



# Grasping God's Word

## **Spring 2023**

**When:** February 5—April 30, 2023

**Time:** 10:30am—12:00pm

**Room:** 130

**Class Webpage:** [www.TheologyClass.org/GGW23](http://www.TheologyClass.org/GGW23)

[VinnieAngelo@goldenhills.org](mailto:VinnieAngelo@goldenhills.org)

Check the class webpage each week for articles/videos pertaining to that topic

- Each reading/assignment should be completed prior to that week's class
- Assignments are not turned in, and are for your edification
- Extra resource: The Golden Hills Podcast “*Word Saturated*” series from the Fall 2020

## Syllabus Textbook Options

### Syllabus A—First-Time Students

- **Main textbook:** J. Scott Duvall, *Journey Into God's Word: Second Edition* (2020, Zondervan)
- First-time Grasping God's Word students should follow Syllabus A. This will primarily use “*Journey Into God's Word*” as the main textbook and will focus on the basic tools needed to read, interpret, and apply the Bible.

### Syllabus B—Repeat Students

- **Main textbooks:** Robert Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (2021, Kregel Academic)
- Repeat students have the option to use Syllabus A or Syllabus B. Syllabus B will challenge the student to build on basic biblical interpretation skills. The primary textbook for Syllabus B is “*40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible.*”
- Syllabus B also contains extra assignments

# Syllabus A: *First-Time Students*

Book: The updated (2020) “*Journey Into God’s Word*” book has changed some of its chapters.

(1st edition) [2nd edition]

## **Week 1: Christocentric Hermeneutics & Biblical Theology**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos & read articles on the class website

## **Week 2: Interpretation & Translations**

### **Assignment:**

- Read Luke 15:15 in the following four translations ESV, NIV, KJV, and NLT
  - Note any differences/similarities that you find interesting
  - You can do this for free on [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter (7) [1]

## **Week 3: The Interpretive Journey, Levels of Meaning, Word Studies, Who Controls the Meaning?**

### **Assignment:**

- Find 30 observations in Luke 15:1-2 (make a list)
  - Don't make any interpretations/applications—just observations
- *Word Study*
  - 1. Watch the video on the class webpage for instructions on “how to do a word study” (located in the week 3 video playlist)
  - 2. Look up Luke 15:15 on [www.StudyLight.org](http://www.StudyLight.org) and do a word study on the word “hired”
  - 3. What did you find?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters (1 & 2) [2 & 3]

## **Week 4: How to Read Paragraphs & Discourses, & The Literary Context**

### **Assignment:**

- Reading Luke 15:1-32; Structure: how many parables does Jesus tell in this chapter?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters (3 & 6) [4 & 6]

## **Week 5: What Do We Bring to the Text & The Historical Context**

### **Assignment:**

- Read through Luke 15:1-32
  - With your best abilities, guess as to how the cultural context would help the modern reader in the following verses (i.e., is there a special significance to these verses that we miss in our modern context?):
    - Took a journey into a far country/fed the pigs (15:13, 15)
    - But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (15:20)
    - Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing...But he was angry and refused to go in (15:25-28)

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters (4 & 5) [5 & 7]

## **Week 6: The Role of the Holy Spirit & Application**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Write a story that retells the original parable of Luke 15:12-32 so that the effect on the contemporary audience is equivalent to the effect on the original audience

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 8

- Read articles/watch videos on the class webpage

## **Week 7: Letters**

### **Assignment:**

- Read the introductions to the following letters, and note the differences:
  - Phil 1:1-11; Col 1:1-14; Gal 1:1-5

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 9

**Bible Reading:** Galatians

## **Week 8: Gospels**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read the following accounts about the betrayal of Jesus
  - Matt. 26:17-25
  - Mark 14:17-21
  - Luke 22:1-23
  - John 13:21-30
- What info do the different accounts provide to help tell the story? Is any of the accounts drastically different?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 10

**Bible Reading:** Mark

## **Week 9: Acts & OT Overview**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch the GHCC sermon “We Are Witness” from the Acts series
  - This can be found on the class webpage (April, 22, 2017 sermon)
- In Acts 7, what does Stephen's speech communicate about the importance of the OT?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 11

**Bible Reading:** Acts

## **Week 10: Law & Wisdom**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read through Proverbs: do you notice a difference between chapters 1—9 and 10—31?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 13; “Mosaic Covenant” article (on the class webpage)

**Bible Reading:** Gen. 1—2; Exod. 20; Proverbs

## **Week 11: Prophets & Poetry**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- What do you think of when you hear the words “prophet/prophecy”? How much of this understanding comes from the Bible, and how much comes from popular culture?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters 14 & 15

**Bible Reading:** Isa. 40–53; Micah 3 & 6; Psalms 1, 2, 102, 110

## **Week 12: Revelation—Apocalyptic Literature**

### **Assignment:**

- First, watch the videos/read the articles on the class webpage
- Then, read the entire book of Revelation, focusing on:
  - 1. Who Jesus is and what he does?
  - 2. What the people of God are called to do?
  - 3. Don't “Theologize” the book (just read the text and observe what's happening)

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 12

**Bible Reading:** Revelation

## Syllabus B: Repeat Students

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

### Week 1: Christocentric Hermeneutics & Biblical Theology

#### Assignment:

- Watch videos & read articles on the class website

**Golden Hills Podcast (GHP):** Word Saturated: Jesus and the Bible (9/11/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 8, 17, 18, 24

### Week 2: Interpretation & Translations

#### Assignment:

- Read Luke 15:15 in the following four translations ESV, NIV, KJV, and NLT
  - Note any differences/similarities that you find interesting
  - You can do this for free on [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)

**40 Questions Reading:** 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (if all chapters cannot be read, find the ones that seem interesting to you)

### Week 3: The Interpretive Journey, Levels of Meaning, Word Studies, Who Controls the Meaning?

#### Assignment:

- Find 30 observations in Luke 15:1-2 (make a list)
  - Don't make any interpretations/applications—just observations
- *Word Study*
  - 1. Watch the video on the class webpage for instructions on “how to do a word study” (located in the week 3 video playlist)
  - 2. Look up Luke 15:15 on [www.StudyLight.org](http://www.StudyLight.org) and do a word study on the word “hired”
  - 3. What did you find?

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Studying Words (9/25/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 14, 15, 26, 27

## **Week 4: How to Read Paragraphs & Discourses, & The Literary Context**

### **Assignment:**

- Reading Luke 15:1-32; Structure: how many parables does Jesus tell in this chapter?
- Read the article about word studies from DA Carson's *"Exegetical Fallacies"*
  - PDF found on the class webpage

**40 Questions Reading:** 9, 10, 11, 21

## **Week 5: What Do We Bring to the Text & The Historical Context**

### **Assignment:**

- Read through Luke 15:1-32
  - With your best abilities, guess as to how the cultural context would help the modern reader in the following verses (i.e., is there a special significance to these verses that we miss in our modern context?):
    - Took a journey into a far country/fed the pigs (15:13, 15)
    - But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (15:20)
    - Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing...But he was angry and refused to go in (15:25-28)
- Samaritans/Samaria:
  - Read the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-39
  - Then read the article on "Samaria" or "Samaritan" on the class webpage (or in a Bible dictionary) and make a list of the ways the article helps you understand the conversation between Jesus and the woman
- Videos
  - Watch the YouTube video (linked on the class webpage) titled "Episode 17: Nijay Gupta on Biblical Commentaries"
  - See GW Appendix for an outline

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Background & Culture (9/18/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 9, 12, 13



## **Week 6: The Role of the Holy Spirit & Application**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Write a story that retells the original parable of Luke 15:12-32 so that the effect on the contemporary audience is equivalent to the effect on the original audience

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Application (11/6/20); Devotional Reading (11/13/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 16, 19, 20

- Read articles/watch videos on the class webpage

## **Week 7: Letters**

### **Assignment:**

- Read the introductions to the following letters, and note the differences:
  - Phil 1:1-11; Col 1:1-14; Gal 1:1-5
- For discussion: Why is necessary to understand the situation and cultural background in order to best interpret the the original meaning of a letter?

**40 Questions Reading:** 34, 35

**Bible Reading:** Romans

## **Week 8: Gospels**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read the following accounts about the betrayal of Jesus
  - Matt. 26:17-25
  - Mark 14:17-21
  - Luke 22:1-23
  - John 13:21-30
- What info do the different accounts provide to help tell the story? Is any of the accounts drastically different?
- For discussion: If Jesus provided allegorical explanations for some details in his parables, what is wrong with taking the next step and providing explanations for *all* details?

