

GRASPING GOD'S WORD



Summer 2024

When: June 2—June 23, 2024

Time: 10:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Room: 130

Class Webpage: www.TheologyClass.org/ggw24

Teacher:

VinnieAngelo@goldenhills.org

Reading By Week

Because this is an abbreviated version of this class, completing all the weekly reading may be a difficult task. Our encouragement would be to read what you can each week, and then spend the rest of the summer

Book for First-Time Students

J. Scott Duvall, *Journey Into God's Word: Second Edition* (2020, Zondervan)

(1st edition) [2nd edition]

Book for Repeat Students

Robert Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (2021, Kregel Academic)

Reading Schedule

Week 1: What Does It Say?

Week 2: What Does It *Mean*?

Week 3: Where is *Jesus*?

Week 4: How do I *Apply* It?

Week 1: *What Does It Say?*

Online Resources:

- Various articles on the class website
- “*Know How We Got Our Bible*” GHCC Fall 2023 class

Reading

JIGW: Chapter (7) [1]

40 Questions: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

Week 2: *What Does It Mean?*

Online Resources:

- Various articles on the class website
- **GHP:** *Word Saturated: Studying Words* (9/25/20)
- **GHP:** *Word Saturated: Background & Culture* (9/18/20)

Reading

JIGW: Chapters (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) [2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]

- *Note:* chapters 9—15 would be helpful to describe the specific ways each biblical genre should be read

40 Questions Reading: 8—15, 26, 27

- *Note:* chapters 21—35 would be helpful to describe the specific ways each biblical genre should be read

Week 3: *Where is Jesus in the Text?*

Online Resources:

- Various articles on the class website
- **GHP:** *Word Saturated: Jesus and the Bible* (9/11/20)

Reading

40 Questions Reading: 8, 17, 18, 24

Week 4: *How do I apply it?*

Online Resources:

- Various articles on the class website

Case Study:

- Using the skills you've learned in steps 1—3, try to put together a Bible study for John 2:1-12

Reading

JIGW: Chapter 8

40 Questions: 16, 19, 20, 37-38

Grasping God's Word—Week 1

What Does it Say?

Terms of the week:

Exegesis: To draw the intended meaning out of a text.

Eisegesis: To read a meaning into a text.

Hermeneutics: The theory and art of interpreting a text.

Translation: Putting the original languages of the Bible into other languages.

Formal Equivalent: A “literal,” word-for-word translation. The goal is to stay as close to the original text as possible. The translation will preserve the lexical details, grammatical structure, vocabulary, and syntax of the source text. This assumes the reader knows the cultural and linguistic context of the source text.

Dynamic Equivalent: the target audience is taken into account. The text will be translated in a way that may make more sense than a direct translation. Dynamic equivalence wants to preserve the response of the reader – that is, the reader’s response to the translation should be the same as the reader’s response to the original.

Grasping God's Word Week 1: *What Does It Say?*

I. Intro

- A. "God said it. I believe it. that settles it!"
 - 1. What does this mean?
 - 2. Are we assuming that OUR INTERPRETATION is what God meant when he said it?
 - 3. How do we apply what God said?
- B. The struggle to read and understand an ancient text
 - 1. Getting the context close to the sender's world
 - 2. We should never re-create the story into what we want it to say
- C. Class Overview
 - 1. What does it *say*? **(Week 1)**
 - 2. What does it *mean*? **(Week 2)**
 - 3. Where is *Jesus* in the text? **(Week 3)**
 - 4. How do I *apply* this to my life? **(Week 4)**

II. English Translations of the Bible

- A. History of the Bible/English translations
 - 1. See "Know How We Got the Bible" class
 - a. Fall 2023 (class lectures on www.TheologyClass.org/bible)
- B. Types of Bible translations
 - 1. **Formal equivalence**
 - a. "word for word" (or "literal") translation
 - b. A method of translating the Bible that seeks to keep phrases and word order strictly parallel to the original language. Sometimes called a "literal translation," it is best understood as a method that focuses on achieving a parallel order.
 - c. Translators seek to translate each word from the original language into an equivalent English word
 - d. e.g., NASB, ESV, KJV, NRSV
 - 2. **Dynamic (functional) equivalence**
 - a. "Thought for thought"
 - b. A method of translating the Bible in a thought-for-thought style, not word-for-word
 - c. Translators seek to translate the meaning/message of the original language into an equivalent English word OR expression
 - d. e.g., NIV

3. **Paraphrase**
 - a. Translators seek to translate the main idea in a way that is very fluid and understandable to the modern language
 - b. E.g., NLT, the Message
4. The “smoother” the translation the more interpretation is involved
- C. What should I use for study?
 1. Formal equivalence for study
 2. Dynamic equivalence/Paraphrase for devotion and commentary
- D. Cautions
 1. Chapter & Verses divisions
 - a. Not part of the originals
 - b. Added during the Middle Ages/Reformation era as a help to the reader
 - c. Don’t let man-made divisions limit your study
 - d. Don’t assume that a narrative/idea ends just because the chapter does
 2. Chapter & Section headings
 - a. Added by translators for reference help
 - b. Don’t let these influence our reading/interpretation/focus

III. The Overall Approach To Studying the Bible

- A. Key steps to interpretation
 1. **Exegesis**
 - a. To pull out/discover the original meaning of the text
 - b. “What is the text?”
 - c. Original Context & History
 - d. Original Word meaning
 2. **Hermeneutics**
 - a. The process and method of interpretation
 - b. “This is what it means and how we apply it”
- B. Pitfalls of interpretation
 1. **Eisegesis**
 - a. Reading a meaning INTO the text
 - b. Avoid *eisegesis*; be aware of why/how this happens
- C. The *Redemptive History* Context (the overall narrative/flow of the biblical story)
 1. Creation
 2. Fall
 3. Redemption
 4. Restoration/New Creation
- D. The *Epochal* Context
 1. Locating the story within God’s unfolding plan

- a. How does the story relate to the covenants?
- 2. Christocentric: Where is Jesus in the text?
 - a. Foreshadowed? Typology?
- E. The *Textual* Context (Grammatical—Historical)
 - 1. Grammatical
 - a. What do the words mean?
 - b. This includes literary context (genres)
 - 2. Historical
 - a. What is the historical context?
 - b. What are the cultural/historical/etc. details that shed light on understanding?

