

SECTION 18

Correlation: How does it fit together?

CORRELATION

(How does it fit together?)

Because Scripture is the Word of God written in the words of men we operate from the premise that it is both unified and diversified. Because it is the Word of God, there is an expected unity and harmony to all its parts. Because it is the words of men, at least 40 authors writing over a 1500 year period, there is progression and variety. Putting all of this together presents a significant challenge to the expositor.

Theological exegesis is a badly missing element in much modern preaching. To overcome this weakness, preachers and teachers of the Word must discover and declare the theology which naturally arises from the exegetical study of the text. Several principles should guide us in our hermeneutical/homiletical process.

1. HONOR THE AUTHORIAL INTENT OF THE TEXT

Walt Kaiser notes four ways to ascertain the intention of the writer:

- a) See if the writer himself clearly sets forth his purpose in the text (e.g., John 20:30-31)
- b) Study the paratextual sections in order to determine the author's own applications of his writing.
- c) Observe what details the author selected for inclusion and how he arranged them.
- d) When no other clues are available, the interpreter must develop his own purpose statement for the passage.

2. CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE CONTEXT

Various connections between paragraphs and immediate context may include:

- a) **Historical** - connection of facts, events, or happenings in space and time.
- b) **Theological** - a doctrine may be dependent upon some historical fact and circumstance.
- c) **Logical** - a paragraph may connect with an argument or line of thought that is under development in the whole section.
- d) **Psychological** - something in the preceding line of reasoning may trigger a related idea.

Kaiser well notes,

“Good exegetical procedure dictates that the details be viewed in light of the total context. Unless the exegete knows where the thought of the text begins and how that pattern develops, all the intricate details may be of little or no worth.” (*Towards An Exegetical Theology*, 69)

“Only an awareness of and respect for the immediate context will keep the exegete from going off the deep end here. The author has the right to define his own words as he wishes to do so - and context is the key to unlocking part of that meaning.” (Ibid., 85)

“Any successful exegete must face the question of intentionality. We are most confident that the meaning of any given word (and therefore its text and context) will be discretely contained in a single intention of the author. If it is to be found anywhere else and extricated by some means other than the usual methods of exegesis, no one has yet spelled out how that process works or how we may authenticate the additional meanings at which that process arrives.” (Ibid., 113)

3. BE ALERT TO NARRATIVE AND COMPOSITIONAL PATTERNS IN THE TEXT.

Walter Liefeld points to narrative and compositional patterns in the text that must guide our study of Scripture.

Such patterns serve at least three purposes:

- a) They draw the attention of the reader (especially of the Greek text) to conceptual relationships he or she might not otherwise have observed.
- b) They can provide a structure for a sermon outline.
- c) They contribute to the stylistic excellence of the work.

A. NARRATIVE PATTERNS

Various cultures have different ways of telling stories. We do need to be aware that there are certain conventions that are followed in narration.

These patterns are part of the inspired text. They help us understand the dynamics of the conversation and the theological and personal issues.

Work to identify with people, situations, and feelings of the text.

Haddon Robinson provides some additional assistance as we consider narrative text of Scripture.

He notes that a series of different questions must be raised when trying to understand a story. These include:

- a) Who are the characters in the story and why did the author include them?
- b) Do the characters contrast with one another?
- c) How do these characters develop as the story develops?
- d) What does the setting contribute to the story?
- e) What structure holds the story together and provides its unity?
- f) How do the individual episodes fit into the total framework?
- g) What conflicts develop and how are they resolved?
- h) Why did the writer bother telling the story?
- i) What ideas lie behind the story, implied but not stated?

B. COMPOSITIONAL PATTERNS

These are patterns that lie more on the surface of the passage. They may occur in narrative or logical argument. Some are marked by specific words or constructions. Often these are marked by semantic patterns.