**40 Questions Reading:** 32, 33

**Bible Reading:** Mark

## **Week 9: Acts & OT Overview**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch the GHCC sermon “We Are Witness” from the Acts series
  - This can be found on the class webpage (April, 22, 2017 sermon)
- In Acts 7, what does Stephen's speech communicate about the importance of the OT?
- Memorize the chapters (locations) containing the foundational biblical covenants
  - Gen. 9; 12; 15; 17; Exod. 20; 2 Sam. 7; Jer. 31; Ezek. 36; Matt. 26/Luke 22

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Biblical Genres p. 1 (the Old Testament) (10/9/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 22

**Bible Reading:** Acts

## **Week 10: Law & Wisdom**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read through Proverbs: do you notice a difference between chapters 1—9 and 10—31?
- “Mosaic Covenant” article (on the class webpage)
- For discussion: Describe the “tri-partite” division of the Law and why it’s not considered the best way to understand the Law.

**40 Questions Reading:** 28

**Bible Reading:** Gen. 1—2; Exod. 20; Proverbs

## **Week 11: Prophets & Poetry**

### **Assignment:**

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- What do you think of when you hear the words “prophet/prophecy”? How much of this understanding comes from the Bible, and how much comes from popular culture?
- For discussion: Based on the Bible Project YouTube video titled “The Prophets,” how would you describe/define the role & purpose of the Prophets?

**40 Questions Reading:** 29, 30, 31

**Bible Reading:** Isa. 40—53; Micah 3 & 6; Psalms 1, 2, 102, 110

## **Week 12: Revelation—Apocalyptic Literature**

### **Assignment:**

- First, watch the videos/read the articles on the class webpage
- Then, read the entire book of Revelation, focusing on:
  - 1. Who Jesus is and what he does?
  - 2. What the people of God are called to do?
  - 3. Don't "Theologize" the book (just read the text and observe what's happening)
- For discussion: Watch the YouTube video "the book of Revelation with Richard Bauchkam and Ben Witherington"
  - What statements do you affirm?
  - What statements are challenging you?
  - Are there any statements that you disagree with?

**40 Questions Reading:** 25, 36

**Bible Reading:** Revelation

# Grasping God's Word—Week 1

## Christocentric Hermeneutics & Biblical Theology

### Assignment:

Watch videos/read articles on the class webpage

### 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.

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

**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)

**Hermeneutics:** The theory and art of interpreting a text.

**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:

## *Where is Jesus in the Text?* (Christocentric Interpretation)

### 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)

### 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 showing:
    - a. Prediction
      - i. Is 53:5
    - b. A type of Christ? (**typology**)
    - c. **Foreshadowing**
      - i. Sacrifices/Law are just a shadow of the good things to come
      - ii. Heb 10:1

### III. Why do we read it this way?

- A. This is how the NT audience read the OT
  - 1. Is 40:3 (Cf. Malachi 3:1)
    - a. Mark 1:2-3
  - 2. Joel 2:28
    - a. Acts 2:16-17
  - 3. 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
  - 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?

# Grasping God's Word:

## *Biblical Theology*

### V. What is theology?

- A. The 4 Boxes of Study
  - 1. Exegesis/Scripture
  - 2. **Biblical Theology**
  - 3. Systematic Theology
  - 4. Practical Theology
- B. Biblical Theology
  - 1. Themes
  - 2. Assumes the harmony of the Bible
    - a. The many authors are telling one overarching story, which culminates in the Christ
    - b. This is why we practice a Christocentric reading of the Bible
  - 3. Assumes a central “script” that has an overarching narrative

### VI. The Main Narrative of the Bible

- A. 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/Re-creation
    - a. New Jerusalem, all things have been made new

# Grasping God's Word—Week 2

## Syllabus A—Week 2: Interpretation & Translations

### Assignment:

- Read Luke 15:15 in the following four translations ESV, NIV, KJV, and NLT
  - Note any differences/similarities that you find interesting
  - You can do this for free on [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter (7) [1]

## Syllabus B—Week 2: Interpretation & Translations

### Assignment:

- Read Luke 15:15 in the following four translations ESV, NIV, KJV, and NLT
  - Note any differences/similarities that you find interesting
  - You can do this for free on [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)

**40 Questions Reading:** 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (if all chapters cannot be read, find the ones that seem interesting to you)

### 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.

**Manuscript/Autograph:** Manuscripts are copies of biblical books. The Autograph is the original.

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

**Transmission:** The process of copying a book of the Bible over generations.



# Grasping God's Word:

## *Interpretation & Translations*

### I. Intro

#### A. Does the Bible *really* say that?

1. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13)
2. “Where two or more are gathered...” (Mt 18:20)
3. “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jer 29:11)

### II. The Big Picture of Biblical Interpretation

#### A. The Three Horizons of studying the Bible

1. The *Textual* Context (Grammatical—Historical—Christ-Centered)
  - a. Grammatical
  - b. Historical
2. The *Epochal* Context
  - a. Locating the story within God’s unfolding plan
  - b. Christocentric: Where is Jesus in the text?
3. *Redemptive History*
  - a. Creation
  - b. Fall
  - c. Redemption
  - d. Restoration/Re-creation

#### B. Scripture interprets Scripture

1. The “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*)
  - a. Since all Scripture is from God we can expect consistency among itself
2. Not everything in the Bible is equally clear
  - a. Some texts are more clear than others
  - b. After studying a passage and not finding the clear meaning, seek to find the clear meaning from a clearer passage
3. Cautions
  - a. Don’t immediately jump to a clear passage because it affirms what you want the unclear passage to mean

#### C. Process of interpretation

1. What does it *say*?
2. What does it *mean*?
3. Where is *Jesus* in the text?
4. How do I *apply* this to my life?

#### D. 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”

##### 3. **Eisegesis**

- a. Reading a meaning INTO the text
- b. Avoid this, be aware of why/how this happens

### III. How did we get our English Bible?

#### A. The **transmission** of the Bible (NT)

1. God inspires the words of the biblical writers (autograph)
  - a. God used real people
2. The autograph is sent to its audience
  - a. It is then read to the audience, copied (manuscript), and redistributed
3. The early church began collecting/assembling early writings
  - a. Purpose of the NT writings
  - b. These writings are collected by the early church; becomes the “canon”
    - i. Criteria for canonization:
      - Apostle Authority
      - Theological consistency
      - Church Acceptance as Authoritative
4. Circulating **Manuscripts** [MAP]
  - a. Copied in regions, sent all over
  - b. As it's copied, “variants” come into existence
5. Basis for all translations
  - a. From the Greek Text, scholars translate the Greek in the common tongue

#### B. Uncial Text

1. NTHBGNNNGDCRTDTHHVNSNDTHRTH
2. INTHEBEGINNINGWASTHEWORDANDTHEWORDWASWITHGODANDTHEWORDWASGOD

### C. Example of Textual Variants

### D. Numbers and Headings

1. Chapter and Verses divisions
  - a. Not part of the originals
  - b. Added during the middle-ages/Reformation era as a help to the reader
  - c. Caution: don't let these man-made divisions limit your study
2. Chapter/section headings
  - a. Added by translators
  - b. Caution: don't let these man-made descriptions guide your interpretation

## IV. English Translations

### A. Types of Translations

1. Formal equivalence
  - a. "word for word" or "literal" translation
  - b. Translators seek to translate each word from the original language into an equivalent English word
  - c. e.g., NASB, ESV, KJV, RSV/NRSV
2. Dynamic/functional equivalence
  - a. "Thought for thought"
  - b. Translators seek to translate the meaning/message of the original language into an equivalent English word OR expression
  - c. 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. NLT, the Message
4. The "smoother" the translation the more interpretation is involved

### B. What should I use for study?

1. Formal equivalence for study
2. Dynamic equivalence/Paraphrase for devotion?

### C. What does GHCC use?

1. ESV
2. The Golden Hills Podcast "*Why do we use the ESV?*" (Nov 24, 2019)

# Grasping God's Word—Week 3

## Syllabus A—Week 3: The Interpretive Journey, Levels of Meaning, Word Studies, Who Controls the Meaning?

### Assignment:

- Find 30 observations in Luke 15:1-2 (make a list)
  - Don't make any interpretations/applications—just observations
- *Word Study*
  - 1. Watch the video on the class webpage for instructions on “how to do a word study” (located in the week 3 video playlist)
  - 2. Look up Luke 15:15 on [www.StudyLight.org](http://www.StudyLight.org) and do a word study on the word “hired”
  - 3. What did you find?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters (1 & 2) [2 & 3]

## Syllabus B—Week 3: The Interpretive Journey, Levels of Meaning, Word Studies, Who Controls the Meaning?

### Assignment:

- Find 30 observations in Luke 15:1-2 (make a list)
  - Don't make any interpretations/applications—just observations
- *Word Study*
  - 1. Watch the video on the class webpage for instructions on “how to do a word study” (located in the week 3 video playlist)
  - 2. Look up Luke 15:15 on [www.StudyLight.org](http://www.StudyLight.org) and do a word study on the word “hired”
  - 3. What did you find?

