

OLD TESTAMENT

Basic Bible Interpretation

1 HOPE an APOSTOLIC ARROW

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Basic Bible Interpretation

The Old Testament

Section 1

Definition of Bible Interpretation

Hermeneutics is a process of understanding sacred biblical literature in light of the whole and the whole in light of its parts. In other words bible interpretation is a process of inspiration through revelation by the Holy Spirit, which is simply allowing the Word of God to speak to us.

“When God reveals Himself to humans, He does not reveal Himself according to His own knowledge, but according to the human spirit, beginning with the simple rules of grammar and language. When this Divine communication is realized in a community that calls itself the church, it follows in its humanization the laws and rules of collective knowledge, that any sociologist {or linguist, or for that matter any literate person} can observe in human societies

M. D Chenu

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not

Prerequisites for Bible Interpretation

1. Humility

Unless our hearts are humble and we come with a willingness to learn and hear God’s Word we will never truly understand God’s Word.

Matthew 13:13

Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand

“Have you not heard?” Jesus often started his sermons in these words, so the thing is if we have no humility we will be like those who listen, but not hear. Parabolic and symbolic language simplifies and amplifies something that is be understood accurately but hard hearers listen but do not understand therefore humility before God is not a choice.

2. Respect for God’s Word

1 Samuel 2:30

Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

First, when you come to hear the Word, if you would sanctify God's name, you must possess your soul with what it is you are going to hear. That is, what you are going to hear is the Word of God. Therefore you find that the Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians {**1 Thessalonians 2:13** *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*} Gives them the reason why the Word did them so much good as it did; it was because they did hear it as the Word of God....

3. A listening ear

There is a remarkable difference between **Exegesis** and **Eisegesis**....

Matthew 11:15

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear

Psalms 40:6

*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;
mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required*

Exegesis – letting the Word speak for itself

Eisegesis – reading into scripture what we want it to say

4. Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit

Psalms 119:18

*Open thou mine eyes,
that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you

Since the Holy Spirit inspired the Holy Scriptures, He remains the best guide for the true inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

5. Prayer

Ezra 7:11

10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. 11 Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes

gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel

1 Timothy 4:13

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine

Prayer and bible interpretation goes hand in hand together – one cannot do biblical interpretation without the discipline of prayer and reflection.

6. Discipline

The discipline of bible interpretation does not come overnight – it is a discipline that needs commitment and endurance for it to be successful.

7. Hard work

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth

Here then is a real problem of our negligence. We fail to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not lack of intelligence or lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.

8. Willingness to change

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves

Here is a truth, unless we are willing to change and do the word meaning living by experience, practice, allow for reforms, transitions, accountable, responsible, most importantly been in fellowship with Truth [Holy Spirit] we will not continue with our study of the word.

Scripture Reflection

Proverbs 22:17-22

*Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,
and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.*

*For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee;
they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.*

*That thy trust may be in the Lord,
I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.*

*Have not I written to thee excellent things
in counsels and knowledge,*

*That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth;
that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee*

Section 2

The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures

The most basic question about the nature of the bible centers in its claim, to be **inspired** {*inspirara - Latin*} or the **word of God**. Just what is meant by and what is included in that claim is the subject of the first link and, in that sense, the most important link in the chain of communication '**From God to Us**'

As of this point prepare yourself to integrate a definition of inspiration of the scriptures and also to formulate a historical formation of the canon of the Hebrews scriptures.

A Definition of Inspiration

- ✚ **Inspiration:** inspiration is derived from "*inspirare*" the Latin meaning, "to breathe upon or into something". According to the oxford English dictionary, this term depicts to be directly under Divine influence.
- ✚ **Enthusiasm:** Is derived from the Greek "Enthusiasmos" {en + Theos}, to signify the idea of being possessed by a god, In scripture it depicts a complete surrender of the mind and will to the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - **2 Peter 1:21**
 - *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man:but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*
- ✚ **Theopneustia:** Is derived from the Greek 'Theopheustos' which literally means 'God-Breathed' or 'inspired by God' **2 Timothy 3:16** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* The sacred Scriptures are all expressive of the mind of God, they are the 'God-breathed' revelation of God which result in the practical out working of holiness in our lives.

The definition of inspiration can be formulated as follows:

Inspiration is that mysterious process by which the Divine causality – God the Father, worked through the human prophets without destroying their individual personalities and styles to produce Divinely authoritative and inerrant writings.

The Process of Inspiration

From the biblical description of the process of inspiration {**Heb 1:1, 2 Peter 1:21, 2 Sam 23:2, Jer 1:9, 2 Tim 3:16-17**}, the necessary constituents of a theological definition of inspiration may be derived.

Divine Causality:

The prime mover in inspiration is God {**2 Peter 1:21** *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man:but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*}. In other words, God moved, and the prophet mouthed the truths; God revealed, and man recorded His word. The bible is God's Word in the sense that it originates with Him and is authorized by Him, even though men articulates it. God speaks in their written records.

Prophetic Agency

Men and women of God were the means by which God spoke. The Word of God was written by men of God. God used persons to convey His propositions.

As J.I Packer observes:

'We are to think of the Spirit's inspiration activity, and for that matter, of all His regular operations in and upon human personality, as {to use an old but valuable term technical term} "concussive", that is, as exercised in, through and by means of the writers' own activity, in such a way that their thinking and writing was both free and spontaneous on their part and divinely elicited and controlled, and what they wrote was not only their own work but also God's work."

Inspiration then, God is primary cause, and people of faith the second cause. Thus the Divine influence did not restrict human activity but rather enable the human authors to communicate the Divine message accurately.

Scriptural Authority

Scriptural Authority is the final product of God's causality and prophetic agency. Hence, the Bible is a Divinely authoritative book. God moved the prophets in such a way a to breathe out {literally, 'aspirate'} their writings. The cause of inspiration is God, the means is the men of God, and the result is the Word of God in the language of men.

It is important at this time to distinguish **Inspiration** from **Revelation** and **Interpretation**.

Revelation concerns the origin and giving of Truth {1 Corinthians 2:10}

Revelation {Latin "revelare"} means to reveal and it involves "disclosure" rather than "discovery". As it relates to scripture, all these terms refer to Divine disclosure. It may be the disclosure of a person {as in Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, **Galatians 1:16**}, while at other times it may be propositions {as in Scripture, the written Word of God, **John 10:35**}. In the ultimate sense, God gives the revelation or disclosure of truth; man can have an interpretation or discovery of that truth.

