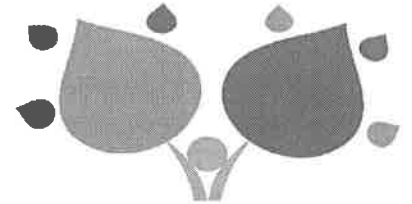




Kairos University

Kairos Campus



BS 302 Hermeneutics

January 2019

Dr. Daniel C. Lane

List of Handouts for **BS 302 Hermeneutics**

Dr. Daniel C. Lane / January 2019

- #01 Why Do We Need to *Interpret* the Bible?
- #02 An Overview of How We Interpret the Bible / the Historical-grammatical Method
[The **three main categories**; the **six factors** to pay attention to.]
- #03 The Main Principles by which We Interpret the Bible
- #04 Semantics & Syntax
[= the meaning of the words & the grammar]
- #05 The Importance of Context
- #06 Observing & Interpreting OT Narrative
- #07 Insights for Reading and Understanding OT Poetry
- #08 Overview Timeline of the OT
- #09 List of Main OT Events
- #10 A Biblical versus a Pagan Understanding of God / the gods, and the Cosmos
- #11 The "Inter-testamental" Period
[Brief Notes on the History of Israel from the end of the OT until the Birth of Jesus]
- #12 The Setting in Judea and Jerusalem when Jesus Began his Public Ministry
- #13 Key Dates & Main Events During the New Testament Era
- #14a Observing & Interpreting NT Narrative & Discourse
[the Gospels & Acts]
- #14b Insights for Reading & Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels
[Matthew, Mark, & Luke]
- #14c Insights for Interpreting NT Parables
- #15 Insights for Interpreting NT Epistles
- #16 The Importance of Reading the Rest of the Bible
- #17 Can We "Plop & Point"?

SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is the foundational course for all other Bible & theology courses taught in the Bachelor of Arts in Theology program. This course sets forth the basic principles and insights by which we interpret the Bible soundly. There will be initial lectures, plus practice assignments for developing practical skills, and class discussion, along with quizzes and a final exam.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The goal of this course is for students to be able read and interpret the Bible soundly, and so to be able to feed themselves and others spiritually.

This course will equip students with fundamental insights concerning how we interpret the Bible, and why. It will stress and illustrate the importance of insights such as the following:

- What is the context of the passage we are reading?
(This is vital in passages like Romans 2 and Romans 14.)
- Is the language in a passage straight-forward, or is it figurative?
(For example: *Does God sleep?* Ps 44:23 sounds like He does . . . but does He?)
- What do the words mean? (Especially terms such as "justification" and "sanctification.")
- What events and earlier books in the Bible set the stage for understanding the passage I am looking at now? (This is essential for making sense of the Old Testament.)
- How does a basic knowledge of the culture and customs of the times in which the Bible was written help shed light on the meaning of the text? This includes items such as:
 - The pagan understanding of the cosmos (in contrast to a biblical understanding).
 - What is a covenant, and how do covenants function?
 - How Greek culture and Roman government affected Israel and the Jews at the time of Jesus.
 - The Jewish culture into which Jesus spoke.

The course will set forth these insights, will illustrate them from Scripture, and then will give the student practice on multiple passages. Mastering these insights will give students increasing confidence that they can read the Scriptures soundly, which is foundational to everything we do in the Christian faith and life.

III. COURSE TEXTBOOK / REQUIRED READING

Our textbooks will be the Bible and the extensive class handouts.

A Reading Schedule / Reading Report will be provided.

Required Reading:

All course handouts.

The Reading Report: 100 designated chapters from the Bible.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: Students are expected to be in all class sessions unless they are ill or there is a family emergency. We will seek to accommodate unusual circumstances. But any student who misses more than eight hours of class may be required to withdraw from the course. The final decision lies with the professor.

[Any student who withdraws from the course may continue to audit the course with the professor's permission, but would need to re-take the course to take it for credit.]

Grades: Grades will be based on the following:

Two Quizzes (40 points each)	80 points
Three Assignments during class week	50 points
Reading Report	20 points
Two "After-class Assignments"	50 points
Final Exam (100 x 2 = 200)	<u>200 points</u>
Total Possible Points:	400 points

Grading Scale:

[A+ 98 - 100]	B+ 87 - 89	C+ 77 - 79	D+ 67 - 69	☹ below 60
A 93 - 97	B 83 - 86	C 73 - 76	D 63 - 66	
A - 90 - 92	B - 80 - 82	C - 70 - 72	D - 60 - 62	

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H/O #01 – Why Do We Need to *Interpret* the Bible?

A. Why do we need to *interpret* the Bible? Don't we just read it and obey it?

Most of the Bible is written in a common-sense, straight forward way. The 10 Commandments are good examples.

- Honor your father and your mother.
- Do not commit murder.
- Do not commit adultery.
- Do not steal.

The meanings of those commandments are clear, and it is also clear that those commandments apply to all of us.

But note that there are actually two issues involved:

- (1) What do the words mean? (the basic interpretation of the verse)
- (2) Does this verse apply to me? = Does it apply to Christians today?
(the application of the verse)

For example, consider Leviticus chs. 1–7, the rules for offering animal sacrifices at the tabernacle and later at the temple. The meaning of the verses in those chapters is generally clear. But do those instructions *apply to* modern Christians? Answering that question involves interpreting and understanding the overall structure and teaching of the Scriptures.

So for some Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament, the question we need to ask is:
Does this Bible verse apply to Christians?

But for other Scriptures, the question we need to ask is:
What does this Bible verse mean? = What is its basic meaning?

B. Examples of Verses that Are Not Easy to Interpret:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Genesis 24:22-30 | What is the “gold nose ring” all about?
Does it symbolize something, or is it simply a gift, to show sincerity? |
| Psalm 44:23 | “Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord?
Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!”
So – Does God sleep? |
| Amos 9:4b | “I will fix my eyes on them for <u>evil</u> , and not for good.”
So – Does God do “evil”? |
| 2 Peter 3:15–16 | Peter says that some things that Paul wrote are hard to understand. |

John 6:53–57

⁵³So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.** ⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.”

Should we understand this passage in a flatly-literal way?

Romans 2:6–12

Does this passage teach that we earn our salvation by our good works? It sounds like it teaches it.

Romans 14:22

“The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God.”

So – Should Christians share the gospel, or not?

1 Timothy 3:1,2

An elder must be “*the husband of one wife . . .*”.

Does that mean, if an elder’s wife dies, he is *not* free to re-marry?

Can he only have one wife, for all his life?

Hebrews 8:6–13

Verse 6 and 9 refer to an *earlier* covenant, an “old” one (v. 6).

Q: Is the “old covenant” the *Old Testament*?

Or does it refer to one of the covenants mentioned in the Old Testament?

If so, which one?

And many honest Bible readers have felt that James 2:20–24 seems to(??) disagree with Romans 3:28 & Galatians 2:16. (We will address these verses directly in **Handout #04.**)

C. Examples of Verses where We Need to Ask: ***Does this apply to us / to me?***

2 Sam 17:23

“When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went home to his own city. He set his house in order, and then he hanged himself.”

If we are at a church planning meeting and no one listens to our advice, is this what we should do?

Isaiah 6:9b

“Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
keep on seeing, but do not perceive.”

Does this describe what Christians should do when we read our Bibles?

1 Sam 28

King Saul used a medium / a witch, to call up the spirit of Samuel.

If a king of Israel could do so, then is it permissible for Christians to be in a séance, or to contact the dead?

D. Conclusion:

Again, most of the Bible is written in a straight-forward way. However, not all of it is. Many passages in the Bible require us to think carefully, to read a lot of the rest of the Bible, in order to understand them correctly. The goal of this course is to help us be able to read and understand our Bibles better.

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H/O #02 – An Overview of How We Interpret the Bible – The “Historical-grammatical Method”

This handout summarizes the things we look for when we read the Bible.

I. Do I get a new “meaning” every time I read a passage in the Bible?

This deals with the questions:

“What does it mean?” ← versus → “What does it mean to me?”

When we re-read a passage in the Bible . . .

We might observe some details . . .

We might perceive . . .

We might realize . . .

But the *basic sense* of the text . . .

II. What is the Role of the Holy Spirit as Regards Interpretation?

The Holy Spirit opens our eyes . . .

It opens our hearts . . .

But the Holy Spirit does not . . .

The words mean what they mean, or else we have nothing.

We cannot say, “*This is what the Scriptures teach . . .*”, if someone can answer, “Oh, but that’s not what it means to me.”

The Holy Spirit does not ≈ magically interpret the text for us. We need to read it, to think about it, even to study it, in its context.

III. Where Our Interpretive Method Gets Its Name:

The label, “historical-grammatical method,” gets its name from the fact that it means that, when we read the Bible, we pay attention to three main categories of features / information:

- The “history” =
and,
- The “grammar” =

These are the two categories from which our method gets its name. The third major category of information we pay attention to is:

- The "context" =

Because we pay attention to these three main categories of information, some people have suggested that we call our interpretive method the "historical-grammatical-contextual method." This would be accurate, but it becomes a very long title. So that's why our interpretive method it is usually simply called, "the historical-grammatical method" = "HGM". It is not a "magic method" for interpreting the Bible; it is based on the way language works.

IV. The Six Basic Categories of Things We Pay Attention To:

When we identify the specific features and details we are looking for within these three main categories, they break down into **six basic categories**, which come in three natural pairs of two:

- 1 & 2 When we focus in on an individual verse, we pay attention to the meanings of the words (= "semantics"), and to the grammar = the structure of the sentence.
- 3 & 4 When we look just beyond that verse itself, we look at the genre (= the type of writing), and the local context.
- 5 & 6. When we step back and look further, we pay attention to how the rest of the Bible sheds light on the verse, and then also where this book of the Bible falls in terms of the larger historical & cultural setting.

Of these six basic categories, the first three (semantics, grammar, and genre) fall under the general label "grammatical" in the name "historical-grammatical method."

The fourth and fifth (context, and the rest of the Bible), fall under the general category of "context."

The sixth one (the historical & cultural setting), obviously falls under the general category of "historical."

V. A Brief Description of these Six Basic Categories = Six Basic Features that We Look for When Reading & Interpreting the Bible

We will have handouts which elaborate on these six factors; here we are listing them briefly.

A. The Normal Function of Grammar & Language ("grammatical")

1. **Semantics** = the meanings of the words.
This is often self-evident ("donkey" means "donkey," "tree" means "tree"). But when the NT uses a term such as *sanctify*, what does it mean? When the OT says that God will sometimes come against people for *evil*, and not for good (Amos 9:4), precisely what does that word "evil" mean?
2. **The Grammar**.
3. **The Genre** = the type of literature = type of writing style of the biblical passage.
Recognizing the type of writing style of a Bible passage is vital to interpreting it correctly.

In the Bible, there are main three types of literature, three main *genre*:

- a. Narrative & Prose
- b. <Hebrew> Poetry (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, & many/much of the prophets)
Hebrew poetry communicates truth just as well as does narrative or epistle, but does it in a different style, in a different way. It is much more figurative and more emotive.
- c. Apocalyptic Prophecy.
These are prophetic passages which contain striking visual images which are not merely figures of speech. Found mainly in Ezekiel, Daniel & Zechariah, & Revelation.

Question: Do Christians interpret all of the Bible “literally” = “flatly literally”?

Answer: No.

Rather, this is a better approach:

We interpret the Scriptures according to the normal use of language.

B. The Context (from the local context to the larger biblical context)

4. The Local Context

The immediate **context** of the passage (i.e., the paragraph and/or chapter it falls into)

The overall **structure of the book**, especially, where the passage falls into that structure. This is very important in NT letters.

5. Information from the Rest of the Bible:

From other **related passages** –

– Passages which came earlier . . .

– Or, other passages which add to or fill out the thought of text at hand.

From paying attention to: ***where are we in the overall flow of the Bible.***

C. Historical & Cultural Setting of a Book (“historical”)

6. The general historical & cultural setting of the book:

- a. The general historical setting: where are we in the larger flow of world history?
- b. What is the cultural setting? (Ancient near-east, paganism, Greco-Roman, etc.).
- c. The **specific situation & occasion** into which a book was written (esp.: OT Minor Prophets, and NT epistles).

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H/O #03r

An Overview of the Main Principles by which We Interpret the Bible

I. No One is a "Neutral" Interpreter –

II. General Principles & Guidelines:

1. A Basic Principle: Interpretation should fit the historical setting, the grammar, and the context of the passage.

That is, it should fit with . . .

2. Observe the text carefully; pay attention to the details.

Example: Eph 3:5 does *not* read, ". . . which was not known at all in former times . . .".

Instead, it reads: ". . . which was not known in former times as it has been made known now."

3. Do not *overdrive* the text; do not say more than the text says. James 2:24 **Mark 16:16.**

4. "Don't build a big house . . .

Major doctrines should be built on multiple references from a several places in the Bible. They should not be built not on just one verse, especially if it is a verse which is not easy to interpret. *Because if you have misunderstood that one verse → you've got nothing.*

Gal 6:16 Are Christians "spiritual Jews"? Is the church the new / true Israel?

Matt 15:24 "I was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel."

5. When we are reading a specific translation of the Bible, we should bear in mind that translation's approach to translating the Bible.

That is → Were the translators trying to be as accurate as possible, even if the resulting translation is somewhat difficult to read?

Or, → Were they trying to make sure their translation was very readable, and then after that, be as accurate as they could be?

To Note: For matters of doctrine . . .