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Studying Words (9/25/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 14, 15, 26, 27

### Terms of the week:

**Antecedent:** A thing or event that existed before

**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

**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.

# Grasping God's Word: *Who Controls the Meaning?*

## I. Intro

- A. The Meaning isn't always "plain"
  - 1. "God said it. I believe it. that settles it!"
  - 2. Example:
    - a. Genesis 1:3-31
    - b. Genesis 2:24
  - 3. God said it, but first, WHAT does what He said even mean?
    - a. A passage means what it means, so we develop application based on the meaning

## II. Who Controls the Meaning, the Reader, or the Author?

- A. How Cultures Interpret Meaning
  - 1. Modernistic **Worldviews**:
    - a. *Pre-Modern*: the gods/God reveal truth
      - i. Adam/Eve → 1700s (the Enlightenment)
    - b. *Modern*: We have knowledge through science and reason
      - i. 1700 (the Enlightenment) → 1950s
    - c. *Post-Modern*: Can knowledge/truth actually be known?
      - i. 1950s → 2023
- B. The Author determines the meaning
  - 1. Authorial intention: The text means what the AUTHOR wants it to mean
    - a. Always strive to determine the Sender's Intended Meaning [SIM]
  - 2. To ignore the author's intention can produce serious consequences for the readers
- C. Application
  - 1. Identify what God communicated
    - a. The meaning is the same for all people
    - b. The meaning isn't subjective and does not change from reader to reader
  - 2. Determine application
    - a. Never ask "what does this mean to me"

# Grasping God's Word:

## *The Interpretive Journey*

### III. Process of Interpretation

- A. The basic process to interpret and apply the Bible
  - 1. What does it *say*?
  - 2. What does it *mean*?
  - 3. Where is *Jesus* in the text?
  - 4. How do I *apply* this to my life?
- B. The process
  - 1. Exegesis
    - a. The process of discovering the meaning of a text
    - b. *Eisegesis* = the process of inserting a meaning into the text
  - 2. Hermeneutics
    - a. Interpreting the text and learning how to apply it
- C. Determining Proper Application
  - 1. **Descriptive**
    - a. When a passage describes what happened historically, but isn't making a command for people outside of that situation
  - 2. **Prescriptive**
    - a. When a passage prescribes (commands) an action or desired outcome

# Grasping God's Word:

## *Levels of Meaning*

### IV. Reading Sentences

- A. Repetition of Words
  - 1. 1 John 2:15-17
- B. Comparisons (similarities, items, ideas, individuals)
  - 1. Prov 25:26
  - 2. James 3:3-6
- C. Lists
  - 1. Make lists (explore their significance)
    - a. 1 John 2:16
- D. Figures of Speech
  - 1. Words used in a sense other than the normal, literal sense
    - a. Ps 119:105
- E. Verbs
  - 1. Action (past, present, future - progressive, passive, continued, indicative, imperative)
    - a. Col 3:1-4
- F. Pronouns & **Antecedent**
  - 1. Our, us, you, them, he, etc.
  - 2. What/who is the antecedent?
    - a. A thing or event that existed before

### VI. Biblical Words and Their Meanings

- A. What does literal mean?
  - 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. Semantic Range
  - 1. The range of meaning/semantic range = all the possible meanings of a word
    - a. "Draft"
    - b. Find the range of meaning for a Greek/Hebrew word
    - c. Don't pick ANY meaning

2. 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. Use the "Circle of Context" for help
    - c. Give more weight to the writings of by the same author
    - d. Finally, make your interpretive choices with conviction and humility
- 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. "Word meanings are determined by context, not word counts"  
—Bock
    - c. 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



# Grasping God's Word—Week 4

## Syllabus A—Week 4: How to Read Paragraphs & Discourses, & The Literary Context

### Assignment:

- Reading Luke 15:1-32; Structure: how many parables does Jesus tell in this chapter?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters (3 & 6) [4 & 6]

## Syllabus B—Week 4: How to Read Paragraphs & Discourses, & The Literary Context

### Assignment:

- Reading Luke 15:1-32; Structure: how many parables does Jesus tell in this chapter?
- Read the article about word studies from DA Carson's *"Exegetical Fallacies"*
  - PDF found on the class webpage

**40 Questions Reading:** 9, 10, 11, 21

### Terms of the week:

**Context:** Everything in and around a verse that helps provide understanding

**Genre:** A style, kind, or form of writing

**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

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

# **Grasping God's Word:**

## *How to Read the Book & Paragraphs/Discourses*

### **I. Reading Paragraphs**

#### **A. General and Specific**

1. Does the author introduce an idea?

- a. Gal 5:16-23

#### **B. Questions and Answers**

1. A rhetorical question

- a. Romans 6:1-4

- b. Diatribe: A way to teach without dropping lots of information on your audience

#### **C. Dialogue**

1. Always observe:

- a. Who are the participants?

- b. Who is speaking to whom?

- c. What is the setting?

- d. Are other people around?

- e. What is the point of the dialogue?

#### **D. Purpose/Result Statements**

1. Sentences that describe the reason, result, or consequence

- a. Matt 1:22

#### **E. Means**

1. Look for the means that brings about an action, result, or purpose

- a. Heb 9:12

#### **F. Conditional Clauses**

1. The conditions whereby some action, consequence, reality, or result will happen.

- a. "If/then"

- b. 1 Cor 15:12-19

#### **G. Emotion & Tone**

1. Relationships

- a. Hab 1:2

- b. 1 Thes 1:2-7

- c. Gal 1:6-9

## II. Discourses

- A. Connections between Paragraphs and Episodes (**pericope**)
  - 1. Ask how the paragraphs/episodes relates to and connects with the other paragraphs/episodes that come before and after
    - a. Luke 14—16
- B. Story Shifts: Major Breaks & Pivots
  - 1. Look for critical places where the text seems to take a new turn
    - a. This could be a major break in a letter
      - i. Eph 1—3 (**indicative**) & 4—6 (**imperative**)
  - 2. A plot change
    - a. Nineveh repenting, and God not destroying them

# Grasping God's Word:

## *The Literary Context*

### III. What is Literary Genre?

*“For communication to occur, the reader must be on the same page as the author in terms of genre.”*

- A. Biblical **Genre**: form/kind
  - 1. OT genres:
    - a. Narrative
    - b. Law
    - c. Poetry
    - d. Prophecy
    - e. Wisdom
  - 2. NT genres:
    - a. Gospel
    - b. History
    - c. Letter (epistle)
    - d. Apocalypse

### IV. What is the Surrounding Context?

- A. Immediate **Context**: the text being studied
  - 1. The immediate context circle
  - 2. 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)
  - 2. Chapter/verse distractions
    - a. Not part of the original documents
- 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

# Grasping God's Word—Week 5

## Syllabus A—Week 5: What Do We Bring to the Text & The Historical Context

### Assignment:

- Read through Luke 15:1-32
  - With your best abilities, guess as to how the cultural context would help the modern reader in the following verses (i.e., is there a special significance to these verses that we miss in our modern context?):
    - Took a journey into a far country/fed the pigs (15:13, 15)
    - But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (15:20)
    - Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing...But he was angry and refused to go in (15:25-28)

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters (4 & 5) [5 & 7]

## Syllabus B—Week 5: What Do We Bring to the Text & The Historical Context

### Assignment:

- Read through Luke 15:1-32
  - With your best abilities, guess as to how the cultural context would help the modern reader in the following verses (i.e., is there a special significance to these verses that we miss in our modern context?):
    - Took a journey into a far country/fed the pigs (15:13, 15)
    - But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (15:20)
    - Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing...But he was angry and refused to go in (15:25-28)
- Samaritans/Samaria:
  - Read the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-39
  - Then read the article on “Samaria” or “Samaritan” on the class webpage (or in a Bible dictionary) and make a list of the ways the article helps you understand the conversation between Jesus and the woman
- Videos
  - Watch the YouTube video (linked on the class webpage) titled “Episode 17: Nijay Gupta on Biblical Commentaries”
  - See GGW Appendix for an outline

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Background & Culture (9/18/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 9, 12, 13

### Terms of the week:

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

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

# **Grasping God's Word:**

## *The Historical-Cultural Context*

### **I. Why bother with Historical-Cultural Context?**

- A. Our task is to discover what the Sender (author) originally intended his audience to understand
  - 1. Interpretation to be valid = consistent with the historical-cultural context
    - a. If it doesn't make sense, then we are on the wrong track

### **II. 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?
      - i. Geography/Topography
      - ii. Social Customs
      - iii. Economic Issues
      - iv. Political Issues

## B. Tools

1. Bible Dictionaries
  - a. Have general articles about the Bible
2. Old Testament and New Testament Introductions and Surveys
  - a. Supply detailed background information on each book of the Bible
3. Commentaries
  - a. Up-to-date, detailed information about the historical-cultural context of the book that contains your passage
  - b. Know the background of the scholar you're reading
4. Historical-Cultural
  - a. Dealing with geography, politics, religion, economics, family life, social customs

## **III. 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



# **Grasping God's Word:**

## *What do we bring to the text?*

### **IV. Preunderstanding**

#### **A. Preunderstanding**

1. Preconceived notions and understandings that we bring to the text
  - a. Specific experiences
  - b. Previous encounters
  - c. Anything that makes us assume that we already understand something

#### **B. Culture**

1. The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group
  - a. The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization
2. National heritage
  - a. school, social media, language, customs, stories, the arts (movies, music, literature, etc), jokes, national habits
  - b. What about revolutions and Romans 13?

