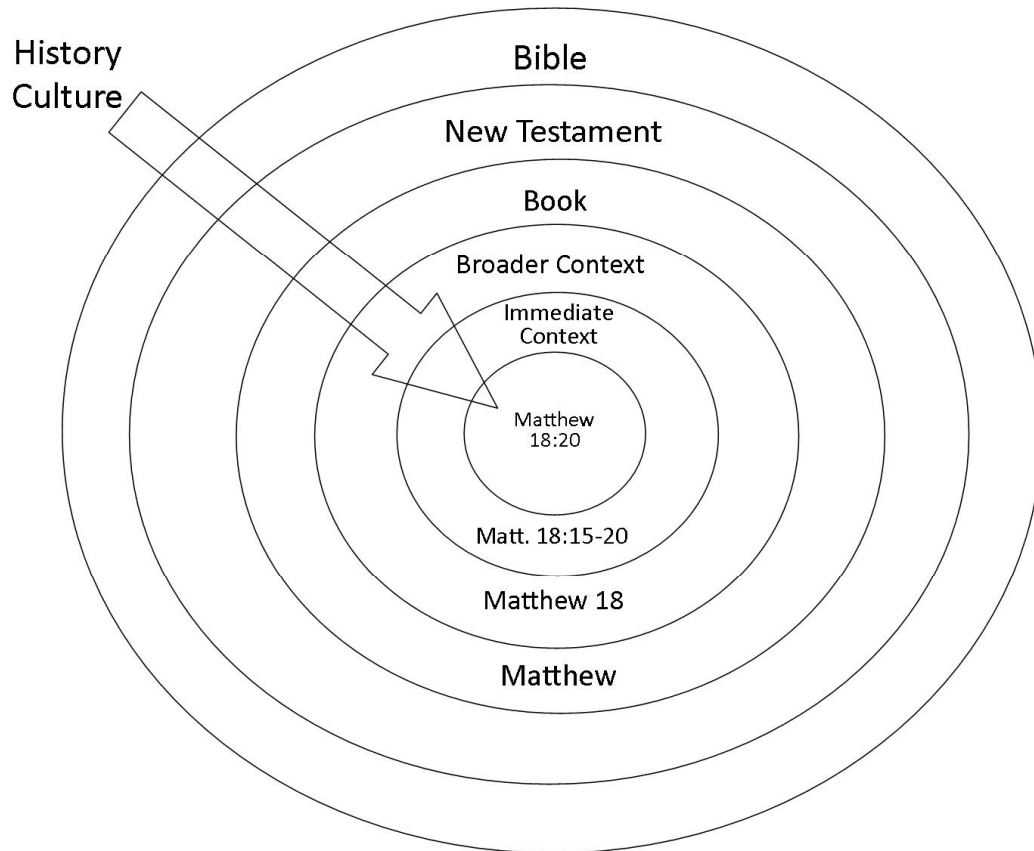
VII. What is God Doing in this Text?

- A. What do we do with language?
- B. **Axiom: The Bible is God's speech to us where God engages us.**
- C. Biblical Support
 - 1. **Isa 55:10-11.**
 - 2. **Jn 20:30-31.**
- D. **Axiom: One of the first questions of interpretation is "What is God doing in this text?"**
- E. Examples. What is the author doing with these passages?
 - 1. **I Jn 5:13.**
 - 2. **Gen 15:5.**
 - 3. **Rom 6:12-13.**
 - 4. **Gen 1:1.**
 - 5. **Rev 20:1-3.**
 - 6. **Gen 15:6.**
 - 7. **Luke 1:53.**

VIII. How should I respond?

- A. You have not understood if you do not obey.
- B. What part of _____ did you not understand?

Levels of Context



HERMENEUTICS AXIOMS

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- Axiom 1: Your hermeneutics will flow directly from your convictions on inspiration
- Axiom 2: Hermeneutics is, first and foremost, a theological endeavor
- Axiom 3: The Bible is God's speech to us where God engages us
- Axiom 4: One of the first questions of interpretation is "What is God doing in this text?"
- Axiom 5: We cannot interpret the Bible correctly unless we understand the story of Scripture as a whole
- Axiom 6: Hermeneutics is intuitive and not complicated. We are not Gnostics!
- Axiom 7: Faithful Bible interpreters must be fervent Bible readers
- Axiom 8: The three most important things in hermeneutics are context, context, and context
- Axiom 9: There is a progress to revelation and redemptive history. Pay attention to it!
- Axiom 10: For the interpretation of any biblical text to be valid, it must be consistent with the historical-cultural context.
- Axiom 11: The first and best place to look for the historical-cultural context is in Scripture itself.
- Axiom 12: Words have meanings, not meaning. But they have meaning in context.
- Axiom 13: A genre is a type of literature with the rules that govern its interpretation
- Axiom 14: A biblical narrative is not merely a record of what happened, but it is also the divine interpretation of what happened
- Axiom 15: Interpreting narrative rests on identifying setting, characters, and plot, and the principle of selectivity
- Axiom 16: Prophecy is direct discourse from God to man mediated through the prophet
- Axiom 17: The prophet was more of a forth-teller than a fore-teller
- Axiom 18: The key to understanding the prophetic genre is understanding the Covenants (particularly, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New), Deut 28 and 30, and Jer 18
- Axiom 19: The purpose of poetry is to evoke emotion
- Axiom 20: Biblical poetry is dominated by parallelism and figurative language
- Axiom 21: Every parable contains two parts - a fictional part and a real part. Do not confuse them.
- Axiom 22: Proverbs are *general* truths about living wisely in God's world
- Axiom 23: In discourse, an argument is being made. Follow it!
- Axiom 24: Apocalyptic literature is written to *encourage* the saints to persevere
- Axiom 25: Illumination is the work of Holy Spirit by which he makes the Bible understandable and applicable to the believer's life
- Axiom 26: Applications should be personal, specific, measureable, with time frames and a plan of accountability.