6. When multiple translations of the Bible agree on how they render a verse . . .

7. A basic principle which pervades all of this is: → **Scripture interprets Scripture**

8. Finally, *think carefully*. ☺

III. Specific Principles of Interpretation which are especially important for the Bible:

1. Since Scripture does not finally contradict Scripture → If we *think* the Bible *seems to be* contradicting itself, then we need to look more carefully at the passage(s) involved, or else improve our understanding of how to interpret the Bible, or both.
2. A passage which directly addresses an issue takes precedence over one which addresses it only indirectly or by implication. Hence it is vital to determine, "*What is the **topic** of this passage?*"
3. A passage which is clear on a subject takes precedence over one which is unclear or obscure.
4. A more specific statement takes precedence over, or else qualifies, a general one.

Examples:

- 1 Cor 7:17–24, but then note especially v. 21b.
 - Mutual Christian submission, vs. parent ↔ child.
5. Recognize the normal *summarizing* use of language. (This is similar to "Do not over-drive . . .".)

Some Examples:

- **1 Cor 13:7** "*Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*"
- **Jesus** often states things in *absolute* terms, terms which do not easily lend themselves to seeing things in shades of gray. But statements on the same topics in the epistles are often more practical, speaking in realistic terms. Two examples:

Jesus, speaking to the rich young man in Matt 19:21 –

Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Paul, in 1 Tim 6:17 –

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Jesus, in Luke 14:26 –

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Paul, in 1 Tim 5:8 –

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

6. To sum up: **Q:** How can we make sound conclusions about what the Bible is teaching?

Ans.: Base our doctrine and our practice on →

→ **Multiple** passages, which address and issue **directly**, and speak **clearly**.

7. Finally, an interpretation which makes the best sense of all the data in the text is to be preferred over one which involves a lot a special pleading.

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H/O #04r – Semantics & Grammar

We pay attention to the meaning of the words, and to the grammar.

I. GRAMMAR:

Hebrews 10:14 – Notice the verbs / the verb tenses, in this verse:

*“For by one sacrifice, He **has made perfect** forever . . .
. . . those who **are being made holy**.”*

Romans 5:1–11 – Again, notice the tenses of the verbs, esp. in vv. 1, 2, 9, & 11.

In this handout, we will spend most of our time on Semantics.

II. SEMANTICS: (= the meanings of the words)

The term “semantics” refers to the meanings of the words being used.

Most of the words in the Bible are used in a way that is clear and straight-forward. But this is not always the case.

For example, many words can be used both **literally** and **figuratively**.

[For a specific example, consider the term “fox” in Luke 13:32.]

Also, words often have a **range of meaning**, and can be used in more one way.

Please Note:

The entire range of meaning does **not** (!) show up each & every time the word is used.

[We will see this below, when we compare Romans 3:28 to James 2:24.]

So sometimes it is necessary to ask: *How is this word being used in this particular verse?*

We see that the meaning of a word in a particular verse is determined by these two factors:

-
-

We tend to pay close attention to the meanings of the words either when the meaning is simply not clear to us (such as: is it being used literally or figuratively?), or, when one verse seems to disagree with another verse.

When we are paying close attention to the meanings of the words, we are usually trying to determine one of two things:

A. We are trying to determine . . .

– or –

B. We are trying to determine . . .

We will look at a few examples of each. (*next page.*)

A. Determine Exactly What Word(s) are Being Used,
and perhaps: What is the Focus of that Word Compared to Similar Words.

We will look at one example from the Old Testament, and one from the New Testament.

1. An Example from the Old Testament: Amos 9:4 → Does God do 'evil'?

The apparent problem with this verse:

The solution / the explanation → is to understand two things very carefully:

- (1) What is the 'semantic range' of this word?
= What are the ways this word can be used?
- (2) How does this word differ from other similar words in the Old Testament for "sin," iniquity, "transgression," etc.? [For example, the terms usually translated "*sin / iniquity / transgression*" are all used in Ps 51:1–3]

The specific word used in Amos 9:4 occurs ≈ 350x in the OT.

[For those who can read English, you can look it up in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* online; it is **word # 7451**.]

Here are some of the many passages that use this specific word; they are grouped below into two sets:

Set #1:

- Gen 50:20 *You intended it for **evil**, but God . . .*
- Deut 31:18 *When Israel scorns Yahweh and serves foreign gods, many **evils** will come upon them.*
- Judges, 7x *The Israelites did **evil** in the sight of the Lord.*
- 1 Sam 23:9 *. . . when David learned that Saul was plotting **evil** against him . . .*
- 1 Kings 16:7 *Jeroboam the son of Nebat did **evil** in the eyes of Yahweh . . .*
- Psalms 15:3 *. . . who does no **evil** to his neighbor. . .* [See(!) similarly: Rom 13:10]
- Hab 1:13 *Your eyes are too pure to look on **evil**; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?*

Set #2:

- 2 Sam 12:11 *Out of your own household I am going to bring **disaster** upon you . . .*
- 2 Chron 34:24 *I am going to bring **disaster** upon this house . . .*
 . . . according to all the curses written in the book . . .
- Jer 4:6 *I am bringing **disaster** from the north, a terrible destruction*
- Jer 6:19 *I am bringing **disaster** on this people, the fruit of their schemes . . .*
- Jer 11:11 *I will bring a **disaster** on them that they cannot escape. . .*
 [There are many similar references in Jeremiah.]
- Ezek 6:10 *Then they will know that . . . I did not threaten to bring this **calamity** on them in vain.*
- Micah 2:3,4 *I am planning a **disaster** against this people from which you cannot save yourselves . . .*
 "We are ruined! . . . Our fields are assigned to traitors."

What do you notice about the difference between the examples in the first set, and the examples in the second set?

A Basic Question: Does God reserve to himself the right to actually punish sin?

Conclusion about the meaning of the word 'evil' in Amos 9:4.

2. An Example from the New Testament: 1 John 3:7–10 → Do Christians still sin, or not?

This is the apparent problem with these verses:

The solution / the explanation, has two parts:

(1) Look closely at the specific words being used.

1 John 3:8 "*The one who practices sin is of the Devil . . .*".

1 John 3:9 "*No one who is born of God sins (??) ↔ practices sin.*"

(2) Also, bear in mind what was said earlier in 1 John 1:8–10.

So → How do we understand what John is saying in 1 John 3:7–10?

John is not saying . . .

But John is saying . . .

B. Determine How a Word is Being Used in a Verse

An Example from the New Testament: Rom 3:28 & Gal 2:16 ↔ James 2:20–24.

Read each of these verses, and in particular, consider the use of the verb '*to justify*'.

What seems to be the problem?

Q: How are we to understand this / to resolve the seeming disagreement?

A: There are two key insights.

#1. Paul and James are asking *related but different questions*.

Paul is asking:

And what is Paul's answer?

James is asking:

And what is James' answer?

Don't miss this: James is making an important point.
(See for example Acts 10:34-35).

#2. Paul and James are using the same verb, *to justify* (it is the same verb in Greek). But that verb has a range of meaning (its "semantic range"), and can be used in more than one specific way.

Consider how that verb is used in Luke 7:35 (and also in Rom 3:4 and 1 Tim 3:16).

We see that there are two main uses of the verb *to justify* in the NT:

(1)

(2)

Therefore, Paul and James are using the same word, the same verb. However, Paul is using it in the first sense listed above, and James is using it in the second sense.

Conclusions Concerning James 2:24, and the verb "*to justify*":

Our justification toward God, the act by which we are declared righteous in God's sight, and are moved from death to life, is based on genuine faith, apart from works which we might have done. This what Paul emphasizes.

Nonetheless, true faith will(!) produce some kind of evidence, some kind of 'works'; James is right.

The Reformers put it this way: *We conclude that we are saved by faith, apart from works—but not by a faith which is apart from works.*

A simple way to put it is as follows:

=====

In Summary: It is very important to understand the meanings of the words in the Bible correctly, and also to pay attention to how they are being used in a specific passage.

* * * * *

H/O #05 – The Importance of Context

A. The Importance of Context

As concerns the genre of Scripture—

While much of the Bible is written using figurative language (see **Handout #07** on OT Poetry), nonetheless, most of the Bible is written in a straight-forward manner.

As concerns semantics—

While we need to carefully examine the meaning & use of some words in the Bible, nonetheless, most of the time the meaning of the words used in the Bible is clear.

Since that is the case, then *in general*, the single most important factor for interpreting the Bible correctly is paying attention to the **context**.

B. Correctly Appreciating the Context

1. Do not read the Bible as if it were made up of unconnected verses, floating in space.

For example: We examined **James 2:24** in **Handout #04** ("Semantics & Grammar").
James 2:24 – *"We see that a person is justified by works, and not by faith alone."*

One key insight in interpreting James 2:24 was to examine the semantic range of the verb, "to justify."

What was the other key insight for rightly interpreting James 2:24?

Question: Which book of the Bible can we read as separate individual verses?
Answer:

2. To be specific: The meaning of the verse must fit the local context and(!) the larger structure of the book.

Example: **Romans 14:22** reads:

"Whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God."

Does this mean we should not share the gospel?

So it is very important to ask: What is Paul talking about in Romans ch. 14?

Answer:

3. Similarly: Do not violate either the clear general teaching of scripture or the local context of a passage.

For example: It *is* legitimate to say, "I do not know what to do with James 2, because it seems to contradict Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and the Gospel of John." When we say that, we are respecting the clear general teaching of Scripture.

On the other hand, it is *not* legitimate to conclude, "The purpose of James 2, I guess, must be to explain that we are saved by faith apart from works." If we did that, we would be ignoring the local context of James ch. 2.

C. Some Examples of Passages which Have a Fairly Lengthy Local Context:

Romans 1–8 (!)

Romans 9–11.

1 Corinthians 8–10.

1 Corinthians 12–14.

Galatians 1–4

Hebrews 1–10.

D. Two Quick Practice Examples:

- Habakkuk 1:14 – “You have made men like the fish of the sea . . .” ← Means what?
- What topic is Paul addressing in Gal 3:28?

E. One Quick Example for Thought:

In 1 Corinthians 14:20, Paul tells the Corinthians,

“Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regards to evil be infants, but in your thinking, be adults.”

From the local context, can we determine what Paul thought was child-like in their thinking?

F. One Specific Example: Romans 2:13

Romans 2:6–8, and 2:13 read as follows:

⁶“God will give to each person according to what he has done. ⁷To those who persist in doing good and seeking glory, honor and immortality, God will give eternal life. ⁸But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”

¹³“For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”

So → Are we saved by works? If we wish to go to heaven, do we need to be good all of the time, so that we can earn our way to heaven? How are we to understand this passage?

* * * * *

H/O #06 – Observing and Interpreting OT Narrative:

How Do We Go from the Story → to the Moral of the Story?

A. Features To Observe When Reading Narrative:

1. In general, Old Testament **narrative** is written in a straight-forward manner.
So, in general, we should
2. Pay attention to the **details**. // Even though the Old Testament adds up to be rather large, the individual accounts are often rather brief; so the details count. If the writer slows down to give more detail, it's important.

To Note! OT narrative often does not give you all of the info you might like to have. But **it gives you enough for you to know what you need to know** in order to assess the episode you are reading.

For example:

1 Samuel 15, Saul and the command to utterly destroy the Amalekites.

3. Similarly, if something gets **lengthy treatment**, it is probably important.
4. **Editorial Comments.**
Note comments which give direct moral or theological evaluation, comments which offer a value judgment on what is happening in the story. I call these "**editorial comments**".

They give us *God's perspective* on the events recorded.

The classic example is: "*They did evil in the eyes of the Lord.*"

Other examples are: Judges 9:56-57; 2 Kings 17:7–23; and 1 Chron 10:13-14.

5. Pay attention to the **dialogue**. // By "dialogue" we mean whenever someone is speaking, whether or not there is a back-and-forth conversation.
[The story as told by the narrator is sometimes called the "**narrative proper**."]]

In particular, pay attention to lengthy statements or speeches or prayers by "approved persons."

[An "**approved person**" is –

someone who is commended in Scripture (e.g., Moses, Abraham, Joshua, David, Solomon < *sometimes* ☹, Josiah, etc.), or, someone whose conduct shows genuine faithfulness to God (Joseph, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah).

Note, however: Just because a person is a main character in an episode does not guarantee that he/she is an 'approved person'.]

In OT narratives, the dialogue often carries the theology of the passage.

Example: Gen 22.

On the other hand, the Bible sometimes records people saying things that are not true. When the narrator is speaking, what is said will always be true. But when a person is speaking, sometimes what they say is *not* true. (e.g.: King Saul, 1 Sam 23:7)

B. Principles of Special Value for Interpreting Narrative:

1. Bear in mind the prior theological framework provided by Scripture, especially **the foundation set by the Pentateuch**. This is what the text 'assumes' you know.
Example: Deut 18:10,11 ↔ 1 Samuel 28.
2. What happens in narrative is to be judged by the general teaching and the prophetic sections in the rest of the Old Testament.

Pay attention to other Scriptures (especially in the OT) to see if they make it clear whether the action recorded is good or bad. Example: 1 Sam 28 ↔ 1 Chron 10.

3. Read the passage and then keep reading. **Ask:**
 - What does the rest of Scripture do with this **event**? (Gen 35:22)
 - What does the rest of Scripture do with the **information** given here? (Gen 34)

4. Ask yourself: What is the point, the purpose, of this passage? Why is it recorded?
A good way to find the purpose of the passage is to ask:

*If this passage was not in the Bible, **what would we miss, what would we lose?***

The answer to that question may well be the point of the passage.

Examples:

The **Joseph** narrative (Gen 37–50).

The account of **Rahab** (Josh 2–6).

Do Not !! –

1. Do not ignore the context while trying to draw applications from a small detail of a narrative.
2. Do not assume the that Bible **recommends** something it merely **records**.
3. Do not 'overdrive' your evidence. That is, do not draw a big conclusion or make a big application you cannot show clearly from the text.

Often, the Bible itself . . .