#### **C. Interpretational Reflex**

1. We fill gaps from our culture
  - a. family's socio-economic situation and outlook
  - b. Relationships

#### **D. Familiarity happens when we're thoroughly familiar with a passage**

1. When we think we know all there is to know
2. Avoid coming to the text with a theological agenda already formulated
  - a. We will ignore anything that doesn't affirm the meaning we're looking for
  - b. are we “understanding” or “overstanding”?

E. *Cultural Baggage*

1. Culture weighs us down [allows us to twist to fit into our culture - subconsciously/consciously]
2. Examples of subconscious
  - a. Jonah
  - b. Jesus/Moses
3. “*What would Jesus do?*”
  - a. We interpret to not conflict with our cultural norms
  - b. Jesus = turning the other cheek, not the American way

F. Total Objectivity?

1. This is impossible
2. The goal is to SUBMIT to the text and interact with it
  - a. Allow your preunderstanding to change

# Grasping God's Word—Week 6

## Syllabus A—Week 6: The Role of the Holy Spirit & Application

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Write a story that retells the original parable of Luke 15:12-32 so that the effect on the contemporary audience is equivalent to the effect on the original audience

### JIGW Reading: Chapter 8

- Read articles/watch videos on the class webpage

## Syllabus B—Week 6: The Role of the Holy Spirit & Application

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Write a story that retells the original parable of Luke 15:12-32 so that the effect on the contemporary audience is equivalent to the effect on the original audience

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Application (11/6/20); Devotional Reading (11/13/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 16, 19, 20

- Read articles/watch videos on the class webpage

### 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 in to the future.

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

# **Grasping God's Word:**

## *The Role of the Holy Spirit & Application*

### **I. Can We Grasp God's Word Apart From The Spirit?**

- A. The unbeliever's ability to understand the text is limited
  - 1. Sin has had an effect on the whole person
  - 2. Unbelievers can understand the basic message, but reject the gospel
    - a. Unbelievers won't be persuaded of its truth/live out a biblical ethic

### **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. 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

#### IV. How to Apply the Meaning

##### A. Process of Interpretation: Steps 1—3

1. What does it *say*?
2. What does it *mean*?
3. Where is *Jesus*?

##### B. Step 4: How do I *apply* it to my life?

###### 1. Ask if the passage is Descriptive or Prescriptive?

- a. **Descriptive**: when a passage describes what happened historically
  - i. If something is descriptive, then application can be drawn from the basic principle of the situation
  - ii. Deut 22:8
- b. **Prescriptive**: when a passage prescribes (commands) an outcome for all people
  - i. If something is prescriptive, then its direct principle is to be obeyed for the people of God in all generations
  - ii. Exod. 20:13 Don't murder
  - iii. Matt 28:19-20
- c. Descriptive/Prescriptive is not always obvious, and often results in theological disputes among Christians
  - i. 1 Cor 14:33b-35

###### 2. Determine Application

- a. Ask ourselves “what does this passage MEAN, and how do I LIVE IT OUT in my life”
  - i. We don't ask “what does it mean to me”
- b. The Spirit doesn't change for our purposes/circumstances
  - i. Don't adjust the meaning to fit your situation/purposes/feelings

###### 3. Discover a parallel situation in a contemporary context

- a. We have to be students of the ancient world (to understand the meaning), as well as students of the modern world (to understand the application)
- b. Don't create a parallel meaning/application where there isn't one
- c. “Real-world scenarios should accurately reflect the meaning of the biblical text and be relevant to contemporary life”

### C. Application through the church

1. Corporate application is just as important as individual application
2. “Personal interpretation” as a downfall of the Reformation
  - a. It’s not just “me and God”
  - b. It’s God and His people

## V. Personal Prayer & Devotional

### A. *Praying the Bible* (adapted from Donald Whitney, *Praying the Bible*)

1. The Psalms are a great foundation for biblical prayer
  - a. This helps us pray for the things that God sees as important
2. E.g., Psalm 23
  - a. “*The LORD is my shepherd...*”
3. Responsible ways to do this?
  - a. The goal of Praying the Bible is NOT to dive into exegesis
  - b. The focus of Praying the Bible is to glance at the text and reflect upwards

### B. Devotional

1. “Devotions” = who are we giving devotion to?
  - a. Is our goal of devotionals is to make ourselves feel a certain way?
  - b. Are we spending more time reflecting on ourselves or God?
2. Read and reflect
  - a. What does it say (if you know the meaning that makes it more meaningful), and how does it help you reflect about the goodness of God?

## VI. Conclusion

### A. The Holy Spirit guides us in meaning & application

1. Meaning and application shouldn't be private
  - a. Scripture is for the church, not just for individuals
2. But we can pray through Scripture for ourselves too

# Grasping God's Word—Week 7

## Syllabus A—Week 7: Letters

### Assignment:

- Read the introductions to the following letters, and note the differences:
  - Phil 1:1-11; Col 1:1-14; Gal 1:1-5

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 9

**Bible Reading:** Galatians

## Syllabus B—Week 7: Letters

### Assignment:

- Read the introductions to the following letters, and note the differences:
  - Phil 1:1-11; Col 1:1-14; Gal 1:1-5
- For discussion: Why is necessary to understand the situation and cultural background in order to best interpret the the original meaning of a letter?

**40 Questions Reading:** 34, 35

**Bible Reading:** Romans

### Terms of the week:

**Epistle:** The Greek word for “letter”

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

# Grasping God's Word:

## *Letters*

### I. Intro

- A. Basic info about biblical letters
  - 1. Genre: **Epistle**
  - 2. Author: (Paul/John/Peter/etc.)
  - 3. Audience: A Christian community/person
  - 4. Specific Christian Communities
- B. Distinction between Pauline and **catholic epistles**
  - 1. Paul
    - a. Romans
    - b. 1 Corinthians
    - c. 2 Corinthians
    - d. Galatians
    - e. Ephesians
    - f. Philippians
    - g. Colossians
    - h. 1st Thessalonians
    - i. 2nd Thessalonians
    - j. 1st Timothy
    - k. 2nd Timothy
    - l. Titus
    - m. Philemon
  - 2. catholic (universal)
    - a. Hebrews
    - b. James
    - c. Peter's epistles
    - d. Jude
    - e. John's epistles



## II. Characteristics of NT/Ancient Letters

- A. Authoritative substitutes for personal presence
  - 1. A substitute
    - a. A personal document
  - 2. Authority in the name
    - a. The authors write as *apostles*
- B. Other people involved in the letter
  - 1. Co-writers
    - a. *2 Cor 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia:*
  - 2. Scribes
    - a. *Rom 16:22 I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.*
  - 3. Carrier (expositors)
    - a. *Rom 16:1-2 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, 2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.*
  - 4. Readers
    - a. Sometimes the carrier
    - b. Sometimes a professional reader
- C. Situational
  - 1. NT Letters are situational/occasional
    - a. Address a specific situation
    - b. Correct a doctrinal issue/confront behavior
  - 2. Not exhaustive dictionaries of Christian doctrine
    - a. Letters deal with theology, but aren't written to expound it
    - b. Don't conclude too much from one letter
    - c. Paul moves the paradigm to create emphasis/prove a point
      - i. Galatians = law is bad (3:10-13)
      - ii. Romans = law is good (7:7-12)

### III. The Form of the NT/Ancient Letters

#### A. Modern Letter Structure

1. Letter Opening
2. Body
3. Letter Closing

#### B. Ancient Letter Structure

1. *Letter Opening*
  - a. Standard: X to Y, greetings
  - b. Thanksgiving period
2. *Body*
  - a. The purpose of the letter
3. *Letter Closing*
  - a. Greetings
  - b. Blessing/doxology

