

Left: A fragment of the P<sup>2</sup> papyrus containing John 18:31-33

### 3. Exegesis: Getting Back to the (Presumed) Original Meaning

*Exegesis versus exposition—them, there, then and us, here, now. Literary and historical context; studying and understanding the words themselves.*

## Studying, Interpreting, and Applying Biblical Texts

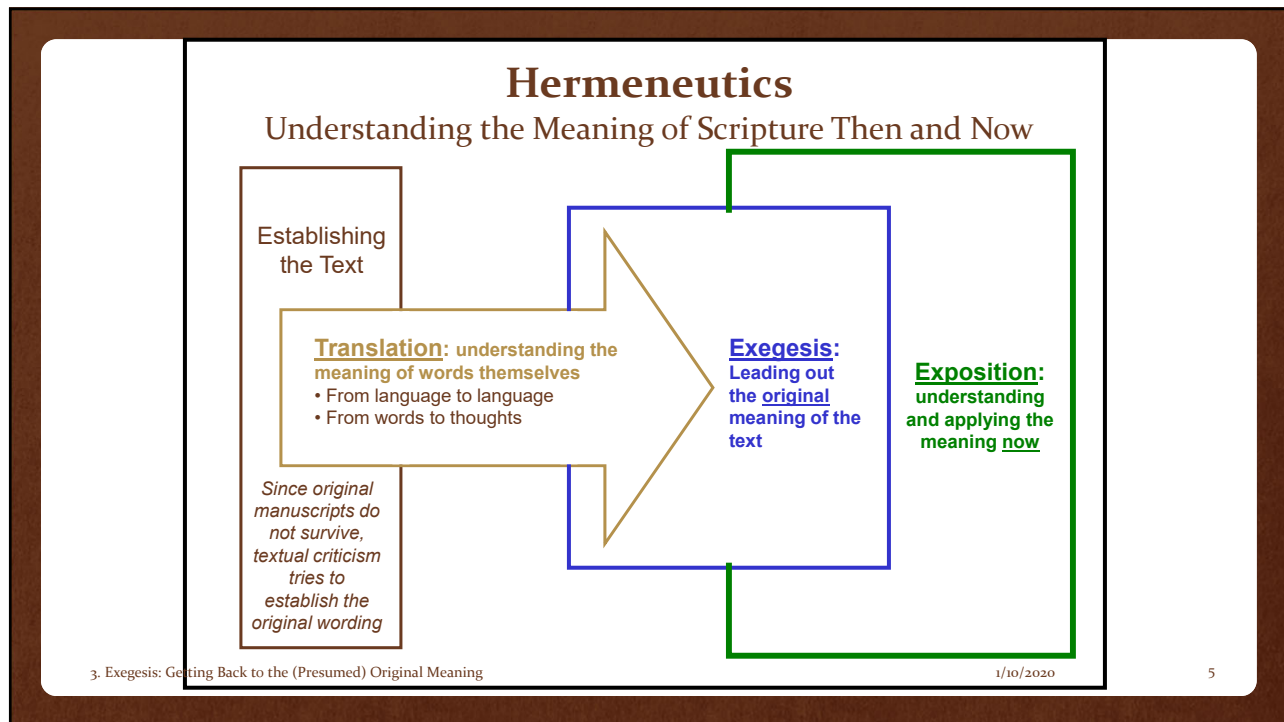
*Exegesis and Exposition*

## “Interpreting” the Scripture

- **Hermeneutics:** how to interpret and understand texts
  - From a Greek word meaning “translate” or “interpret”
- **Exegesis:** to understand better the *original* meaning . . .
  - From the Greek “to lead out” or explain
    - **Definition:** “*the careful historical, literary, and theological analysis of a text*” (Gorman, 8)
    - A close reading and careful examination of a passage, section, or book to understand its meaning in its original context
      - as opposed to “reading into” the text what we think it means—*eisegesis!*
  - “Them, there, then . . .”
- **Exposition:** application of the meaning to contemporary believers
  - “Us, here, now . . .”
    - **What does it mean to us as readers?**
  - 1 Nephi 19:23, “likening” scripture to ourselves
    - Done more properly *after* exegesis!

## Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard’s 5 Essential Factors

- **Constraints of literary context**
  - Look at surrounding units and the book as a whole; don’t take a passage out of context (ex. Ezekiel 37!)
- **Facts of historical-cultural background**
  - “Do not allow features of the historical-cultural background sabotage the main task of understanding the meaning of the text”
- **Normal word meanings**
  - Note that meanings change over time and the usual diction of an author is more important than a lexical definition
  - Example of *agapaō* and *phileō* in John 21
- **Rules of grammar and how a sentence is constructed**
- **Generic expectations—i.e., how a literary genre affects its meaning**



## Ask Exegetical Questions

For more detail, see Huntsman, "Teaching through Exegesis: Helping Students Ask Questions of the Text"

- **Historical Questions**
  - **When and where** was this text written? Who was its **audience**? What cultural and historical factors affect our understanding of it?
- **Literary Questions**
  - What is the text's major themes and purposes? How do they affect our understanding of its content? What kind of writing is it (**what is its genre**)? How is the book structured and how does **what comes before and after a passage** affect our understanding of it?
- **Theological Questions**
  - **What principles or doctrines** does this passage illustrate or teach?
    - What did it teach them **then** (meaning) and what does it teach us **now** (significance)

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## Brief Overview of Important Biblical Criticisms

- **Text Criticism**
- **Historical criticism**
  - Establishes authorship, date, and original audience
  - Seeks to find the literal sense (what the author meant to say)
  - takes into account customs and historical context
- **Source criticism**
  - Attempts to identify the sources of the authors' material
  - e.g., what were the origins of the different "strands" of the Torah, at least two of the four gospel authors were not eyewitnesses; at times Paul seems to quote earlier Christian hymns
- **Redaction criticism**
  - criticism—how an author edited, shortened, expanded, and used his material
- **Form criticism**
  - Considers the genre or type of writing of a passage; we read different types of writing differently—e.g., a newspaper, novel, poem, conference talk
  - In extreme forms seeks to identify preexisting units of text and why they were composed and transmitted as they were
- **Narrative criticism**
  - Considering the text as received
  - Looking at the objectives held by the final author and editor and how he or she accomplishes them

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## Read in Sections and Outline

- **Avoid the tendency to take individual verses or passages out of context!**
  - "proof-texting" is the process of using verses to prove one's own point rather than letting the text make its point
- **Divide chapters into sections** (*pericopes*, literally "a section cut around" or "cut out")
  - Our verse and chapter divisions are late and not original to the texts
  - A *pericope* will usually describe one particular episode or addresses one theme or topic; often equivalent to a "paragraph" (¶)
- Delineate each section in your scriptures, perhaps dividing sections with a line
- Give each section a **title** or **identifying label**, perhaps writing the title in the margin
- **Identify Literary Context:** Use outlines to see how the pericope fits into and relates to the entire book
  - Creating such outlines is called **structural analysis** and it provides a "road map" for your reading
  - See "Outlining Books of Scripture" (handout online)
  - (feel free to use my outlines: see the structural analyses in the packet)

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Just an example . . .

2 NEPHI 16:1-17:3

9 And he said: Go and tell this people—Hear ye indeed, but they understood not, and see ye indeed, but they perceived not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes—lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and be healed.

11 Then said I: Lord, how long? And he said: Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.

12 And the Lord have removed men far away, for there shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

13 But yet there shall be a tenth, and they shall return, and shall be eaten, as a tall-tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

CHAPTER 17

Ephraim and Syria were war against Judah—Christ shall be born of a virgin—Compare Isaiah 7.

1 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

2 And it was told the house of David, saying: Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

3 Then said the Lord unto Isaiah: Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;

4 And say unto him: Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying:

6 Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, yea, the son of Tabeal.

7 Thus saith the Lord God: It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus, Rezin; and within three scores and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it shall not be a people.