IV. Reading the Bible Responsibly

- A. Not everything in the Bible is equally clear (some texts are more obscure)
 - 1. Genesis 1:3-31 *...and there was evening and there was morning, the X day*
 - a. Is this literal?
 - b. Is this figurative?
 - 2. Genesis 2:24 *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*
 - a. Is this literal?
 - b. Is this figurative?
 - 3. Our goal is to determine the author’s intended meaning
 - a. What did God intend to communicate through the biblical writer
- B. Jumping to passage B to interpret passage A
 - 1. Yes, “*scripture interprets scripture*”
 - a. In the sense that God’s Word is consistent, passage B can illuminate passage A
 - 2. No, in the sense that the Bible is not a jigsaw puzzle
 - a. We move to passage B when we are unable to determine passage A
 - b. We do this with an open hand
 - c. Always allow passage A to speak for itself
 - 3. E.g., The role of faith and works
 - a. James 2 & Ephesians 2

V. What Does It Say? Exploring a Passage Through *Observations*

- A. The goal of making observations
 - 1. Immerse yourself in the text
 - a. Do this by *slowly* observing the text
 - b. *Gather* as much information as you can
 - c. Don't be "overly familiar" with the text
- B. Ask honest questions of the text
 - 1. Don't assume you know what is being stated
 - a. Especially when it comes to antecedents or "familiar" terms
- C. Be aware of preunderstandings
 - 1. Have "fresh eyes"
 - a. Don't bring in pre-formed conclusions
- D. Don't "theologize"
 - 1. I.e., Attempting to harmonize the passage with a larger theological system
 - a. E.g., Assuming that Matthew 24—25 is to be harmonized with Revelation
- E. Don't draw conclusions/interpretations (while in step 1)
 - 1. Avoid "therefore" or absolute statements
- F. Don't develop application (while in step 1)
 - 1. The observation process is *exploratory*
 - a. Determining "what to do" with the passage only happens once we know "what the passage means"
- G. Practice text
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Grasping God's Word—Week 2

What Does It Mean?

Terms of the week:

Descriptive: When a passage describes what happened historically

Literary: The author's intended meaning, based on background, genre, etc

Prescriptive: When a passage prescribes (commands) an outcome for all people

Spiritualizing: Trying to find a deeper meaning than is actually intended

Genre: A Biblical genre is a classification of Bible literature according to literary genre. The genre of a particular Bible passage is ordinarily identified by analysis of its general writing style, tone, form, structure, literary technique, content, design, and related linguistic factors; texts that exhibit a common set of literary features (very often in keeping with the writing styles of the times in which they were written) are together considered to be belonging to a genre.

Grasping God's Word Week 2: *What Does It Mean?*

I. Intro

- A. Gaining understanding (what it means) happens through understanding the literary features
 - 1. Techniques, styles, and strategies an author uses to enhance their writing
 - 2. All literary pieces of art contain literary keys to help us determine meaning
- B. Observing the grammar and context
 - 1. What is the style and genre?
 - a. Are multiple genres reflected?
 - b. What is the mood?
 - 2. What do you know about the author's intended message/context?
 - a. Who wrote the words?
 - b. Is there an event that inspired the words?
 - c. Are we reading the words in their original language?
 - 3. What is the perspective of the storyteller?
 - a. Is the message a 1st person account (autobiographical)
 - b. Is the message a 3rd person account? (omniscient narrator)
 - 4. Do the words portray an *obvious/surface-level* meaning?
 - a. Is there an obvious message/narrative of the words?
 - 5. Do the words contain a *symbolic* meaning? (as a secondary or primary meaning)
 - a. Metaphor?
 - b. Imagery?
 - c. Personification?
 - 6. Determining meaning
 - a. Is the author intending to communicate the obvious/surface-level meaning, or the symbolic meaning?
- C. Case Studies (see Appendix IV for lyrics)
 - 1. "*Alexander Hamilton*" (Hamilton)
 - 2. "*That Lucky Old Sun*" (Crossroads)
 - 3. "*Disposable Heros*" (Metallica)

II. What is Literary Genre?

- A. Examples of Biblical **Genre**:
 - 1. Form/kind
 - 2. Understanding genre is key to interpreting a biblical text
- B. OT genres
 - 1. Narrative
 - 2. Law
 - 3. Poetry
 - 4. Prophecy
 - 5. Wisdom
- C. NT genres
 - 1. Gospel
 - 2. History
 - 3. Letter (epistle)
 - 4. Apocalypse
- D. For deeper study, look at weeks 7—12 of the 2023 Grasping God's Word class
 - 1. www.theologyclass.org/ggw23

III. Biblical Words and Their Meanings

- A. Being literally responsible
 - 1. What do we mean by *literal*?
 - a. Historical? Physical?
 - 2. Better to think **Literary/literarily**
 - a. The meaning the authors have intended
 - b. This is based on the type of literature (genre), the context, the historical background, the grammar, the word meaning
 - c. The literary meaning is literal/spiritual/etc. (the TRUE MEANING)
- B. Word Studies
 - 1. Context determines word meaning
 - a. This includes everything that surrounds the word paragraph, subject matter, author's argument, historical situation, the original audience, etc.
 - b. Give more weight to the writings of by the same author
 - c. Finally, make your interpretive choices with conviction and humility
 - 2. The range of meaning/semantic range = all the possible meanings of a word
 - a. "Draft"
 - b. "Pig"
 - c. Find the range of meaning for a Greek/Hebrew word
 - d. Don't pick ANY meaning