#### C. Making a point

1. Normal Structure to make your point clearly
2. Changing Structure
  - a. Skip/extend a greeting
  - b. Skip/extend a thanksgiving
3. Expanding Structure
  - a. Add extra words/titles
  - b. Homework review

#### D. Pauline Letter Openings

1. Greetings:
  - a. "grace and peace"
    - i. *Grace (charis)*: goodwill toward men expressed in the saving work of Christ
    - ii. *Peace (shalom/irene)*: is the state of life - peace with God and peace with one another (Eph 2:14-18) [Peace in secular Greek indicated the antithesis to war]

#### IV. How to Read & Interpret NT Letters

- A. What did the text mean to the biblical audience?
  1. Read in one sitting
    - a. Don't be distracted by chapters/verses
    - b. Look at the big picture
  2. Remember they are situational letters
    - a. Reconstruct the situation
      - i. One end of the phone conversation
    - b. Paul's response to the Corinthians (1 Cor)
      - i. 7:1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote...
      - ii. 7:25 Now concerning the betrothed...
      - iii. 8:1 Now concerning food offered to idols...
      - iv. 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts...
    - c. Historical-Cultural issues become more complex
      - i. Eating food offered to idols (1 Cor 8:4)
- B. Is the command/principle **Prescriptive** or **Descriptive**?
  1. If it's Prescriptive
    - a. Do it in the closest way possible (paying attention to any cultural differences)
  2. If it's Descriptive
    - a. How is it consistent with the rest of Scripture?
    - b. Find the best way to adapt the principle to your situation
  3. If it's unclear
    - a. Seek out the best possible interpretation (survey various scholars/commentaries)
    - b. Pray and be open to truth
    - c. Be charitable to others who may come to a different conclusion

# Grasping God's Word—Week 8

## Syllabus A—Week 8: Gospels

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read the following accounts about the betrayal of Jesus
  - Matt. 26:17-25
  - Mark 14:17-21
  - Luke 22:1-23
  - John 13:21-30
- What info do the different accounts provide to help tell the story? Is any of the accounts drastically different?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 10

**Bible Reading:** Mark

## Syllabus B—Week 8: Gospels

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read the following accounts about the betrayal of Jesus
  - Matt. 26:17-25
  - Mark 14:17-21
  - Luke 22:1-23
  - John 13:21-30
- What info do the different accounts provide to help tell the story? Is any of the accounts drastically different?
- For discussion: If Jesus provided allegorical explanations for some details in his parables, what is wrong with taking the next step and providing explanations for *all* details?

**40 Questions Reading:** 32, 33

**Bible Reading:** Mark

**Terms of the week:**

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

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

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

**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.

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

# Grasping God's Word:

## *Gospels*

### I. What Are The Gospels?

#### A. *Euangelion*

1. Political/Military background
  - a. Mark 1:1
    - i. Caesar Augustus
2. OT background
  - a. Gen 3:15; Isa 40—55
  - b. Ps 67:12; Is 60:6
3. **Kingdom of God**
  - a. The Gospels present the establishment of the Kingdom of God
  - b. Mt. 12:28; 19:24; Mk. 1:15; 10:14-25; Lk. 4:43; 8:1-10; Jn. 3:3-5
  - c. *Context* of the gospel
4. Different emphasis
  - a. *Mark*: God's Kingdom has arrived, so repent, believe, and join
  - b. *Matthew*: Jesus is the greater Moses who fulfills the OT story; the Kingdom is established through his life/death
  - c. *Luke*: God's royal servant who brings God's light and justice to the nations; the Kingdom is the fulfillment of the law/prophets
  - d. *John*: Jesus is Yahweh who has stepped into his own creation to dwell with His people; One becomes a member of the Kingdom by believing

#### B. Parallels in the Gospels

1. **Synoptic Gospels**
  - a. "With the same eyes/viewpoint" (synopsis)
  - b. The similar gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke
  - c. John
  - d. Harmony of the Gospels
2. Authors arrange the stories to best communicate to their audience
  - a. paraphrase, summarize, expand, explain/assume Jewish terms
  - b. The goal = tell the Jesus story in a faithful, relevant, persuasive way
3. Homework review
  - a. Reading paralleled accounts

### C. The Gospels are “biographies”

1. Memoirs of the apostles
2. Differ from [modern] biographies
  - a. Gospels don't cover the whole life of Jesus [birth/public ministry]
  - b. They are specific to the good news of the Kingdom/rule & reign
3. Stories are arranged topically, not chronologically
  - a. Different set of rules [for ancient authors]
  - b. Same story, details vary from each perspective/purpose

## II. How Should We Read The Gospels?

### A. Trees/forest

1. What does this small story tell us about Jesus?
  - a. Including what it tells about the Kingdom of God
2. The flow:
  - a. Each *pericope*
  - b. What is the author trying to communicate to his readers by the way he connects these stories together?

## III. Special Literary Forms in the Gospels

### A. Exaggeration

1. Exaggeration/hyperbole
  - a. Occurs when a truth is overstated for the sake of effect
  - b. This makes a literal fulfillment impossible/ridiculous
  - c. Matt 5:29-30

### B. Comparisons

1. Metaphors: comparison is implicit
  - a. John 15:5 *“I am the vine, you are the branches”*
2. Simile: comparison is explicit
  - a. Lk 22:44: *“And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”*

### C. Parables

1. What is a parable?
  - a. Something cast beside something else (an illustration for comparison)
2. The Kingdom of God
  - a. The KOG stands at the center of the story
  - b. Connecting Jesus to the OT anticipation of God's Kingdom
3. Parables are best understood in light of these features:
  - a. 1st century Palestine
    - i. Including shame/honor, Rome, etc.
  - b. Parables have a surprise element
    - i. Prodigal son...
    - ii. Matt 20:1-16 it is surprising that all are paid equal
    - iii. Luke 18:9-14 Parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee; for 1st c Jews the Pharisees were admired as godly (not as hypocrites); and tax collectors were dishonest and traitors; thus, the outcome of the parable was shocking
4. The details
  - a. Not an allegory
  - b. Look for the main point of the parable

### IV. Gospel Takeaways

- A. Ask yourself
  1. How the Kingdom of God fits within each chapter?
  2. If you're identifying with Jesus/disciples, or the Religious Leaders in each story?



# Grasping God's Word—Week 9

## Syllabus A—Week 9: Acts & OT Overview

### Assignment:

- Watch the GHCC sermon “We Are Witness” from the Acts series
  - This can be found on the class webpage (April, 22, 2017 sermon)
- In Acts 7, what does Stephen's speech communicate about the importance of the OT?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 11

**Bible Reading:** Acts

## Syllabus B—Week 9: Acts & OT Overview

### Assignment:

- Watch the GHCC sermon “We Are Witness” from the Acts series
  - This can be found on the class webpage (April, 22, 2017 sermon)
- In Acts 7, what does Stephen's speech communicate about the importance of the OT?
- Memorize the chapters (locations) containing the foundational biblical covenants
  - Gen. 9; 12; 15; 17; Exod. 20; 2 Sam. 7; Jer. 31; Ezek. 36; Matt. 26/Luke 22

**GHP:** Word Saturated: Biblical Genres p. 1 (the Old Testament) (10/9/20)

**40 Questions Reading:** 22

**Bible Reading:** Acts

### **Terms of the week:**

**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.

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

**Septuagint:** The first translation of the Bible: the translation of the OT from Hebrew into Greek. This started around 300 BCE, and was probably completed sometime during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

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

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

**Torah:** This can either refer to the Law (the five books of Moses), or to the entire OT

# Grasping God's Word:

## Acts

### I. What Kind of Book is Acts?

- A. Acts is a story
  - 1. Acts is a narrative
    - a. Sequel to Luke (Cf. Connection)
    - b. Gospels focus on Jesus
    - c. Acts focuses on several key church leaders
      - i. Peter: Mission to the Jews: chapters 1–12
      - ii. Paul: Mission to the Gentiles: chapters 13–28
- B. Acts is **Theological History**
  - 1. Luke writes in theological history in his Gospel and Acts
  - 2. Recorded speeches = historical records with a theological purpose
    - a. Not verbatim, but reliable summaries
  - 3. Look for repeated themes and patterns

### II. Purpose/Themes of Acts

- A. Discipleship
  - 1. Holy Spirit, prayer, community, ethnic inclusion, missions, etc.
- B. The Resurrection
  - 1. The central message of the early church
    - a. Sermons/speeches: 2:23-24; 3:15; 4:1-2, 10, 33; 5:30; 7:56; 10:38-41; 13:16-33; 17:18, 31; 26:22-23
- C. The Church
  - 1. The Spirit works through the People of God to accomplish His will
    - a. What Jesus began the Spirit continues in the Church (2:1-13)
  - 2. The Spirit creates a healthy community
  - 3. The church prays a lot
  - 4. They suffered (following Jesus)
- D. Gentiles
  - 1. The Gospel is to go to the end of the earth
    - a. 1:9 (Cf. Chs 10; 14; 15)
    - b. The gospel spreads to the Gentiles to fulfill the mission of God's People
      - i. Cf. Gen 12:1-3; Gal 3:9