But if the Bible itself does not draw any conclusions about an event, or does not focus on it . . .

4. Do not neglect the passage by merely "typologizing" the recorded events, or by *spiritualizing*, seeking to find a '*hidden spiritual meaning*' for every incident and detail in the Old Testament.

E.g.: Genesis 22:17 "*like sand of the seashore ↔ like stars of the sky.*"

H/O #07 – Insights for Reading and Understanding OT Poetry

Old Testament Poetry / Hebrew Poetry –

– definitely has something to say. But it makes its point in a different way than do OT or NT narrative passages or NT epistles. It is a different style of writing, a different **genre**, than prose. Like poetry in any language, OT poetry has an elevated, artistic use of language.

Also, poetry often requires us to think harder in order to understand the point it is making.

And in a few places (mostly the book of Ecclesiastes), it seems to deliberately move the reader in the wrong direction for a while, in order to force(!) the reader to think about the issue.

I. Which OT Books Are Mostly Poetic?

The 'Wisdom Books':

Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, & Song of Songs.

The book of Psalms.

Most of the Prophetic Books:

Esp.: Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk & Nahum.

Most of the other prophetic books are at least partly written in poetry, even Jonah.

II. The General Nature of OT Poetry:

1. It often uses **figurative language**, such as: "*God is my rock*"; or, "*the God of Jacob is our fortress*".

Such figurative language . . .

2. OT poetry tends to describe . . .
rather than describing . . .

3. It often does **not** make its train of thought obvious. Its arguments might not have a tight logical sequence.

By way of contrast: NT books like . . .

Yes, there is(!) a flow of thought in poetic passages . . .

4. Sometimes the '**speaker**' in a psalm . . .

To Clarify: The person who wrote the psalm is often called '**the psalmist**'.

And the psalmist is often the speaker in the psalm, *but not always*.

We will use **Ps 46** as an example.

The 'Psalmist' = The persons who wrote Ps 46 are . . .

The 'Speaker' = The persons speaking at the beginning of Ps 46 are the sons of Korah.
(They are perhaps speaking on behalf of the nation of Israel.)

But in **v. 10**, the speaker shifts, and can only be **God**.

Q: In what verse does the speaker shift back to the original speaker, the sons of Korah?

So the speaker in Ps 46 switches from the sons of Korah to God, and then back to the sons of Korah. But the psalm does not tell you the speaker has changed, either time.

5. In like manner, sometimes *the person being talked about* will shift from one person to another, without the psalm telling you it has done so. When this happens, it is usually shifting from David to the Messiah, and perhaps then back to David.

Consider Ps 16. It seems to be David talking about himself, and yet what it says . . .

In these cases, what the Psalm describes . . .

6. A given poetic passage might only tell us **one side of the story**.

- Contrast David's lament over Saul in 2 Samuel 1, to the mood of Psalms 52–59,
- Psalms with a **positive** view of the nations:
Psalms with a **negative** view of the nations:

7. Poetry often **evokes emotion**, and may display **strong swings of emotion**.
[Psalm 31, the book of Hosea, Lamentations 3.]

8. Poetic passages sometimes describe ***how something feels or how it looks at the moment to the speaker***, rather than setting forth the objective reality of the matter / the Bible's final word on the matter.

In the Wisdom Books, an example is **Job 9:14-22**.

This also occurs in the **Psalms**:

(In addition to the examples listed below, see also: Ps 12:1 and Ps 89:38,39.)

Some examples from the Psalms:

Ps 9:9 *The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
A stronghold in times of trouble.*

Ps 10:1 *Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*

Ps 44:23 *Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep!
Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever.*

Ps 73:4-12 ⁴*The wicked have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and well-fed.
⁵They are free from the burdens common to man;
they are not plagued by human ills. [. . .]*
¹²*This is what the wicked are like—
always carefree, they increase in wealth.*

Ps 74:1 *Why have you rejected us forever, O God?
Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?*

In Sum:

What OT poetry says is true **in some sense**; but it does not always describe each situation with balance or with precision.

So to get a balanced picture from poetry, we need to read a lot of it.

And we need to bear in mind its genre, that it is *poetic*. Poetry often does use language in a normal, straight-forward way. But as poetry, much of its language is figurative and emotional; such language is not intended to be taken in a flatly literal manner.

Question:

How can we tell when OT poetry is using language in a normal way, versus when it is figurative and emotional?

Answer:

(1) Your common sense will serve you well.

You know that God is not actually a rock (Ps 18:2), and you know that God does not actually sleep (Ps 44: 23).

(2) Also, the parts of the Bible that are written in . . .

In the Old Testament, the narrative-historical books (such as; Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings & Chronicles) and the books containing the Law (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy) are mostly written in normal language.

In the New Testament, the gospels, the books of Acts, and the Epistles are mostly written in normal language.

So again, we use what those books teach us to form a grid by which we can sort through the figurative and emotional language of the poetic passages.

III. Some Key Features of the Way OT Poetry is Written:

(i.e., its "***literary features***")

In English, the two main 'literary features' of poetry are ***rhyming*** and ***meter***. By way of contrast, Hebrew poetry does not rhyme and has no precise meter. But it does have features that distinguish it from regular prose or narrative writing.

A. The Main Literary Feature of OT Poetry: **Parallelism**

1. "Parallel structure" in OT poetry: In Hebrew poetry (= OT poetry), the lines of poetry usually come in **pairs**. The second line is said to be 'parallel' to the first line. This feature is called "**parallelism**."
2. The basic idea of parallelism / of parallel structure in OT poetry is this:

So we should not base a conclusion on ...

- ### 3. The Most Common 'Types' of Parallelism in OT Poetry:

We identify these 'types' of parallelism by asking & answering the question:

The three most common ways that the thought of the second line relates back to the thought of the first line are:

(1) 'Synonymous' Parallelism

[There are many examples in Ps 2 and in Isaiah 59.]

In synonymous parallelism, the second essentially restates, or closely echoes, the thought of the first line.

Ps 2:1 *Why do the nations rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?*

Ps 51:3 For my transgression I know
and my sin is continually before me.

What is called '**Chiastic**' Parallelism [A—B, then B'—A'] is essentially a subset of Synonymous Parallelism.

In chiasmic parallelism, the two lines say much the same thing. But with chiasmic parallelism, *the word-order of the two lines is approximately reversed*. That is, the second line has an inverted word order compared to the first line.

Ps 51:2 **Wash** me thoroughly • from my iniquity,
and from my sin • **cleanse** me.

(2) 'Antithetic' Parallelism

[This is very common in the book of Proverbs.]

The second line makes much the same point as does the first line, but does so using

These examples are from Proverbs.

12:1 *Reckless words pierce like a sword,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

14:9 *Fools mock at making amends for sin,
but good will is found among the upright.*

15:1 *A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

(3) 'Synthetic' Parallelism

[This is the most common type of parallelism.]

The second line adds a related thought, completes the thought, or qualifies the thought of, the first line.

Ps 53:1 *The fool has said in his heart,
"There is no God."
[2nd line completes the thought of the 1st line.]*

Hos 8:12 *I wrote them the many things of my law,
but they regard them as something alien.
[2nd line adds a related thought to the 1st line.]*

Prov. 20:4 *A sluggard does not plow in season;
so at harvest he looks but finds nothing.
[2nd line adds a related thought to the 1st line.]*

Ps 145:18 *The Lord is near to all who call on him –
– to all who call on him in truth.
[2nd line qualifies or modifies the 1st line.]*

4. Question: What if there is a break (breakdown?) in the parallel pattern? That is, what if a line seems to be left-over?

Or, what if there seems to be a triplet (= three lines together, instead of two)?
Should we "fix" it?

Answer: No. The "break" either marks . . .

[Examples: Ruth 1:16-17; Ps 13:1-2; Ps 18:50, **Ps 37:40**, Ps 94:23; Ps 100:5.]

B. Three other Literary Features Found in OT Poetry:

1. "Gapping." [Examples: Hos 6:3,4,6.]

Examples:

Ps 24:1 *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it;
The world [] and all who dwell in it.*

Ps 74:23 *Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries,
[] the uproar of your enemies, • which rises continually.*

2. An "**acrostic**." [Examples: Ps 37; Ps 111; Ps 137; also see Lamentations, chs. 1–4.]

The significance of an acrostic:

3. An "**inclusio**." [Examples: Psalm 8; Joel 1:2–14; Eccles 1:2–12:8]

The significance of an inclusio:

IV. Conclusions About OT Poetry / Hebrew Poetry:

Hebrew Poetry is **not** the same genre as Narrative or Law. If we try to read it as if it were all to be taken flatly literally we are reading it **against** the intention of the author, against the nature of its *genre*.

Yet we do not say, "Since it uses figures of speech, we have no idea what it means." Rather, it is to be interpreted in light of its recognized literary features, and in light of the normal approach to reading figurative poetic literature.

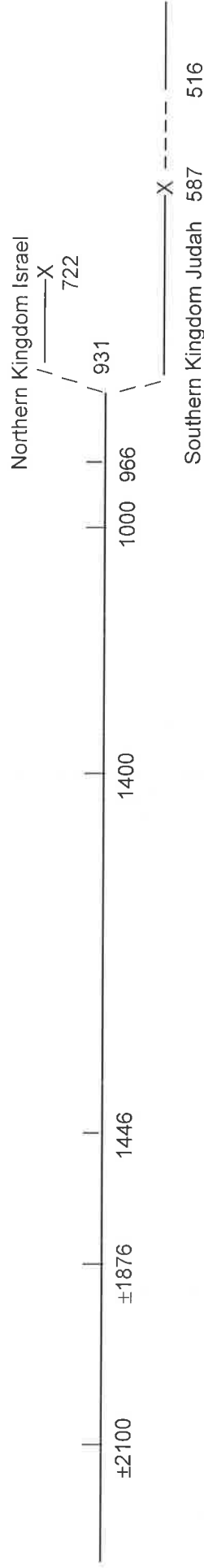
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PRIMEVAL HISTORY	PATRIARCHS	BONDAGE IN EGYPT	EXODUS & SINAI	40 YEARS WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS	CONQUEST	JUDGES	UNITED MONARCHY	DIVIDED KINGDOM	JUDAH ALONE	EXILE	POST-EXILIC PERIOD
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Creation

Fall, Flood, Tower of Babel	Abraham Isaac Jacob = Israel, 12 sons → 12 tribes Joseph & the entry into Egypt	400 yrs. in Egypt	10 Plagues; the Exodus; the law given at Mt. Sinai	12 Spies; disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea; 40 Years Decead	Joshua, Jericho	Failure to drive out the Canaanites	Saul David Solomon, the Temple	Kingdom splits after the death of Solomon	Fall of Samaria Jerusalem	Return from exile in Babylon
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[----- Age of the Prophets -----]



1st Temple Destroyed 2nd Temple [Re-] Built

[New Covenant prophesied →]

Davidic Covenant (with David & his Son) → → →

Sinai Covenant (w/ Israel)

Abrahamic Covenant (with Abraham & his seed) → → →

The Noah Covenant (with the human race) → → →

Genesis

sis
Exodus
Leviticus
Deuteronomy
Numbers
1 Chronicles

? Job ?

Joshua	Judges	1 & 2 Samuel	1 & 2 Kings	Daniel
	Ruth			Esther
			2 Chronicles	Ezra-Nehemiah
			Psalms	
	Proverbs			Ezekiel
	Eccles	?Obad.?	Nahum	Haggai &
	& SOS	Joel	Zephaniah	Zechariah
		Jonah	Habakkuk	?Joel?
		Amos	Jeremiah	Mala
		Hosea	Lamentations	
		Micah	Obadiah	
		Isaiah		

H/O #09 – List of Main OT Events

(1-4) The creation, the fall of mankind into sin & judgment; Noah & the flood; the tower of Babel.

(5) The call of the **patriarchs** (Abraham, Isaac & Jacob/Israel). God gives them three main promises:

- He will make them into . . .
- He will give them . . .
- He will . . .

These promises are also called the **Abrahamic Covenant**. Gen 12, 15, 17, 22.
In the New Testament, important chapters for the Abrahamic covenant are:

(6) Joseph, and the entry of the patriarchs into **Egypt**. They spend **400 years** there. Over time, they are oppressed more and more by the Egyptians, until they cry out to God.

(7) The **exodus**: God's delivers Israel from Egypt via the 10 plagues & the Red Sea. **1446 BC**.

(8) The nation of Israel arrives at **Mt. Sinai**.

There they have a monumental encounter with God through Moses.

They receive the 10 Commandments and the rest of the Law. ☺

They build the golden calf (Exod 32). ☹

They build the ark of the covenant and the Tabernacle. ☺

(9) **The Sinai Covenant**

In particular at Mt Sinai, Israel enters into a special relationship with God, namely, the 'Sinai covenant' (Exod 19–24).

The main dynamic of the Sinai Covenant is this: (Exod 19, Lev 26, Deut 7, Deut 28)

If → Israel will . . .

then, God will . . .

But if → Israel dishonors Yahweh, breaks the laws of the Sinai covenant, and if they worship other gods, then . . .

So note carefully:

(10) After the 12 spies spy out the land from Kadesh-Barnea, Israel decides not to enter the land.

Their subsequent **punishment** is **40 years of wandering in the wilderness**, while the entire unbelieving generation dies off. Num 13 & 14; 26:6-65; then later Deut 1 & 2; Josh 5:5-7. See also Psalm 95:8–11.

(11) After the 40 years are completed, they enter the land under **Joshua**. Israel is generally faithful to God at this time. Joshua, esp. chs. 1-2, 7, 11, 22-24.