There are twelve kinds of patterns which are very useful to the expositor:

- a) ***Comparison or Contrast***
Romans 5:12-19; Luke 7:36-50
- b) ***Repetition*** (a simple device, sometimes reflecting Semitic style) Matt. 5:3-11; Eph. 4 (one body and one spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, etc.)
- c) ***Continuity*** (passages that may, or may not, have a repeated phrase) Matt. 13:24-52; Luke 4:1-12
- d) ***Climax***
Matt. 4; Luke 4 (Jesus' temptations); Eph. 3:14-21 (Paul's doxological climax)

- e) **Cruciality** (a point that is of extreme importance)
Matt. 16:16 (Peter's confession); Rev. 11:15 (The eternal Kingdom and reign of Christ)
- f) **Interchange** (the alteration of person or subject)
Luke 1:2 (the approaching birth of John, then of Jesus); Rom. 5:12-19 (interchange and contrast of Christ and Adam)
- g) **Particularization**
Eph. 4; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12 (gifts of the Spirit)
- h) **Generalization** (the reverse of particularization) Matt. 7:12 (the "Golden Rule")
- i) **Cause to Effect**
Matt. 21:33-46 (parable of the tenants)
- j) **Substantiation** (providing the grounds or reason for something) Luke 12:13-34
(Jesus' teaching on 'possessions')
- k) **Radiation** (a central theme that radiates outward in various directions) Matt. 23 (Jesus' comments about the Pharisees)
- l) **Progression** (it is not easy to tell when an author is consciously using a progression of thought)
Rom. 1:18-32 (degenerating activities of humankind)

Liefield notes that when we discipline ourselves to be alert for the twelve compositional patterns, we accomplish two things:

- a) We are likely to find a pattern that itself can form the basis of a sermon outline.
- b) We will follow closely the author's own direction of thought, rather than superimpose our own impressions.

4. GIVE CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE PARTICULAR LITERARY FORM(S) UNDER CONSIDERATION.

Five basic literary forms used by Biblical writers are:

1. ***Prose*** - the basic model of Biblical communication
This includes: Descriptive Prose, Explanatory or Expository Prose, Emotive Prose, and Polemical Prose.
Common features are Speeches; Records; and Historical Narratives.
2. ***Poetry*** - composes one-third of the OT
3. ***Historical Narrative***
4. ***Wisdom Writings***
5. ***Apocalyptic***
 - a) Rich symbolism involving heavenly and earthly creatures
 - b) Formalized phraseology indicating the revelation came by a vision or dream
 - c) Frequent conversations between the prophet and the heavenly being who discloses God's secrets to him
 - d) Cosmic catastrophes
 - e) The radical transformation of all nature and nations
 - f) The imminent end of the present age

5. LOCATE THE "SEAMS" IN A TEXT WHICH WILL MARK OFF PARAGRAPH OR SECTION DIVISIONS.

Seams will reveal themselves through:

- a) Repeated terms, phrases, clauses, or sentences
- b) Grammatical clues
- c) Rhetorical questions
- d) Change in time, location, or setting
- e) Vocative form of address showing shift of attention between groups
- f) Change in tense, mood, or aspect of the verb
- g) Repetition of the same key word, proposition, or concept
- h) A new theme

“The grand object of grammatical and historical interpretation is to ascertain the *usus loquendi*, that is, the specific usage of words as employed by an individual writer and/or as prevalent in a particular age. And the most fundamental principle in gramatico-historical exposition is that words and sentences can have only one signification in one and the same connection.”

6. CAREFULLY DEFINE KEY WORDS

General principles for understanding word meaning include:

- a) The meaning of words is determined, in the first place, by custom and general usage current in the times when the author wrote them.
- b) In assigning meaning to a word, the exegete is on the most solid basis when the author himself has defined the term he uses.
- c) A word may be explained by the immediate attachment of a genitive phrase, an appositional phrase, or some other defining expression.
- d) The grammatical construction of a word may be another clue to its meaning.
- e) The meaning of some words may be determined by contextual antithesis and contrasts.
- f) In OT poetry, often one of the best ways to determine the meaning of a word is by means of Hebrew parallelism.
- g) A careful comparison of parallel passages may help an exegete define a word or phrase.

“Figures of speech can be a joy to the interpreter. But we must never label an expression as a figure of speech just to avoid difficulties. One has never settled an issue by proclaiming with a wave of the hand or shrug of the shoulder, ‘Oh, that is just figurative. We need not bother with it!’” –(Kaiser, 124-125).