C. The Problem with Word Studies

1. Assigning one meaning to a biblical word
 - a. When we insist a word must have the same meaning every time it occurs.
 - b. Immediate context takes priority
2. Limiting our study to a word over a concept
 - a. When we believe that since we've studied one word, we've studied an entire concept

D. Should I do word studies?

1. Be responsible
2. Check your work (commentaries)

IV. Expanding the Context

- A. Immediate **Context**: the text being studied
 1. Give the highest priority to the immediate context
- B. Surrounding Context: The texts that surround the passage you are studying
 1. Words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses that come before/after
- C. Don't ignore the Surrounding Context
 1. "Never read a Bible verse"
 - a. e.g., 2 Chron 7:14; Phil 4:6; 4:13
- D. How to Identify the Surrounding Context
 1. Main goal: identify how an author's thought flows from part to whole
 2. Identify how the book is divided into paragraphs or sections
 - a. Items that mark changes or transitions:
 - i. Conjunctions
 - ii. change of genre
 - iii. change of topic/theme
 - iv. changes in time/location/setting
 - v. grammatical change

V. Identifying Historical-Cultural Context

A. Historical-Cultural Context of the Entire Book

1. The author
 - a. Who was the author, what's his background?
 - b. When did he write, what's the nature of his ministry?
 - c. What kind of relationship did he have with the audience?
 - d. Why was he writing?
2. The audience
 - a. Who was the biblical audience?
 - b. What were their circumstances?
 - c. How was their relationship to God?
 - d. What kind of relationship did they have with each other?
3. Historical/cultural background
 - a. What was happening at the time the book was written?
 - b. Other historical-cultural factors?

VI. Dangers Associated with Studying Background

- A. Inaccurate background information
- B. Elevating the Background of the text
- C. Don't let yourself evolve into anything more than a walking database of ancient facts
- D. *Cultural Baggage*
 1. Culture weighs us down [allows us to twist to fit into our culture - subconsciously/consciously]
 2. Examples of subconscious
 3. "*What would Jesus do?*"
- E. Total Objectivity?
 1. This is impossible [not the goal]
 2. The goal is to SUBMIT to the text and interact with it
 - a. Allow your pre-understanding to change

VII. Study Tools (see Appendix for handouts)

- A. Bible Dictionaries
 - 1. General articles about the Bible
- B. Old Testament and New Testament Introductions and Surveys
 - 1. Supply detailed background information on each book of the Bible
 - 2. Ephesians introduction
 - a. *Introducing the New Testament* (Carson, Moo)
- C. Commentaries
 - 1. Up-to-date, detailed information about the historical-cultural context of the book that contains your passage
 - a. Know the background of the scholar you're reading
 - 2. See *Appendix II & III* regarding *Commentaries*
- D. Historical-Cultural
 - 1. Dealing with geography, politics, religion, economics, family life, social customs

Grasping God's Word—Week 3

Where is Jesus in the Text?

Terms of the week:

Biblical Theology: A way of reading the Bible that looks for themes that run throughout the biblical story.

Christocentric (Christ-centered): To see Christ at the center of the biblical story.

Foreshadowing: When something is anticipated in the future (e.g., God installs priests to serve sacrifices in Israel; foreshadowing/anticipating the eternal priesthood of Jesus)

Typology (type/antitype): This is a literary device that introduces characters, places, events, sayings, or institutions that God specifically designed to correspond to, and predictively prefigure, their antitype fulfillment. For instance, Adam, Moses, and David are all a type of Christ (with Christ being the antitype).

Grasping God's Word Week 3: *Where is Jesus?*

I. The Bible's Central Message and Theme

- A. Ultimate purpose of the Bible
 - 1. God reveals Himself through His Son
 - a. To demonstrate His redemption of creation
 - b. The Bible narrates the ongoing flow of redemptive history that moves to the person/work of Jesus
 - 2. In order to transform people into Christ's image
 - a. So they can rule over creation, just as Adam was to rule over creation
 - 3. The Bible isn't a moral-guide book/behavior manual
 - a. Jesus is the hero of the Bible (Genesis—Revelation)
- B. Biblical Theology
 - 1. Explores *themes*
 - 2. Assumes the harmony of the Bible
 - a. The many authors are telling one overarching story, which culminates in the Christ Event
 - b. This is why we practice a Christocentric reading of the Bible
 - 3. Assumes a central “script” that has an overarching narrative (metanarrative)
- C. Redemptive History: Understanding the Context of the Gospel
 - 1. Creation
 - a. God dwelling w/ his people, the Garden
 - 2. Fall
 - a. Humankind separated from God, Blessings & Curses
 - 3. Redemption
 - a. Jesus perfectly obeys and receives blessings; the cross & resurrection; all in Christ are heirs
 - 4. Restoration/New Creation
 - a. New Jerusalem, all things have been made new

II. Where is Jesus in the text?

- A. Jesus said the Bible was about himself
 - 1. John 5:39, 45-47
 - 2. Luke 24:27, 44-46
 - 3. Christ-centered (**Christocentric**)
- B. Jesus in the OT
 - 1. Every story stands in relation to Jesus
 - a. Every page of scripture directly, or indirectly, speaks of Christ
 - b. Because he was always the plan of God to redeem creation to Himself
 - i. Cf. Acts 2:22-24 4:6-12; Rev 13:8
 - c. 2 Cor 1:20
- C. Questions to ask:
 - 1. How does the OT pre-reveal Christ?
 - a. How to find Jesus where Jesus isn't mentioned?
 - 2. Is the OT story a prediction?:
 - a. Isa 53:5
 - 3. Is the OT story a type of Christ? (**typology**)
 - a. David: The great king sitting on the throne of Jerusalem, a man after God's heart
 - b. Jesus: The greatest king who sits on God's throne in the New Jerusalem and rules the world, the God-man who is completely pure in heart
 - 4. Is the OT story **Foreshadowing**
 - a. Sacrifices/Law are just a shadow of the good things to come
 - b. Heb 10:1

