

**Lecture 26- Discussion of *The Art of Biblical History* (I)**

*The Art of Biblical History* seeks to address basic questions that all Bible readers might ask: Is the Bible a history book? What do we mean by “history” anyway? In what sense, if at all, is biblical historicity important to faith? Are there guidelines for discovering what historical truth claims a particular passage might be making?

**Key Terms**

Truth claim, truth value, history, art, Bible as history?

**Lecture Objectives**

- Explore the issues surrounding responsible reading of biblical history.
- Consider implications of responsible reading for our Christian life and service.

**Preliminary Questions**

- In what ways is the Bible a history book? In what ways is it not a history book? How can historical narratives be considered art? How can they be authoritative?

**Discussion of *The Art of Biblical History* (I)**

## I. Title/Preface

- \* Robert Alter *The Art of Biblical Poetry; The Art of Biblical History*
- \* Provisional definition of history writing

Evaluate Dr. Long’s definition of history writing.

## II. Introduction

- \* What is the purpose of the story?
- \* Illustrating a truth vs. establishing a truth
- \* Genre recognition
- \* Internal evidence
- \* External evidence
- \* Truth claim vs. truth value
- \* Embodied intent

## III. History and the Genre(s) of the Bible: Is the Bible a History Book? (Chpt. 1)

- A. “Most agree that the Bible is not a history book”
  1. 2 Timothy 3:16, “God-breathed” applies to everyone
- B. Truth claim vs. truth value
- C. The Bible as a foreign book
  1. Ancient literary competence
  2. Lime juice illustration

Explain the relationship between genre and truth claim identification.

Is the Old Testament more foreign than the New Testament?

We need to be in synch with the Bible’s judgments. What does this say about polygamy?

3. Perspicuity
4. The Westminster Confession of Faith on perspicuity (Chapter I, Section VII)
 

“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation,

are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.”

How is perspicuity a balance to the Bible’s foreignness?

D. Genre criticism and biblical interpretation

1. High level
2. Sublevel
3. Lazarus and the rich man. Lazarus = “God is my helper”
4. Poetics- study leading to a grammar of literature
  - a. Repetition for literary intent
  - b. Deborah and Barak story
    - 1) Cisera as “fallen”

IV. History and Fiction: What is History? (Chpt. 2)

- A. Uses of the word “history”
- B. A painting of an apple
- C. Alter: fictionalized history
  1. Historicized fiction
- D. Compare history writing to representational art
  1. Major themes and specific details
  2. Distance from event

In what ways is biblical history understood as art?