Inspiration relates to the reception and recording of truth {2 Peter 1:20-21}

God revealed truth to men who received and recorded it. Inspiration is the means God used to achieve His revelation in the bible. Inspiration involves man in an active sense, whereas revelation is solely the activity of God. In inspiration, the

prophet received from God what he in turns related to others. Inspiration as a tool process includes the prophet and the product of his pen.

Interpretation focuses on the apprehension and understanding of truth:

{[1 Corinthians 2:14-16](#)}

The Greek term “hermeneuein” {to interpret} is applied to the interpretation of Scripture in the study of Hermeneutics. Whereas Revelation is an objective disclosure of God, and inspiration includes the process and product God used in communicating, interpretation emphasizes the apprehension and understanding of God’s Revelation to man. In Revelation God unveils truth, by interpretation man understands that truth.

In summary:

- + Revelation is the **fact** of Divine Communication
- + Inspiration is the **means** of Divine Communication
- + Interpretation is the **process** of understanding that Divine Communication

The Characteristics of Inspiration

What the bible says about itself should be understood in light of what the bible shows in itself. In order to demonstrate the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, it must be shown that the bible has divine claim corroborated by a Divine character and supported by Divine credentials. The claim for Inspiration within the Bible includes several pertinent characteristics:

It is verbal

The classical text for inspiration in the bible {[2 Timothy 3:16](#)} affirms that the writings are inspired. Inspiration extends to the very words of scripture [[Exodus 24:4](#), [Isaiah 8:1](#), [30:8](#)]. We must be clear that it is not only the thought and intent of the bible that is inspired, but the very words {[Matthew 5:18](#), [Hebrew 5:12](#), [Jeremiah 26:2](#)}

It is unbreakable

The Word is not only unbreakable, but also infallible. Jesus said to the Jews, to whom He had quoted from the [Psalm 82](#), “Scripture cannot be broken {[John 10:35](#)}.

It is irrevocable

[Matt 5:18](#), [Luke 16:17](#), [Luke 24:44](#), [Acts 1:16](#)

It has final authority

The Biblical writers and Jesus Himself claim that the written word is the final arbitrator in matters of faith practice. Jesus quoted Old Testament Scripture in matters of faith and practice {[Matthew 4:4-10](#), [Matthew 21:42](#), [Mark 11:17](#)}. Paul used Old Testament Scriptures as the basis for His discussions with the Jews {[Acts 17: 2](#)}

It is plenary

It is plenary, that means full, complete, extending to every part. It is the claim of [2 Timothy 3:16](#) that all scripture is inspired, and not just part of it. That

inspiration extends universally to all of Scripture and is borne out by the use of the inclusive phrases “it is written,” “the scriptures,” “the law of the prophets,” “the word of God” {compare [Mark 7:13](#)}. Jesus referred to all sections of the Hebrew Bible as predictive of Himself {[Luke 24:27, 44](#)}, and Peter considered that Old Testament as a whole to be “prophetic writing” {[2 Peter 1:20-21](#)} given by the “Spirit of Christ” {[1 Peter 1:10-11](#)}

It has complete inerrancy

The Bible is wholly true and without error. Jesus said: ‘**Thy Word is truth ...**’ {[John 17:17](#)}. To those who denied the truth of scripture He said: ‘**You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures...**’ {[Matthew 22:29](#)}. The Psalmist said: ‘**The law of the Lord is perfect...**’ and ‘**The sum of Thy Word is truth...**’ {[Psalm 19:7, 119:160](#)}. The bible is God’s Word, and God cannot err {[Hebrew 6:18, Titus 1:2](#)}. Scripture are the utterance of the Holy Spirit {[2 Timothy 3:16](#)}, and the Spirit of Truth cannot err. “To err is human,” but the Bible is not a mere human book. It is divinely inspired, and a divinely inspired error is a contradiction in terms.

Section 3

Evidences for the Inspiration of the Bible

The Word of God needs no proof. It has self-vindicating authority because it is God’s Word. After all, God is the highest authority {[Hebrews 6:13](#)}. Hence, there is nothing greater than God to which one could appeal for authority. The Word of God is therefore its own authority. However, the question as to whether or not the Bible is the Word of God is a matter of evidence. What, then, is the evidence that the Bible has Divine Authority?

Internal Evidences of the Bible’s Inspiration

The prima facia {as it appear} evidence for inspiration:

The Bible on its surface seems to be an inspiration book. Like Jesus, the Bible speaks with authority {[John 7:46](#)}. It gives appearance of having come from God. Not only does it claim to have a Divine origin, but it seems to have a Supernatural character. Although such is not full proof of the Bible’s inspiration, it is at least an indication that merits examination. To rephrase the Gospel writer, “never did a book speak the way this Book speaks..” {compare [John 7:46](#)}. The Bible has the ring of truth.

Evidence of the testimony of the Holy Spirit:

The Word of God is confirmed to the Children {the sons} of God by the Spirit of God. The inner witness of God in the heart of the believer who reads the Bible is evidence of its Divine origin. The Holy Spirit not only bears witness to the believer that he/she is a child of God {[Romans 8:16](#)} but that the Bible is the Word of God {[2 Peter 1:20-21](#)}. The same Spirit that communicated the truth of God also confirms to the believer that the Bible is the Word of God. That witness does not occur in a vacuum. The Spirit uses the objective Word to bring subjective assurance. But by the witness of the Spirit of God to the Word of God, there is certainty on its Divine authority.

Evidence from the transforming ability of the Bible:

Another internal evidence for the inspiration of the Bible is the ability of the Bible to convert the unbeliever and to build up the believers in the faith. The writer of the Hebrews says: “ **The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword...**” {[Hebrews 4:12](#)}. Untold millions have experienced this dynamic power. Drug addicts, have been delivered, derelicts have been transformed; hate has been turned to love by reading the bible. Believers grow by studying it {[1 Peter 2:2](#)}. The sorrowing are comforted, sinners rebuked, and the negligent are exhorted by the Scriptures. God’s word possesses the dynamic, transforming power of God. God vindicates the bible’s authority by its evangelistic and edifying powers.

Evidence from the unity of the Bible

A more formal evidence of the bible’s inspiration is its unity. **Composed as it is of 66 books, written over a period of some 2500 years by about forty authors using several languages and containing hundreds of topics**, it is more than accidental or incidental that the bible possesses an amazing unity of theme –Jesus Christ. One problem –sin –and one solution JESUS CHRIST-unify its pages from Genesis to Revelation. This is an especially valid point because no person or group of men put the bible together. Books were added as they were written by the prophets. They were then collected because they were considered inspired. It is only later reflection, both by the prophets themselves {compare [1 Peter 1:10-11](#)} and later generations, that has discovered that the bible is really one book whose “chapters” were written by men who had no explicit knowledge of the overall structure. Whatever unity the book has must come from beyond them. Like a symphony, each individual part of the bible contributes to an overall unity that is orchestrated by one Master.

