**What You Should Know from CL1 – Biblical Interpretation**

Lakeside Institute of Theology

1. What is “**exegesis**?”
   1. A critical explanation or interpretation of a text, particularly a religious text. Traditionally used primarily for exegesis of the Bible; however, in modern usage "biblical exegesis" distinguishes it from other broader critical text explanation.
2. What is “**hermeneutics**?”
   1. The theory of textual interpretation, especially the interpretation of biblical texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts.
3. What is the difference in **exegesis** and **hermeneutics**?
   1. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but hermeneutics is a wider discipline, including written, verbal, and nonverbal communication. Exegesis focuses primarily on texts.
4. What is **Biblical Interpretation**?
   1. The process of finding the *purpose*, *meaning* and *right application* of a passage of Scripture through a study of the cultural, geographic and historical context of the original writers and audiences; literary genre and forms; textual sources and variants; language structure, word meanings and grammar; and theological harmony within Scripture.
5. What do we mean when we say the Bible is the product of “dual authorship?"
   1. The Bible is the result of a miraculous process whereby God worked through thinking, feeling individuals, mysteriously superintending the process to have written exactly what he wants (Verbal-Plenary Inspiration).
6. Working from the perspective of the human side of Bible authorship, what questions are we then prompted to ask?
   1. What did the text mean to the original writers/audiences?
   2. What are differences between the biblical audience and us?
   3. What textual aspects must be considered; are we dealing with the most accurate text available?
   4. What is/are the primary theological principles in the text?
   5. How does the theological principle fit into the rest of Scripture?
   6. How should individual Christians today live out these theological principles?

1. In a larger context, what questions might we ask as a way to approach the process of Biblical Interpretation?
   1. Who wrote/spoke the passage and who was it addressed to?
   2. What does the passage say?
   3. Are there any words in the passage that need to be examined?
   4. What is the immediate context?
   5. What is the broader context in the chapter and book?
   6. What are the related verses to the passage’s subject, and how do they affect the understanding of this passage?
   7. What is the historical and cultural background?
   8. What can I conclude about the passage?
   9. Do my conclusions agree or disagree with related areas of scripture and others who have studied the passage?
   10. What have I learned and what must I apply to my life?
2. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Definition?
   1. *What does the word mean?* Any study of Scripture must begin with a study of words. Define your terms and then keep to the terms defined. The interpreter should conscientiously abide by the plain meaning of the words. We must not violate the known usage of a word and invent another for which there is no precedent.
3. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Usage?
   1. It is important to remember that the Old Testament was originally written by and for Jews, while the New Testament was written to people in the Greco-Roman world. In doing so we must not impose our modern biases and word usage onto our interpretation of Scripture.

1. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Context?
   1. Meaning must be gathered from the context – every word of Scripture must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it – in order to accurately find the biblical author’s intended meaning. We also must keep in mind that interpretation of a specific passage must not contradict the total teaching of Scripture.
2. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Historical Background?
   1. To interpret Scripture accurately requires awareness of the life and society of the times in which the Scripture was written.
3. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Logic?
   1. The Bible was given to us in the form of human language and therefore appeals to human reason - it invites investigation. Interpretation is merely logical reasoning. When interpreting Scripture, the use of reason is to be assumed. Does the interpretation make sense?
4. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Inference?
   1. An inference is a fact reasonably implied from another fact. It is a logical consequence; a conclusion legitimately derived from a given fact or premise. Such reasoning can and must be applied to Scripture. (For example, the doctrine of the Trinity is not specifically mentioned in Scripture, but is *inferred* from the whole evidence of the Bible.)
5. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Genre Judgment?
   1. The Bible contains a variety of literary genres, each of which has certain peculiar characteristics that must be recognized in order to interpret the text properly.
6. In Biblical Interpretation, what is meant by the Rule of Dependence upon the Holy Spirit?
   1. Scripture tells us that we are to rely on the Holy Spirit's illumination to gain insights into the meaning and application of Scripture (John 16:12-15, 1 Corinthians 2:9-11). It is the Holy Spirit's work to throw light upon the Word of God so that the believer can determine the meaning intended and act on it.
7. What does Scripture, by the power of the Holy Spirit, provide for Christians?
   1. Conviction of Sin.
   2. Correction and Instruction.
   3. Spiritual Fruitfulness.
   4. Perseverance.
   5. Joy and Delight.
   6. Ultimate Authority in Doctrine and Deed.
8. What (according to the Christian Bible) are the five sections of the Old Testament?
   1. **The Law** (Genesis–Deuteronomy). These five books are also called the Books

of Moses or the Pentateuch. (“the five books.”)