“Words, then, are the basic building blocks for building meaning. We repeat, they must not be torn from their contexts. They will become untrustworthy guides if this happens. But when they are viewed and treated in their distinctive roles as part of the larger context, they serve the exegete well.” –(Ibid., 129)

7. GIVE DUE ATTENTION TO CULTURAL CONTEXT AND ITS CLUES

Kaiser provides exegetical principles for approaching cultural terms. These include:

- a) Those items that reflect the specific times, culture, and temporal forms in which the message was given should be identified.
- b) Where a distinction between cultural form and its content is to be made. The following guidelines can be used to distinguish timeless truth from that which is temporary and contingent.
 - The exegete must determine when the writer is merely describing something and setting a background for his abiding principle, and when he is prescribing something for his time and afterwards.
 - The exegete must determine whether the passage is inculcating a theological principle by means of a handy illustration from the culture of the day.
 - The exegete should ask himself whether the same theological principle may not be recognized just as fully today through an equivalent but not culturally identical medium.
 - There is something to be learned whenever Scripture itself, in a later historical situation, applies a different form or sanction to the same content.
- c) If a reason for a practice or for what might appear to a culturally-conditioned command is given and that reason is located in God's unchanging nature, then the command or practice is of permanent relevance for all believers in all ages.
- d) There are times when the principle of *ceteris paribus* ("other things being equal") may be attached to some of these commands.
- e) Special emphasis must be placed on the context every time the exegete meets what is suspected of being a strictly cultural item.
 - The use of explicit doctrinal and theological statements interspersed throughout a passage which treats some local or cultural problem indicates that serious teaching is involved even if the form of the custom is not always to be retained.
 - If the context rejects a practice or custom mentioned in the text being examined, we may be sure the practice or custom was never normative for believers.

- A more difficult decision is to be made when the immediate passage is not qualified by anything except an explanatory clause(s) or sentence(s) that follows it.
- Strict attention must be paid to the Bible's own definition of its terms as found in context.

“The historically or culturally conditioned nature of some of the Bible’s ethical demands or general teachings should not embarrass the interpreter. Particularity is often nothing more than a specific application or illustration within the universal to which it belongs. Thus the exegete may not, and in a fair number of cases should not, universalize or ‘principalize’ every injunction or description in Scripture.” - (Kaiser, 121)

8. ENGAGE IN THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- A. Remember, “Scripture interprets Scripture.” It is its own best interpreter.
- B. Examine explicit theological affirmations found in the text.
- C. Compare with similar affirmations found in passages that have preceded the text under study.
- D. Study the clues to the antecedent theology within the text:
 1. The use of certain terms which have already acquired a special meaning in the history of salvation and have begun to take on a technical status;
 2. A direct reference or an indirect allusion to a previous event in the progress of revelation with a view to making a related theological statement;
 3. Direct or indirect citation of quotations so as to appropriate them for a similar theological point in the new situation;
 4. Reference to the covenant(s), its contents of accumulating promises, or its formulae.
- E. Consider again those key words that bear theological weight.
 1. Select those words which are significant.
 - It plays a key role in the passage.
 - It occurs frequently in previous contexts.
 - It is important in the history of salvation up to this point.

2. Define the word selected in terms of its function in the immediate context.
3. Examine the usages of the same word in other authors from the same period.
4. Use lexical tools to examine word roots and variations in meaning.
5. Consult an exhaustive concordance for the following:
 - The total number of times it appears in the Bible.
 - The period in which there is the highest concentration of usage.
 - Any limited context that exhibits an extraordinary number of usages.
 - Those contexts that illustrate its usage prior to the selected text being exegeted.
6. Consult various cognate languages to find additional usages, especially for words which occur infrequently in the Bible.

“Simply to impose a theological grid on a text must be condemned as the mark of a foolish and lazy exegete. Further, the facile linking of assorted Biblical texts because of what appears on a prima facie reading to be similar wording or subject matter (usually called the proof-text method) must also be resisted since it fails to establish that all of the texts being grouped together do indeed share the same theological or factual content.”

-(Kaiser, 134)

“...the discipline of Biblical theology must be a twin of exegesis. Exegetical theology will remain incomplete and virtually barren in its results, as far as the church is concerned, without a proper input of ‘informing theology.’”

-(Ibid, 139)