

### **Hermeneutics – The Art of Biblical Interpretation Continued:**

**3. Goal of Biblical Interpretation** – Is to properly discover, communicate, and apply the Spirit Guided recitation of the Devine *Author's* intended message for humanity. Thus, the original meaning of the text was fixed by God through the auspices of the Holy Spirit when originally given, and human interpretation is not inventing new meaning but rather to relate the message the original hearers would have understood to succeeding generations throughout history.

The intended meaning relates **ONLY** to the text. How the Spirit engages our mind and heart in relation to the text is subject to cultural and historical adaptation throughout redemptive history. This requires discernment, wisdom, and insight on the part of the interpreter. Those most at risk of falling into false teachings and theological quagmires are those who don't really know what they believe in light of how God has communicated to humanity. Thus, the goal of Christian discipleship is to produce mature, well-equipped and disciplined followers of Jesus, who know how to properly read and relate the text and are being transformed progressively through the work of the Spirit as a result.

#### **3.1 Model of Communication**

**3.1.1 Elements of Communication** include two parties – the Sender [God and the original human author] and the Receiver [the human interpreter throughout redemptive history].

##### **3.1.2.1 Sender:**

- 3.1.2.1.1 The sender is the active party creating and sending the message.
- 3.1.2.1.2 The receiver is actively and prayerfully listening, but these are more passive elements as they are not creating the message just making the original message understandable to their human audience.
- 3.1.2.1.3 The Message is the Sender's product – the delivery of which is God's responsibility, and in which we participate as willing receivers.
- 3.1.2.1.4 The Medium is the actual communication of the sender through language – which is shared in terms of verbal or non-verbal, oral or written means.

##### **3.1.2.2 Receiver:**

- 3.1.2.2.1 The receiver has the responsibility to properly interpret [decipher, understand] the sender's intended message.
- 3.1.2.2.2 The sender had a specific thought to convey, proper interpretation puts us in touch with that thought – this is the primary goal of interpretation.
- 3.1.2.2.3 There may well be additional thoughts [messages] included in or peripheral to the sender's intended message – which have contextual and/or historical/cultural significance.
- 3.1.2.2.4 Hermeneutics is the disciplined process of unraveling the sender's intended message and making it understandable into today's context.

##### **3.1.2.3 Transfer of Information:**

- 3.1.2.3.1 The transfer process is not so simple as computer download or “file transfer protocol.”
- 3.1.2.3.2 The serious disciple must place themselves into the context where understanding may occur. This requires the mental process of cultural and historical study, as well as the Spiritual process of openness, sensitivity, and response. Discipleship is all about ‘mind’ and ‘heart’ – ‘ministry’ is the outcome of a sharpened mind

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and a softened heart.

3.1.2.3.3 Imagination plays a major role in this process as well – we need to place ourselves into the situation being revealed and imagine how we would feel or think as the unfolding drama revolved around us. An intriguing reality of God’s choice to reveal Himself in story, is that story invites people to utilize their imagination... we are invited to place ourselves into the story and imaginatively see and feel what the characters living through the story saw and felt.

3.1.2.3.4 The message as sent is static; the message as received is dynamic. The basic message will not change, but the application will change through time with historical and cultural influences.

### 3.1.2.4 Physical Feedback:

3.1.2.4.1 When originally given vocally and face-to-face, the sender is reading body language, facial expressions, etc. to observe if the message is being properly received. Also, the receiver sends subtle and direct messages back to indicate they are tracking with the sender’s thoughts.

3.1.2.4.2 When given through the written medium, it is up to the receiver to prayerfully fill in the missing pieces to obtain a fuller understanding of the proper message.

### 3.1.3 Goals of communication:

3.1.3.1 Is first and foremost the understanding of what is in the mind of the sender.

3.1.3.2 When the understanding is the same or consistent between both sender and receiver, we have a successful communication experience.

3.1.3.3 When the understanding varies significantly between both sender and receiver, we have a failed communication experience.