* 1. **The Historical Books** (Joshua–Esther).
  2. **Wisdom and Songs** (Job–Song of Songs).
  3. **The Major Prophets** (Isaiah–Daniel).
  4. **The Minor Prophets** (Hosea–Malachi).

1. What are the five sections of the New Testament?
   1. ***The Gospels***
      1. *Synoptic Gospels (3)- Matthew, Mark, Luke*
      2. *Theological Gospel (1) - John*
   2. ***Acts of the Apostles*** *(1)*
   3. ***Pauline Epistles*** *(13) – Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians,*

*Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.*

* 1. ***General Epistles*** *(8) – Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter, 1-2-3 John, Jude.*
  2. ***Book of Revelation***

1. Generally speaking, what are the major points and approximate dates of the Bible timeline?
   1. Adam and Eve; Noah - l.t.a. (*long time ago*)
   2. Calling of Abraham - 2000 B.C.
   3. The Exodus - 1446 B.C. (first Bible books written by Moses)
   4. Monarchy begins - 1050 B.C. (God chooses Saul)
   5. King David - 1010–970 B.C.
   6. Divided kingdom - 931 B.C. (Israel and Judah divided)
   7. Assyrian exile - 722 B.C. (destruction of Samaria)
   8. Babylonian exile - 586 B.C. (destruction of Jerusalem)
   9. Persian Period - 537 B.C. (return of Jews under Cyrus)
   10. Second temple finished - 515 B.C.
   11. Malachi (last Old Testament book) - 430 B.C.
   12. Intertestamental period - 430 B.C.–A.D. 45
   13. Jesus’ birth - 7–4 B.C.
   14. Jesus’ ministry - A.D. 27–30
   15. Jesus’ crucifixion - A.D. 30
   16. First New Testament book(s) written - A.D. 45
   17. Revelation written - A.D. 90 (last book of New Testament)
2. What questions can and should we legitimately ask regarding the Bible?
   1. **Is the Bible textually reliable?** Meaning does the Bible we have today accurately reflect the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek documents? Is there any evidence the Bible is inaccurate?
   2. **Is the Bible historically reliable?** Is there evidence that Scripture accurately reflects real events in the past?
   3. **Is the Bible internally consistent?** Or is it full of contradictions, as is often claimed?
   4. **Is the Bible relevant?** Does it have a history of being meaningful in the lives of real people in real situations?
   5. **Ultimately, is there support for the idea that the Bible is more than just a human document, but instead is truly the Word of God**?
3. What is ***textual criticism***?
   1. The branch of textual scholarship, philology, and literary criticism that is concerned with the identification and removal of transcription errors in texts, both manuscripts and printed books, in order to have a document as close as possible to the original.
4. What is the basic problem of textual criticism and Bible translation?
   1. We have no autograph manuscripts (original writings) of the Scriptures, and no copies which have been collated with the originals. The manuscripts we possess derive from the originals through an unknown number of intermediate copies, and so great care must be taken to ensure the available copies are accurate and trustworthy.
5. What is the ultimate objective for textual critics?
   1. The textual critic's ultimate objective is the production of a “critical edition” – a text most closely approximating the original.
6. Broadly speaking, what are the two types of textual errors found in ancient manuscripts?
7. Unintentional errors, which constitute 95% of all textual errors.
8. Intentional errors, which constitute the remaining 5% of textual errors.
9. What are the most common types of unintentional textual errors?
10. ***Errors of Sight.*** Scribes sometimes copied texts by looking back and forth to the originals. By this method, they inevitably made a number of errors of sight.
11. ***Errors of Hearing.*** When scribes copied manuscripts through dictation (that is, scribes wrote as a manuscript was being read), errors of hearing were made.
12. ***Errors of Writing.*** Sometimes scribes introduced errors into texts simply by writing the wrong thing.
13. ***Errors of Judgment.*** Sometimes scribes exercised poor judgment through incorporating marginal glosses (ancient footnotes) into the body of the text or similar unintentional corrupting influences.
14. What are the most common types of intentional textual errors?
15. **Revising Grammar and Spelling**.
16. **Harmonizing Similar Passages**. Scribes tended to harmonize parallel passages and introduce uniformity to stylized expressions.
17. **Eliminating Apparent Discrepancies and Difficulties**. Scribes sometimes fixed what they perceived as problems in the text.
18. **Conflating the Text**. Sometimes scribes combined variant readings when copying, conflating them together.
19. **Adapting Different Liturgical Traditions**. It is possible that church liturgy (i.e., stylized prayers or praises) influenced some textual additions or wording changes.
20. **Making Theological or Doctrinal Changes**. Sometimes scribes made theological or doctrinal changes – omitting or clarifying something they saw as wrong.
21. What are some of the theories regarding the inspiration of Scripture?
    1. **The Intuition Theory.** Writers of the Bible exhibited natural religious intuition that is also found in other great religious thinkers, such as Confucius or Plato.
    2. **The Illumination Theory.** The Spirit of God in some way impressed himself on the consciousness of the biblical writers, but not in a way essentially different from the way the Spirit communicates with all humanity.
    3. **The Dynamic Theory.** God gave specific impressions to biblical authors but allowed the writers to communicate those in their own words.
    4. **The Dictation Theory.** God dictated the exact words to the human authors.
    5. **The Verbal-Plenary Theory**. There is a dual authorship to the Scriptures. The human authors of the Bible wrote as thinking, feeling human beings, while God so mysteriously superintended the process that every word written was also the exact word he wanted to be written—free from all error.
22. What is the usually accepted, evangelical theory of the inspiration of Scripture?
    1. **Verbal-Plenary Inspiration.**