External evidence of the bible’s inspiration

Evidence from the historicity of the bible:

Much of the bible is historically and such is subject to historical investigation. The most significant area of confirmation in this regard has come from the field of archeology. The renowned archeologist William F. Albright said: “There can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition...”. Nelson Glueck adds: ‘It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the bible..’ Miller brown notes that more than one archeologist has found his respect for the bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.” No historical discovery is a direct evidence of any spiritual claim in the bible, such as the claim to be Divinely inspired, nevertheless the historicity of the Bible does provide indirect verification of the claim of inspiration. Confirmation of the bible’s accuracy in factual matters lends credibility to its claims when speaking on other subjects {[John 3:12](#).

Evidence from the testimony of Christ:

In connection with the evidence from the historicity of the Biblical documents is the evidence of the testimony of Christ. Since the New Testament has been

documented as historical, and since those same historical documents provide the teaching of Christ about the inspiration of the bible, one needs only to assume the truthfulness of Christ in order to argue for the inspiration of the bible. If Christ possesses any kind of authority or integrity as a religious teacher, then the scriptures are inspired, for He taught that they are God's Word. Indications from the gospel records, with ample historical backing, show that Jesus was a man of integrity and truth. The argument, then, is this: {if what Jesus taught is true, and Jesus taught that the bible is inspired, then follows that it is true that the bible is inspired of God.

Evidence from prophecy

Another external testimony to the inspiration of scripture is the fact of fulfilling prophecy. According to [Deuteronomy 18](#), a prophet was false if he made predictions that were never fulfilled. No conditional prophecy of the Bible events to the present day has gone unfulfilled. Hundreds of predictions, some of them given hundreds of years in advance, have been literally fulfilled. The time {[Daniel 9](#)}, the city {[Micah 5:2](#)}, and the nature {[Isaiah 7:14](#)}, Christ birth were foretold in the Old Testament, as were dozens of other things about His life, death and resurrection {compare [Ps 22](#), [Is 53](#) etc}. Numerous other prophecies have been fulfilled, including the destruction of Edom {[Obadiah 1](#)}, the curse on Babylon {[Is 13](#)}, the destruction of Tyre {[Ezekiel 26](#)} and Nineveh {[Nahum 1-3](#)}, and the return of Israel to their land {[Is 11:11](#)}. Other books claim Divine inspiration, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and parts of the Veda. But none of those books contains predictive prophecy. As a result, fulfilled prophecy is a strong indication of the unique, Divine authority of the Bible.

Evidence from the influence of the bible

No book has more widely disseminated and has more broadly influenced the course of world events than the bible. Civilization has been influenced more by Judeo-Christian Scriptures than by any other book or series of books in the world. In deed, no great moral or religious work in the world exceeds the depth of morality in the principle of Christian love, and none has a more loft spiritual concept than the biblical view of God. The bible presents the highest ideals known to man, ideals that have molded civilization.

Evidence from the apparent indestructibility of the bible

Despite its importance {or maybe because of it}, the bible suffered more vicious attacks than any other religious work. But the bible has withstood all its attackers. Diocletian attempted to exterminate it {302-305 AD}, and yet it is the most widely published book in the world today. Biblical critics once regarded much of it as mythological, but archeology has established it as historical. Antagonist have attacked its teaching as primitive, but moralist urge that its teaching on love be applied to modern society. Skeptics have cast doubt on its authenticity, and yet more men are convinced of its truth today than ever. The bible remains untouched and undaunted {[Mark 13:31](#)}

Some of these arguments alone are indecisive. But when all of them are taken together they form a very persuasive argument that the bible is indeed the word of God. In fact, no other book in the world has such widespread and unique support for its claim to be the inspired Word of God.

THE WORD OF GOD, THE WORD OF GOD,
THE WORD IS GOD INCARNATED. THE WORD MADE FLESH IN
JESUS. WHAT OUR EYES HAVE SEEN, OUR HANDS HAVE TOUCHED.
{John Michael Talbot –‘Meditations in the Spirit’}

Section 4

The bible is the record of those divine breakthroughs into human history. ‘God’s search for man,’ rather than being our search for God, and it’s accents are considered a key for discerning the continuing divine activity in the present. Unlikely most religious literature, it is not chiefly a collection of noble sayings, but a drumroll of events, people, struggles, great and terrible, of frailty, doubts, and heroism, of the ultimate might of right. Scripture isn’t meant as {mere} scientific exposition or as mere history. It is salvation history, a universal spiritual drama of an overarching compassion and concern for human integrity, of an unwavering love that seeks an answering affirmation. It is a vivid, sometimes parabolic account of God’s persistent, unrelenting quest for us and our stumbling, often faithless response.

The Canon of the Hebrew Scriptures

The English word ‘bible’ is from the Greek phrase {ta biblia}, ‘the books,’ an expression Hellenistic Jews used to describe their sacred books several centuries before the time of Jesus. Christians adopted the phrase ‘Old Testament’ to refer to these sacred books they shared with Jews. Jews called the same books Miqra, ‘scripture’ or the Tanakh, an acronym for the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Torah {instruction or less accurately ‘the law’}, Neviim {prophets}, and Kethuvim {writings, including Psalms, Proverbs, and several other books}. Modern scholars often use the term ‘Hebrew Bible’ to avoid the confessional terms Old Testament and Tanakh.

The bible is not one book, but a library of 66 books written over a 1500-year period in 3 languages by 40 authors living in 10 different countries. The authors’ works include history, mystery, romance, poetry, prose, and even humour! Casts of 2930 characters are depicted in 1551 places. How did this amazing collection ever come about? God revealed Himself through His Hebrew prophets. The Jews revered the writings of the prophets and carefully preserved them. These sacred writings became the scriptures of the first Christians. Christians recognized these scriptures contained promises of the coming of Jesus. Inspired writings from the earliest church were later added to the Hebrew sacred books to make up a canon of scripture. The Greek word canon {quite a different from Latin cannon – used in warfare} meant a rule, measuring standard. When it is used to refer to the set or collection of books of the bible which were identified as authoritative from God, it indicates those books which were chosen according to certain rules. The decision as to which books of the Bible are canonical, that is, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is made according to a set of rules, or criteria.

