

THREE STEPS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Step One: The Historical Interpretation

The Aim of Step One

The Biblical interpreter seeks to grasp the author's meaning of his/her message to the original audience in their context. Our aim is to remove ourselves from the meaning of the text and see it from the vantage point of the author or speaker.

The 4-1-1 of Interpretation

The Biblical interpreter seeks to discover the following information before making any conclusions on the meaning of the text.

1. The author
 - a. Where does the author come from?
 - b. What is the author's background?
 - c. What are the attitudes and feelings of the author?
 - d. What was his purpose for putting pen to paper?
2. The audience
 - a. Where was the audience located?
 - b. What time period did they live in?
 - c. What were their struggles or victories?
3. The culture
 - a. The Importance of Agriculture
 - b. The Reality of War
4. What assumptions do I bring to the text?
 - a. Reread it carefully and stick to what is in the passage
 - b. Separate fact from fiction

The Utility Belt of the Interpreter

1. Multiple Bible Translations
 - a. Start with literal translations –

The Historical Books

- b. Move to Dynamic translations -
- c. End with Paraphrases -
- 2. Good Maps -
- 3. Bible dictionaries and word study books -
- 4. Bible introductions and surveys -
- 5. Fellow Interpreters (commentaries) -
 - a. OT -
 - b. NT -

The Context of the Passages

A. Literary Genres

- a. Old Testament
 - i. Historical Narrative
 - ii. Law
 - iii. Covenant
 - iv. Poetry
 - v. Prophecy
 - vi. Wisdom
- b. New Testament
 - i. Gospel
 - ii. Historical Narrative
 - iii. Epistle
 - iv. Sermonic
 - v. Parable
 - vi. Apocalyptic

B. Historical Context

- a. Pre-Fall
- b. Post-Fall
- c. Old Covenant
 - i. Confusion before the Kings
 - ii. The United Kingdom
 - iii. The Divided Kingdom
 - iv. The Exile
 - v. Post-Exilic
- d. New Covenant
 - i. The Bridge Ministry of Jesus
 - ii. The Church Age
 - iii. The Tribulation
 - iv. The Millennial Kingdom
- e. The New Heavens and New Earth

See through another's eyes

Your first task in understanding and interpreting the Bible is to grasp the message from _____ to the _____.

Examples:

What were God's promises to Abraham?

What was Isaiah's message to King Ahaz?

Why did Hosea redeem Gomer?

Who was the audience for the Parable of the Dishonest Manager?

How did Paul tell the Corinthian women to pray in church?