1. What is meant by the terms “***inerrancy***” and “***inerrant***,” with regard to Biblical Interpretation?
   1. The doctrine that the Bible is completely truthful in all things that the biblical authors assert—whether in geographic, chronological, or theological details. (Wayne Grudem: *“The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.”*)
2. What is meant by the terms “***infallibility***” and “***infallible***,” with regard to Biblical Interpretation?
   1. The belief that Scripture is without error in all matters of theology or faith (sometimes also called “limited inerrancy”).
3. What is meant by the terms “***inspiration***” and “***inspired***,” with regard to Biblical Interpretation?
   1. To claim the Bible is divinely inspired is to assert that God was somehow behind its writing.
4. What is meant by the terms “***Neo-orthodoxy***” and “***neo-orthodox***,” with regard to Biblical Interpretation?
   1. A theological movement of the 1920s-60s in which scholars generally affirmed God revealed himself in history but that fallible human beings recorded these acts imperfectly. According to neo-orthodox theologians, these writings *become* the Word of God as they are newly proclaimed and people have an existential encounter with the living God**.**
5. What is meant by the terms “***authoritative***” and “***trustworthy***,” with regard to Biblical Interpretation?
   1. Some critics charge words like inerrant and infallible are not found in Scripture and wrongly focus on negation (that is, *no error*), rather than on positive terms such as true, trustworthy, or authoritative.
6. What qualifications are to be understood as applying to the Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy?
   1. Inerrancy applies only to the autographs (original copies of Scripture).
   2. Inerrancy respects the authorial intent of the passage and the literary conventions under which the author wrote.
   3. It is clear that the Gospel authors are not intending to give a strict chronological account of Jesus’ ministry; the material is frequently arranged topically. Faithful interpretation respects individual emphases and purposes of the different authors and faithfully allows those original emphases to come through in teaching and preaching.
   4. Inerrancy allows for partial reporting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.
   5. Inerrancy allows for phenomenological language (that is, description of events as they are observed and experienced from *one* vantage point rather than providing an objective scientific explanation).
   6. Inerrancy allows the reporting of speech without the endorsement of the truthfulness of that speech.
   7. Inerrancy does not mean that the Bible provides definitive or exhaustive information on every topic.
   8. Inerrancy is not invalidated by colloquial or nonstandard grammar or spelling.
7. In Biblical Interpretation, what principles are to be applied in dealing with difficult texts?
   1. Be sure that you are interacting with real texts and the best available translations.
   2. Approach the text in trust, not as a skeptic, while still investigating the truthfulness of Christianity.
   3. Pray about a difficult text.
   4. Keep in mind the “Qualifications of Inerrancy” when dealing with difficult texts (see above).
   5. Seek counsel when dealing with difficult texts.
   6. Be willing to set a text aside for further consideration rather than force harmonization.
8. What questions regarding “*meaning*” must be addressed in effective Biblical Interpretation?
   1. Where does meaning happen? Is it in the author’s intent? In the text itself? In the reader’s interpretation?
   2. Is meaning *limited* to the author’s intent? Is there meaning beyond the perception and intention of the human authors?
   3. Who or what arbitrates a “correct” reading, or at least what constitutes a “helpful” or “harmful” reading?
   4. What is the role of theology in biblical interpretation?
   5. What other disciplines should be used to provide greater clarity? Philosophy? History? Literary studies?
9. What are the Four Loci of Biblical Interpretation? (That is, what locations of meaning must be considered to get an accurate understanding of the meaning of a text?)
   1. The world(s), external to the biblical text.
   2. The biblical text itself.
   3. The author(s) of the text.
   4. The current reader(s).
10. What are the three **General Approaches** to Biblical Interpretation?