3.1.3.4 Corrupted communication typically occurs in three areas: 1) when the interpretive goal of communication is subverted to purposefully confuse the receiver, or 2) when the interpretive goal of communication is manipulated for the interpreters benefit or self-interest, or 3) when the receiver doesn’t want to hear and understand what is being said.

3.1.3.5 The receiver is always expected to be attempting to understand the sender’s message.

3.1.3.6 The goal of communication is understanding where thought sharing between sender and receiver come together.

3.1.3.7 Art and music are also a form of communication where the artist attempts to draw you into an experience where thoughts, or emotions can be transmitted.

3.1.3.8 Modern art primarily conveys an emotional message, provoking the question of “what do you feel when you interact with the work of art?”

3.1.3.9 Contemporary art provides the benefit that you can inquire of the artist what they intended to say.

3.1.3.10 Ancient art is more difficult – we have to discover what the artist was trying to convey, and we cannot ask them if we are correct. The most reliable way to interpret is to inquire of a scholar who has made this particular art form or artist their life’s work – they can provide answers and insights into what the sender was saying based upon their knowledge and familiarity with the author.

3.1.3.11 The sender invents meaning; the receiver discovers meaning.

3.1.3.12 Personal application occurs after the receiver understands the sender’s message. The meaning of the message remains the same as the sender intended, but the life experiences of the individual may expand the appreciation of the message. In a sense, it

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now has a “new meaning to me” but it is not a different meaning than the sender intended.

### 3.3.2 Potential Problems:

- 3.3.2.1 Faulty encoding – is the language being delivered properly understandable? The message can be rendered more difficult through improper use of language – accents that affect delivery, inflection, slang, and colloquialisms can all complicate language and understanding.
- 3.3.2.2 Faulty decoding – occurs from a number of failures on the part of the receiver:
  - 3.3.2.2.1 Do we have a sufficient command of the language to properly understand what is being said?
  - 3.3.2.2.2 Are we being lazy or dishonest in our hearing, translation or interpreting?
  - 3.3.2.2.3 Are we actively involved – asking questions of the speaker or the writer?
  - 3.3.2.2.4 Do we presume too much or leap to conclusions before having done the work of interpreting?

### 3.3.3 Observation:

- 3.3.3.1 Is the intentional process of seeking what is there – it is pursuing the raw data.
- 3.3.3.2 You cannot start interpretation until observations are made. Observations are the intentional, self-conscious, reasoned grasping of clues and information to render the message meaningful. It requires thoughtful work!
- 3.3.3.3 Facts are meaningless until brought into connection [context] with some law or principle we understand.
- 3.3.3.4 Wise observers practice different kinds of observing – they ask questions of themselves as well as the source they study. They list their thoughts and assumptions, and then challenge those thoughts and assumptions. In other words, study and think... and then study again and rethink.
- 3.3.3.5 Be aware that “you see what you want to see, and hear what you want to hear” – great quote made by the ‘Rockman’ from the animated movie “The Point” by Harry Nilsson in the 1970’s. We all have a preference in our interpretation... sometimes we understand it asks too much of us or requires sacrifices we don’t want to make. Be honest with yourself, with God, and the material.
- 3.3.3.6 Keep an open mind and learn to seek and find complexities. There are always hidden thoughts and ideas that await discovery. Don’t allow your pre-conceived beliefs to so color your observations that you can’t find the truth. Don’t let your theology blind you to otherwise obvious truth.
- 3.3.3.7 **Deductive Reasoning – is working from a general conceptual approach to the more specific – eisegesis [reading meaning into]. Homiletics [preaching/teaching] is deductive and tends to be more intuitive and less scientific. Deductive usually starts with something you want to prove as true. It is less about exploration and discovery, and more about proving a point.**
  - 3.3.3.7.1 Deductive reasoning, also called Deductive logic, is reasoning which constructs or evaluates deductive arguments. Deductive arguments are attempts to show that a conclusion necessarily follows from a set of premises. A deductive argument is valid if the conclusion does follow necessarily from the premises, i.e., the conclusion must be true provided that the premises are true. A deductive argument is sound if it is valid AND its premises are true. Deductive arguments are valid or invalid, sound or unsound, but are never false or true.