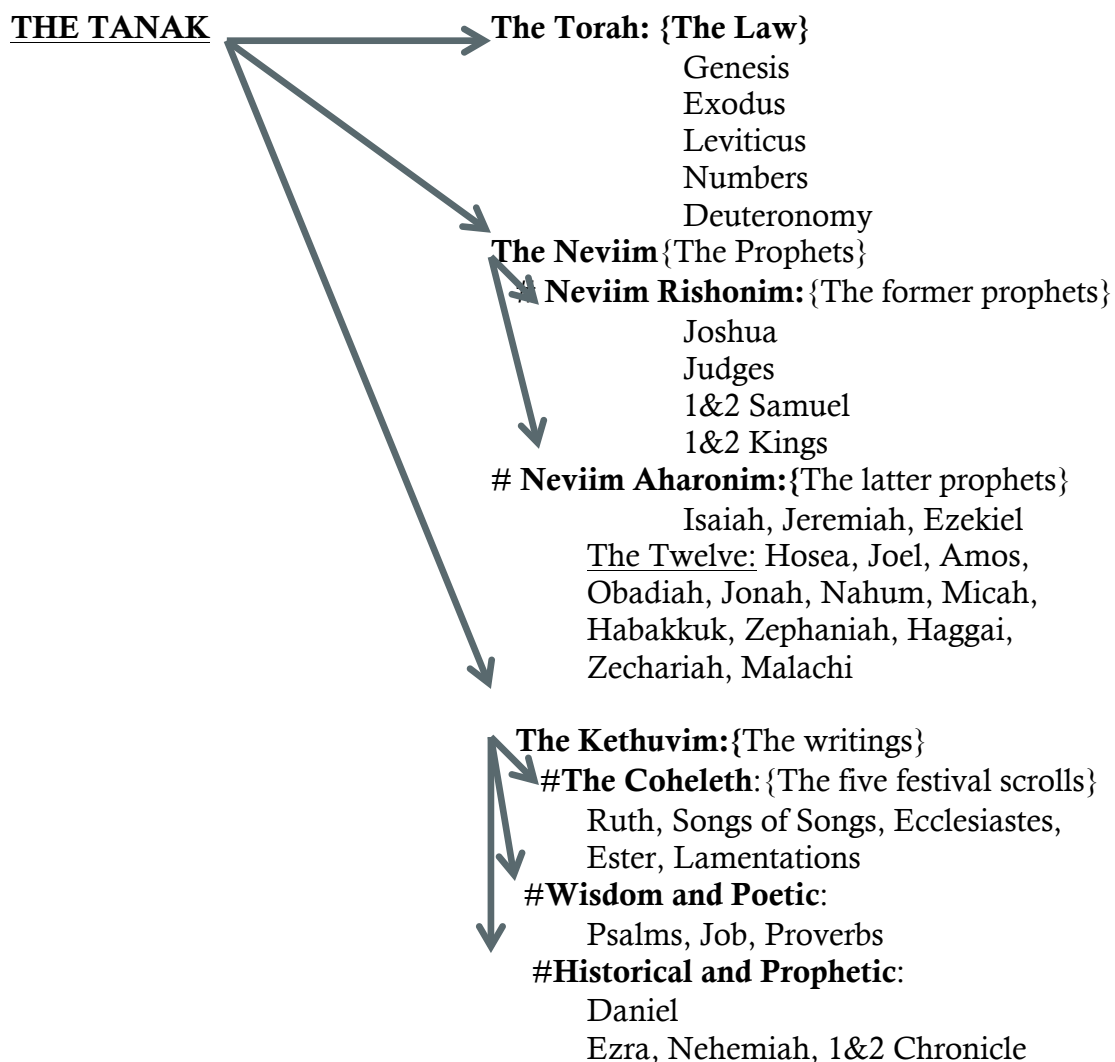
The canon of the Old Testament

1. That people might have a complete revelation from God in their own time. It was that people be given Gospel information before the time of the cross and that they understand Grace and the Plan of God.
2. That people might have the written word of God to live by.
3. That manuscript of the inspired writing might be preserved from corruption and destruction. Therefore, a canon must be defined so that non-canonical writings may be rejected as far as divine authorship is concerned. The non-canonical writings include the Antilegomena, the Apocryphal writings, the Pseudographal, etc.
4. That people might know limits of the inspired writings and thus define which writings are spurious.

There are three kinds of prophets who wrote the Old Testament

- ✚ Those who had the gift of prophecy
- ✚ Those who held the office of prophet
- ✚ Those who held both the gift and the office of prophet

The structure of the Old Testament {The TANAK}



The Literature of the Old Testament

The Tanak

The Torah:

- mostly historical narratives, but also certain Law documents for example we find:
 - + Priestly regulations – Numbers 15, Lev. 11-15
 - + Prophetic – Genesis 22
 - + Songs of victory and worship – Ex. 15:20-21, Deut. 33:1-5
 - + Lists of blessings and curses – Num. 6:24-26
 - + Sermons – Deut. 1-10
 - + Lists of persons and groups – Genesis 10
 - + List of places – Num. 33:1-49
 - + List of materials objects – Ex 35:21-29

The Neviim:

- Neviim Rishonim, we find mostly historical narratives but also:
 - + Funeral songs-2 Samuel 1:17-27
 - + Thanksgiving Songs -1 Samuel 2:1-10
 - + Parables – 2 Samuel 12:1-4
 - + Prophetic – words of salvation 2 Kings 3:16-19
- words of judgment 2 Kings 1:3-16
 - + Proverbs – 1 Sam 24:14
- Neviim Aharonim, we find mostly Prophetic material like:
 - + Words of judgment – Amos 7:16-17
 - + Words of Salvation – Isaiah 41:8-13
 - + Vision Reports – Amos 7:1-19
 - + Symbolic Action Reports – Jeremiah 13:1-11
 - + Biography – Jeremiah 26-28, 36-45
 - + Exhortations / Admonitions – Isaiah 1:10-17

The Kethuvim:

- + Wisdom Writings
- + Megilloth {scrolls}
- + Prophetic / Apocalyptic
- + Historical

Tanak – outlined as follows:		
Torah	Neviim	Kethuvim
<i>Law</i>	<i>Prophets</i>	<i>Writings</i>
	Rishonim	The Coheleth
	<i>The former prophets</i>	<i>five festival scrolls</i>
	Aharonim	Wisdom / Poetic
	<i>The latter prophets</i>	
		Historical / Prophetic

Section 5

How did these various pieces come to be regarded as Scripture by Jewish and later, Christian communities?