    1. **The Diachronic Approach** – (meaning “across time”). focuses on the origin and development of a text. It takes the “long view” of a text, and is often referred to as the historical-critical method.
    2. **The Synchronic Approach** – (meaning “with[in] time,” or “same time”) looks only at the final form of the text as it stands in the Bible as we have it, analyzing the text itself and/or the text in relation to the world in which it first existed.
    3. **The Existential Approach** – focuses on the text as something to be engaged, as a means to an end, rather than as an end in itself. The goal of this kind of reading is often an encounter with a reality beyond the text, but to which the text bears witness.
11. What are five **Specific Approaches** to Biblical Interpretation?
    1. **Historical-Critical/Grammatical Approach** – focuses on the historical context and development of the writings, as well as emphasis on analyzing the grammar of the biblical text.
    2. **Literary/Postmodern Approach** – views the biblical text primarily as it is relevant for today’s reader.
    3. **Redemptive-Historical Approach** – argues that the role of Christ in his redemptive work is central to interpreting the whole of Scripture.
    4. **Whole Canon Interpretive Approach** – argues that the entire Canon must be read in terms of its relationship to all the rest of the Canon.
    5. **Philosophical/Theological Approach** – addresses biblical hermeneutics primarily through a philosophical lens and awareness.
12. What **Principles of Interpretation** are best followed to become a more faithful interpreter of Scripture?
    1. Approach the Bible in prayer
    2. Read the Bible as a book that points to Jesus
    3. Let Scripture interpret Scripture
    4. Meditate on the Bible
    5. Approach the Bible in faith and obedience
    6. Take note of the biblical genre you are reading
    7. Be aware of historical or cultural background issues
    8. Pay attention to context
    9. Read the Bible in community
13. What is the danger of misunderstanding the genre of a book of the Bible?
    1. It can (and often does) lead to a skewed interpretation.
14. For what reasons have interpreters sometimes intentionally mislabeled the genre of a biblical book or misused genre interpretation?
    1. As an underhanded way to undermine the truthfulness and authority of Scripture.
    2. To excuse one from the rightful demands of Scripture.
15. What are some of the major genres found in both the Old and New Testaments?
    1. Historical Narrative
    2. Prophesy
    3. Apocalyptic Literature
16. What is meant by “historical narrative” as a biblical genre?
    1. Narrative that recounts factual events. Historical narrative makes up about 60% of the entire Bible.
17. What are principles and guidelines for accurately interpreting historical narrative in Scripture?
    1. It is often not obvious what the purposes are for the authors of biblical historical narrative, so it is more difficult to get at author intent. (An interpretive technique is to think: *“I, (*author*), have told you this story because…”*)
    2. **Context** is especially important for interpreting historical narrative.
    3. **Editorial comments** within the test often can guide to author purpose.
    4. **Repetition** of words or concepts is often a way for biblical authors to tells us what they want emphasized.
    5. **Trustworthy characters** often appear in historical narrative, to tell us more clearly what is right and what the main message is.
18. What is meant by “prophesy” as a biblical genre?
    1. While it can have many meanings, most basically prophesy is the delivery of a message from God (a “Spirit-inspired utterance”) through an appointed “prophet,” both in the OT and NT.
19. What **general principles** must be kept in mind when seeking to interpret prophetic writing in Scripture?
    1. The authors of Scripture understood themselves and their task as occurring in the context of community, and so they must be interpreted in this light.
    2. Biblical authors assumed a continuity in God’s dealing with his people, so that earlier events are seen as clearly foreshadowing of later ones.
    3. The New Testament authors understood themselves as living in the age of eschatological fulfillment.
    4. The New Testament authors believed all Scriptures were about Jesus Christ, as he was the fulfillment of all that had come before.