- (12) But not long after Joshua dies, Israel becomes unfaithful to God, and even begins to worship idols and other gods. This is the time of the **Judges**. The book of Judges repeats the refrain, "*And again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.*" There is a downward **cycle** in the book of Judges (see Judges ch. 2). // Israel cries out for a king.
- (13) Saul becomes Israel's first king. But he disobey God, and loses his kingship. He persecutes David for no good reason. Saul is eventually rejected by God.
- (14) David becomes king; he wins many victories. He brings the ark to Jerusalem. **±1000 BC.**
- (15) **The Davidic Covenant**
 God promises David that a son of his ("God's anointed") will reign on the throne forever; David's son will be God's Son. 2 Sam 7; 2 Chron 17; Ps 2, Ps 89, Ps 110, Ps 132.
- (16) David's personal failures: His adultery with Bathsheba and effective murder of Uriah the Hittite. David's own son Absalom (a handsome but godless young man) rebels of against him. David is succeeded by his son Solomon.
- (17) Solomon builds the temple; the ark of the covenant is brought to reside there. **966/960 BC.**
- (18) **931 BC.** Solomon dies, and the **kingdom divides** into two kingdoms:
- Northern-kingdom 'Israel' ("NKI", 10 tribes), whose capital is _____; and,
 - Judah (2 tribes), whose capital is _____. 1 Kgs 11 & 12.
- (19) Jeroboam (1st king of NKI) sets up centers of worship at Bethel & Dan ("The sin of Jeroboam"). ☹ // Shortly after this time is when . . .
- (20) **As the result of scorning God, worshipping other gods and breaking the Sinai covenant, Samaria was laid waste by the Assyrians.** Most of the northern 10 tribes were scattered into Assyria's empire, and Gentiles were imported into the region of Samaria. 2 Kings 17. **722 BC.**
- (21) The prophet Jeremiah announces a **'new covenant'**, which will come in the future (Jer 31). Its two main dynamics are: (1)
 (2)
- (22) **As the result of scorning God, worshipping other gods and breaking the Sinai covenant, Jerusalem is laid waste by the Babylonians, the temple is destroyed, and the nation is dragged off into **exile** to Babylon (587 BC).** 2 Kings 25, 36; Jer 39 & 52; Ezek 20-23, 33. **587 BC.**
- (23) The Jews return from exile (announced in 2 Chronicles 36, and in Ezra ch. 1), after 70 years.
- (24) They rebuild the temple. Ezra 1-6. The 2nd Temple is completed in **516 BC.**
- (25) They later rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-6).
 The people are back in the land, and there is no more idolatry. The promises to Abraham and the promise of a son of David, the Messiah, remain. But the mood is not positive, and the people are not as faithful to God as could be hoped (Neh 10-13; see similarly Haggai & Malachi). That is where the Old Testament ends.

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H/O #10r – A Biblical Understanding of God and the Cosmos – in contrast to – a Pagan Understanding of the 'gods' and the Cosmos

I. Two Preliminary Definitions:

#1. What is "the ancient near-east"?

The expression, "the ancient near-east," refers to Israel and the nations surrounding Israel, during the time of the Old Testament (approximately 3,000 BC to 400 BC). For example: Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, ancient Syria, Moab, and Ammon, are all in the ancient near-east. The expression "ancient near-east" is often abbreviated "**ANE**."

#2. What do we mean by the term "pagan"?

The term "pagan" labels a way of understanding and relating to the cosmos and its 'gods'. We may call this the pagan "worldview."

Some basic features of a pagan worldview are: There are many 'gods'. No one god is truly in control. And the main way we relate to those gods and perhaps influence those gods is through rituals, incantations, and sacrifices. We will say more about this in the next section.

All of the nations surrounding OT Israel were pagan; none of them was monotheistic. That is to say, in the entire ancient near-east, the only ANE nation that was not pagan, was Israel.

[Ancient Greece and ancient Rome, which were the major western world powers just before and during the time of Jesus and the New Testament, were also pagan.]

This handout will elaborate on the difference between a pagan understanding of their gods and the cosmos, in contrast to a biblical understanding of God and the cosmos. And it will explain why this difference matters.

II. The Main Features of a Pagan Understanding of the 'gods' and the Cosmos:

1. There is more than one 'god.' This belief is called "**polytheism**" (= "*many gods*").
All pagan religions are polytheistic. But the differences between pagan polytheism and biblical monotheism are not as simple as saying, "We believe in one God; they believe in many gods." Keep reading.
2. No one god is truly supreme; no one god is sovereign; no one god is finally in control.
3. There is no basis for absolute morals. While pagan societies generally recognize commonly accepted moral rules (such as: do not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery), nonetheless, they have no final basis for identifying a set of absolute moral values.
4. These gods did *not* create the cosmos; **they did not create matter out of nothing**.
5. Rather, before there were any gods, there was initially a vague form of matter, called **chaos**, in which nothing was organized, nothing was distinct from anything else. It is sometimes described as being <water and darkness>. There were no stars, no mountains, no seas, no plants, no animals, nothing specific. There was just one large undifferentiated mass. It is kind of like a soup in which there are no specific ingredients, just 'soup'. Pagan legends and myths do not explain where this initial matter came from; it was just there.

The word **chaos** is contrasted to the word **cosmos**. In the initial state of chaos, there is no organization, and there are no specific things. But in the *cosmos* in which we live, there is organization, and there are specific things (such as the sun, the moon, land, and humans).

6. In the pagan worldview, the first gods somehow arose out of the churning dark chaotic watery mass.
7. There was initially one male and one female god; they mated and gave birth to more gods.
8. These gods are not morally perfect. They eventually quarrel with each other and are jealous of each other. They fight, and sometimes kill each other.
9. However, sometimes when the gods battle each other, there is no clear winner.

So for example, it is sometimes said that one god is active for a while (say, during the summer), but then is subdued for a while (during the winter). But then he will return and be more active again the next summer. This cycle will repeat. Such pagan legends are used to explain the change of the seasons.

10. **Cosmos.** It is the gods who bring order to the universe; **it is the gods who bring cosmos out of chaos.** They sometimes use the dead bodies of other gods, and from them they will form and fashion the sun, the stars, the moon, and the earth. Again, in the pagan worldview, the gods do not truly *create* these things. Rather, they fashion them out of something. In some pagan legends, the drops of blood from the dying gods become the first human beings.
11. In the pagan understanding, some of the gods are generally good: these are the gods who bring enough sun and enough rain for the crops to grow. These are the gods who make herds and flocks healthy and fertile, so that they reproduce and provide meat for food.
12. Everything that we now attribute to the normal operation of the universe according to science and natural law, pagans attributed to the work of a god. For them, there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural.

So for example, there is a god who flies the sun through the sky, a god who brings the rain, and god who controls the wind. There are gods for many of the animals, especially the important ones (like cattle, sheep & goats, and crocodiles). In pagan thinking, everything is controlled by the gods. They do not have modern scientific notions such as "natural law."

13. But in addition to the generally good gods, there are **demons** and **evil spirits**. And there are also other gods who are viewed as generally bad. These bad gods are sometimes called **chaos-gods**, because they want to drag the orderly, functioning *cosmos* back down to a state of *chaos*. In the pagan view of things, the good gods fight and struggle against the chaos-gods. They do this to keep the chaos-gods from turning the cosmos back into chaos. Thus a major idea in the pagan understanding of the cosmos is that there is **ongoing conflict** between the relatively good gods, and the chaos-gods.

14. The gods must be fed to remain strong.

They are fed by the **sacrifices** (the grain, and especially by the meat and blood of the animal sacrifices) that are offered by humans. Gods who are not fed will actually become weak. To pagans, when their sacrifices were being burned up on the altar, their gods were

eating those sacrifices; when the fire consumed an offering, a god was consuming the offering.

Thus for pagans, it was very important(!) to offer sacrifices to the good gods to keep them strong. Thus they offered such sacrifices again and again. The main responsibility for making sure the sacrifices continued to be offered fell upon **the king and the high priest**. A very real fear among pagans was that if they did not continue to feed their gods by offering sacrifices to them, *the world would descend back into chaos*.

15. In general, in a pagan view of the world, human beings do not have true dignity. Pagans do not speak of human beings as being created "in the image of God."

In some pagan accounts, the gods created humans to do the hard work (the "grunt work") of actually raising the crops and the herds and offering the sacrifices, so that the lesser-gods would be freed from such drudgery. In pagan writings, humans are often described by the gods as savages and beasts.

16. **Rituals.** Similarly, rituals conducted on behalf of a god brought that god honor and respect in the eyes of other gods. Therefore it was important to conduct elaborate rituals on behalf of your gods. Again, the main responsibility for conducting these rituals fell upon the king and the high priest.

17. Another main way that pagans related to their gods was through **ritual prayers and incantations**. These prayers were used to seek the favor of a god. Perhaps a couple had no children, or a farmer's crops were not growing well, or a some sheep in a shepherd's flock were dying off. People would recite the appropriate prayer or incantation to appeal to a god to help them. They would often recite them many times.

For pagans, what mattered most was **the precise wording of the prayers and incantations**. They were usually recited exactly, word-for-word. It did not much matter if the person praying was a good person or a bad person; what mattered most was finding the correct prayer and reciting it precisely.

And these ritual prayers were not known by everybody; many were **secret**, and were known only by the priests. So ordinary people would sometimes pay a priest (= would have to pay a priest) to either recite ritual prayers for them, or else to teach them the prayer.

18. When two nations went to **war** against each other, in the pagan view of things, their gods were fighting each other. The god who is stronger, or is more respected by other gods, will win.

Sometimes when one nation defeated another in battle, they would also destroy the statues of that nation's gods. They would then replace them with the statues of their own gods. This was to demonstrate that the gods of the victorious nation were stronger.

But some conquering kings did not do this. Instead, some conquering kings would go in to the temples of the defeated nation, and would offer sacrifices to that nation's gods, to show respect. This often resulted in more cooperation between the two nations. But of course, the conquering king would set up the idols of his own gods in those temples, so that the local people would offer sacrifices to his gods, too.

19. Also, a common dynamic in pagan cultures is that people are very **superstitious**. There is fear that if certain things were not done in certain ways, it will bring bad luck, or worse, an evil spirit or a demon will harm someone.

[Again we see that emphasis is not placed on living in a moral or ethical way that pleases God. Rather, emphasis is placed on certain things that should only be done in certain ways.]

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20. Magic. In addition to ritual prayers, incantations, and superstition, the pagan understanding of the world also involved magic. By the use of a magical spell, or a magical object, or a magical potion, a person could bring about the result they desired.

The realm of magic was viewed as having power of its own, apart from the gods. Magic spells were often closely guarded secrets. Similarly, objects that were believed to have magical power were carefully hidden. A very powerful magical spell or object could even enable a person to overcome the will of a god on a specific matter.

Yet similar to their ritual prayers and incantations, what is important in magic spells is to recite them, or to perform the required ritual, correctly. The spell will not work(!) if it is not done correctly. In the case of magic, it does not matter at all if the person is a good or bad. What matters is that he or she recites the spell or conducts the required ritual or prepares the potion exactly.

III. Important Differences between a Biblical Worldview and a Pagan Worldview:

Anyone who knows anything about how the Bible describes God and the creation can see how radically different a pagan worldview is from a biblical worldview. Compare the biblical concepts listed below to the summary of the pagan worldview listed just above.

1. There is only one God. The Bible does acknowledge the existence of demons and evil spirits (1 Cor 10:19-21; Eph 6:12; and the gospels). But it does not acknowledge the existence of any other gods (Isaiah 43:8-12; Isaiah 44:6-8).

The one true God exists eternally. He existed before the universe, before there was any matter.

2. God is all-powerful. He created the universe *out of nothing* by an act of his will. There is nothing that has independent existence apart from being created by God.
3. The world is not an extension of God; it is not a part of God. God created the world separate from himself. There is a clear distinction between the creator and the creation.
4. The universe is sustained by God's power and operates according to his will. Its operation is dependable. Nothing outside of God can disrupt its operation, or destroy it.
5. God is all-knowing and is morally perfect; this is the basis for moral absolutes. Moral standards are based on his wisdom and his perfect, unchanging nature and character.
6. God cares very much about how we live, about our moral conduct. He will someday righteously judge the earth, and all who live in it.
7. God does not grow weary; He is not fed by human hands. Although humans may rightly serve the purposes of God (such as proclaiming the gospel), God himself is not served by human hands directly (Act 17: 25).

8. **Human beings** → are created in God's image (Gen 1:26,27).

Even though they are sinful and disobedient, they have dignity (Ps 8). Even though they have sinned, they still bear God's image (Gen 9:5,6). And God has given them dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26-28).

9. The way we relate to God is not primarily on the basis of rituals, prescribed sacrifices, or chanted incantations. There is no ritual or prayer that can force God to do something. God does not work that way.

[However, God may freely pledge himself to do something. For example, God has freely promised to save everyone who repents of their sin and believes the gospel. So if someone prays to become a Christian, that prayer does not *force* God to save them. Rather, it accepts God's promise, freely given, that He will do so. And God will be faithful to what He has promised.

Also, we may **ask** God to do things, in general, through **prayer**. But our prayers do not *force* God to do anything.]

The way we relate to God is primarily by believing that He exists (Heb 11:6), confessing and repenting of our sin, and believing the gospel. Those who do so are reconciled to God, and are at peace with God (Rom 5:1-11), and receive the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:2; Eph 1:13-14).

That is why the Bible says that we are "**justified by faith**" (Rom 3:28, 4:1; Gal 2:16, 3:24), not by performing rituals or good deeds (Rom 3:28, Gal 3:2).

10. Once we are reconciled to God, Christians should seek to live their lives in a manner that pleases God (Rom ch. 12; Eph chs. 3 & 4; Col ch. 3). We should learn more and more of God's word and God's ways.

When Christians sin, we should confess it and repent of it (Ps 32; Ps 51; Rev chs. 2 & 3). This is not to obtain eternal forgiveness, but to be at rest with God, to be at peace with God, and to serve him better.