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- 3.3.3.7.2 An example of a deductive argument: All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore, Socrates is mortal
- 3.3.3.7.3 The first premise states that all objects classified as 'men' have the attribute 'mortal'. The second premise states that 'Socrates' is classified as a man- a member of the set 'men'. The conclusion states that 'Socrates' must be mortal because he inherits this attribute from his classification as a man. Deductive reasoning is sometimes contrasted with inductive reasoning.
- 3.3.3.7.4 Deductive arguments are generally evaluated in terms of their *validity* and *soundness*. An argument is *valid* if it is impossible both for its premises to be true and its conclusion to be false. An argument can be valid even though the premises are false.
- 3.3.3.7.5 This is an example of a valid argument. The first premise is false, yet the conclusion is still valid. An example of this is “everyone who eats steak is a quarterback. John eats steak. Therefore, John is a quarterback.” Not necessarily true.
- 3.3.3.7.6 This argument is valid but not sound. For a deductive argument to be considered sound the argument must not only be valid, but the premises must be true as well.
- 3.3.3.7.7 A theory of deductive reasoning known as categorical or term logic was developed by Aristotle, but was superseded by propositional (sentential) logic and predicate logic.
- 3.3.3.7.8 Deductive reasoning can be contrasted with inductive reasoning. In cases of inductive reasoning, it is possible for the conclusion to be false even though the premises are true, and the argument's form is cogent.

**3.3.3.8 Inductive Reasoning – is working from specific conceptual approach to general – exegesis is by nature inductive [study]. It is a more scholastic and scientific approach that looks to discover. Inductive is more about discovery and seeing where the material takes you.**

- 3.3.3.8.1 Inductive reasoning, also known as induction or inductive logic, or educated guess in colloquial English, is a kind of reasoning that allows for the possibility that the conclusion is false even where all of the premises are true. The premises of an inductive logical argument indicate some degree of support (inductive probability) for the conclusion but do not entail it; i.e., they do not ensure its truth. Induction is employed, for example, in the following reasoned arguments:
  - 3.3.3.8.1.1 All of the ice we have examined so far is cold. Therefore, all ice is cold.
  - 3.3.3.8.1.2 The person looks uncomfortable Therefore, the person is uncomfortable.
- 3.3.3.8.2 The words 'strong' and 'weak' are sometimes used to praise or demean the goodness of an inductive argument. The idea is that you say "this is an example of strong induction" when you would decide to believe the conclusion if presented with the premises. Alternatively, you say "that is weak induction" when your particular world view does not allow you to see that the conclusions are likely given the premises.
- 3.3.3.8.3 True observations can lead to false conclusions – if the observations are limited in scope, too colored by preconception, or taken apart from the whole.
- 3.3.3.9 **Micro Observations** – are verse-by-verse, or word-by-word study. These focus on a small piece of the material.
- 3.3.3.10 **Macro Observations** – are taken from the whole message by section, chapter or book. These focus on the flow of the entire material and how the pieces fit together.
- 3.3.3.11 Observations need to be adequately descriptive so the reader will understand what you saw or understand about the material. Learn to employ brief explanations of your

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observations – work at developing clarity in developing/communicating succinct thoughts. More is not better! A few words chosen wisely are more likely to clearly communicate, where a multiplication of words can often obscure or confuse the message.

3.3.3.12 Avoid commentary, editorializing or restating the text. Just give the text your voice.

3.3.3.13 Focus on the message of the book or passage when looking for detailed clues. The author is not trying to confuse you, He wants the message to be known and understood.

### 3.3.4 **We fail by:**

3.3.4.1 Being lazy – Making presumptions without careful investigations.

3.3.4.2 Jumping to conclusions – by making intuitive leaps of faith without going back and readdressing the facts to see if they bear out our thoughts.

3.3.4.3 Being too simple – expecting the message to be clear, concise or overly general – they may well be subtle, complicated, or below the surface.