III. The NT Writers Read the OT Through the Jesus Lens

- A. How the NT writers read the Prophets
 - 1. Is 40:3 (Cf. Malachi 3:1)
 - a. Mark 1:2-3
 - 2. Joel 2:28
 - a. Acts 2:16-17
- B. How the NT writers read the Psalms
 - 1. Ps 102:25-27
 - a. Heb 1:8, 10-12

IV. Cautions

- A. Moralizing
 - 1. Making the goal of the text a mere behavior modification
 - a. i.e., act/behave in a certain way
 - 2. Assuming that a “Judeo-Christian ethic is the goal”
 - 3. Acting in a way that doesn't depend on God's justifying you through the cross
 - 4. Acting in a way that doesn't depend on the Holy Spirit who empowers you
- B. Avoid spiritualizing
 - 1. Any mention of wood doesn't automatically connect to the cross
 - 2. Any mention of blood/the color red doesn't automatically connect to his spilled blood
- C. Don't skip the original context/meaning
 - 1. Maintain faithful **exegesis/hermeneutics**
 - 2. We find Jesus once we find out what the text meant
- D. Does the cross hover over every text of the Scriptures?
 - 1. If you were to give a talk/sermon/Bible Study on the OT, would it eventually lead to the cross?

V. Homework

- A. Read through John 2:1-12
- B. Do your best (with the resources you have) to apply steps 1—3 to the passage
 - 1. What observations did you find?
 - 2. What is the background/context of the passage? What does the passage mean?
 - 3. Where is Jesus in the passage?

Grasping God's Word—Week 4

How Do I Apply It?

Terms of the week:

Application: Our response to the meaning of the inspired text

Descriptive: To describe a historical event, but the application might not carry over into the future.

Prescriptive: To prescribe/command something, which is to be applied to all people for all time.

Grasping God's Word Week 4: *How Do I Apply It?*

I. Intro

- A. Steps in the interpretive process
 - 1. What Does It Say?
 - 2. What Does It Mean?
 - 3. Where is Jesus?
- B. The goal of studying (and learning the meaning) of the Bible is to apply it
 - 1. It doesn't matter "what it means to me"—we take the meaning and then apply it

II. The Spirit and the Christian Interpreter

- A. Interpretation is more than possession of the Spirit
 - 1. The Spirit doesn't make a valid interpretation automatic
 - a. False (and common) view
 - b. The Spirit won't do everything for you
- B. God DOES EXPECT us to use our minds
 - 1. Matt. 22:37
 - 2. God works with/through people
 - a. Think clearly, reason soundly, study diligently and faithfully
- C. We understand as we mature
 - 1. Spiritual maturity
 - a. Beware of young/zealous interpreters

III. Interpretation & Meaning vs. Application

- A. Interpretation & Meaning
 - 1. The passage means what the author intended to communicate
 - a. There is only one meaning to every text
 - b. It means what it means (in its original context)
- B. **Application**
 - 1. Our response to the meaning of the inspired text
 - 2. Application isn't (necessarily) dogmatic, transcultural, or uniform
 - a. Application of a text might change from person to person, situation to situation, or from culture to culture

IV. How to Apply the Meaning (Step 4)

- A. Ask if the passage is Descriptive or Prescriptive
 - 1. **Descriptive**: when a passage describes what happened historically
 - a. If something is descriptive, then application can be drawn from the basic principle of the situation
 - b. Joshua 6:1-17 (The Israelites and the conquest of Canaan, *Battle of Jericho*)
 - 2. **Prescriptive**: when a passage prescribes (commands) an outcome for all people
 - a. If something is prescriptive, then its direct principle is to be obeyed for the people of God in all generations
 - b. Exod. 20:13
 - c. Matt 28:19-20
- B. Determine Application
 - 1. Ask ourselves “what does this passage MEAN, and how do I LIVE IT OUT in my life”
 - a. We don't ask “what does it mean to me”
 - b. Deut 22:8
 - 2. The Spirit doesn't change for our purposes/circumstances
 - a. Don't adjust the meaning to fit your situation/purposes/feelings
- C. Descriptive/Prescriptive is not always obvious, and often results in theological disputes among Christians
 - 1. 1 Cor 14:33b-35

V. Our Posture Towards Difficult/Disputed Passages

- A. Determine if the passage can have different interpretations
 - 1. Is it a matter of orthodoxy?
 - a. Monotheism (Ps 82)
 - 2. There's room for perspective/nuance
 - a. Learn if the passage has faithful Christians who hold to various interpretations
 - b. Evaluate your position and why you hold to it
- B. Exploring the different options
 - 1. Start with your tradition (Baptist, Reformed, etc)
 - 2. Explore the viable options that exist
 - a. What are the presuppositions behind the other conclusions?
 - b. Do the alternate perspectives use *sound* reasoning?
 - c. Articulate the other positions as best you can
 - d. Compare/contrast against your position

C. Love, Charity, and Honesty

1. Be loving
 - a. We love God because He first loved us
 - b. So we should engage His Word from a place of receiving (and giving) love
 - c. His disciples are known by the love we have for one another (so don't devour one another when disagreeing)
2. Show charity when engaging other views
 - a. Don't strawman
 - b. Try to understand the best aspects of the other position
3. Be intellectually & emotionally honest with your position
 - a. Seek truth, not self-affirmation
 - b. Don't take the mindset of the apologist (merely trying to prove your own position)
 - c. Be humble enough to change your perspective to what is most faithful to Scripture
 - d. Don't let your emotional attachment to a position influence you