# Grasping God's Word: *Narratives & OT Overview*

## III. Reading Narratives

- A. Speeding up/Slowing down
  - 1. Speeding up: less details
    - a. etc. Gen 1–11
  - 2. Slowing down: more details
    - a. etc. Gen 12–50

## IV. Old Testament Overview

- A. Timeframe
  - 1. The writings of the Bible span a time of over 2000 years
    - a. The writings themselves: 1400's BCE – 95 CE
    - b. The stories themselves: 2100's BCE – 95 CE
- B. The Book
  - 1. "Old Testament"
    - a. Hebrew Scriptures/Jewish Bible
  - 2. Genre:
    - a. Law, Narrative, Poetry, Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Wisdom, etc.
- C. Categories/Identification of the OT
  - 1. *Tanakh* (TNK)
    - a. *Torah* (Law)
    - b. *Nevi'im* (Prophets)
    - c. *Ketuvim* (Writings)
- D. *Torah* (*Pentateuch*) (*Law*)
  - a. Genesis
  - b. Exodus
  - c. Leviticus
  - d. Numbers
  - e. Deuteronomy
- E. *Nevi'im* (*Prophets*)
  - 1. Narrative Books: Entry into the Promise Land to the Babylonian Exile
    - a. Joshua
    - b. Judges
    - c. Samuel (I & II)
    - d. Kings (I & II)

2. Oracular Books
    - a. Isaiah
    - b. Jeremiah
    - c. Ezekiel
  3. the Book of the Twelve
    - a. Hosea
    - b. Joel
    - c. Amos
    - d. Obadiah
    - e. Jonah
    - f. Micah
    - g. Nahum
    - h. Habakkuk
    - i. Zephaniah
    - j. Haggai
    - k. Zechariah
    - l. Malachi
- F. Ketuvim (*Writings*)
1. Lyrical/Wisdom Books
    - a. Psalms
    - b. Job
    - c. Proverbs
    - d. Ruth
    - e. Song of Songs
    - f. Ecclesiastes
    - g. Lamentations
  2. Narrative books: period of exile to the return
    - a. Esther
    - b. Daniel
    - c. Ezra-Nehemiah
    - d. Chronicles (I & II)

## V. Other Books

### A. Septuagint (LXX)

1. Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures
  - a. First translation of the Bible (OT only)
  - b. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> cent. CE (Egypt)
2. The Bible used in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine/Judea
  - a. Most all OT quotes in the NT are from the LXX

### B. Apocrypha

1. Collection of important Jewish books, telling the history of the Jewish people between the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent BCE and 1<sup>st</sup> cent CE.
  - a. Considered “deuterocanonical” by RCC & Greek Churches
  - b. e.g., 1 & 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon
2. Produced in Palestine, Alexandria (Egypt), Antioch (Syria), in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic
  - a. Purpose:
    - i. Encourage the Jewish people to remain faithful to Torah
    - ii. To persevere through times of persecution

### C. Dead Sea Scrolls

1. Hebrew Scrolls found between 1947-1956 at Qumran
  - a. NW shore of the Dead Sea
2. Date from 150 BCE to 70 CE
3. The *Essenes*
  - a. Secluded Jewish group who lived in segregation
4. The Scrolls
  - a. The Scrolls contained fragments from every book in OT (no Esther)
  - b. Strong preservation
  - c. Prior to this, the oldest MT dated to 10<sup>th</sup> cent CE

# Grasping God's Word—Week 10

## Syllabus A—Week 10: Law & Wisdom

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read through Proverbs: do you notice a difference between chapters 1—9 and 10—31?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 13; “Mosaic Covenant” article (on the class webpage)

**Bible Reading:** Gen. 1—2; Exod. 20; Proverbs

## Syllabus B—Week 10: Law & Wisdom

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- Read through Proverbs: do you notice a difference between chapters 1—9 and 10—31?
- “Mosaic Covenant” article (on the class webpage)
- For discussion: Describe the “tri-partite” division of the Law and why it’s not considered the best way to understand the Law.

**40 Questions Reading:** 28

**Bible Reading:** Gen. 1—2; Exod. 20; Proverbs

### Terms of the week:

**ANE (Ancient Near East):** A term scholars use to describe the period of the Middle Eastern/Mesopotamian region from the periods of the 4th millennium BC to the 4th century BC.

**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.

**Law:** The *law* means variously the OT in general, the Torah (the 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.

**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.

**Wisdom:** Biblical literature characterized by instruction based upon experience, tradition.

# Grasping God's Word:

## *Old Testament: Law*

### I. What is the Torah?

- A. **Torah**
  - 1. Law/instruction
- B. Moses' writings
  - 1. Pentateuch (the 5 books)
  - 2. Gen—Deut
- C. Mosaic Law (the 10 Commandments)
  - 1. Ex 20 (Deut 5)

### II. Creation & the ANE

- A. How to approach the OT?
  - 1. The OT is true and teaches truth!
    - a. Interpretive difficulties: importing modern questions onto an ancient text
  - 2. Creation account
    - a. Science/cosmology/evolution/age of earth?
    - b. Is the text addressing this topic?
    - c. Author's meaning?
- B. Genesis
  - 1. Moses instructing the Hebrews
    - a. Israel during the Exodus
    - b. 400+ years in polytheistic captivity
      - i. Sun god (*Ra*)
      - ii. Moon god (*Iah*)
      - iii. Earth god (*Geb*)
      - iv. Sky/Sun (etc) (*Hathor*)
      - v. The formless, watery disorder from which the world emerged at creation (*Nu*)
      - vi. A creator deity (*Ptah*)
      - vii. Star gods (*Sopdet*)
      - viii. Mediterranean sea/Nile Delta (*Wadj-wer*)
      - ix. (Multiple animal gods)



2. Moses is Correcting theology
  - a. 1:6 And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”
    - i. The formless, watery disorder from which the world emerged at creation (Nu)
  - b. 1:20 And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.”
    - i. Animal/Bird gods
  - c. 1:16 And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.
    - i. Sun god (Ra)
    - ii. Moon god (Iah)
  - d. Moses is teaching theology
- C. How to interpret Gen 1 & 2?
  1. Original audience
  2. How was God instructing them?
  3. Remember, it was written to/for the Hebrews; we get to benefit

### III. Law

- A. Understanding **Law**
  1. Our difficulty
- B. How NOT to read/understand the Law
  1. Tripartite
    - a. Moral Law
    - b. Civil Law
    - c. Ceremonial Law
  2. Problems with this approach (tripartite)
    - a. Jews (ancient or modern) don't use this categorization
    - b. The Bible always speaks of the Law in a singularity (not plural)
    - c. To break a ceremonial law is to break a moral law
- C. How we should read the Law
  1. The 10 Commandments = the **covenant**/law Yahweh made with Israel
    - a. Cf. Ex 24:12; Deut 4:13
  2. Everything else is “Case Law”

D. Does the Law apply today?

1. Yes, the 10 Commands are all relevant today!
2. The Law is not the covenant-law for the NT people of God (we are not UNDER the Law)
  - a. It applies as *prophecy* and *wisdom*
  - b. It shows what it looks like to love God and others
  - c. Love is the center of the Torah
    - i. Lev 19:17-18
    - ii. Deut 6:5
3. Jesus fulfilled the Law
  - a. Therefore, we can too!
  - b. Matt 5:17-19
    - i. Jer 31:31-34
    - ii. God has written His Law on our hearts
    - iii. Because Jesus has fulfilled the Law, we too can follow Him and fulfill the Law, by loving God and neighbor

# Grasping God's Word:

## *Old Testament: Wisdom*

### IV. Wisdom Literature

#### A. The genre

1. Instruction based on experience, tradition, and the way the world works, rather than emphasizing direct divine disclosure as the source of truth
  - a. Usually addresses the issue of what is wisdom?
2. Often uses imagery, poetry, allegories, riddles, narrative, etc.