There were no committees that sat down to decree what was or was not a holy book. To some degree, the process of scripture making, or canonization as it is often called {from Greek word *kanon*, a 'measuring rod'}, involved a process, by which the Jewish community decided which works reflected most clearly its vision of God. The antiquity of many of the books was clearly a factor, and this is why Psalms that were eventually attributed to David, and Proverbs, Songs of Songs, and Ecclesiastes that was attributed to Solomon were first considered to be inspired. However, mere age was not enough. There had to be some way in which the Jewish community could identify its own experiences and understanding of God in the sacred books. This occurred, at least in part, through an elaborate process of biblical interpretation. Simple reading a text involves interpretation. Interpretative choices are made even in picking up today's newspaper: one must know the literary conventions that distinguish a news report, for example, from a literary drama piece. The challenge becomes much more intense when one reads highly artistic text from a different time and place, such as the bible. The earliest examples of interpretation we have appeared in the bible itself. Zechariah reinterprets Ezekiel, Jeremiah often refers to Hosea and Micah, and Chronicles substantially rewrites Kings. These reinterpretations are in themselves evidence that the older books were already becoming authoritative, canonical, even as the younger ones were still being written.

At this point we will not get into Semitic language or Hebrew though patterns nor perfect and imperfect verbs of the language for more information and further study please refer to {David H. Roper} on what every student needs to know about Hebrew. What we will have a look at is:

Understanding evocative imagery

Hebrew is a language rich in imagery. The Semitic people in general were not given to abstract definition and precise delineation of ideas, but rather to eloquent symbolism and imagery. The language was, therefore a powerful medium for touching and moving the emotions. Hebrew lacks the ability of most Indo-European languages to express subtle shades of meaning. For instance, Latin is far more concise and thus the proper medium for legal terminology, while Greek is better suited to the delicate shades of theological meaning found in the New Testament. But Hebrew has a force of its own a remarkable ability to evoke enduring mental images by use of powerful symbols. It's this characteristic that I call evocative imagery. The images in the Old Testament come from a number of sources but are drawn principally from the physical features of the Near East {the flora, fauna, and topography of the region}: the customs and habits of the people {cf. [Jer. 2:13](#), [Isa. 5:1,2](#); [40:26](#)}; and the Israelite or pagan worship. It may surprise you to learn that some of the most powerful symbols are taken right out of pagan cult terminology and their myths and legends. For e.g, the sea monster frequently referred to in the Old Testament and variously named {Rahab, Leviathan, Tannin and so on} is taken directly from near eastern mythology {see Mary K. Wakeman's *God's and monster, a study in biblical imagery*}. The

theology of the Old Testament, of course, is radically different from that of pagan literature, but many of the symbols and figures are shared in common. Be aware of this characteristic in the Old Testament and try to focus on image that the writer wishes to convey instead of the specific details of the passage. It's not that the details are unimportant; every aspect of scripture has its own importance. However, there is a big picture being painted and you ought to stand back and look at the whole in order to grasp the full intent of the author.

Interpreting Symbols and Figure of Speech

A characteristic closely related to evocative imagery is the extensive use of figures of speech in the Old Testament. No language has a word for every idea. That's one of the weaknesses of language, and biblical Hebrew in particular suffers in this regard, since it has such a limited vocabulary. In addition, there is, as we have indicated, a tendency in Hebrew to express ideas symbolically rather than abstractly. Thus, the authors of the Old Testament rely extensively on figurative language. We must therefore learn to recognize some of their frequently-employed figures of speech. Some of these have been mentioned previously, but their application to Old Testament Hebrew is particularly significant.

Euphemism – the substitution of an inoffensive or mild expression for one that might offend or suggest something unpleasant.

Isaiah 57:8 you loved their bed. Their 'hand' you gazed at {for sexual desire}

Metonymy – the use of a concrete term for another more abstract idea.

Isaiah 53:10 – Then I will set the key {way to gain access} of David on his shoulder.. {As a burden, or heavy responsibility}.

Synecdoche – a use of the whole for a part or a part for the whole.

Isaiah 53:10- if he would render up his soul {himself} as a guilt offering

Merism - a form of synecdoche where a totality is expressed by two opposites.

Genesis 1:1 in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth {i.e the universe}

Personification – the representation of inanimate objects or abstract objects as endowed with personal attributes.

Isaiah 35:1 the wilderness and the desert shall be glad

Apostrophe – a turning away one's audience to address directly a person or thing, or an abstract imaginary object {Frequent in prophetic books}

Hyperbole - an exaggeration used for emphasis.

Isaiah 34: 1-17 {Description of destruction of nations}

Irony – the intended implication is opposite the literal meaning of the words.

Isaiah 41:23 {Address to idols} indeed, do good or evil that we may anxiously look about us and fear.

Simile – one thing, action or relationship is explicitly compared with something else {as or like}

Metaphor – a word or phrase used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy.

[Isaiah 1:10](#) –Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom {Jerusalem}

Hendiadys – a stylistic device in which two coordinated terms are joined by ‘and’ to convey as single concept.

[Genesis 3:16](#) –‘I will greatly multiply your pain and childbirth’ {Painful childbirth}

Anthropomorphism – the representation of God in the form of, or with attributes of, a man.

[Isaiah 7:18](#) ‘and it shall come about that the Lord will whistle for the fly which is at the sources of the rivers of Egypt’

Anthropopathism – the ascription to God of the emotions and passions of man.

[Psalms 2:4](#) ‘He who sits in the heavens will laugh’

Zoomorphism – the representation of God in the form of, or with the attributes of, the lower animals.

[Psalm 63:7](#) ‘In the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy’

Scripture Reflection

[Proverbs 30:5-6](#)

Every word of God is pure; he is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

Section 6

Basic rules and principles for Old Testament Interpretation

Practical rules for Bible interpretation

The bible is to be read like any other book

- ✚ This rule goes in the beginning because it is so important.
- ✚ When we say that the bible should be read like any other book, we do not mean that the Bible is like any other book. The Bible is uniquely inspired and infallible, and this puts it into a class of its own. But when it comes to interpreting the text of the Holy Scriptures, the basic literary rules of interpretation still applies. In the Bible a verb is a verb and a noun a noun.
- ✚ The Rules of context and basic reading must be applied diligently to understand the scriptures correctly. Remember the bible requires interpreters but revelation comes from the Spirit.

Read the Bible existentially

- ✚ When we read the bible, we ought to get passionately and personally involved in what we read.

- ✚ By placing ourselves in the life situation of the characters in scripture, we can come to a better understanding of what we are reading.

Historical narratives are to be interpreted by didactic

- ✚ Didactic literature is literature that teaches or explains. Much of Paul's writings is didactic in character.
- ✚ Historical Narratives should always be interpreted by the Didactic.

The implicit is to be interpreted by the explicit

- ✚ In the business of language we make distinctions between that which is implicit and that which is explicit.