D. Learn in community

1. Avoid being a one-man-wolf pack
 - a. Don't be "me and hours of YouTube videos"

VI. How to develop a teaching/lesson

A. Don't worry about "showing all your work"

1. We often think that just because we learned something then it HAS to make the outline
2. The background information is often to help you get a grasp on the text
 - a. At least 50% won't make your outline
3. It takes practice to learn what doesn't need to be included

B. Develop your own voice/style

1. Don't teach like someone else (sound like you, not like Vinnie, Phil, Pastor Larry, Tim Keller, etc)
 - a. Glean from others but be you
2. It will take time to develop your own style
 - a. If you're not someone who regularly tells jokes, don't force jokes
3. BUT challenge yourself to grow as a communicator
 - a. If you are a fast talker, slow down!
 - b. If you are monodynamic, learn to increase your pacing

C. Let the text inform your teaching, don't force an idea

1. Always be faithful to the text
2. Eisegesis is a real issue
3. Be aware of your hobby horses

D. Don't merely teach to YOUR personal learning style

1. Learning styles
 - a. *Visual*
 - b. *Auditory*
 - c. *Kinesthetic*
 - d. *Read/write*
 - e. *Intrapersonal*
 - f. *Interpersonal*
 - g. *Logical/analytical*
2. Just because you don't need a visual aid doesn't mean that your audience doesn't
 - a. Etc.

VII. Class example: John 2:1-12

- A. Use all 4 steps (as best you can) to
1. Observe what's in the text
 2. Discover what the text means (in its original context)
 3. Find where Jesus is
 4. Determine how to apply the meaning of the passage to your life

Grasping God's Word

Appendix

Grasping God's Word: *Appendix I—Definitions*

Anachronism: Looking back in time (from our modern perspective) and assuming the past is like the present.

Ancient Near East (ANE): A term scholars use to describe the sociological period of the Middle Eastern/Mesopotamian region (Israel, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, etc.) from the periods of the 4th millennium BC to the 4th century BC (this covers the Bronze and Iron Age, through Alexander the Great). Biblically, this is the Old Testament period.

Antecedent: A thing or event that existed before (like when trying to identify a pronoun, such as “he,” “you,” “it”).

Application: Our response to the meaning of the inspired text (when developing application)

Apocalyptic literature: A genre of writing that developed near the close of the OT. It told the stories of cosmic battles between good/evil, encouraging the people of God to persevere during times of oppression.

Apocrypha: Books from the “inter-testamental period” (after the completion of the OT, but before the NT) that tell the story of the Jewish people. These books are contained in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, but not for Protestants.

Argument from silence: Coming to a conclusion based on what is NOT present (e.g., Matthew’s Gospel was written prior to the destruction of the temple, because Matthew doesn’t mention the event).

Biblical Languages: The Old Testament was primarily written in Hebrew, with a few passages (Daniel, Ezra) in Aramaic, which is a sister language to Hebrew. The New Testament was written entirely in Greek.

Biblical Theology: A way of reading the Bible that looks for themes that run throughout the biblical story.

Catholic epistle (letter): Meaning “universal” letter (not to a specific church or person)

Christocentric (Christ-Centered): Reading the entire Bible seeing Jesus at the center of every story.

Context: Everything that surrounds a passage that helps shed light on it.

Covenant: An agreement made between two people (a greater and a lesser), in which the greater agrees to provide something for the lesser as long as the lesser is faithful to the covenant.

Culture: The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group

Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS): A collection of writings found in 1947 CE which predate the 1st century. Every book of the Bible (but Esther) was found in the DSS, along with other Jewish writings.

Descriptive: When a passage describes what happened historically, but is not necessarily a command for today.

Eisegesis: Reading one's own meaning into a text, rather than pull the meaning out of the text.

Epistle (letter): These were written from someone to a particular group of people to deal with a situation that had arisen.

Eschatology: Derived from the Greek term meaning "last," *eschaton* refers to the ultimate climax or end of history wherein Christ returns to earth to establish his eternal kingdom of righteousness and justice among all nations. Eschatology, then, is the theological study that seeks to understand the ultimate direction or purpose of history as it moves toward the future, both from an individual perspective (What happens when a person dies?) and from a corporate perspective (Where is history going, and how will it end?). In the twentieth century, at least three basic forms of eschatology have developed. *Consistent, or thoroughgoing, eschatology* is the view that the teaching of Jesus and the apostles is thoroughly concerned with proclaiming the imminent end of history. *Realized eschatology* views the first coming of Jesus Christ itself as the full

presence of the kingdom of God.

Inaugurated eschatology sees the first coming of Christ as the beginning of the kingdom in the present while acknowledging that the consummation or fulfillment of the kingdom of God is yet to come.

Euangelion: The Greek word for "good news." This has the Greek background of a military/political victory.

Exegesis (exegetical): Literally, "drawing meaning out of" respectively. Exegesis is the process of seeking to understand what a text means or communicates on its own.

Foreshadowing: This occurs when something is anticipated in the future. For instance, when God installs priests to serve sacrifices in Israel, this is foreshadowing (anticipating) the eternal priesthood of Jesus, as the perfect sacrifice.

Genre: A type or kind of literature. The Bible contains multiple genres; everything from narrative, law,

Gospel: A form of ancient biography, which tells the good news of military leaders/rulers and the conquests and victories they've had. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John take this Greek/Roman way of telling stories and apply it to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

Hermeneutics: Theories of interpretation. The term *hermeneutics* was first used with respect to interpretive methods and discussions of biblical interpretation; now the term has a broader use as the theory and art of interpreting any text.

Imperative: The imperative mood is a verb form that gives a command.