IV. Good Reasons to Believe that Paganism is Not True:

There are very good reasons to believe that paganism is not true.

1. Modern science has shown that paganism's explanation of the origins of the world is ridiculous. No educated person believes such things anymore.
2. With the spread of Christianity, and later the spread of Islam, paganism was virtually wiped out in Egypt, northern Africa, the entire Middle-east, and in Greece and Rome. So all of the elaborate rituals and the many, many sacrifices which allegedly fed the gods were ended. The pagan priests had insisted that these rituals and sacrifices were utterly necessary(!) to feed the gods and thereby maintain the order of the cosmos.

But when those rituals and sacrifices stopped, what happened? Nothing.

The cosmos is still here. The sun still comes up in the morning, the stars still come out every night. The rains return in the spring (or the monsoon), and warmth returns in the summer. Crops grew, flocks & herds reproduced. People kept on having babies, as always. The chaos and disaster that the pagan priests had assured people would happen, did not happen.

That is why we may conclude that the pagan understanding of the cosmos and the gods → is false.

V. Practical Applications for Christians:

1. It is true that elaborate religious rituals at shrines and temples with chanted incantations, music and incense can *feel* very religious. But Christians need to realize that those activities do not reconcile us to God. They reflect a pagan worldview, not a biblical worldview.

The idea that performing a religious ritual, in and of itself, presents us to God or reconciles us to God, is not a biblical idea, but is a pagan idea. What reconciles us to God is repenting of our sin and believing the gospel.

2. Similarly, such activities probably do not actually help those who participate in them to become better people *on the inside*.

Jesus says that those who repeat prayer after prayer, the same prayer over and over, do not understand how they should pray to God (Matt 6:7).

The apostle Paul says that religious festivals are not what are important; the reality is Christ (Col 2:16-17). He also refers to the restrictions on eating certain kinds of food; the Jews and some pagan groups emphasized such restrictions. Paul said such things may have the *appearance* of religion, but they do not have any value in changing us on the inside (Col 2:20-23).

What God wants from us, in the Old and the New Testament, is to know him, to be reverent to him, and to live lives that honor him. He wants us to be changed on the inside (Eph ch. 4; Col ch. 3), so that we may be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:29).

3. Christians should not be superstitious. The way the Bible describes the world and the nature of God does not fit with the idea that superstitions are real.

However, *when we are sharing the gospel*, it is not necessary to attack superstitious beliefs at that moment. Rather, we should preach the reality of Jesus Christ, and what he has done for us, and what he will do for those who believe in him. As new Christians learn more about the Bible, they will change their mind about superstitions.

4. Finally, Christians should not participate in any form of magic or pagan rituals. Christians should not participate in a séance, or attempt to contact the dead. All these things were forbidden to OT Israel (**Deut 18:9-13**), and are likewise forbidden to Christians (1 Cor 10:18-22; Rev 21:8, 22:15).

[Yes, it is true that King **Saul** used a **witch** to contact the spirit of Samuel after Samuel had died (1 Sam 28). But 1 Chron 10:13-14 tells us that this was one of the reasons for which the Lord put Saul to death. 1 Samuel 28 *records* what Saul did; it does not *recommend* what Saul did.]

All of these activities are an affront to God. Christians should have nothing to do with them. Instead, Christians should worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

A Closing Reflection:

Christians do well to reflect on the implications of the biblical doctrine of creation. Namely: that there is one God, eternally self-existent, who spoke the material universe into existence by an act of his will. It is his wisdom, will, and power that sovereignly maintain it. The implications of this are manifold, and are quietly staggering.

May I commend to your reading: Genesis 1, Job 38, Psalm 19, and Isaiah 40, esp. vv. 12–26.

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H/O #11 – The “Inter-Testamental” Period, ≈ 400 years.

Brief Notes on the History of Israel / Judea, from the end of the OT until the Birth of Jesus

The Bible tells us very little about what happened between the testaments.

Our main two sources of information concerning what happened between the testaments are:

- 1. The books 1 & 2 Maccabees.*
- 2. The writings of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who lived from roughly AD 37 until about AD 100.*

I. Recap: Israel / Judah as of the End of the Old Testament:

A. Main Dates Near the End of the Old Testament:

[To Note:

After the Jews return from exile, their nation is called “Judah,” the same as it was since the kingdom divided after the death of king Solomon. It is called “Judah” because almost all the people living in it were from the tribe of Judah.

When we come to the New Testament, the land is called “Judea,” which is the Greek and Roman equivalent to “Judah.” So NT “Judea” is the same as OT “Judah,” which is roughly the southern half of the land of Israel.]

587 Babylonia defeats Judah, destroys Jerusalem & the Temple of Solomon;
the **exile** begins (= 70 years in Babylon).

539 Babylon falls to Cyrus the Persian. (Daniel 5)

538 Cyrus decrees that Jews may return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

±536 The first Jews return to Jerusalem.

516 The 2nd temple is completed. (Ezra 1-6)

458 Ezra returns to Jerusalem. (Ezra 7-10)

445 Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem - rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem.

B. The Situation in Judah at the End of the Old Testament:

[This period of OT history is also called “post-exilic Judah,” or, “the post-exilic era.”]

The Jews are back in the land. They have rebuilt the Temple = built the 2nd Temple, and have restored the walls of Jerusalem. There is no more idolatry.

The promises to Abraham and the promise of a son of David, the Messiah, remain to be fulfilled. They provide hope for the future.

But the nation is not independent; they are under the Persian empire. Also, the mood is not positive, and the people are not as faithful to God as they should be.

That is the situation when the Old Testament ends.

II. The Main Events from the End of the Old Testament until the Birth of Jesus:

[You do not need to know all of the following items. But I want you to have an idea of what happened, and of how it sets the stage for the New Testament.]

1. Persia rules Judah, 539–332 BC.
2. Alexander the Great conquers Judah, taking it away from Persian control in 332 BC. He goes on to defeat Persia in 330 BC.
3. Alexander the Great dies in 323 BC.
Before long, war breaks out between Alexander the Great's main generals, and Alexander's kingdom is divided among them. The kingdoms that result are called "**Hellenistic**" kingdoms, because they are led by Greek rulers and influenced by Greek learning and culture.
4. By 301 BC, Alexander's kingdom has been divided into four main kingdoms, four Hellenistic kingdoms. (See Daniel 7:6).
5. By 277 BC, as a result of much warfare, they have resolved into three Hellenistic kingdoms:

Macedonia / Greece,
Egypt, under the rule of the Ptolemies, and,
Syria & Mesopotamia, under the rule of the Seleucids.

6. Judah is under the control of the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt from then until 198 BC.
7. In 198 BC, after much warfare, the Seleucids (Syria) defeat the Ptolemies (Egypt) and take control of Judah.

[Daniel ch. 11 probably describes the wars between the Ptolemies ("the king of the south") and the Seleucids ("the king of the north").]

The first Seleucid king who rules over Judah treats them well, and in general, there is peace.

8. "**Hellenization**." Some Jews began to adopt Greek customs, they became "Hellenistic Jews." But other Jews rejected this. This caused much strife and disagreement among the Jews. Some Jews even left and went off to live separately. This is the beginning of the main divisions among the Jews, the main Jewish "sects".

[Three of these sects are mentioned in the New Testament: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Zealots. We will say more about them in the next handout.]

Greek influence endured, but the trend of Jews to become Hellenized ended around 100 BC.

9. But the second Seleucid king who ruled over Judah, Antiochus IV, treated the Jews terribly, and actually desecrated the temple (167 BC).

[The Jewish book, 1 Maccabees, refers to this event as "the abomination of desolation" in 1 Macc 1:54. The same expression occurs in Daniel 9:27, 11:31, & 12:11, and in Matt 24:15 & Mark 13:14.]

10. This causes Judah to rebel against Antiochus IV in 166 BC. The resulting war is called the "**Maccabean War**." It gets its name from Judas Maccabaeus, who was the commander of the Jewish forces. Judah wins its independence in 142 BC.

11. When the Jews recovered the temple (164 BC), they purified it, and then re-dedicated it. This is the origin of the Jewish holiday "**Hanukah**" (meaning "consecration/purification").

12. Judah is independent for about 100 years, from 166 BC until 63 BC. This period is called the “**Hasmonean**” period, from the family name of the Jewish kings who ruled Judah.

[To Note: These kings were not from the line of **King David**.]

13. According to the Old Testament, under the Law, priests were all to come from the tribe of Levi. And the **high priests** were to come from the family of Aaron, through his son Eleazar, and eventually through their descendant, Zadok (the “Zadokite” line of high priests).

But during the inter-testamental period, this was not followed. The wicked Seleucid king Antiochus IV picked whoever promised him the most money. He chose someone from the tribe of Benjamin. Faithful Jews were outraged by this.

When Judah became independent, its Hasmonean kings themselves served as the high priests. They were from the tribe of Levi, but they were not from the line of Zadok. Therefore, many devout Jews still viewed such high priests as illegitimate.

This disagreement over the high priests also contributed to the divisions within Judaism = contributed to the rise of different sects among the Jews.

14. Judah lost its independence when Rome took over in 63 BC. Rome laid siege to Jerusalem, and took it over, but Jerusalem was not destroyed at this point. After Rome took over, Judah (a Hebrew name) is called “**Judea**” (the Greek/Latin name form of “Judah”).

15. Around 55 BC, Rome put the Herod family in charge of Judea.

“**Herod the Great**” becomes king in 37 BC. He was the king when Jesus was born. He died in 4 BC, so **Jesus** was probably born about 6 BC.

III. The Main Items that are Useful to Know, to Help us Read the New Testament:

1. Persians ruled Judah at the end of the Old Testament, and for the next 100 years.
2. After Alexander the Great defeated Persia, Judah came under the control of Hellenistic Greek kingdoms (first the Ptolemies, then the Seleucids).
3. Some Jews adopted Greek customs [“**Hellenization**”], others did not. This caused great division among the Jews, and led to the rise of the different **sects** among the Jews.
4. Eventually, the Jews rebelled against the oppressive Seleucid king Antiochus IV, and won their freedom. The battles are called the **Maccabean Wars** (166 – 142 BC).
5. They were independent for about 100 years. This is the **Hasmonean era**. But their kings were not from the line of David.
6. Rome took over in 63 BC, and soon put the Herod family in charge of Judea.

Thus Caesar Augustus was the Roman emperor, and Herod the Great was the king of Judea, when Jesus was born. Since the end of the Old Testament period, Judah had only been independent for about 100 years, but their kings were not from the line of David. And as a result of some Jews adopting Greek customs (“Hellenization”), divisions had begun to grow among the Jews.

They were waiting for the Messiah (= the son of David) to come. And they had God’s gracious promises to Abraham. But they all agreed that no prophet of God had come for over 400 years.

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H/O #12

The Setting in Judea and Jerusalem when Jesus' Public Ministry Begins

A. Greco-Roman Culture, and Roman Rule:

Ancient Greece and ancient Rome had many features in their cultures that were admirable. Nonetheless, they were also characterized by power struggles, intrigue, greed, betrayal, etc.

In Greek culture there was . . .

In Roman culture, there was . . .

Q: Did Greece and Rome tolerate other religions?

Rome and Greece were generally "tolerant" of other religions; they would even offer sacrifices to the foreign gods.

However, they also wanted the other cultures to respect their gods, and to sacrifice to them. For Rome in particular, this was a 'state religion'. It was not necessary that those who did so had any particular 'personal belief' in Rome's gods. You simply had to offer sacrifices to please the gods, so that those gods would bless Rome. Most of the pagan cultures that Rome conquered did offer sacrifices to Rome's gods.

People who would not offer sacrifice to Roman gods were viewed as disloyal, or even as rebellious, to Rome. So who did this create a problem for?

The Single most Immediate and Irritating Aspect of Roman Rule was:

This is why tax collectors were especially hated by the Jews.

[In the NT, see for example: Matt 9:11, 11:19, and 22:15–22.]

Which disciple of Jesus was a tax collector?

One Major Benefit of Roman Government & Rule: "*Pax Romana*"

Despite its many wars and battles, nonetheless, Rome did bring . . .

This peace and stability is referred to as "*Pax Romana*", which means . . .

In specific, there was one 200-year period of time in Rome's history that was especially peaceful, it was . . .

B. The Divisions within Judaism = the Jewish Sects:

Factors which Set the Stage for the Divisions among the Jews:

Recall: During the inter-testamental period, some Jews adopted Greek customs & culture; these were the "Hellenizing Jews." But other Jews rejected this completely. Greek influence would remain a factor in Jewish culture. But the tendency for Jews to adopt Greek customs & culture faded when Judah became independent (166 BC), and largely ended around 100 BC.

Also during the inter-testamental period, some kings, even Jewish kings (during the Hasmonean era, 166–63 BC), violated the requirements of the OT Law, and did not chose high priests from the line of Aaron / Eleazar / Zadok. The result was that many Jews regarded such high priests as corrupt and illegitimate, and did not accept them.

As a result of this, by the time of Jesus, there were four main division, four main sects, among the Jews: The Essenes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Zealots.

The Four Divisions, the Four Sects of Jews, during the Life of Jesus:

1. The Essenes (They are not mentioned in the NT.)

- The Essenes . . .
- They chose to . . .
- They lived lives of piety and simplicity, even poverty. Many did not marry.
- They were the smallest sect.
- The Essenes disappeared from history . . .

2. The Pharisees

- Like the Essenes, they rejected Hellenization, and they agreed that the high priesthood was corrupt.
- But unlike the Essenes, the Pharisees . . .
- They accepted the authority of . . .
- Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees believed in . . .
- In general, they followed the Law and separated themselves from things that were "unclean" (see for example John 18:28).
- Jesus sometimes criticized them harshly (Matt ch. 23). But from the writings of Flavius Josephus, we know that the Jews generally regarded them well. They respected them for their knowledge of the Torah = the OT.
- The Pharisees are the **only** Jewish sect /party . . .