Determine carefully the meaning of words

- ✚ The bible is a book, which communicates information verbally. That simply means that it is filled with words. Thoughts are expressed through the relationship of those words. Each individual word contributes something to the whole of the context expressed. The better we understand the individual words used in Biblical statements, the better we will be able to understand the total message of Scripture.
- ✚ There are usually two basic methods by which the meaning of words be defined: **Etymology** and **Customary Usage**.

Etymology – is the science of word derivations. We see a word like hippopotamus and wonder what it means. If we know Greek, we know that the word hippos means 'horse' and the word potamos means 'river'. Thus we have hippopotamus or 'riverhorse'

Studying the roots and original meanings of words can be very helpful to gain the flavor of a term. For example, the Hebrew word for glory tip'eret originally meant 'heavy or weighty'. Thus, the glory of God has to do with His 'weightiness' or 'significance'. We do not take Him 'lightly'

In addition to origins to origins and derivations, it is extremely important to study language in the context of its usage.

Customary Usage: For example is the use of the word prevent in the King James Version of [1 Thessalonians 4:15](#): 'for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.' In this context the word prevent speaks of an action that comes before a specific event {thus pre-event}. In modern English prevent means hinder. Note the King James version of this verse: 'for this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep'.

Words with multiple meanings – There are scores of words in the bible that have multiple meanings. Only the context can determine the particular meaning of a word: A good example of multiple meanings is the use of the word **justify** in the New Testament. Here follows two examples {one from Paul and one from James}:

[Romans 3:28](#) 'therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law'

[James 2:24](#) 'you see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only'

If the word justified means the same thing in both cases, we might have a irreconcilable contradictions between two Biblical writers on a issue that concerns

our eternal destinies. This question of justification is easily resolved if we examine the possible meanings of the term justify and apply them within the contexts of the respective passages. The term justify may mean:

- ❖ To restore to a state of reconciliation with God those who stand under judgment of his law.
- ❖ To demonstrate or to vindicate.

Paul makes use of the word in an ultimate theological sense {meaning one}. In context is showing that faith is demonstrated through works {He is saying that true faith brings forth works} – marking use of the example of Abraham and Isaac {see [James 2:14](#) and also [Luke 7:35](#) for the use of the word justify to demonstrate something}

Words whose meaning become **Doctrinal Concepts**. One category of words can give us “interpreting fits’. It is that group of words that have come to be used for Doctrinal concepts. For example, there is the word save and the corresponding word salvation. In the biblical world, a person was ‘saved’ if he experienced any deliverance from any kind of trouble or calamity. People rescued from military defeat, from bodily injury or disease, from defamation of character all experience what calls ‘salvation’. Yet ultimate salvation comes when we are rescued from the power of sin and death and escape the wrath of God –that is true and ultimate salvation. Note the use of the word save in the following New Testament quotation: Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control’. Does this mean that women can only be saved in enter into the kingdom of God through the process of childbearing? The word save here means to be spared many of the traumas of childbearing of the Christian Couple continue in faith, love, holiness and self-control.

Note the presence of parallelism in the bible

One of the most fascinating aspects of Hebrew literature {especially} is its use of parallelism may be defined as a relationship between two or more sentences or clauses that correspond in similarity or are set with each other.

These are the basic types of parallelism:

Synonymous Parallelism

Synonymous parallelism occurs when different lines or parts of a passage present the same thought in a slightly altered manner of expression. Here is an E.G

“A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape”
[Proverbs 19:5](#)

Or

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our
Maker”
[Psalm 95:6](#)

Antithetic Parallelism

Antithetic parallelism occurs when the two parts are set in contrast to each other. They may say the same thing but it in a way of negation. Here is an E.G

“A wise son heeds his fathers instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke”
Proverbs 13:1

Or

“He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich”
Proverbs 10:4

Synthetic Parallelism

Synthetic parallelism is a bit more complex than the other forms. Here the first part of the passage creates a sense of expectation, which is completed by the second part. It can also move in a progressive ‘staircase’ movement to a conclusion in a third line. For E.G

‘For behold, your enemies, O Lord, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.’ {Psalm 92:9}

Or

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.’ {Matthew 7:7}

Note the difference between Proverb and Law

A common mistake in biblical interpretation and application is to give a proverbial saying the weight or force of a moral absolute. Proverbs are catchy little couplets designed to express practical truisms. They reflect principles of wisdom for godly living. They do not reflect moral law that is to be applied absolutely to every conceivable situation – they must be applied in the context of the situation. For E.G

‘But Jesus said to him, ‘do not forbid him, for he is not against us is on our side.’
{Luke 9:50}

And

Do not answer a fool to his folly, lest you also be like him

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes
Proverbs 26: 4-5

Observe the difference between the Spirit and the Letter of the Law

To obey the letter while violating the Spirit makes one technically righteous but actually corrupt. Another way the law is distorted is by trying to obey the Spirit of the Law but ignoring the letter. Letter and Spirit are inseparably related.

Be careful with Parables

‘But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And he said to them, To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, ‘so that Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not

understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.' {Mark 4:10-12}

A parable is not a riddle. It is meant to be understood. The safest and probably the most accurate way to treat the parables is to look for one basic central point in them. There are some parables that, like The Prodigal son, that have more than one point. The basic rule is to have great care in interpreting them.

Be careful with Predictive Prophecy

The basic rule of Allegory applies to predictive prophecy. Let the Scripture interpret Scripture. There are two very important points to remember when interpreting predictive prophecy:

- ✚ What the prophet foresaw as one event may actually be two or more.
- ✚ Although much of the Old Testament Prophecy is fulfilled in the New Testament and then again in the new {Recapitulation Theory}.

Scripture Reflection

'I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God, abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.' 1 John 2:14

Section 7

The Principles of Bible Interpretation

The purpose here is to introduce an approach to hermeneutical approaches in Old Testament Bible interpretation, especially the fourfold approach of the Church Father Origen

1 Thessalonians 5:23

'May God Himself...keep you sound in spirit, soul, and body, without fault until our Lord Jesus Christ comes'

Applied to the bible:

- ✚ The Body is literal meaning of the text
- ✚ The Soul is its moral meaning
- ✚ The Spirit is its spiritual and allegorical meaning

Accordingly, these three kinds of meaning will have their appeal to man in:

- ✚ The literal meaning to the material needs of the man {Body}
- ✚ The moral meaning to the every day life/morals of man {Soul}
- ✚ The spiritual or allegorical to man's spiritual or faith life {Spirit}

In time the spiritual and allegorical meanings of scripture was distinguished as thus we can speak of a fourfold meaning of the Bible. Much later under the direction of Jerome, Augustine, and John Cassian this approach within bible interpretation became more structured and practical. There were two kinds of meanings within the text:

- ✚ Literal

✚ Figurative

John Cassian introduced {based on Origen's method a threefold distinction under the heading of the figurative meaning of a Bible passage:

✚ Literal

✚ Figurative

- Allegorical {the deeper meaning}
- Tropological {moral}
- Anagogical {spiritual}

Long after Cassian Theology students had to learn the following Latin jingle by heart:

*Littera gesta docet
Quid credas allegoria
Moralis quid agas
Qua tendas anagogia*

Here are follows an English translation:

*The latter shows us what God and our fathers did
The allegory shows us where our faith is hid
The moral meaning gives us the rules of daily life
The anagogy shows us where we end our strife*

Here follows a brief description of every aspect of the fourfold approach.