### V. Proverbs

#### A. Practical Wisdom

1. Short, pithy statements that teach
  - a. Usually have a parallelistic structure
2. Not taken as unbending rules
  - a. *26:4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself*
  - b. *26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.*
3. Not legal guarantees from God (blessings as the result of righteousness)
  - a. Cf. Job
  - b. *Prov 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it*
4. Language
  - a. Uses exaggeration/symbolism
    - i. 20:17

## B. The Collection

1. Chs 1—9 need to be read as a collection
  - a. The theology is found in light of the entire story
  - b. Folly vs. Wisdom
    - i. 1:2-7
  - c. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge
    - i. Fear: reverence
    - ii. Comes from the root “*yada*”
2. Chs 10—29 are traditional proverbs
  - a. Two short lines of poetry expressing one general truth of wisdom
  - b. No specific order to these
  - c. Understanding historical-cultural context is important

# Grasping God's Word—Week 11

## Syllabus A—Week 11: Prophets & Poetry

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- What do you think of when you hear the words “prophet/prophecy”? How much of this understanding comes from the Bible, and how much comes from popular culture?

**JIGW Reading:** Chapters 14 & 15

**Bible Reading:** Isa. 40—53; Micah 3 & 6; Psalms 1, 2, 102, 110

## Syllabus B—Week 11: Prophets & Poetry

### Assignment:

- Watch videos on the class webpage
- What do you think of when you hear the words “prophet/prophecy”? How much of this understanding comes from the Bible, and how much comes from popular culture?
- For discussion: Based on the Bible Project YouTube video titled “The Prophets,” how would you describe/define the role & purpose of the Prophets?

**40 Questions Reading:** 29, 30, 31

**Bible Reading:** Isa. 40—53; Micah 3 & 6; Psalms 1, 2, 102, 110

### Terms of the week:

**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.

**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.

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

**Prophets:** Call their contemporaries to repentance/return to Torah, or judgment; covenant enforcers.

# Grasping God's Word:

## *Old Testament: Prophets*

### I. Intro

- A. The context of John 15:1-10
  - 1. The Vine
    - a. Is 5:1-7; Is 27:2-6; Jer 2:21; 6:9; 12:10-13; Ez 15:1-8; 17:5-10; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1-2; 14:7
  - 2. Israel is the Vine/Vineyard
    - a. Her job was to bring forth fruit
    - b. Jesus the Messiah FULFILLS Israel's destiny as the Vine of God—is the new & perfect Israel/true Vine
    - c. Faith in Jesus replaces keeping the Law as the decisive characteristic for membership among God's people
  - 3. The NT is made up of OT Imagery
    - a. We cannot understand the context of the NT without an understanding of the OT

### II. The Job Description of the Prophet

- A. What is a Prophet?
  - 1. **Prophets**: *Call their contemporaries to repentance/return to Torah, or judgment*
    - a. Prophets: critiques and criticizes society (kings/corrupt priests)
    - b. Focus wasn't "secular" but the people of God!
    - c. Job description: The Prophets were Covenant Enforcers!
- B. The **covenant** defines the terms of Israel's living in the land
  - 1. If Israel obeys the Torah they stay (blessed), if they disobey they leave (cursed)
  - 2. Deut 27—32
    - a. 27:1-2 If/then (conditions to stay in the land)
    - b. Curses for disobedience 27:15-26; 28:15-68; Cursed be the man who...
    - c. Blessings for obedience 28:1-14

3. Israel did not stay faithful (broke Torah), was sent into Exile (cast out of the Land)
  - a. Northern Kingdom: 2 Kings 17:7-23
    - i. 720 BCE
  - b. Southern Kingdom: Jeremiah 29:1-14
    - i. 597 BCE—539 BCE
  - c. Understand Israel's history/context at the time of the prophets to understand their purpose

### III. Covenant Violations

#### A. Idolatry

##### 1. Syncretism

- a. Blending religions/worship

#### B. Injustice

##### 1. God is concerned with the weak, and how they are treated

- a. Deuteronomy (Torah) demands Fair Treatment (Dt. 24:14)
- b. Justice in court (Dt. 19:15-21)
- c. Special care for the Orphans/Widows/Foreigners (Dt. 24:17-22)

##### 2. Violation voids their Sacrifices to Yahweh (Jer 5:28-29)

#### C. Religious ritualism instead of authentic devotion

##### 1. Rituals are good

- a. Self-discipline & symbolism to worship

##### 2. Don't make the ritual more important than the relationship

- a. Legalism/bad religion
- b. Hosea 6:6 *“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”*

#### **IV. Predictions**

- A. Hope for a glorious, future restoration of God's Kingdom
  - 1. The Prophets proclaim, there will be a future:
    - a. Future exodus (Is 40:3)
    - b. New covenant (Jer 31:31-33)
    - c. New presence of the Spirit of Yahweh (Joel 2:28-29)
  - 2. All the prophecies of Christ fall into this category
    - a. Obvious fulfillment
      - i. Virgin Birth; Messiah; Davidic King
    - b. Other fulfillment (Life, Death, & Resurrection)
- B. Future Predictions: Near and Far
  - 1. What was future to the prophets/people? What is future to us now?
    - a. near view—far view problem
      - i. Joel 2:28-29
      - ii. Acts 2:14-18
  - 2. Difficult, have humility and charity!
    - a. The goal of studying “prophecy”
      - i. Not to “unlock hidden meaning”

#### **V. Interpretation & Application**

- A. Always understand the original historical-cultural context first!
  - 1. Understand the theological context (story)
    - a. We're not in the Old Covenant
    - b. We're not a theocracy
- B. How to heed the Prophets' command?
  - 1. Repent and return to Torah!
    - a. Lev 19:17-18
    - b. Mt 22:34-40



# Grasping God's Word:

## *Old Testament: Poetry*

### VI. Poetry

- A. Wide usage in the OT
  - 1. Poetry is used in: Psalms, prophets, wisdom, Genesis, etc.
- B. **Poetry** & Theology
  - 1. Don't develop doctrine/theology primarily from the Psalms
    - a. The purpose of the Psalms/poetry is to expression emotion with word pictures, it's not systematic/legal/doctrinal
  - 2. The purpose of the Psalms
    - a. Give us models of how to sing/talk/mediate about God
    - b. A guide to worship
- C. Psalm(s)
  - 1. Plural: Psalms
  - 2. Singular: Psalm
- D. Themes in the Psalms
  - 1. Yahweh as King
  - 2. Yahweh as Refuge
  - 3. Yahweh as Creator

### VII. The Artistry of Hebrew Poetry

- A. Terseness
  - 1. Concise, neat, brevity, minimal number of words
    - a. Not meant to be systematic theologies
- B. Figurative Language
  - 1. Figures of speech are more effective, persuasive, impactful
    - a. Nursery stories as teaching lessons (not dictating from a behavior manual)
  - 2. There is no end to the amount of figures of speech in Hebrew poetry
    - a. As a non-native reader, we need to work hard to recognize what is a FOS
  - 3. Analogy: using two different things to make a point
    - a. Simile: like/as
      - i. 102:6
    - b. Metaphor: an analogy between items without the use of like/as
      - i. 18:2
    - c. Hyperbole: Conscious exaggeration for effect
      - i. 119:136

- d. Attributing attributes to different entities
  - i. Personification: attributing human features/characteristics to nonhuman entities
  - ii. 77:16
  - iii. Anthropomorphism: representation of God with human features/characteristics
  - iv. 139:16

### C. Structure

#### 1. **Parallelism**

- a. The text is structured around lines of verse
  - i. Thoughts are usually expressed in 2 lines
- b. Synonymous parallelism
  - i. Both lines are similar
  - ii. Ps 69:7
- c. Contrastive (antithetical)
  - i. The 2nd line contrasts/is opposite of the 1st
  - ii. Prov 15:20
- d. Chiasm is said in opposite order
  - i. Gen 1:27

### D. Problem Psalms

#### 1. Imprecatory Psalms

- a. Psalms that are vigorous towards one's enemy
- b. 5, 10, 17, 35, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 109, 129, 137, 140

#### 2. 137:9

## VIII. Jesus and the Psalms

### A. Read the Psalms Christologically

1. In the OT the Psalms were sung to YHWH
  - a. In the NT, the Psalms were applied to Jesus
  - b. Ps 102:25-27 (YHWH's hand in creation)
    - i. Heb 1:10-12 (Jesus being superior to the angels)
  - c. Other NT uses of Ps 110
    - i. Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42, 43; Acts 2:34, 35; Eph. 1:20, 22; Col. 3:1; 1 Cor. 15:25; 1 Pet. 3:22; Heb. 1:3, 13; 2:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:21; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2

### B. Interpreting the Psalms in light of Jesus (Christologically)

1. Interpret the psalm according to its OT context
2. Consider how the psalm anticipates the coming of Jesus
3. Ask how the song may be sung to Jesus
  - a. Jesus as King
  - b. Jesus as Refuge
  - c. Jesus as Creator

# Grasping God's Word—Week 12

## Syllabus A—Week 12: Revelation—Apocalyptic Literature

### Assignment:

- First, watch the videos/read the articles on the class webpage
- Then, read the entire book of Revelation, focusing on:
  - 1. Who Jesus is and what he does?
  - 2. What the people of God are called to do?
  - 3. Don't “Theologize” the book (just read the text and observe what's happening)

**JIGW Reading:** Chapter 12

**Bible Reading:** Revelation

## Syllabus B—Week 12: Revelation—Apocalyptic Literature

### Assignment:

- First, watch the videos/read the articles on the class webpage
- Then, read the entire book of Revelation, focusing on:
  - 1. Who Jesus is and what he does?
  - 2. What the people of God are called to do?
  - 3. Don't “Theologize” the book (just read the text and observe what's happening)
- For discussion: Watch the YouTube video “the book of Revelation with Richard Bauchkam and Ben Witherington”
  - What statements do you affirm?
  - What statements are challenging you?
  - Are there any statements that you disagree with?