Indicative: The indicative mood is a verb form that makes a statement or asks a question (it's describing something).

Jewish Christians. Jews who were disciples of Jesus or converted to Christianity by confessing Jesus as the Messiah and were baptized “into the name of Jesus” (Acts 2:38). Sometimes this group of early Jewish Christians is described as Palestinian Christians because the movement was largely confined to Palestine. It appears that Jewish Christians, under the leadership of James (Acts 15:1–35; 21:17–26), particularly those in and around Jerusalem, retained many of their Jewish traditions and beliefs—in other words, they continued to “live Jewishly” and saw no need to cease being Jews because they converted to Christianity. It is likely that some of these Jewish/Palestinian Christians (Judaizers) insisted that Paul required Gentile converts to obey Jewish.

Kingdom of God: God’s establishing His rule and reign through His messiah (which was foretold in the OT)

Law: The *law* means variously the OT in general, the Torah (especially the Pentateuch or first five books of the Bible), the Ten Commandments or the several codes of conduct that identified Israel as set apart and in covenantal relationship with God. Jesus summarized the law with two commandments: to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Paul declares that the law is fulfilled in Jesus, who sets humans free from the law’s penalty of death. *Legalism* is the attitude that identifies morality with the strict observance of laws or that views adherence to moral codes as defining the boundaries of a community. Religious legalism focuses on obedience to laws or moral codes based on the (misguided) assumption that such obedience is a means of gaining divine favor.

Literarily/Literary: Reading a piece of literature (like the Bible) and interpreting it based on the genre, and other indicators that best reflect the author’s intent.

Literalism: adherence to the exact letter or the literal sense, where literal means “in accordance with, involving, or being the primary or strict meaning of the word or words; not figurative or metaphorical”

Manuscript (autograph): The first copy of a book of the Bible is called the “autograph.” After it is copied manuscripts exist. We don’t have any autographs, but we have thousands of manuscripts.

Parable: A common literary form found in the NT. Parables are short, simple stories designed to communicate a spiritual truth or a moral lesson by using examples or making comparisons from everyday life, as in Jesus' parables in the Gospels.

Parallelism: A common form of Hebrew poetry. In parallelism, the second (and possibly third line) parallels the first. Parallelism is very common in the Psalms, but will also be found in many other genres, including, the Law, Prophets, and Wisdom literature.

Pericope: A short section or literary unit that makes sense even when "cut off" or "cut out" from a longer narrative.

Poetry: Conscience phrases using figurative/symbolic language that are meant to tug at the emotions.

Prescriptive/Descriptive: *Prescriptive:* To prescribe/command something, which is to be applied to all people for all time. *Descriptive:* To describe a historical event, but the application might not carry over in to the future.

Presuppositions/Preunderstanding:

When someone carries a pre-understanding of something (everyone does this to some level).

Prophet: This was a role God called people into (not born into). The primary responsibility of the prophet was to be a "covenant enforcer," as prophets called the people of God to repentance for

breaking Torah (the Law), and to return to the proper worship/ethics of Yahweh.

Proverb: A brief, popular saying summarizing a piece of wisdom about common human experiences: "A penny saved is a penny earned." The biblical proverbs are intended as instructions on the "art of living well" and invite the reader to look at the world from the distinctive view of faith, the "fear of the Lord." Proverbs require both skill and discernment to plumb the art of living well (cf. Prov 1:2–7 and 1–9 generally). In the NT, note Matthew 6:21 ("For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also") and 26:52 ("For all who take the sword will perish by the sword").

Second Temple Judaism: This is the period in Jewish history (in the Palestinian region) from 515 BC until the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. This is the period of the development of the Hebrew canon, post-Exilic Jews, the rise of Jewish sects like the Pharisees, an emphasis in monotheism, and the expectation of the Messiah who will deliver Israel from oppression and exile, and will once again rule as Yahweh's kingdom on earth.

Semantic Range (word studies): All the possible meanings a word can have. To discover the meaning of a word in question, attention should be paid to the context, and how that author tends to use that word (if applicable).

Septuagint (LXX): The first translation of the Bible, done from Hebrew to Greek. This began around roughly 300 BCE, and was finished around the time of the first century.

Spiritualizing: Trying to find a deeper meaning than is actually intended

Symbolism: is to convey the hidden meaning to the reader or listener. It tells us about artistic expression and represents abstract ideas.

Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These are similar in how they read (in contrast to John)

Tanakh: The Hebrew Scriptures (Law, Prophets, and Writings)

Theology: *Theology* commonly refers to the ordered, systematic study or interpretation of the Christian faith and experience of God based on God's divine self-revelation. Theology seeks to "harmonize" what the Bible (along with church history) has said about a particular topic (e.g., the Trinity; hell; baptism).

Theologizing: To speculate about theology; to render/insert a theological conclusion; to treat theologically, oftentimes at the expense of exegesis.

Theological History: An ancient way of recording historical events, but having more of a focus on the theological idea that is presented

Torah: The first part of the Hebrew canon (Gen-Deut). It is traditionally translated "*law*" but is more literally the *instruction*. The term can also be used of the OT as a whole, including even the Talmud, so it comes to have the sense of God's revelation as a whole and not just commands or laws. Instructive are passages such as Psalm 1:2, where the righteous "delight" in Torah, and Psalms 19 and 119, which are extended poems on the worth of Torah. Torah sets forth the fundamentals of Israelite faith and functions as the norm for judging all subsequent experiences of God.

Translation: When the Bible is translated from its original language to another.

Transmission: How the Bible has been copied and preserved through the generations.

Typology (type/antitype): This is a literary device that introduces characters, places, events, sayings, or institutions that God specifically designed to correspond to, and predictively prefigure, their antitype fulfillment. For instance, Adam, Moses, and David are all a type of Christ (with Christ being the antitype).