3.3.4.4 Being arrogant – presuming we understand something that no one else has ever seen or thought of before.

3.3.4.5 Being naive – expecting that others will accept our thoughts because we love them, not because we can defend them.

### 3.3.5 **Summary — “We wonder . . . why there are so many diverse views as to what the Bible teaches. God is neither the author of confusion nor of error. The fault does not lie with Him or with the Bible, but with us” (Sproul, AOD, 34).**

## 3.2 Definitions of Biblical Study Terms – always be precise, and be consistent in your use of all terms:

3.3.6 **Meaning** — The actual [objective] idea in the mind of the sender, which He has endeavored to communicate in words through the text.

3.3.7 **Interpretation** — The receiver’s [subjective] reconstruction as interpreted and applied through Spirit guided disciples in the culturally relevant present. Such reconstruction may or may not be the correct sender’s message.

3.3.8 **Understanding** — The correct perception of the meaning; that is, when the receiver’s subjective interpretation matches the sender’s objective meaning [to be distinguished from a faulty understanding or espousing an understanding inconsistent with the sender’s intended meaning].

3.3.9 **Exegesis** — The application of sound methodology in accordance with the science of hermeneutics in order to arrive at an accurate and valid interpretation. It is simply – the act [work] of interpreting the text by drawing out its meaning through disciplined study.

3.3.10 **Eisegesis** – The use of subjective means of reading meaning into the text the sender never intended. Typically employs feelings, emotionalism to elicit a response the interpreter desires.

3.3.11 **Significance** — Has to do with the relevance of the meaning to me – it is the application of the truth and how I integrate it into my life.

## 3.3 Exegesis NOT Eisegesis – Is the means of proper Biblical study

3.3.12 Exegesis is about drawing out what the writer was saying, it focuses on discovering the meaning strictly from within the confines of the text [sender’s intended message – SIM]. The emphasis on discovering the Truth within the text is key.

3.3.13 Eisegesis – is about the interpreter reading a preferred meaning into the text. It is rendering a meaning that is from outside the text – it is based rather on the reader/receiver [reader’s intended message – RIM]. Too much teaching is in the form of eisegesis, which is shaped by the teacher’s philosophy or theology, rather than the Word itself. It is focused on the preacher’s point being made not the truth being revealed.



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- 3.3.14 Proclamation – Scripture is powerful on its own... we don't need to help it. Speak it and make it known... give it a voice and it will do the work intended with the guidance of the Spirit.
- 3.3.15 Prophetic proclamation – is making the path straight in our world setting... it is pointing people back to Scripture to encounter the God being revealed within it and through it. It is speaking the Truth in Love.
- 3.3.16 Exegetical sermons – are not merely discovering or distilling teaching principles.
  - 3.3.16.1 It is the responsibility of the teacher/preacher to discuss God's meaning and preach it to the congregation being faithful to the Sender's Intended Message.
  - 3.3.16.2 Preaching and teaching are **prophetic ministries** – where the Word is diligently studied, and God's message proclaimed by the disciple of Jesus; where we become 'the man/woman of God' teaching God's people.
  - 3.3.16.3 Teachers and preachers will ultimately be held accountable for their words... and for the impact they make on others. It's not our job to make people feel good about themselves. God's Word does a combination of things – it convicts, confirms, encourages, directs and redirects.

**3.4 A proper interpretation of Scripture focuses upon the meaning that is found in the "Text" itself. How we interpret the "words" the author employed in the text and understand the meaning of the passages constructed by the words, involves "Contextual" Guidance. The meaning comes out of the whole thought or the Pericope, which is a set of verses that forms one coherent unit or thought. Additionally, Historical and Cultural influences certainly have an impact on proper interpretation. Once we understand what the original hearers of the passage would have understood about the text, then we can extrapolate and make it relevant for today. Here are some additional interpretative factors:**