3. The Sadducees

- By the time of Jesus, the high priests were chosen most often from them.
- Unlike the Pharisees, they did not recognize . . .
- Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees . . .
- They did not like the Romans, but they cooperated with them, because . . .
- They were well-connected with people of wealth and power, but never numerous. They disappear after AD 70.

4. The Zealots

- This sect did not arise between the testaments. It arose . . .
- This is the group that actively promoted . . .
- They believed it was a sin against God . . .
- One of Jesus' disciples was a zealot; Matt 10:4; Mark 3:18, . . .
- They led the major revolt against Rome in AD 66; they perished at **Masada** in AD 73.

C. The Jewish Institutions:

1. The Temple, i.e., the Second Temple.

It is sometimes called "Herod's Temple" because he greatly expanded it, over several years. But Jews call it simply "the second temple."

Jesus prophesied the destruction of the second temple in Luke 19:44. The second temple was destroyed by the Romans in **AD 70**. Since then, the temple has not been rebuilt.

2. The Sanhedrin (in the NT they are sometimes called "the chief priests")

From the time of the return from the exile (536 / 516 BC), until the time of Jesus, Judah was only independent for about 100 years (166–63 BC).

When post-exilic Judah was under the control of another nation (Persia, then the Ptolemies, then the Seleucids, then later Rome), the Jewish high priest and the elders exercised much local control over Judah.

In the time of Jesus, the council of priests & elders who exercised much local control over Judea was called **the Sanhedrin** (see Matt 26:57–59). It had 71 members. The Sanhedrin was the council before which Jesus was put on trial before he was crucified.

3. The Office of High Priest

- Since the days of Aaron & Moses, they had always come from the tribe of **Levi**, and from the family line of **Zadok**. (Ezek 40:46, 45:15).
- In 174 B.C., **Antiochus IV** began appointing High Priests on the basis of the *amounts of tribute* they promised to provide him.
- During the Hasmonean era (166-63 BC), the Hasmonean kings served as the high priests. [They were from the tribe of Levi, but they were not from the line of Zadok.]
- Once the Romans took over (63 BC), the Roman ruler appointed the high priest. King Herod also did so when he ruled Judea (starting in 37 BC).
- During the life of Jesus, Judea was under the direct rule of a Roman governor/prefect. It was the Roman governor (such as Pontius Pilate) who appointed the high priests. They almost always appointed high priests from wealthy families of the . . .
- In the time of Jesus, the high priest was very influential, even to the Romans. Because Rome recognized him as the representative of the Jewish nation.
- Thus the relationship between the Roman governors of Judea and the high priests was complex. On the one hand, the governors appointed the high priests. But on the other hand, the high priest can potentially get a governor fired by complaining to Rome.

D. The Samaritans:

The NT mentions the Samaritans (Matt 10:5; John ch. 4). It makes it clear that they do not get along well with the Jews. The first Samaritans become Christians in Acts 8.

Their Origins: 2 Kings 17 records the fall of Samaria to Assyria. The Assyrians deported thousands of Israelites. But they also imported thousands of people from other countries to live in Israel. The Samaritans are probably a result of the racial mixing between the Israelites who remained and the Gentiles who were brought in. They did worship Yahweh as God, but they only recognized the Torah as Scripture, not the Prophets or the Writings. They also believed the temple should be on Mt. Gerizim (Deut 11:29, 27:12; Josh 8:33; John 4:20), not in Jerusalem.

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H/O #13 – Key Dates & Main Events During the New Testament Era

*If we are aware of these events,
it will help us to understand the New Testament better.*

I. The Years Just Before the Birth of Jesus

- 37 BC Herod the Great becomes ruler of Judea.
- 30 BC Octavian is affirmed as the overall leader of Rome.
- 27 BC Octavian receives the title **Augustus** → Caesar Augustus.
- ±19 BC Herod the Great begins a massive repair & expansion of **the temple**; the main work takes 8-10 years. [The entire project will not be completed until AD 63.]
This will be the impressive building that the disciples point out to Jesus (Luke 21:5).

II. The Earthly Life & Ministry of Jesus

- 6 BC Jesus is born in Bethlehem
[Jesus was born roughly two years before Herod the Great died.]
- 4 BC Herod the Great dies; his kingdom is divided three ways among three of his sons.

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- AD 6 The reign of the Herod family ends, and **Judea reverts to being a Roman province**.
As a Roman province, Judea is now governed directly by a Roman governor = a Roman prefect.
[This is when the Jewish sect the Zealots arose.]
- AD 26 Pontius Pilate becomes Prefect/governor of Judea. He will govern until AD 36.
- ±AD 27 Jesus' public Ministry begins. He is about 30 years old (Luke 3:23).
- AD 30 Jesus is crucified, dead and buried. *But not for long.*
[The other possible date for the crucifixion of Jesus is AD 33.
The professor thinks the biblical accounts fit best with a date of AD 30.]

(continued on back.)

III. The Earliest Church = The Apostolic Age

- AD 30 **Pentecost** – The Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples with power.
The first preaching of the gospel by the apostles, by Peter.
- ±AD 31 The first **Samaritans** respond to the gospel, in Samaria (Acts 8). It is authenticated by Peter and John; the Samaritan believers receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14–17).
- ±AD 33 **Paul's** conversion.
[His Jewish name was 'Saul'; his Roman name was 'Paul'; Acts 13:9.]
- ±AD 34 The first **Gentiles** believe the gospel, when Peter preaches to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). The Holy Spirit comes upon them (Acts 10:44–47).
- 47-48 Paul's first missionary journey (Paul & Barnabas).
- AD 49 The **Acts 15 Jerusalem Council**. [This is the first church council. It addressed the question: *Do Gentiles need to be circumcised to be saved?* Its answer was: **No.**]
- 49-52 Paul's second missionary journey. (Paul & Silas).
- [50-70 **Most of the NT epistles** will be written from AD 50 until AD 70.]
- 53-57 Paul's third missionary journey. (Luke is with Paul for much of this journey).
- AD 54 Nero becomes Emperor of Rome (until AD 68).
- AD 57 Paul returns to Jerusalem; he is arrested there.
- ±57-59 Paul imprisoned at Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27).
- AD 60 Paul arrives in Rome.
- 60-62 Paul remains in Rome under "house arrest." The book of Acts ends here.
- ±AD 63 It appears that Paul was released from house arrest, based on the comments in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.
- AD 64 Rome burns, and is largely destroyed. Nero blames the Christians.
The persecution of Christians begins.
- ±65/66 Paul is re-arrested.
- AD 66 The Jews revolt against Rome.
- AD 67 Roman armies lay siege to Jerusalem.
- ±AD 67 Death of Paul in Rome under the persecution of Nero.
Probably also: Death of Peter, also under the persecution of Nero.
- AD 68 Death of Nero.
- AD 70 Jerusalem falls to the Romans; the second temple is destroyed.**
The remaining Zealots flee to Masada, near the Dead Sea.
- AD 73 Destruction/suicide of the final Jewish resistance at Masada.
- ±AD 100 Death of the Apostle John; end of the Apostolic age.

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H/O #14a – Observing and Interpreting Narrative and Discourses in the New Testament = in the Gospels and the book of Acts

I. Review: General Principles for Reading & Interpreting Narrative:

1. Bear in mind the mind the prior theological framework provided by Scripture comes before the passage you are reading. This can also be called ***the redemptive-historical setting***.
2. With narrative, read it in a straight-forward manner unless there are good reasons to do otherwise.
 - In narrative proper . . .
 - But in dialogue and speeches . . .

An example of figurative language from the Gospel of John: John 7:37–39

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

3. Pay attention to the **editorial comments**.
4. Pay attention to the **dialogue**, esp. to **major speeches** and **major prayers**.
5. Try to identify: What is the point, the purpose of this episode? Why is it recorded?
6. Do not go off on tangents about some particular detail in a narrative passage until you have identified the overall purpose & function of the passage.
7. In general, things which are unclear are to be judged by the context of the entire Bible, by the clear general teaching of the rest of Scripture.

II. In the New Testament in Particular:

A. In the Gospels:

1. The statements and discourses of Jesus are always important.

At this point, there is a practical difference between the NT and the OT:

- In the Old Testament, when someone is speaking . . .
- But in the NT, when Jesus is speaking, there is no doubt about this.

2. In the NT, an event or a confrontation often leads to Jesus making a statement. Such statements probably give us . . .

3. In like manner, all of the actions of Jesus are approved, are good and commendable.
4. As in the OT, in the NT, if something is given lengthy treatment, it is important.

5. If an event or sermon is recorded in multiple gospels, it is especially important.
For example, what are some events or miracles that are recorded in all four gospels?

6. Note wording that draws you in to vividly envision the event being described.
Example: The beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:2.

7. Try to identify where narrative segments begin and end = define the individual segments.
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 -

B. In the Acts of the Apostles:

1. Regarding major sermons by the apostles in the book of Acts . . .

2. Many events recorded in the book of Acts are unique.

3. Acts is a book of . . .
This distinguishes it from the epistles, which give us normative teaching and practice.
An example of an event that reflects a transition: Acts 19:1–7.

A suggestion from the professor, as regards understanding and applying the book of Acts:

The _____ in the book of Acts *may or may not* set examples that are normative for Christians.

However, we may look to the _____ in the book of Acts for dependable, normative doctrine.

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H/O #14b-r – Insights for Interpreting the “Synoptic Gospels,” Matthew, Mark & Luke

A. Definition: “Synoptic”:

Matthew, Mark and Luke have come to be called the “Synoptic” Gospels because they contain much similar material.

[The Gospel of John is quite different from them, and contains much material that Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not record.]

The term “synoptic” is from the English term “*synopsis*”, which suggests the idea that these three gospel accounts are “seeing together,” are looking at the life of Jesus through the same lens.

Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke have much the same material (= have many parallel accounts), nonetheless, they each contain some material that the others do not contain. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similar, but not identical.

B. “Parallel Accounts” between the Gospels

When two or more gospels record the same event or sermon, we say they are “parallel accounts.” Again, the gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke have many parallel accounts.

Parallel accounts are often very similar, but sometimes they each give different details. Again, the accounts are *parallel*, but that does not mean . . .

In general, the **sequence of events** in the life of Jesus as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is the same. But it is not identical; there are some differences. This naturally raises the question: *Why would a gospel writer choose to present events in a different order from which they actually occurred?* At the end of this handout, we will look at an example: The account of the temptation of Christ.

Differences of Detail. Even when parallel accounts are quite similar, nonetheless, there are often differences of detail or differences in specific wording.

This combination of close similarities and yet differences makes it very natural to compare the three Synoptic accounts. It also makes it natural to ask: *What order were they written in? Which one was written first?*

C. What Order Were the Synoptic Gospels Written In?

This question is debated by scholars. [“Scholars” are university and seminary professors.]

A common assumption in the early church was that → they were written in the order that they appear in the New Testament: Matthew first, then Mark, then Luke.

The view held by most modern scholars is that . . .

Most likely, Mark was written in the 50’s, and Matthew and Luke in the early 60’s.

Some reasons why scholars think Mark came first:

- 90% of what Mark records can be found in Matthew or Luke. // And the 10% that is unique to Mark doesn't make a major contribution to our theology or to our understanding of Jesus. So if Matthew & Luke were already around, why produce Mark?
- Matthew's and Luke's grammar is more refined than Mark's.
- Some ways that Mark words things are hard to understand; in Matthew's parallel account they are often more clear.

Question: How Important is it for us to know which gospel was written first?

Answer:

- It is not vital to know . . .
- Rather, it is helpful to observe . . .

D. So → How Should We Interpret and Compare the Synoptic Gospels?

1. The proper starting point for interpreting a gospel is . . .

2. After that, it is legitimate to compare and contrast them. The goals in doing so are:

- (1) To identify more precisely . . .
- (2) Then to use that improved understanding of each individual gospel . . .

3. In particular, we should observe:

- (1) Omitted Material.
- (2) Different Location / Placement of an Episode.
- (3) Differences in Detail of the Same Account.
- (4) Differences in Wording or Grammar of the Same Statement.

E. One Example: The Temptation of Jesus: Matt 4:1–11 ↔ Luke 4:1–12

Q: Whose account is probably in chronological order?

Q: What makes us think so?

Q: Do we have a truth problem here?

Q: What question comes last in Matthew's account? = what point is **Matthew** emphasizing?

Q: So → What point was **Luke** trying to emphasize?

F. The Main Theme of Matthew, of Mark, and of Luke;
What Audience Did Each Apostle Have in Mind?

Matthew:

Mark:

Luke:

* * * * *

H/O #14c – Insights for Interpreting NT Parables

I. Some General Observations about the Nature of Parables

A. Their Common Features / Their General Nature:

1. They use everyday events that were familiar to his listeners to present and illustrate spiritual truth. ↔ To Note! Parables do not use . . .
- 2a. The fact that they use everyday events makes them . . .
- 2b. But the fact that parables use everyday events *to illustrate a spiritual truth* means . . .
- 2c. Also, the details in the parables *were* familiar to people *in that time*; but they might not be familiar to people today. Two examples:
 - How did Jews view Samaritans?
 - What is unusual about the conduct of the father in the parable of the prodigal son?
3. Some are very short, just a verse or two. Others are fairly long.
4. The characters in the parables are rarely named.
5. We are never given the date or the time when the story occurred.