Wisdom Literature. Biblical literature is characterized by instruction based upon experience, and tradition. Biblical wisdom books are traditionally identified as Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes (Song of Songs is also included in some lists), and Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha. We also find strong wisdom influence in the Psalms (e.g., Ps 1) and in many other books (e.g., the Joseph stories in Genesis and the stories of Daniel and his friends, to which some would add the story of Esther). Defining and delimiting wisdom literature is often problematic. Wisdom is open to all, since it seeks to instruct people to live a well-ordered life, a life lived acknowledging God's ways and intentions for his creation. Wisdom has

its source in God, the "fear of the LORD" (Prov 1:7).

Worldview: An overall (philosophical) view of the world, an all-encompassing perspective on everything that exists and matters to us, representing their most fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the universe they inhabit, reflecting how they would answer the "big questions" of human existence.

Yahweh (the LORD): This is the special, covenantal name of God. In English translations of the OT we know when this name appears by the small-capital letters LORD. This is different from lord/Lord, which is most likely the Hebrew word "*adonai*."

Grasping God's Word: *Appendix II—Resources*

Online Tools

- TheologyClass.org
- BibleGateway.com
- BiblicalTraining.org
- BiblicalELearning.org
- BibleStudyTools.com

Bible Software

- Accordance
- Logos

Commentaries

- *“The New Bible Commentary”* edited by Wenham, Motyer, Carson, France (IVP Press, 1994)
- The *“NIV Application Commentary”* series (Zondervan)

Dictionaries

- *“The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary”* edited by Chad Brand (Holman Reference, 2015)
- *“The IVP New Bible Dictionary”* edited by Marshall, Millard, Packer, Wiseman (IVP Press, 1996)

Christocentric Interpretation

- *“Exalting Jesus: Christ Centered Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary”* series (Holman Reference)
- *“How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens”* by Michael Williar (Zondervan, 2012)

Misc. tools

- *“Intro to the New Testament: A Short Guide”* by Carson & Moo (Zondervan, 2010)
- *“Intro to the Old Testament: A Short Guide”* by Tremper Longman (Zondervan, 2012)
- *“The IVP Bible Background Commentary on the OT and the NT”* by Craig Keener (IVP Press, 2000)
- *“The ESV Study Bible”* (Crossway, 2008)
- *“The Essential Bible Companion”* (Zondervan, 2006)

Biblical Theology

- *“Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ”* by Trent Hunter & Stephen Wellum (Zondervan, 2018)
- *“The King in His Beauty”* by Thomas Schreiner (Baker, 2013)
- *“God Dwells Among Us”* by G.K. Beale (IVP Books, 2014)
- *“Understanding the New Testament and the End Times”* 2nd edition by Rob Dalrymple (Wipf, 2018)

Biblical Interpretation

- *“How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth”* by Fee, Stuart, 4th edition (Zondervan, 2014)
- *“40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible”* by Robert Plummer (Kregel, 2010)
- *“Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible”* by E. Randolph Richards & Brandon J. O’Brien (IVP Books, 2012)
- *“Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels”* by Kenneth E. Bailey (IVP Academic, 2008)
- *“How (Not) to Read the Bible: Making Sense of the Anti-women, Anti-science, Pro-violence, Pro-slavery and Other Crazy-Sounding Parts of Scripture”* by Dan Kimball (Zondervan, 2020)

Reading Revelation

- *“Follow the Lamb”* by Rob Dalrymple (Weaver Books, 2018)
- *“Reading Revelation Responsibly”* by Michael Gorman (Cascade Books, 2011)
- *“The Theology of the Book of Revelation”* by Richard Bauckham (Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- *“More Than Conquerors”* by William Hendriksen (Baker Books, 2007)
- *“Unholy Allegiances: Heeding Revelation's Warning”* by David DaSilva (Henrickson Publishing, 2013)
- *“The Returning King: A Guide to the book of Revelation”* by Vern Poythress (P&R, 2000)
- *“Revelation for the Rest of Us”* by Scot McKnight & Cody Matchett (Zondervan, 2023)

Grasping God's Word: *Appendix III—Commentaries*

Commentaries are (usually) written by biblical scholars who have wrestled with a book of the Bible and have explored all the relevant data on a passage (language, culture, background, geography, etc.). Commentaries are fantastic tools, as they shed light on a text in a way that the reader might not be able to.

The information below is taken from a YouTube interview on choosing commentaries, given by NT scholar, Dr. Nijay Gupta.

- *Episode 17: Nijay Gupta on Biblical Commentaries* (The Bible Toolbox), January 20, 2023 <https://youtu.be/ZBGpejSp8gU>

I. Types of Commentaries

A. *Technical* commentaries

1. Written by scholars for other scholars/academics
2. Wrestles with issues and disputes in the text; unpacks deeper interpretation issues
3. Deals heavily with the original languages
4. Does not provide personal application
5. Examples
 - a. Word Biblical Commentary (WBC)
 - b. New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)
 - c. Hermeneia
 - d. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
 - e. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

B. *Lay* commentaries

1. Written by scholars for pastors/lay people
2. Explores background issues and provides exegesis
 - a. When dealing with original languages it often puts that info in footnotes
3. May or may not provide personal application
 - a. Note: Commentaries that focus heavily on application tend to be light on background/exegesis

4. Examples
 - a. The Story of God Bible Commentary (SGBC) [Zondervan]
 - b. New International Version Application Commentary (NIVAC) [Eerdmans]
 - c. New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT) [Eerdmans]
 - d. New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT) [Eerdmans]
- C. Single-volume commentaries
 1. Contains commentary on the entire Bible
 - a. Good: Quick reference, basic overview
 - b. Limitations: only a limited number of words per chapter
 2. Examples
 - a. New Bible Commentary, 21st Century Edition [Intervarsity Press]
 - b. The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary [Baker Books]

II. How to choose a commentary

- A. Start with scholars who are in your tradition
 1. Questions to ask
 - a. Are they Evangelical?
 - b. Are they Reformed?
 - c. Are they Baptist?
 2. Dangers of only using scholars within your tradition
 - a. Confirmation bias: only hearing a point of view that affirms what you already believe
- B. Things to explore when searching for a commentary
 1. Who is the publisher and do they have a specific theological background or affiliation?
 - a. Zondervan, Baker, Eerdmans, InterVarsity Press, are all Protestant-Evangelical
 - b. Crossway is Reformed
 - c. B & H (Lifeway) is Southern Baptist
 2. Who is the scholar/author and what are their associations?
 - a. Do they teach at a college/university/seminary?
 - b. Do they belong to a specific denomination?
 - c. Do they pastor at a church or have they been ordained?

