



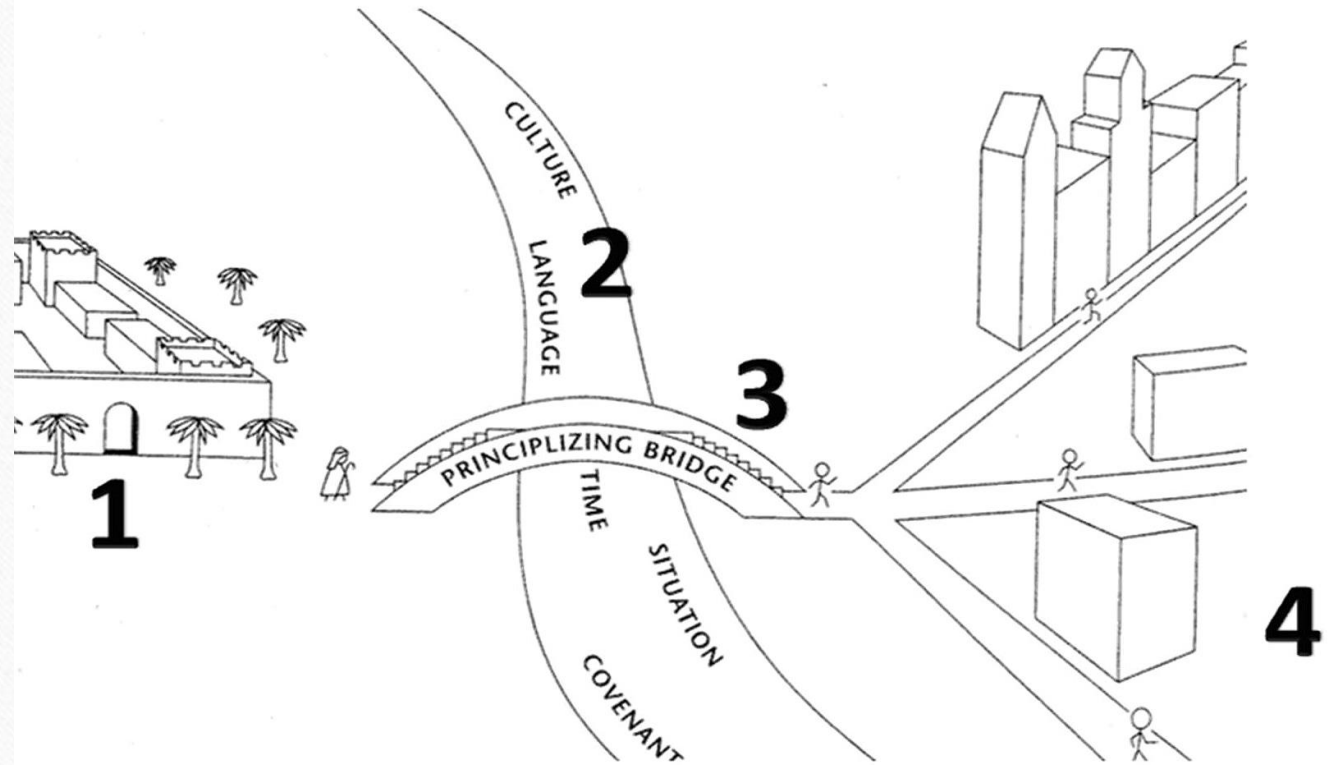
Interpreting the Bible

Hermeneutics for the Layperson

How to Interpret a Passage



1. What is the author's intended meaning for the original audience?
2. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
3. What are the theological principals in this text?
4. How should Christians apply the theological principals today?



Review



- Our focus in this class is on what is called the Grammatical-Historical Method of Bible interpretation
 - Seeks to discern the author's intended meaning by accounting for the *grammatical* (grammar, syntax, word meaning, language, literature type) and *historical* (original audience, culture, covenant, situation) contexts
- The Christocentric Method seeks to see Jesus Christ in *every* passage of Scripture—this is useful but it is important to distinguish macro vs. micro
 - The Bible is a message of redemption, and Jesus Christ is at the center of that message
 - The OT abounds with direct Messianic references that are confirmed in the NT, as well as many allusions to Jesus Christ

Review (cont.)



- The Allegorical Method, which seeks to find a hidden spiritual meaning in every passage, is generally rejected by the Christian Church
- Sensus Plenior conveys the idea that because of the double authorship of Scripture, a passage may have a fuller sense of meaning than what was intended by the original author
 - We should only consider this when God reveals this meaning in later revelation
- Finally, we began considering our first general rule of interpretation:
CONTEXT IS KING!

General Principals of Interpreting Scripture: Context



- Context Example: Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

- If we read this verse in context, we must conclude that it was specifically directed to Israelites that were in captivity in Babylon
- We must be careful to not lift this verse out of context and conclude that it can be universally applied to all of God’s people throughout all time

General Principals of Interpreting Scripture: Context



- Context Example #2: Rev 3:20

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

- Is this a good use to use for evangelism? Why or why not?

