

Hermeneutics 101: The Art of Interpreting Scripture (Part 3)

How to Proceed: L.I.G.H.T

- A. **Look**
- B. **Inquire** (of God)
- C. **Geography & Genre:** The where is it, and what culture does it speak in.
- D. **Hallelujah:** How does this effect my worship?
- E. **Transformation:** What is the transforming effect in my life?

I. Geography: Where is it? Interpret a text in light of its context.

A. Context is the portions surrounding a particular passage that we are studying.

- i. **Thomas Á Kempis:** “In the holy Scriptures, truth is to be looked for rather than fair phrases. All sacred scriptures should be read in the spirit in which they were written.... But curiosity often hinders us in the reading of the Scriptures, for we try to examine and dis-pute over matters that we should pass over and accept in simplicity. If you desire to profit, read with humility, simplicity, and faith, and have no concern to appear learned. Ask questions freely, and listen in silence to the words of the Saints; hear with patience the parables of the fathers, for they are not told without good cause.”
- ii. There is an original meaning and intention.

B. Three Primary Levels of Context we should consider.

- i. Historical
- ii. Redemptive
- iii. Literary

II. Literary Context: Three levels

A. **Immediate—**

- Leviticus 10:6

B. Remote—

- i. One of the things we discussed in this section is...What is the big idea of this section? What is it about?
- ii. Don Carson: *"There is a kind of 'biblical' preaching that is not so much unbiblical as trivial. Not long ago I heard a sermon on Luke 1:26-38, in which the angel Gabriel announces the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary. The entire sermon focused on how God sometimes does unexpected things in our lives. After all, Mary didn't expect to become pregnant in this way. The rest of the 'exposition' focused on Mary's psychological and spiritual profile in all of this. A fair bit of what was said had some sort of relation to the text; reasonable inferences were made. But none of the 'exposition,' none of it at all, focused on Jesus! Whatever interest Luke has in saying something about Mary is minor compared with his interest in telling us who Jesus is. Five minutes of the sermon reserved for some reflection on Mary's outlook might have been appropriate; the loss of Jesus was not."*

C. Form—The literary form of a writing is part of its context.

III. Form—How did the author write this?

A. Genre (literary form)

- i. The doctrine of inspiration of Scripture means that every word is inspired. But not only is each word inspired, but the form of the communication, the literary form, is inspired also.
- ii. Scripture contains a variety of literary forms (genres). Some books contain multiple genre.
 - a) Historical narrative
 - b) Poetry
 - c) Law
 - d) Epistles/letters
 - e) Writings of Prophets
 - f) Apocalyptic
 - g) Wisdom Literature
 - h) Parables
 - i) Exposition
 - j) Biographical sections

k) Tragedy / Satire

l) Gospel

B. We often consider the form naturally; particularly more familiar forms:

- i. Psalm 91:4 "*He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge...*"
- ii. Exodus 15:9 "*The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them....'*"
- iii. Exodus 15:15-16 "*The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall upon them.*"

C. If the writer is communicating through a form/genre, then the rules of this form/genre must guide our understanding of what is said.

i. Prophetic & Apocalyptic genres are highly symbolic.

a) Ezekiel 7:1-8

b) Hosea 6:5 "*Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.*"

c) Micah 3:1-3 *Then I said, "Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel. Should you not know justice, ²you who hate good and love evil; who tear the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones; ³who eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot?"*

d) Wisdom Literature: Where is Christ in this genre?

➤ Proverbs 26:12 "*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*"

ii. How does genre effect our understanding of this text?

IV. Other Considerations

A. The “Danger” of Isolating Verses

- i. Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*
- a) Matthew 18:20 *For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*
- b) Philippians 4:13 *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

B. The “Danger” of Concordance Studies

C. Is context always important in Scripture? Are there some portions where it is not necessary, like in the book of Proverbs?

D. Therefore, despite some exceptions, the first rule of interpretation stands. Interpret Scripture in light of its context.