1. What are **specific guidelines** for accurately interpreting the prophetic genre in Scripture?
   1. Make sure you investigate the book’s background, date and author. When was it written, and what were the circumstances? To whom was it addressed, and what do we know of them? What do we know about the author?
   2. **Context** is also especially important for interpreting prophetic writing.
   3. **Figurative language**, including poetry and exaggerated expressions, is to be expected in prophesy – and in modern translations are often set off in poetic lines.
   4. **Conditional and unconditional prophesy** – that is, the statement of the unalterable purposes of God versus conditional consequences or warnings about human actions, must be distinguished from each other.
   5. Considering the **implications for us today** may help you see the intentions of the original prophetic author.
   6. Consider **whether the prophetic predictions were fulfilled** or are as yet unfulfilled.
   7. Take special note of the **apologetic nature** of prophetic writing.
   8. Understand the **difference between Old Testament-era and New Testament-era prophesy**.
2. What is meant by “apocalyptic literature” as a biblical genre?
   1. Writing (such as Daniel and The Book of Revelation) which “reveals” or “unveils” God’s plans, especially by use of symbolic and/or mysterious imagery.
3. What are characteristics of apocalyptic literature in Scripture?
   1. A clear expectation of God breaking into the present age to initiate a qualitatively different existence in the age to come.
   2. The use of an angelic mediator or mediators to communicate God’s messages.
   3. A journey by a chosen human into the heavenly realms.
   4. Symbolic visions or dreams that describe both current and future spiritual realities and divine interventions.
   5. Visions of final, divine judgment.
   6. Warnings to the faithful or coming distresses and trials.
   7. Encouragement to the faithful to persevere until God intervenes.
4. What are “parables” as a New Testament biblical genre?
   1. Parables are short fictional stories meant to illustrate a moral or religious principle, especially by using some sort of *comparison*. Historically interpreted allegorically, they are now read more for the plain meaning likely perceived by their original listeners.
5. What are principles and guidelines for accurately interpreting parables in the New Testament?
   1. A primary theme in the parables of Jesus is the coming of the Kingdom of God and the resulting discipleship that is required.
   2. A good first step in parable interpretation is to determine the main point (or main points) of the parable, by asking…
      1. Who are the main characters, and what do they represent?
      2. What happens at the end?
      3. What happens through direct discourse between characters?
      4. Who or what gets the most space in the parable, and why?
      5. What striking or unexpected details stand out? (But note that not ALL details have special meaning.)
6. What are “epistles” as a New Testament biblical genre?
   1. Epistles are letters of personal communication written either to individuals or to church congregations.
7. What are principles and guidelines for accurately interpreting the epistles in the New Testament?
   1. Epistles are not abstract theological treatises, but instead address the specific concerns and problem of specific people and groups within the Church. For this reason historical and cultural context are especially important.
   2. Remember that we have only one side of the “conversation” in the epistles – we can only try to understand all that prompted the response we read.
   3. It helps to break a letter (especially some of the longer letters) into more manageable sections for analysis/interpretation.
   4. Try to get a firm grasp on the overall organization of the letter (especially since they were intended to be read in entirety).