**40 Questions Reading:** 25, 36

**Bible Reading:** Revelation

### **Terms of the week:**

**Apocalypse:** 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.

**Epistles:** Letters. These were written from someone to a particular group of people to deal with a situation that had arose.

**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”

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

**Prophecy/Prophets:** Biblical prophets were covenant enforcers who called the people of God to repentance and to obey the covenant God had made with them.

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

# Grasping God's Word: *Apocalypse*

## I. Intro

### A. Overview

—Revelations—

1. Understanding genres
  - a. Once Upon A Time
  - b. The original audience could interpret the apocalypse

### B. History of *Apocalypse*

1. Not invented by John
  - a. In the OT
    - i. Dan 7—12; Ezek 40—48; Zech 1—6
  - b. In the NT (apocalyptic)
    - i. Mark 13 (cf. Luke 21; Matt 24—25)  
The “Little Apocalypse”
    - ii. 1 Thes 4:13—5:11; 2 Thes 2:1-2; 2 Pet 3:1-13
  - c. Non-canonical
    - i. 1 Enoch 88:1-2 (c. 300-100 BCE) *And I saw one of those four who had come out first, how he took hold of that first star which had fallen from heaven, and bound it by its hands and its feet, and threw it into the abyss; and that abyss was narrow, and deep, and horrible and dark. 2 And one of them drew his sword and gave (it) to those elephants and camels and donkeys, and they began to strike on each other, and the whole earth shook because of them.*
2. John is using a familiar Jewish literary tradition

### C. Interpretive methods for interpretation (*Presuppositions*)

1. Futurist
  - a. It's a literal description of future events
  - b. Events happen in the last 3.5 or 7 years before the return of Christ
2. Idealist/Eclectic/Symbolic
  - a. These things happen from the resurrection of Jesus till the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
    - i. They are always happening
    - ii. It's not chronological
    - iii. Revelation is more symbolic
  - b. Focuses on the theme/message, not using as a key/map to the future

## II. Interpretive Keys to Revelation

### A. Jesus

1. 1:1 *The revelation of Jesus Christ*
  - a. of = about/from
2. The book is about Jesus and from Jesus

### B. OT background/influence

1. A very Jewish book
2. Allusions
  - a. Uses 400-600 OT allusions
  - b. Always search the OT to find the answers (look backwards)
  - c. John is interpreting the OT through the lens of Jesus

### C. John's original audience was expected to obey

1. 1:3 *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.*
2. 22:7 *And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.*

## III. The Literary Genre(s) of Revelation

### A. Letter and Prophecy

1. **Epistle** (1:4-5; 22:21)
  - a. Single letter to be circulated
  - b. Epistolary structure of Revelation
    - i. Begins as a letter
    - ii. Ends with "Amen"
    - iii. Contains 7 letters (that don't follow epistolary structure)
2. **Prophecy** (1:3)
  - a. Role of the prophet
    - i. Speak to their contemporaries
    - ii. Covenant enforcers
  - b. The 7 epistles are largely prophetic

## B. Apocalypse

1. 1:1 *"The revelation of Jesus Christ"*
  - a. *Revelation*
    - i. Apocalypse = to reveal/unveil
    - ii. Unfamiliar modern way of telling stories
  2. Characteristics of Apocalypse
    - a. Encouragement to God's people during times of distress
    - b. Presented as divine revelation
      - i. Mediated from an "otherworldly" creature
      - ii. Angel/heavenly intermediary to a well-known figure (e.g., Patriarch)
    - c. God will intervene in human history (during persecution), overthrow evil empires, establish his kingdom
    - d. Use of images (stars falling, bizarre animals, etc.)

## C. Literal or Symbolic?

1. Rev 1:1 ... *He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John...*
  - a. *Semaino*
  - b. *made it known* (ESV, NIV, NRSV), *communicated it* (NASB), *signified it* (KJV, HCSB)
    - i. *signify*: communicate by symbols
    - ii. noun form is the term used in Gospels to indicate the miracles Jesus did (make known something that people didn't know)
  - c. Dan 2:28 (2:45 LXX) *"A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this."*
    - i. John is using the same word (that described the symbolic nature of the Babylonian king's dream)
    - ii. This indicates that the entire book is expected to be understood symbolically
  - d. Order of interpretation?
    - i. Symbolic then literal



#### D. Apocalypse & Chronology

1. What's the timeline?
  - a. Presents the future in the current
  - b. Chronology becomes one of the major hermeneutical issues for the book
2. E.g., Satan falls from heaven in the future tribulation? (12:8-9)
  - a. Luke 10:17-20
  - b. If Jesus is speaking of the same event, Revelation is not (entirely) future, and the book shouldn't be read sequentially
  - c. Jewish writings aren't concerned with chronology (e.g., the Gospel accounts)

#### IV. Themes of Revelation

##### A. Worship

1. What is true worship?
  - a. Ch 4–5 The One who sits on the throne, and the Lamb
  - b. In the New Jerusalem 22:1-5
2. Warning against false worship
  - a. False worship is tied to the \*nations
  - b. Rome in the ancient world

##### B. Overcome (conquer/victorious) = *nikao*

1. to win in the face of obstacles, *be victor, conquer, overcome, prevail*
  - a. As in battle
2. Jesus became King by overcoming
  - a. 5:5
  - b. 12:11
  - c. 17:14
3. The People of God imitate the King
  - a. 3:21
  - b. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26-27; 3:5; 3:12; 21:7

### C. OT Symbolism

1. Rev 10:8-11
  - a. Ezek 2:8-3:5
  - b. John is being commissioned to be a prophet
2. Seven-bowls of wrath (Exodus plague imagery)
  - a. Painful sores 16:2
    - i. Ex 9:9-11
  - b. Sea-like blood 16:3
    - i. Ex 7:17-18
  - c. Sun scorched people with fire 16:8
    - i. Ex 9:22-24
  - d. Darkness 16:10
    - i. Ex 10:21-22
  - e. Water dried up/3-unclean spirits, like frogs 16:12,13
    - i. Ex 14:21-22
    - ii. Ex 8:2-3
  - f. Great hailstones 16:21
    - i. Ex 9:22
  - g. (also)
    - i. Judgment scene of Daniel 7 and Rev 20
    - ii. Marking/sealing of Ezek 9 with Rev 7
    - iii. Doom of Babylon in Jer 50, 51 with Rev 17, 18
    - iv. Temple imagery and language throughout the Pentateuch

### D. Numbers

1. See chapter 5 of *Follow the Lamb* by Rob Dalrymple (2018, Weaver Book Company)

## V. What does this mean for us?

### A. Conclusion

1. John's reading the OT in light of Jesus, and telling the people of God what it means (and how to live it)
2. It's about Jesus, in light of his fulfillment of the OT, and it would have made sense to its first-century readers

### B. Jesus is Lord

1. Resurrected God and Lord of all creation who will come in the future
  - a. JESUS IS LORD

### C. We *overcome* by keeping his word (just as Jesus overcame)

1. We are called to be imitators of Jesus
  - a. Be imitators of Christ
    - i. 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 5:1-2
  - b. The first description of Jesus in Rev (1:5 Jesus is the faithful witness)
    - i. Jesus is the model/example, so we can reign on earth as kings and priests

# **Grasping God's Word—** *Appendix*

## Grasping God's Word: Appendix 1—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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 arose.

**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 require 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 characterized by instruction based upon experience, 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 inhabits, 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 2—Resources

### Online Tools

- TheologyClass.org
- BiblicalTraining.org
- BiblicalELearning.org
- BibleStudyTools.com
- JustVerses.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)

### 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)

### 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)
- *“Jesus on Every Page”* by David Murray (Thomas Nelson, 2013)

### 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)
- *“Far as the Curse is Found”* by Michael Williams (P&R Publishing, 2005)
- *“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. Baily (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)

## Grasping God's Word: Appendix 3—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 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 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. Contain 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