

**Lecture 6- How to Interpret the “Historical Books” (III)**

*The whole army then returned safely to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah, and no one uttered a word against the Israelites.*

*Josh 10:21*

*But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal. Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.*

*Ex 11:7*

**Key Terms**

First things first, establish, read, reflect, respond

**Lecture Objectives**

- Outline, describe, and practice basic steps in responsive exegesis.
- Recognize and explain the difference between a truth claim and truth value.

**Preliminary Questions**

- Thinking about our exegetical attitude and approach to scripture, what is the difference in the mental processes and attitudes 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” (III)****I. Basic Exegetical Steps**

A. First things first

B. Establish the text

C. Read the text literarily

1. Look for general literary features (general poetics)
2. Look for specific literary devices (special poetics) (cont. from lect. 5)
  - a. Attention can be focused by a heightening of style.
    - 1) Change from prose to poetry
  - b. Attention can be focused by repetition.
    - 1) Flashback
    - 2) Compare and contrast subtle variation (1 Samuel 15)
    - 3) Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*
  - c. Attention can be focused by word play.
  - d. Attention can be focused by inter-textual allusions.
    - 1) Joshua 10:21, “no one uttered a word against the Israelites.”
    - 2) Exodus 11:7 - same construction, “not a dog (sharpened a tongue) barked”
3. Look for significant words and phrases (lexical and grammatical analysis).
  - a. How do I know something is significant?
  - b. Exegesis is an art and a science.
  - c. Leitwort = “leading word”
4. Look for structure (structural analysis)
  - a. Structural analysis, not structuralism.
  - b. 1 Samuel 1— Hannah
  - c. 1 Samuel 2:12— shift to Eli’s sons

- d. 1 Samuel 2:18—shift to Samuel
- e. 1 Samuel 2:22—shift to Eli and his sons
- 5. Look for special forms (form criticism)
  - a. Form criticism is sometimes used to damage Scripture.
  - b. Scripture can use forms in any way God chooses.
  - c. Look at the particularity of the text.
  - d. 1 Samuel 2:27 - prophetic judgment speech
    - Form:
      - 1) Accusation
      - 2) Announcement of judgment (correspondence motif)
  - e. Illustration of Dr. Long's father
  - f. 1 Samuel 10:17 - this begins like a judgment speech
    - 1) The lot casting is similar to the Achan story
  - g. Avoid the philosophical underpinnings which often accompany form criticism.
- 6. Look for evidence of composition (source and redaction criticism)
  - a. How has the text come to be?
  - b. 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17
    - 1) The Chronicler makes explicit what is implicit in the earlier account.
- 7. Look for contextual significance (biblical-theological analysis, canonical criticism)
  - a. Judges 19
  - b. Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25 - nothing happens that is right
  - c. Genesis 19 - Even Sodom does better because disaster is averted by divine action

How would you respond to someone who is bothered that some editing and arrangement took place in the formation of the Bible?

#### D. Reflect on the text historically

Truth claims and truth value

You may trust your parents (truth value), yet you must figure out if a story they are telling is meant to be a true story.

##### 1. Acknowledge truth claims

Do not let a literary approach keep you from recognizing the historicity of the events.

##### 2. Assess the truth value

We accept on faith the truth of the Bible, yet there are two good reasons for assessing the truth value of the text

##### a. Apologetic value in demonstrating the truth value of the truth claims made in the text.

1) There is value in trying to cross reference archeological data.

##### b. Outside data may serve as a corrective to an erroneous interpretation of the text.

1) e.g., the movement of the sun=phenomenological language (language which describes appearances)

##### c. 2 ways to establish the credibility of a witness (a text):

1) Internal consistency

2) External consistency (only with assured data)

Explain the difference between “truth claim” and “truth value.” Give examples.

#### E. Respond to the text theologically

1. How did the text challenge and encourage its earliest hearers?
  - a. What did the text teach its earliest hearers about God?
  - b. What did the text teach its earliest hearers about themselves?

See Covenant Seminary course “Christ-centered Preaching” (Fallen Condition Focus) by Bryan Chapell.

2. How does the text challenge and encourage us today?
3. What redemptive message(s) does the text convey?
  - a. Often this is found in the light of the larger context
  - b. Bryan Chapell “Context is part of text.”
  - c. Bryan Chapell: Four kinds of questions to ask to discover the redemptive message
    - 1) How does this passage predict/foreshadow the work of Christ?
    - 2) How does this passage prepare for the work Christ? e.g., passages in Hosea, Ecclesiastes
    - 3) How does this passage reflect the work of Christ?
    - 4) How does this passage result from the work of Christ?

What is an example of external evidence which helps our interpretation? (Joshua 3:13-crossing the Jordan “waters stand up in a heap” landslides have fallen into the Jordan at this point)

Having listened to Dr. Long’s lectures so far, list the most important principles of interpreting the historical books.