3. Who recommends the commentary?
 - a. Who are the other people who endorse the commentary (often on the back of the book)?
 - b. Is there a consistency in affiliation among the endorsers?
- C. Warnings about commentaries
 1. Free, online commentaries
 - a. Who are they?
 - b. Do they engage in conspiracy theories?
 - c. Do they have theological accountability (peer review)?
 2. Public domain commentaries
 - a. Written a long time ago
 - b. Historic Christian writers (Calvin, Luther, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, etc.)
 - c. Scholarship might not reflect modern findings:
 - i. Dead Sea Scrolls
 - ii. Archeological evidence
 - iii. Inappropriate views, like antisemitism
 3. Commentaries by popular pastors
 - a. These “commentaries” are often transcriptions of their sermons, and are heavy on the application side of things, and not on the background/exegetical

Grasping God's Word: *Appendix IV—*

Week 2 Case Studies (Lyrics)

“Alexander Hamilton” (Hamilton)

How does a bastard, orphan, son of a
whore
And a Scotsman, dropped in the middle
of a forgotten spot
In the Caribbean by providence
impoverished
In squalor, grow up to be a hero and a
scholar?

The ten-dollar founding father without a
father
Got a lot farther by working a lot harder
By being a lot smarter
By being a self-starter
By fourteen, they placed him in charge of
a trading charter

And every day while slaves were being
slaughtered and carted away
Across the waves, he struggled and kept
his guard up
Inside, he was longing for something to
be a part of
The brother was ready to beg, steal,
borrow, or barter

Then a hurricane came, and devastation
reigned
Our man saw his future drip, dripping
down the drain
Put a pencil to his temple, connected it
to his brain
And he wrote his first refrain, a testament
to his pain

Well, the word got around, they said, this
kid is insane, man
Took up a collection just to send him to
the mainland
Get your education, don't forget from
whence you came
And the world is gonna know your name
What's your name, man?

Alexander Hamilton
My name is Alexander Hamilton
And there's a million things I haven't
done
But just you wait, just you wait

When he was ten his father split, full of it,
debt-ridden
Two years later, see Alex and his mother
bed-ridden
Half-dead sittin' in their own sick, the
scent thick

And Alex got better but his mother went
quick

Moved in with a cousin, the cousin
committed suicide
Left him with nothin' but ruined pride,
something new inside
A voice saying, "Alex, you gotta fend for
yourself"
He started retreatin' and readin' every
treatise on the shelf

There would have been nothin' left to do
for someone less astute
He woulda been dead or destitute
without a cent of restitution
Started workin', clerkin' for his late
mother's landlord
Tradin' sugar cane and rum and all the
things he can't afford
Scammin' for every book he can get his
hands on
Plannin' for the future see him now as he
stands on
The bow of a ship headed for the new
land
In New York you can be a new man

In New York you can be a new man
In New York, New York
Just you wait

Alexander Hamilton
We are waiting in the wings for you
You could never back down
You never learned to take your time

Oh, Alexander Hamilton
When America sings for you
Will they know what you overcame?
Will they know you rewrote your game?
The world will never be the same

The ship is in the harbor now
See if you can spot him (just you wait)
Another immigrant comin' up from the
bottom (just you wait)
His enemies destroyed his rep America
forgot him

We, fought with him
Me, I died for him
Me, I trusted him
Me, I loved him

And me, I'm the damn fool that shot him

There's a million things I haven't done
But just you wait
What's your name, man?
Alexander Hamilton

“That Lucky Old Sun” (Crossroads)

O Lord, O Lord,
I'm tired and weary of pain
So much more
So far to go
Forgive me if I complain

Up in the mornin', out on the job,
Work like the devil for my pay.
But that lucky old sun has nothin' to do,
But roll around heaven all day.

Fuss with my woman, toil for my kids,
Sweat 'til I'm wrinkled and gray.
While that lucky old sun got nothin' to do,
But roll around heaven all day.

My soul is tired and my safe heart aching
The joy and hope all gone
There's no relief for a back that's breaking
Misery lingers on

So many troubles, sorrows, and pain
Can't go on living this way
While that lucky old sun, he's got nothing to do
But roll around heaven all day

Lord up above, can't you know I'm pining?
Tears all in my eyes.
Send down that cloud with a silvery linin',
Lift me to paradise.

Oh, show me that river, take me across,
Wash all my troubles away.
Like that lucky old sun, gimme nothin' to do,
But roll around heaven all day.

“Disposable Heroes” (Metallica)

Bodies fill the fields I see, hungry heroes end
No one to play soldier now, no one to pretend
Running blind through killing fields, bred to kill them all
Victim of what said should be
A servant 'til I fall

Soldier boy, made of clay
Now an empty shell
Twenty one, only son
But he served us well
Bred to kill, not to care
Do just as we say
Finished here, greetings death
He's yours to take away

Back to the front
You will do what I say, when I say
Back to the front
You will die when I say, you must die
Back to the front
You coward
You servant
You blind man