Initial Conclusion:

B. The Way Parables Are Framed in the Gospels / Their Local Context

1. Sometimes they come in a cluster of parables, which are all about the same topic.
Example:
When this is the case, it is a good idea to . . .
2. Often, they arise from a conversation, or from a question someone puts to Jesus.
When this is the case, it is important to observe two things:
 - (1)
 - (2)

Example: The Parable of the **Good Samaritan**, Luke 10.

Q: What is the first verse of the parable itself?

Q: But where does this account begin?

Q: What is the last verse of the parable itself?

Q: What verse gives the conclusion, the application, of the parable?

So we see that, to read the parable in its context, we need to . . .

II. Are Parables the Same as Allegories, or Different?

A. What are Allegories?

An allegory is an extended story that is told to teach something. In allegories,

B. How Are Parables Similar to Allegories?

Parables are similar in that . . .

C. How Are Parables Different from Allegories?

Parables are different from allegories in that . . .

The NT parable that comes closest to an allegory is . . .

An example for practice: **The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10).**

III. For NT Parables: Identify the Main Point; Identify the Main Characters

A. Identify the One Main Point of the Parable.

For the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) –

- The parable itself begins at which verse?
- But where does the overall account begin?
- Which verse states the main conclusion / application of the parable?

B. Note the Main Characters in the Parable.

Unlike with allegories, NT parables do not make a point out of every detail.

But the main characters in a parable probably do represent someone or something.

An example: **The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15).**

- The parable itself begins at which verse?
- But where does the overall account begin?
- For this parable, does Jesus make a concluding statement after the parable in which he gives the conclusion / the application of the parable ?
- Who are the main characters in this parable? Who or what do they represent?
- What is this parable trying to teach us?

IV. Why Did Jesus Use Parables?

1. Since parables use stories, . . .
2. But they also have an additional two-fold purpose:
 - (1) To reveal spiritual truth . . .
 - (2) To conceal spiritual truth . . .

The following passages from the gospels describe this two-fold purpose:

Mark 3:23

So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables . . .

Mark 4:34 (see similarly John 16:29)

*He did not say anything to them [= to the crowd] without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, **he explained everything**.*

Matt 13:10–17 (see also Mark 4:10–12)

¹⁰ *The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”*

¹¹ *He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables:*

*“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

¹⁴ *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:*

*“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.*

¹⁵ *For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts*

and turn, and I would heal them.’ [from Isaiah 6:9-10]

¹⁶ *But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and longed to hear what you hear but did not hear it.*

V. Summary / Conclusions:

The parables in the New Testament are designed to reveal truth to those who are willing to hear it, but to conceal truth from those whose hearts are hard. If we know something of the customs and the setting of Jesus’ time, it will help us to understand them.

Primarily, we should look for the main point the parable is making. We should also attention to the main characters in a parable. And we should always pay attention to the situation into which the parable was spoken.

* * * * *

H/O #15 – Insights for Interpreting NT Epistles

I. Review: Some Guidelines Already Mentioned:

1. A passage which directly addresses an issue takes precedence over one which does not. Therefore, it is vital to determine, “*What is the **topic** of this passage?*”
2. A passage which is clear on a subject takes precedence over one which is unclear.
3. A more specific statement takes precedence over, or else qualifies, a general statement.

Example: Mutual Christian submission, vs. parent ↔ child.

4. Recognize the normal *limited* use of language.
In the normal use of language, we do not say everything with precision, or a normal conversation would sound like a legal contract. Things we say or that we write are often summary in nature, and do not spell out every detail.

Scripture often uses language in that way. To get a complete or more balanced picture, we need to read a lot of Scripture.

II. Guidelines of Particular Value for Interpreting Epistles:

A. The Questions to Ask / the Issues to Identify:

1. The Two Basic Questions We Ask Are:

- (1) What is ...
- (2) What is ...

2. Other Items It Is Helpful to Identify / to Determine:

- (1) What are the main topics addressed by this epistle? = Why was it written?

Some of the epistles are fairly general in nature, that is . . .

But most of the epistles were written ...

- (2) We know the general cultural & historical setting into which the NT epistles were written: The Roman empire, the Greco-Roman culture, and Judaism, around 50–70 AD.

But sometimes, it is helpful to know something about the specific cultural or religious or philosophical background which an epistle is addressing. This is especially true for two letters:

Q: What did you learn about Gnosticism when you looked it up?

- (3) How does the paragraph I am reading relate to the paragraphs next to it?
Is there a train of thought that connects them? Two examples of sections that hang together:

- 1 Cor 8–10

- 1 Cor 12–14

- (4) What is the overall structure of the epistle?
What are its main sections? What are the topics of those sections?

Is there one extended train of thought through the epistle, or, is it divided into main sections that are largely independent?

Three epistles have a connected train of thought that runs most of the way through them:

There is one large epistle that naturally divides into five or six main sections:

B. As We Read an Epistle, What Do We Actually Do? What is the Process?

In practice, the process of reading and studying an epistle has six natural stages:

1. Read it through over time more than once, to become familiar with it.
2. Start to identify what seem to be its natural sections and paragraphs.
We do this mainly by identifying the **topic** of each section / each paragraph.
The standard chapter divisions are usually very useful.
3. Then see what each paragraph, each section, says about the topic you identified.
That is, what is the **content** of the paragraph / section?
4. Then try to determine how the paragraphs relate to each other.
5. From there, we try to identify the larger sections of the letter, and then the overall flow, or overall structure, of the letter.
6. Finally, we seek to understand the overall message of the letter, and the message of each section / paragraph, in light of each other.

There is something of a back-and-forth process: Our improved understanding of each paragraph improves our understanding of the letter, or at least of each of its main sections. But then our improved understanding of the overall letter will help us to fine-tune our understanding of each section/ paragraph within it.

We will be finished when . . .

* * * * *

**H/O #16 – The Importance of Using Information from
The Rest of the Bible
to Help us Understand a Passage,
especially the “Redemptive-historical Context” of a Passage.**

Passages in the Bible often assume that the reader is somewhat familiar with what they are referring to, or at least that he or she could ask someone or could look it up. If a reader is not familiar with what the passage is referring to, and does not look it up, their ability to understand and apply the passage will be substantially decreased. This handout points out the importance of using the rest of the Bible to help us understand the specific passage we are reading.

A. General Examples & Suggestions:

1. If a passage refers to a person, place, event or custom that you are not familiar with, look it up. For example:
 - What is Judah? Is it just another name for Israel?
 - The city Nineveh is a capital city – of what nation?
 - The city Samaria – in the Old Testament, what is its importance?

Some examples from specific verses:

Hosea 9:9 *They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of **Gibeah**.
God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins.*

Q: What happened at **Gibeah**?

Jeremiah 7:14 *“Therefore, what I did to **Shiloh** I will now do to the house that bears my
Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your
ancestors.”*

Jeremiah 26:6 *“... then I will make this house like **Shiloh** and this city a curse among
all the nations of the earth.”*

Q: What happened at **Shiloh**?

Isaiah 7:17 *The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your
father a time unlike any since **Ephraim** broke away from Judah—he will
bring the king of Assyria.*

Jeremiah 7:15 *I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your fellow Israelites,
the people of **Ephraim**.*

Hosea 7:11 ***Ephraim** is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless— now calling to
Egypt, now turning to Assyria.*

Q: Who or what is **Ephraim**, and what does it mean Ephraim calls to
Egypt, and then to Assyria? [And what is Assyria?]

Lamentations 1:1 *How deserted lies the **city**, once so full of people!
How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations!
She who was queen . . . has now become a slave.*

Q: What **city** is this verse talking about?

Q: And what happened to that city?

2. If the New Testament quotes a verse from the Old Testament, look up the Old Testament passage, and read it in its context to see what it is about.

Example: 1 Cor 14:21 quotes Isaiah 28:11,12.

3. If a passage has a **parallel passage**, look it up and compare them.

In the Old Testament, 1 & 2 Chronicles are parallel to 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings.

In the New Testament, Matthew, Mark and Luke are often parallel to each other.

B. A Major Factor to Bear in Mind – The “Redemptive-historical Context”

The expression “redemptive-historical context” refers to → where a passage falls into the overall flow of the events in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, for example, this means bearing in mind how the major developments that have occurred earlier set the stage for the passage we are reading now. The two most important such items are the main events and the covenants.

1. The main events are events such as:

The exodus from Egypt, and Israel receiving the Law at Mt Sinai.

The conquest & settlement of the land under Joshua.

Israel moves from having Judges to having kings (Saul, David, Solomon).

The construction of the temple.

The division of Israel into Judah and northern-kingdom after Solomon dies.

2. The major covenants are: (listed in chronological order)

God’s covenant with the whole earth through Noah (Gen 6–9).

God’s covenant / promises with Abraham and his seed (Gen 12, 15, 17 & 22).

God’s covenant with the nation of Israel through Moses at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19–24).

God’s covenant with David and his son (2 Sam 7; Ps 89, Ps 110, Ps 132).

The new covenant (Jeremiah 31; Hebrews chs. 8 & 10).

To note: The first four of those covenants, and all of the main events listed above, come before any of the OT prophetic books. They are what set the stage for reading and understanding the prophets. If a reader is not familiar with them, it will be hard to understand the prophets.

Closing Thought: When we study the Scriptures, we read a passage closely and pay attention to the details – and we should. We could call this “micro” interpretation. But we also need to do “macro” interpretation. “Macro” interpretation means reading a passage in light of the information that the rest of the Bible provides us. Doing so will shed a lot of light on the passage we are reading, and will help us reach conclusions and applications that are solid and true to the Bible.

* * * * *

H/O #17 – “Plop and Point”

Can we always plop the Bible open, point to a verse, and apply it directly to ourselves?

A. The Issue / the Question:

In this course we have been studying how to interpret the Bible. We have seen that a lot of the Bible can be read in a very straight-forward manner, and can be applied in a common-sense way directly to Christians. But can *all* of it be read that way? In specific, the question is this:

*Does the entire Bible, just as it is written, apply **directly** to Christians?*

Some Bible interpreters state the question this way: **Do we read the Bible as a "flat text"?**

The two main assumptions of a "flat text" approach are:

- We read and apply every verse in the Bible in a flatly-literal way.
- Every verse in the entire Bible applies to Christians in the same way.

Another way to put this question is:

Is it God's intention that we can read any & every verse of the Bible by itself and can always find in it a direct instruction for what we should believe and how we should live?

To put it very simply -

*Can I **plop** open my Bible, **point** to a verse at random, read it, and assume that I am getting direct instruction from God?*

If the answer to this question were yes, there would be no need for the present course.

The focus of this handout, then, is to identify some reasons why *some* passages in the Bible do not <apply directly to Christians, just as they are written>. This issue is especially important for reading and applying the Old Testament.

Drawing on what we have covered in this course, we will suggest five reasons why some passages in the Bible might not apply to Christians directly.

B. Five Reason Why Some Passages in the Bible Might Not Apply Directly to Christians:

1. Some verses do not give general guidance, but gave **specific instructions to a specific individual for a specific purpose.**

Gen 22:1 Abraham was instructed to sacrifice . . .

Hosea 1:2 Hosea was commanded to marry . . .

Ezek 4:9-17 Ezekiel was commanded to

Ezek 12:2-7 Ezekiel was instructed to . . .

Ezek 21:18-20 Set up a signpost to

2. The Bible does not *recommend* everything that it *records*.

Just because something is recorded in its narrative & historical passages, does not mean that it is given to us as a good example to follow. In fact, it would go *against* the teaching of the Bible to assume << Since somebody did this in the Bible, so should we.>>.

After all, the Bible records people committing murder, committing adultery, robbing people, etc. Clearly, such actions are condemned by the general teaching of the Scriptures.

Also consider passages such as **1 Sam 28**, and **2 Sam 17:23**. Are they examples for us to copy?

Further, consider 1 Cor 10:7–11, which tells us:

⁷**Do not be idolaters as some of them were;** as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸**We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did,** and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹**We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did** and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰**nor grumble, as some of them did** and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

So it is not(!) the case that, << if somebody does something in the Bible, it is alright for us to do the same thing >>. The Bible records many actions which it clearly condemns. The Bible does not recommend everything that it records.

3. If verses fall in the middle of an argument, do not yank them out of their context and read them on their own; instead, read them in the context of the entire argument.

Recall a verse we have seen before in Paul's letter to the Romans: Romans 2:13.

4. We Need to Recognize the Nature of the Poetic Passages in the Bible:

We have looked at the nature of poetic language in the Old Testament.

Some poetic passages do not apply directly to Christians, *just as they are written*, because *they are a figurative use of language, and are not intended to be taken flatly literally*.

Rather, the reader needs to recognize that they are figurative, and read them the way one normally reads and interprets figurative poetic language.

In particular, sometimes a poetic passage might not be describing the literal reality, the actual facts, but **might be describing how it feels to the speaker**.

Consider the following:

Ps 12:1 "Save us, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly;
the faithful have vanished from among the children of men."

Ps 13:1 "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?"

Ps 44:23 "Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord?"

Ps 74:1 "O God, why do you cast us off forever?"

Other examples could be cited, but these illustrate the point. Such language is clearly highly emotional, and is *not intended to be taken as a straight-forward statement about what is ultimately true*. Rather, they describe how it feels to the speaker. Such highly

charged language often involves **hyperbole**, the deliberate use of **exaggeration** to make a point. Such language is not intended to be taken in a flatly literal manner.

Nonetheless, the passage is making a point, and that point may well apply to Christians. But in poetic sections of the Bible, if the language is figurative, we are not intended to understand and apply the words in a flatly literal way.

5. We need to bear in mind where the passage falls in the overall *redemptive-historical context* of the Bible. And we especially need to bear in mind if the passage is connected to a particular covenant.

We have mentioned the five main covenants of the Bible before in **Handouts #09 & #16**. They are:

God's covenant with the whole earth through Noah (Gen 6–9).