Literal

✚ The literal meaning of the text, the face value of the words and text.

Allegorical

✚ The deeper meaning of the text, the face value of the words and text

Tropological

✚ The moral application of the text, the day to day application of the text.

Anagogical

✚ The spiritual application and important – the future and prophetic implication of the text.

Some practical examples of the practical application of the fourfold meaning of a text:

The name Jerusalem may mean the following

- ✚ Literal – The physical city of Jerusalem
- ✚ Allegorical – The nation of Israel or the Church {depends on context}
- ✚ Tropological – The heavenly Jerusalem/eternal life

Isaiah 53:7

'He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as sheep before its shearers silent,
So He opened not His mouth.'

Literal – The suffering servant of the Lord and the fact that in the midst of suffering he would not open his mouth or say anything to his opponents, as a sheep before its shearers.

Allegorical – Firstly, it relates to the prophetic ministry, that the prophets as the servants of the Lord would suffer for their message, but not defend themselves. Secondly, it relates to the Messiah that would come, the servant that would suffer at the hands of men and not say a word, as a lamb led to the slaughter.

Tropological {moral} - That even though we are servants of the Lord, it does not mean that we will not suffer for our message, but that we should be quiet, silent as sheep before its shearers –harmless.

Anagogical {spiritual application and prophetic} – Showing towards Jesus, the suffering servant of the Lord that suffered and never opened His mouth – like a lamb. Also prophetic towards the Church as the suffering servant of the Lord.

The process of Bible Interpretation {Structured Approach}

Preparation for gathering information for interpretation

Preparation

1. Determine the scope of your study {Pericope}
 - ✚ The passage will lead you in determining the scope of your study.
 - ✚ Look for the 'natural' seams or divisions in the portion, marking a periscope/unit.
 - ✚ Look for change of direction or thought to determine a periscope/unit.
 - ✚ A periscope/unit must be able to stand on its own.
2. Read the previous and following chapters
 - ✚ When interpreting Historical Narratives, determine the greater story line.
 - ✚ When interpreting Didactic Material, determine the greater thought structure of the text.
 - ✚ Place the periscope in the greater context of the text.
3. Read the periscope a number of times and meditate on what is being said.
 - ✚ Prayer is of paramount importance in the process of meditation.
 - ✚ Practice 'Lectio Divina', making use of your periscope.
 - ✚ Immerse yourself into the text.
5. Ask God for illumination of the Holy Spirit within your interpretation of the periscope.

The inner texture of the text

5. What type of text {Genre} are you working with?
6. What is the greater structure of the periscope {Structural Analysis}?
7. Are there any repetitions of words or phrases – making a list.
8. What background information is found within the text: presupposed, implicit or explicit?
9. Who are the characters mentioned?
10. What type of characters are mentioned: Main, supportive or minor.
11. Determine the language usage within the text {Linguistic Analysis}: What type of language is used {idioms, metaphors, proverbs, figures of speech, parallelism etc}?
12. Carefully determine the meaning of individual words:
 - + Typology
 - + Customary
13. Study now each verse and look at the way that words in each verse relate to one another {intrasentential context}.
14. Look at the greater whole of your periscope. How does each verse relate to one another {suprasentential context}.
15. Are there any switches of mood in the periscope?
16. How is the material ordered {present}?
17. Mark the interplay between narrative and dialogue.
18. Note the difference between what is implicit {unclear} and what is explicit {clear} in the text.
19. Locate any other reference to your periscope in scripture {intertextual reference}.
20. Follow points 5 to 18 in studying these references.

The social and cultural texture of the text

21. What was the date and occasion of the writing of the periscope? {Chronology}
22. Who was the author?
23. What was the historical context in which the text was written?
24. What type of rhetoric {speech} is the author employing to convey his/her message?
25. What is the message of the author to the audience?
26. What is the motivation of the author?
27. What seems to be the context of the author?
 - + His/her historical consciousness
 - + His/her intellectual world
 - + His/her social and economic context
 - + His/her religious traditions and spiritual experiences
 - + His/her political convictions {Place yourself in His shoes}
28. Who was the audience?
29. What was the context of the audience?
 - + Historical, social, economic, spiritual, political etc.
30. What is the relation of the author to the audience?
31. What is the position of the author relative to the audience?

The ideological texture of the text

32. Determine the main message/thought of the periscope and the author.

33. How would this impact the original readers/audience?
34. How does this impact you, the present reader?

The sacred texture of the text

35. What information does the periscope convey about the character and reality of God?
36. What information does the periscope convey about the character and reality of God?

Interpretation of the information gathered

37. Compile all the information that you gathered within your study of the text, author and audience.

Interpretation

38. Determine, which approach within the discipline of Bible Interpretation you, are going to use.
39. Interpret the information that you have gathered through you study of the text, author and audience using the approach that you have chosen.

Testing your interpretation

40. Have you read the text existentially, in other words have you been involved with the text?
41. If your portion is a historical narrative, have you interpreted it in the light of the didactic material?
42. Have the implicit material in your portion been explained in the light of the explicit?
43. Does your interpretation line up the rest of the message of the text.
44. Does your interpretation line up with the over-all message of scripture?
45. Does your interpretation show the character of God in the light of the revelation of His son, Jesus Christ?

Results of your interpretation

46. Compile your whole effort and write a short commentary of the periscope, in a way that anyone could understand the main message of the text.
47. How can you practically apply your interpretation of the periscope?
48. Structure your message/sermon/teaching around your interpretative commentary of the periscope.
49. Make sure that you do what you have learned before you minister on it.
50. Ask the Holy Spirit to make this text a reality within your life.

Scripture Reflection

But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it' [Luke 11:28](#)

Section 8

An interpretation of **Genesis 22: 1-19** based on Origen's Fourfold Meaning of the Text

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the altars which I have said to you. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac.