   5. Focus on which words are important, and what they mean.
   6. What does the message mean for us today?
8. What are “proverbs” as an Old Testament biblical genre?
   1. **Proverbs** are a subset of **Wisdom Literature** – a broad genre in which the reflections and sayings of the wise are recorded.
9. What are principles for accurately interpreting proverbs in the Old Testament?
   1. Biblical proverbs differ from other kinds of proverbs in that they are divinely inspired, and so reflect what God approves of or condemns.
   2. But even biblical proverbs (except those that refer to God’s nature) are circumstantial, and so allow for and even generally assume the possibility of exceptions. Therefore most biblical proverbs (along with the rest of wisdom literature) must be read as helpful guidance, but not as absolute promises.
10. What is “poetry” as an Old Testament biblical genre?
    1. Poetry occurs within many other Bible genres, and predominates the Psalms and Song of Songs.
11. What are principles for accurately understanding and interpreting poetry in the Old Testament?
    1. Hebrew poetry has very little that resembles Western poetry – especially no rhyme or recognizable meter. Rather than being poetry of sound, Hebrew poetry (while it does use repeated syllables, lines, sounds and stress patterns – almost none of which translate into other languages), is best understood as poetry of the mind – built on imagery and ideas.
    2. Poetry is intended to makes the words more memorable, or to express and/or evoke strong emotions. Therefore we should expect figurative and exaggerated language which often cannot be taken literally.
    3. The question must be asked of Hebrew poetry – *“What did the inspired author intend to communicate?”*
    4. It is important to be able to recognize Hebrew poetic forms – parallelism (synonymous, antithetical and synthetic), “X,X+1” structure, repetition of words or sounds, acrostic, chiasm.
12. What are “psalms” as an Old Testament biblical genre?
    1. Psalms is the worship songbook of the Hebrew people, and is part of the large “poetry” genre.
13. What are the seven *major* subgenres of Psalms?
    1. **Psalms of Lament** – the most widespread subgenre, these are songs of mourning and distress, directed to or about God.
    2. **Praise Psalms** – these praise God as Creator, Savior of Israel or Sovereign over history.
    3. **Thanksgiving Psalms** – thanking God for answering petitions.
    4. **Celebration Psalms** – to celebrate God’s covenant relationship with his people.
    5. **Wisdom Psalms** – a hybrid of song and wisdom literature, dealing with the source of true wisdom, dealing with injustice, etc.
    6. **Penitential Psalms** – confess sin and declare repentance.
    7. **Imprecatory Psalms** – calling on God to enact justice against the –psalmist’s enemies.
14. What are principles for accurately understanding and interpreting the psalms in the Old Testament?
    1. Note the organization of the Book of Psalms. The longest book in the Bible, containing 150 psalms, it is helpful the Psalms were divided into five books (perhaps in imitation of the Pentateuch):
       1. Book 1: Psalm 1-41
       2. Book 2: Psalm 42-72
       3. Book 3: Psalm 73-89
       4. Book 4: Psalm 90-106
       5. Book 5: Psalm 107-150
    2. Focus on reading the Psalms themselves, rather than the mountain of introductory materials and commentary.
    3. Identify the subgenre of the psalm – the best way to understand author intention.
    4. Then look at other psalms of the same subgenre type.
    5. Note superscriptions and other contextual information.
    6. Pay attention to how the psalm is structured & segmented.
    7. Recognize the poetic language and symbolism used in the psalm.
    8. Explore any messianic significance reflected in the psalm.
    9. Pray the psalms.
    10. Memorize the psalms.
    11. Sing the psalms.