Out of Context Proof Text Example



LAW 4

We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

We Must Receive Christ

"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

We Receive Christ Through Faith

"By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

When We Receive Christ, We Experience a New Birth
(Read John 3:1-8.)

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We Receive Christ Through Personal Invitation
[Christ speaking] "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree **intellectually** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an **emotional** experience. We receive Jesus Christ by **faith**, as an act of the will.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives:

<p>Self-Directed Life</p> <p>S - Self is on the throne</p> <p>† - Christ is outside the life</p> <p>• - Interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration</p>		<p>Christ-Directed Life</p> <p>† - Christ is in the life and on the throne</p> <p>S - Self is yielding to Christ</p> <p>• - Interests are directed by Christ, resulting in harmony with God's plan</p>
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Which circle best represents your life?
Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

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- This ministry includes Rev 3:20 as an Evangelism verse that is individually applied

- Note at front of this pamphlet they have this statement:

“(References contained in this booklet should be read in context from the Bible wherever possible.)”

Observation Questions for Historical-Cultural Contextual Analysis



- **What is the general historical situation facing the author and his audience?**
 - Political, social, economic, livelihood, major threats and concerns
- **Knowledge of what customs will clarify the meaning of given actions?**
 - Example: “So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah.” (Gen 29:25)
- **What is the spiritual disposition of the audience?**
 - Many (most?) books of the Bible have passages that are directly addressing current (original audience) issues of carnality, unfaithfulness, discouragement, and temptation

Observation Questions for Specific Historical-Cultural Contextual Analysis



- Who was the writer? What was his spiritual background and experience?
- To whom was he writing? Believers, unbelievers, apostates? Those he knew well or strangers? An individual, group, or both?
 - From internal evidence, how can we deduce who were the recipients of Hebrews?
- Does the writer explicitly or implicitly state his purpose in writing a particular book?
 - Note explicit statement of purpose or repeated phrases (e.g. Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1)
 - Pay to attention to hortatory (preaching, exhortation) passages (Paul: doctrine to duty)
 - Observe the author's selectivity—points emphasized and points omitted (e.g. 1 & 2 Chron)

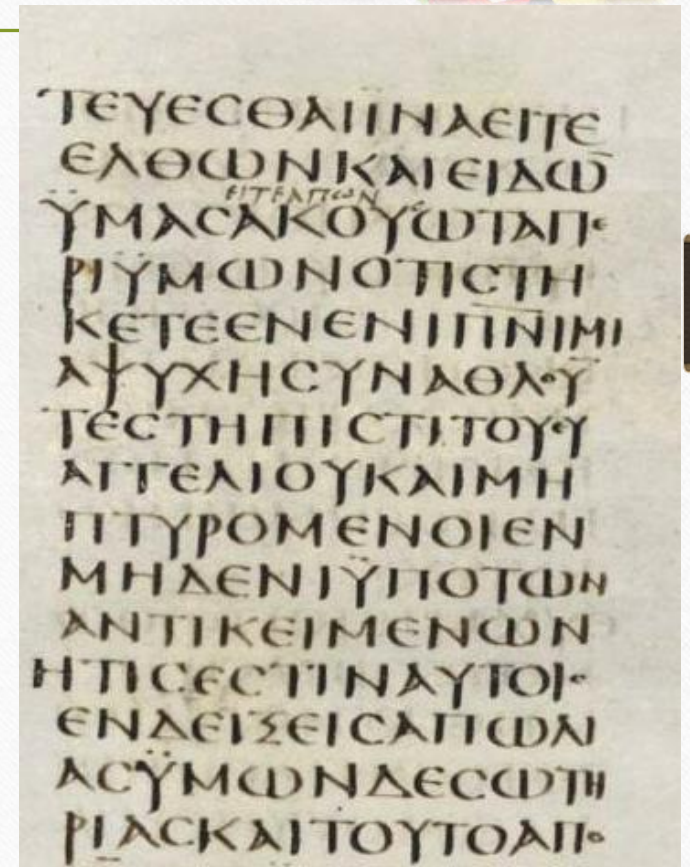
Contextual Analysis includes Discourse Analysis



- As you observe and study a text to determine meaning, it is important to pay attention to the author's propositional flow of thought
- Class Exercise

Imagine what it would be like to read Koine Greek in uncial text by using the English handout in class of Eph 1. Without consulting an English Bible, mark where you think the paragraph divisions should be with a double back slash. It helps to pay attention to prepositional and conjunctive terms.

You have five minutes!



General Principles

The Analogy of Faith



“The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture, (which is not manifold, but one,) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”

Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: Edinburgh Edition* (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1851), 20.

- We should interpret an unclear passage (teaching) in light of a clear passage (teaching)—c.f., Jesus on divorce (Matt 19:3-9), or Rahab’s lie (Josh 6)
- This includes the concept of Sensus Plenior (fuller meaning) previously discussed; specifically that the NT provides clarity to the OT

Coming up



- **Specific literary type interpretation rules**
 - Narrative
 - Poetry, Songs
 - Prophecy and Apocalyptic
 - Wisdom
- **Bible Study Tools**
- **How can the layperson Be a Better Berean?**