Lets summarize Origen's fourfold approach to the meaning of the text:

- A. The Literal Approach – the meaning of the text and its face value of words and its message. {Main Message}
- B. The Allegorical {Spiritual} Approach- The deeper spiritual meaning of words, reading between the lines.
- C. The Tropological {Moral} Approach – The moral/ethical application of the text, the day to day application of the message.

D. The Anagogical {Future Goals} Approach: - the future application of the text and message, the establishment of our goals.

The Literal Approach

Interpretation of Genesis 22:1-19

Moses penned the story of the sacrifice of Isaac in [Genesis 22:1-19](#) during the years of Exodus in the wilderness to the rebellious and often disobedient Israelites. The Israelites having spent four hundred years in Egypt as slaves were a nation without identity, history, vision, and knowledge of God. Moses endeavors to bring the Israelites to the understanding of the covenant that God entered with their Ancestors and therefore with them. In recalling and putting their history to paper, Moses allows the Israelites to come to the knowledge of God brings purpose, dignity and vision. In [Genesis 22:1-19](#) God puts Abraham to the test, he is commanded to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. God asked for Isaac, the visible sign and vehicle of God's promise. The test is about the fear of God {[vs 12](#)}, God wants to see if Abraham fears and loves him above all other things. When God entered into covenant with Abraham {[Genesis 15](#)}, Abraham interrupted God and asked for an heir. Now the test will reveal if God has preeminence in Abraham's life. God takes Abraham on a three-day journey to Moriah, a place formerly connected with child –sacrificed. Abraham builds an altar, binds the feet of his son and takes the knife to slay Isaac. God calls then from heaven and confirms the covenant with Abraham. In God's eyes the sacrifice is complete and now He knows that Abraham truly fears Him. Abraham renames the place: 'God shall provide' which reminds the Israelites of a contemporary proverb: "In the mount of The Lord it shall be provided {He} shall be seen." [Genesis 22:1-19](#) serves as a Didactic Historical Narrative to instruct the Israelites on the importance of the fear of God. This will prepare them to be obedient to God and will equip them for when they enter the promise land. If they are obedient to God's voice and they are willing to sacrifice everything to Him, then He will bless them. This blessing will be fourfold:

- ✚ In blessing God will bless them.
- ✚ God will multiple their descendants as the stars.
- ✚ God will give them victory over their enemies.
- ✚ Through their obedience all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

If they wanted to be part of the covenant that God entered into with Abraham, they must fear God, God must have pre-eminence in their lives.

The knowledge of God brings identity, purpose and vision to our lives, when we understand our covenant with God; it leads us from a slave mentality to a living relationship with God. We are a people of destiny that have been called to fear God!

The Allegorical Interpretation

In [Genesis 22:1-19](#) many types and shadows can be seen pointing to the mission, nature and character of the coming Messiah. The possible allegorical and typological themes can be represented as follows:

Abraham can be seen as a type of God, the Father in the following ways:

Abraham

Isaac, was his only son {[Heb 11:17](#)}
Abraham was will to offer Isaac
Abraham received Isaac from the dead
{[Heb. 11:19](#)}
Abraham loved Isaac {[Gen 22.2](#)}

God The Father

Jesus God's only Son {[Jn 3:16](#)}
God offered up Jesus {[Rom 8:32](#)}
God Raised Jesus from the Dead
{[Rom. 8:11](#)}
God loved Jesus {[John 18:23](#)}

Isaac can be seen as a type and shadow of Jesus, in the following ways:

Isaac

Was the one son of Abraham

Is likened unto a lamb {[Gen 22:8](#)
[1:29](#)}

Does not protest against his
Own death {[Gen 22:9](#)}

Questions his father {[Gen 22:7](#)}

Was willing to lay down his life

His feet was bound {[Gen 22:9](#)}

After his ordeal he received from the Lord
{[Gen 26:2-6](#)}

He carries through the grace of God

Jesus

The only Son of God

He is the Lamb of God {[John](#)
[1:29](#)}

He is the Silent Lamb of God

Questions His Father {[Matt 26](#)}

He lay down His life

His feet is nailed to the cross

Jesus receives his Bride

Jesus is the light and grace of
God

The Ram

Its God's provision

It was caught in bush of thorns

It was consumed as a burnt offering

The ram was proxy for Isaac

Jesus

Christ is God's provision

Christ was crowned with thorns

Jesus is that offering before
God for man

Jesus give up His life for man

Jesus gave up His life for you and I, a perfect offering

The Tropological Approach {Moral} Interpretation

What can we learn from this:.....

Worship happens at a cost. One can only climb the mountain of God, when one is ready to sacrifice all and to place oneself on the altar of God. When we say that we fear God, this will be tested. To be in covenant with God, means that we belong to God, faith without works is dead. When we say we believe, then our faith must be practiced and practical note [James 2:21-24](#). As Abraham took responsibility and accountability for the call of God for a greater purpose we to are required to show that same as God must have pre-eminence in our lives. Nothing must take his place not even the promises of blessings. As Abraham was ready to follow God through obedience to keep the word before him this requirement must not be foreign to the children of God. As Soren Kierkgaard said commenting on Genesis 22:1-19: ‘God created everything out of nothing, before He can use anything, He must reduce it to nothing.’ In the test of obedience – there is a trial involving a three day journey and a confrontation with death that leads to new maturity in Isaac. In our obedience to God, we face our own death to self, which in turn leads to spiritual maturity in God.

No matter what the cost is for humanity, Christ has paid a price, the witness is His undeniable love shown throughout His word every word paints a picture of His grace as in the case of Abraham and Isaac.

The Anagogical {Goal} interpretation

Spiritual principle

When we are obedient to God and do everything in faith towards God, then we will inherit the promises and blessings of God. Obedience brings the vision of God, it opens our eyes to see Him. Obedience is the key to victory over the evil one and brings self-control within the context of our life before God. Obedience is a culture of the Kingdom of God, obedience to God has the power to overthrow evil places, traditions, and customs to establish the things of God in the earth. In our walk with God we will encounter trial and test but if we endure in faith and obedience, then we will overcome the darkness, inherit the promises and blessings to establish the kingdom of God in the earth.

Obedience is better than sacrifice

Comments:

Within the culture of the Kingdom of God it is important that we study to show ourselves approved, by God, this document is limited but is a useful resource tool to a serious bible student. Much broader reading is required and most importantly revelation from the Holy Spirit to open ones understanding. I most often remind myself that what we are given from the spirit is what we become accountable for and held responsible unto God.

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1Hope an apostolic arrow

King James Version of the Holy Bible

Origen's Four-Fold Approach to Bible Interpretation O/T