9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established.

10 Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying:

11 Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depths, or in the heights above.

12 But Ahaz said: I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.

13 And he said: Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

14 Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign—Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and to choose the good.

16 For before the child shall know

to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

17 The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, the king of Assyria.

18 And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

20 In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep;

22 And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk they shall give he shall eat butter; for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

23 And it shall come to pass in that day, these were a thousand vines of a thousand servings which shall be for bushes and thorns.

24 With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; because silver and shall become briars and thorns.

25 And all hills that shall be digged with the mattocks, there shall not come thither the fear of briars and thorns; but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and the treading of lesser cattle.

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Proceeding to Exposition . . .

- "eisegesis" is generally a *negative* term in biblical scholarship . . .
  - Instead of "reading into the text" what we think or what it means, **we seek to correctly apply the original meaning (the exegesis) to ourselves and our time**
- Once we know what it meant "**to them, there, then,**" we are prepared to consider what it means "**to us, here, now**"
  - How do other scriptures (particularly restoration scripture) and modern revelation help us understand the passage's theological implications? **THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINAL CONTEXT**
  - *How do we apply it to ourselves?* (Latin *expono*, to apply)
- **Interpreting and Applying Scripture**
  - Literal or historical
  - Allegorical
  - Moral
  - Experiential (or "anagogical")

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## The Example of John 5:39

- **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”**
  - How have we always heard this passage applied? [us, here, now]
  - Who was John’s original audience? How did they approach the scriptures? [them, there, then]
- **“Search the scriptures,” two possibilities for the Greek *eraunate***
  - Search the scriptures (imperative, a command as our KJV renders it)
  - You are searching the scriptures (indicative, a simple statement regarding the original audience)
  - “in them ye *think* ye have eternal life . . . and ye *will not come to me*, that ye might have life
- **Scriptural ambiguity . . . and richness**
  - Exegesis might be different from exposition
  - We can use the same passage to teach additional truths

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## Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard on “Application”

- **“Meaning”** vs. **“significance”**
- Mistakes to avoid
  - Neglect of any context
  - Partial neglect of literary or historical context (“Blessed is the man whose quiver . . .”)
  - Insufficiently analogous situations (the devil’s “cast yourself down” temptation)
- Four steps for legitimate application
  - Determine the **original application**
  - **Evaluate its specificity to the original context** (they give 10 [!] criteria)
  - **Identify cross-cultural principles**
  - **Find appropriate contemporary applications**

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## Reading Strategies: Approaches to Scriptural Texts

- Establish the **context**
  - Who wrote this, who was the original audience, why was it written, how did the time period and culture affect how it was written?
- Careful **reading**
  - Ask *questions*—**what** is it saying and **why** was it written this way?
    - Read “Genre Questions: What Kind of Writing is This Passage” in the packet or online
- Prayerful **pondering** of the text
  - **What did it mean** then? > *Them, There, Then*
  - **what does it mean** to us now? > *Us, Here, Now*
  - **Note the order! Knowing what it meant originally helps us interpret and apply it today**
- Consider **scholarly contributions**
  - From commentaries or reference works (or such material as summarized in class by the instructor)
- **Reread** and **prayerfully ponder** again!

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## Writing an Exegetical Paper

- Read the Exegetical Paper Instructions online, as well as assigned pages of Gorman’s *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*. Also, follow the guidelines suggested by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 293–359.
- **Pick a pericope and write a brief sketch for yourself addressing, at first glance, the historical, literary, and theological questions that apply to it**
- **Then** look up your passage in two or more commentaries
- **Finally**, follow the instructions and write a paper divided into the following sections
  - Survey or Introduction
  - Contextual Analysis (historical and literary)
  - Formal analysis (genre and structure of the pericope itself)
  - Detailed Analysis
  - Synthesis (pre-conclusion, summarizing what you’ve learned)
  - Reflection and Exposition
- **The grading sheet attached to the instructions gives a helpful idea of the relative weight and length of each section, as well as detailing what should be in each section**

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