

Lecture 5- How to Interpret the “Historical Books” (II)

He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?” Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing.”

Gen 27:18-19

Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her.” But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

Gen 29:21, 23, 25

Key Terms

First things first, submit, choose, establish, read

Lecture Objectives

- Outline, describe, and practice the basic steps in responsible exegesis

Preliminary Questions

- Thinking about our exegetical attitude and approach to scripture, what is the difference in the mental processes and attitude toward God of someone who says “This is what the passage means to me,” and someone who says “This is what the passage means?”

How to Interpret the “Historical Books” (II)**I. Basic Exegetical Steps****A. First things first**

1. Submit the mind and heart to God
2. Choose a passage
 - a. The OT has a scenic mode of narration (episodic)
 - 1) Limited number of characters— 2 or 3 active participants
 - 2) Change in time or place. The actors are introduced in 1 Sam. 13:1, the actors part in v. 15
 - b. Choose a workable unit of study, but do not forget the broader context
 - 1) v. 8- the time sent by Samuel
 - 2) 10:8- broader context
 - 3) v. 3 points to 10:7
Ian Provan- commentaries on Kings
 - 4) Solomon’s wisdom first mentioned in 1 Kings. 2 David points to Solomon’s wisdom
 - c. Don’t allow chapter divisions to over influence your division of the text

Is there ever a time to preach or teach from just 1 or 2 verses from the OT historical books?

- d. Gen. 27- Jacob’s deception-steals the blessing. Does God approve?
 - 1) Gen. 29- the deceiver is deceived
 - 2) “Gapping-” raise question and answer it later (fill in the gap)

How big a text should we choose? Most are manageable. (1 Kgs. 9- God appeared a second time- go to 1 Kgs. 3 for the first appearance)

Can we learn things from genealogies, e.g. Chronicles? Diligent study for the purpose in Scripture of that genealogy. Missionary to Cameroon.

B. Establish the text— how do we determine what the original text said?

1. Acknowledge the primacy of the Hebrew text
 - a. You always lose something in translation. “The art of a good translation is the art of making the right sacrifice.”
 - b. Italian saying, “The translator is a traitor.”

What does this mean in regards to English translations? How confident should we be in our English text?

2. From 1952-1989, 26 English translations of the whole Bible and 25 more of the NT
3. Don't latch onto one English translation; use several translations
 - a. New American Standard-tries to be accurate to the words.
Hebrew word; English word; range of meaning
 - b. New International Version-tries to be more readable
 - c. Which is more accurate?
 - 1) Amos 8:2
 - a) NASB “And he said, ‘what do you see, Amos?’ And I said, ‘a basket of summer fruit.’ Then the LORD said to me, ‘The end has come for My people Israel I will spare them no longer.’”
 - b) NIV “‘What do you see Amos?’ he asked. ‘A basket of ripe fruit’ I answered. Then the Lord said to me, ‘The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.’”
 - c) The word for ‘end’ and ‘summer’ sound alike in Hebrew
-NASB- gives the word
-NIV- gives the rhetorical force of the word play
 - d. Notice the small details in the text
 - 1) 1 Sam. 8:22 “give **for them** a king”
 - 2) 1 Sam. 16 “I have found **for me** a king”

See: Lewis, Jack. *The English Bible from KJV to NIV: A History to Evaluation*. Baker Book House 1991, 2nd ed.

- e. Textual criticism is difficult without knowledge of the original languages.
- f. General rule: “That reading is most likely to be original which most easily explains how the other readings arose.

C. Read the text literarily

1. Look for general literary features (general poetics)
Poetics = a grammar of literature
 - a. Plot (for example)
 - 1) Tension
 - 2) Resolution
 - 3) Climax-often the climax is reached during dialogue
 - 4) Characterization- often done indirectly
 - a) Absalom prideful about hair

- b) Physical features mentioned (Eli- dim sighted-physically and spiritually overweight-gave weight to himself)
- 5) Point of view- narrator (characters- Job's friends)
- 2. Look for special literary devices (special poetics)
 - a. Scenic
 - b. Succinct-economic
 - c. Subtle-read a good commentary
 - 1) 2 Kings 5:10-13 linked to Genesis 3 "My father, a great thing the prophet has said to you-will you not do it? Did he really say, "Wash and be cleansed?""
 - 2) Three important things about Biblical interpretation: "Listen, Listen, Listen."
 - 3) Look for weighted words and phrases: shift from prose to poetry (e.g., Samuel's rejection of Saul)