God's covenant / promises with Abraham and his seed (Gen 12, 15, 17 & 22).

God's covenant with the nation of Israel through Moses at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19–24).

God's covenant with David and his son (2 Sam 7; Ps 89, Ps 110, Ps 132).

The new covenant (Jeremiah 31; Hebrews chs. 8 & 10).

It is beyond the scope of the present course to elaborate on these covenants in detail. However, some brief observations will be helpful.

- The covenant made through **Noah** applies to the whole earth, and everyone in it.
- The covenant with **David** and his son affects Christians, but does not apply directly to us. It is between God and David and his son.
- The Old Testament and the New Testament both teach that Christians (= those who revere God, those who have faith like Abraham's faith) will inherit the promises to **Abraham** (Gen 17, Ezek 47, Zech 2, Rom 4, Gal 3, Eph 2 & 3). So the promises to Abraham do apply to Christians.
- Clearly, the **new covenant** applies to Christians.
- The remaining covenant is the covenant Israel entered with God at Mt Sinai, sometimes called "**the Sinai covenant**." It is the covenant that contains the 10 Commandments and the Law. It is between God and the nation of Israel. So the question becomes: How do the Law and the Sinai covenant apply to Christians?

The Law, the Sinai covenant, and Christians

The foundational passage for the Sinai covenant is Exod 19–24. But after that, much of the rest of the Pentateuch sets forth the rest of the laws / the rest of the Law.

It is widely agreed that the fundamental moral laws of the Sinai covenant do apply to Christians: Do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not commit murder, etc.

It is also widely agreed that the sacrificial laws, and the food restrictions, do not apply to Christians.

But for other laws in the Law, it is not so clear whether they apply to Christians.

Two examples:

- Are Christians *required* to observe the **Sabbath**?
Did the early Christian church continue to meet on the Sabbath?

- In **Leviticus 25** God gave Israel the following command concerning their crops, and promised them a blessing, if they obeyed it. Does this command and blessing apply to Christians today?

Leviticus 25:1–5 + 18–22

¹ The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, ² “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. ³ For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. ⁴ **But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord.** Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards ⁵ Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. [. . .]

¹⁸ “Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. ¹⁹ Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. ²⁰ You may ask, “What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?” ²¹ **I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years.** ²² While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

It is not the goal of this handout to settle such questions. The goal is to point out that, as we read and interpret the Bible, we need to bear in mind where we are in the overall redemptive-historical context of the Bible. And in particular, we need to consider which covenants apply to Christians, and which don't. [The one over which there is a question is the Sinai covenant.]

C. Summary:

In general, much of the Bible can be read, just as it is written, and applied directly to Christians. But it is not the case that the entire Bible was intended to be read that way. We cannot simply plop our Bibles open, put our finger on a verse, and assume that it is direct guidance from God on what we should believe and how we should live.

The following summarizes the reasons why a given passage might not be able to be applied directly and literally to Christians:

1. It might not apply directly to us because – it is addressed to or refers to someone specific, someone else. It is not a general command for the people of God.
2. It might not apply directly to us because – the Bible does not recommend everything that it records.
3. It might not apply directly to us because – the verse is part of a larger argument, and the writer is not finished with his argument.
4. It might not apply directly to us *as it stands written* because – the language is figurative, is poetic, and is not intended to be taken flatly-literally.
5. It might not apply directly to us because – it is a part of the Sinai covenant which is no longer in effect (the sacrifices), which does not apply to Christians.

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Assignment #01 (Saturday, January 19, 10 points)

Identify 10 Items in the Parable of the 'Good Samaritan' (Luke 10)

Below is a list of 10 items or actions mentioned in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Read the Parable through carefully. Then decide what you think each of these 10 items stands for.

We will discuss this later in the week.

Please Note: This is not a group assignment. Do your own work.
This assignment will work better if you do not discuss it with your classmates, until we go over it later in the week. Thank you.

<u>Item / Action:</u>	<u>Verse #</u>	<u>What you think it stands for:</u>
1. The man	v. 30	
2. Jerusalem	v. 30	
3. Jericho	v. 30	
4. The Thieves	v. 30	
5. They beat him And stripped him	v. 30	
6. The priest and The Levite	v. 31 v. 2	
7. The Samaritan	v. 33	
8. The donkey	v. 34	
9. The inn, The hotel	v. 34	
10. The innkeeper	v. 35	

Assignment #02 (Monday, Jan 21, 15 points)

The Accounts of Saul's Death in 1 Samuel 31 and in 2 Samuel 1

1. Read 1 Samuel 31. It records the death of Saul.
2. According to 1 Sam 31, precisely how did Saul die? (2 points)
3. We are also given an account of Saul's death in 2 Sam 1. Read 2 Sam 1:1–16.
4. According to 2 Sam 1, precisely how did Saul die? (2 points)
5. Are the two accounts generally similar? (1 point)
6. But is there a significant difference between them? (hint) What is it? (2 points)
7. How can we explain the difference between these two accounts? (2 points)

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8. Read on to 2 Sam 2:7.
9. Does a prophet of God appear and condemn David for having the Amalekite put to death? (1 point)
10. Is there an "editorial comment" in the text that says what David did was evil? (1 point)
11. Perhaps(?) the Bible does not condemn this because David was the king, and so he could do what he wanted. In the OT, can kings of Israel do whatever they want? If you heard someone try to explain it that way, how could we reply to him *from the Scriptures*? (3 points)
12. Note exactly what David says to the Amalekite in **2 Sam 1:14**.
Have we seen those words before in 1 Samuel? Where? (1 point)

Assignment #03 (Tuesday, January 22, 15 points)
A Passage of Old Testament Poetry – Psalm 79

As you read this passage, be mindful of what we covered in class about how OT poetry works.

In particular: In **H/O #07** we mentioned that in OT poetry, the lines usually come in **pairs**. But sometimes verses of poetry will be a "triplet" = will have three lines. Sometimes it feels like there is a line "left over". Do you recall what we said is usually the case when there is a line left over?

Read Psalm 79

1. Psalms usually do not specifically tell us what events they are referring to. They often describe the event in view, but they do not come right out and identify it. From what Ps 79 says, what major event in Israel's history is it referring to? What details in Ps 79 tell us this? (3 points)

2. Do you find any triplets in Ps 79? Where? (2 points)

3. List a verse that you think is not flatly literal language. _____.
If the language is not flatly literal, nonetheless, what point is the verse making? (3 points)

4. Can you find a verse that reflects how pagan nations might view the major event that this psalm is referring to? (See **H/O #10**, p. 3 or 4). (2 points)

5. Obviously, the major event in view in Ps 79 was harmful to Israel. But is Israel the only party that the writer of Ps 79 feels has been insulted? Who else has been insulted? Which verse? (2 points)

6. Summarize what Ps 79 is about, what it is saying. (3 points)

After-class Assignment #01 (20 points)
Gnosticism and the New Testament

Look up "Gnosticism" online. Also look up "Gnosticism and the New Testament."

1. About when and where in history did Gnosticism flourish? (2 points)

2. Summarize the main ideas of Gnosticism. (4 points)

3. Did the online articles mention any significant archaeological findings?
Name one, and describe why it is significant. (4 points)

4. Can you identify some points that are similar to, or sound like, biblical Christianity? (4 points)

5. Can you identify some points where it is very different from biblical Christianity? (4 points)

6. From the articles you read, did they mention any NT books that might be interacting with
Gnostic ideas? Which ones? (2 points)

After-class Assignment #02 (40 points)
Two Books of the Bible: Micah, and Galatians

Please **type** all answers.

You may use class notes, the Bible, Bible references books, or the internet, to find answers.

The Book of Micah (20 points)

1. What is the approximate date that Micah prophesied?
2. Is Israel under the Sinai covenant at that time?
3. What / where is Zion?
4. Names two or three major events in the Old Testament that set the stage for the time of the prophet Micah; they are events that happened before the time of Micah. (These are all things we discussed in class).

Read the book of Micah. As you read, look for the next two items.

5. Is there a passage which prophesies that Samaria will become a pile of rubble?
Which verse(s):
6. Is there a similar passage about Zion? Which verse(s):
7. Did the prophecy about Samaria come true during the time of the Old Testament? If so, when?
8. Did the prophecy about Zion come true during the time of the Old Testament? If so, when?
9. Summarize two or three main ideas that Micah was trying to emphasize; refer to the verses that support what you are saying.

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The Book of Galatians (20 points)

Read through the book of Galatians.

1. Paul introduces his general concern in Gal 1:6–10.
How would you describe his mood and tone of voice in this section? Point to specific verses as evidence.

2. Again, Paul states his general concern in Gal 1:6–10. But he states the specific reason for his concern later in the book (somewhere after ch. 2).
What is the specific reason for his concern? What verse(s) state it?

3. Does this issue get addressed in the book of Acts?
Where? (Hint: between ch. 13 and ch. 18)

4. What decision is reached about this issue in the book of Acts?

5. In his letter to the Galatians, does Paul appeal to the decision reached in the book of Acts?
Does he refer to the council at Jerusalem?

6. After Paul finishes his main argument, he goes on to give the Galatians some practical instructions for how they should, and should not, live.
Which verses contains Paul's practical instructions?

For Your Personal Reflection:

Re-Read Gal 6:17.

Then read Acts 9:1–19, esp. v. 16.

Then read Acts 14:8–20, esp. v. 19.

Then read 2 Cor 11:1–29.

Then re-read Galatians 6:17.

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**Study Guide for Quiz #1,
on Handouts #02, #08, & #09.**

- Be able to name the six basic categories of things we pay attention to when we read the Bible.
- Be able to identify the following dates from the Old Testament, and to name what happened on them. (all dates are BC)
 - 1446
 - 1000
 - 931 ← There are two significant events connected to this date. Know them both.
 - 722
 - 586
 - 516
- Know the names of the two "divided kingdoms" after the death of Solomon.
- Know the names of the capital cities of those two kingdoms.
- Know which kingdom the descendants of David ruled.
- Be able to name, in order, the five main covenants of the Old Testament.

Study Guide for Quiz #2

(Handouts #03, #06, & #07, esp. Narrative & Poetry)

- Again, be able to name the six basic categories of things we pay attention to when we read the Bible.
- Be able to complete and explain the following sentence: "*Don't build a big house . . .*".
- Be familiar with the 5 specific principles of interpretation listed in Section II of H/O #03.
- What are the three main genre in the Old Testament?
- Be able to complete the following sentence: "*The Bible does not recommend . . .*". Be able to give one example of this principle.
- Be able to describe the basic differences between narrative and poetry.
- Be able to name some OT books that are mainly poetic, and some which are mainly narrative.
- Be able to explain the difference between "dialogue" and "narrative proper."
- What is an "editorial comment"?
- If the Old Testament records a large speech or sermon given by an "approved person," then → what?
- What is the main literary feature of OT poetry?
- What is the basic idea of this feature?
- What are we supposed to do when we read a verse that consists of two parallel lines?
- We have said that some passages in OT poetry are not to be understood in a "flatly literal" manner. The from what we discussed in H/O #07, what are ways that we might understand such passages?
- Be able to name and to recognize the three main kinds of parallelism.
- Know what an acrostic is. Know what an *inclusio* is.
- Be able to explain the term "*redemptive-historical context*."

Study Guide for the Final Exam

Review Quiz #1 and Quiz #2.

1. Which covenant is between the people of Israel and God?
2. What are the three main promises to Abraham?
3. What are the four chapters in Genesis which set forth the promises to Abraham?
- 4a. When did the "40 years of wandering" take place? = Between what events?
(We are not looking for a date; rather, describe the situation = "It occurred after this event, but before this one.")
- 4b. Why was Israel made to wander for 40 years?
- 4c. What gradually happened during those 40 years?
5. The covenant between God and Abraham → is said to be with "Abraham and ..."
6. What are the two things that are most important for pagans when it comes to serving their 'gods'?
7. Name one good reason (mentioned in H/O #10) for concluding that paganism is not true.
8. In the New Testament, Romans 4 and Galatians 3 & 4 tell us that Christians are heirs to one of the Old Testament covenants. Which one is it? _____
9. When there is a line in OT poetry that seems to be left over, what is it probably doing?
10. Be able to explain what we mean by the statement, "We interpret the Bible according to the normal use of language."
11. If a verse is not speaking "flatly literally," what two things is it probably doing?
12. Know the difference between the "psalmist" and the "speaker" in a Psalm.
13. Know roughly when was the age of the prophets in the Old Testament. Know what major developments set the stage for the OT prophets.

14. How long were the Jews in exile?
15. Be able to name the following three empires:
 - (1) The empire in charge of Judah at the end of the Old Testament.
 - (2) The empire that defeated that empire (this happened between the OT and the NT).
 - (3) The empire that defeated that empire (this set the stage for the New Testament).
16. In the time of the New Testament, there were four major divisions, four sects, among the Jews. Know their names something noteworthy about each of them, and roughly when they arose.
17. Who were the Samaritans? Be able to tell a few basic facts about them.
18. Know what the Sanhedrin is.
19. Be able to explain the expression "*Pax Romana*." When did it take place?
20. Most of the NT epistles were written in a 20-year period. What was it?
21. What chapter in the book of Acts records the first church council?
22. What decision was reached at that council?
23. In what year was did the Romans destroy the second temple?
24. Review the professor's judgment as to what material in the book of Acts provides a basis for "normative" Christian doctrine.
25. Know which Gospels are the "Synoptic Gospels."
26. Of the four gospels, which one do most scholars think was probably written first?
27. Of the four gospels, which one do most scholars think was probably written last?
28. Know the professor's main ideas about how parables work.
29. Which NT parable probably comes the closest to being an allegory?
30. One reason that Jesus used parables was because they were easy to remember. But there was also a second reason, a two-fold purpose; what was it?

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