- 3.4.1 Scriptural Inspiration – ALL the WORDS are INSPIRED. Verbal = words; plenary = all.
- 3.4.2 Event vs. Text – it's important to understand that the object of interpretation are the words on the page, NOT merely the historical event the text relates.
  - 3.4.2.1 The event the Biblical author wrote about occurred in the past, and the author's intended meaning can be found in the words written about the historical event. The historical event cannot be recreated, therefore we must rely on the description of the event provided in the text. There is a specific reason the author selected his words to describe the event.
  - 3.4.2.2 For many teacher/preacher/writers it has become popular to rewrite history through the modern lens of how we presently view similar events. While cross referencing such events may prove helpful in merely historical terms, in the inspired nature of Scripture we have a different standard.
  - 3.4.2.3 Dissonance involves the fact that different meanings can be attached by different people to the event that occurred. Also, people can have a slightly or substantially different perspective of the event or its significance.
  - 3.4.2.4 The author(s) who observed the event attached their own significance and meaning to the event under the guidance of the Spirit – that is all we have that we can go forward with. One of the things we should be asking, is why did they write about this? What did they think was important about it? Why did they use the specific words they chose.
- 3.4.3 Non-neutrality of Biblical authors:
  - 3.4.3.1 The meaning is not in the event; the meaning exists in the written words – thus it is the author's *assigned* meaning we are after. People seem to be reviewing and revising the

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historical record and ascribing today's historical-cultural context on the past. This is a faulty interpreting process that leads to the distortion of eisegesis... which is reading into the text what we want to hear or prove.

3.4.3.2 The authors may or may not have been aware of the divine purpose for which they wrote, but they knew it was important which is why they preserved it. It is reasonable to presume that they may have had a vested interest in the words and the message they wrote, but because Scripture is Divinely Inspired – the Author [God] behind the earthly author is what is critical, our job is to figure out what God said, and what He meant from the original writer and hearer's perspective. This is the process of "Exegesis" which means "drawing out" the author's intended meaning. It is through this process of exegesis that proper meaning is discovered that we can deduce and interpret as Truth.

3.4.3.3 The story is the author's account of the event – and he is allowing us to see the matter through his eyes and through his feelings, and often with his sense of significance.

3.4.3.4 Thus, it is incorrect to leave the text behind and seek to recreate the event and assign new meaning to it. While it may be helpful to employ the inductive study method and walk around within the story, we must stay with the text that God provided us.

### 3.4.4 Practical Examples of Text versus Context of an Event:

3.4.4.1 "Text is no more the event than a restaurant review is of the meal that the reviewer ate." (student, Fall 00)

3.4.4.2 A given event can be assigned different meaning by different authors – just listen to political commentary that derive widely different meaning from any given event... usually motivated by the predetermined point of view of the author.

3.4.4.3 *The biblical writers intended to communicate heavenly truth, not merely earthly history. It's still important – crucial – that the historical report is true, that Jesus actually arose. But the task of an interpreter – which is what we are when we read Bible – is to interpret what the author wrote.*

3.4.4.4 *If our goal is the "sender's intended meaning" that is that we want to know what God said; and He has chosen to communicate to us through to us the text, the object that 'thing' which we seek to interpret; direct object of verb, "interpret" is the "text," and hence not the "event."*

3.4.4.5 *Unfortunately, event preaching is so much easier than text preaching:*

*Vivid story telling is legit in preaching; but it is fallacious for the preacher to think that he discovers God's message by such event re-creation. Differentiate between the message to be proclaimed (interpretation and theologizing) and the most effective way to deliver it (homiletics).*

3.4.4.6 Invalidity of biographical studies (Elijah and depression)

*The Bible is never merely telling what happened, it is never mere history. It is never enough merely to answer, "What happened?" or "What lesson?" or even "What did Jesus mean?" (though the author's meaning can never be wholly different than Jesus'). The answer to the question, "What was the author doing with this event-pericope<sup>1</sup>?" is never a subjective-reader supplied 'moral of the story.' If the correct answer is of the form, then 'moral' must be an objective moral that originated in the mind of the author and is actually in the text, often by implication, always requiring an appreciation of the literary context.*

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<sup>1</sup> Pericope – is "a set of verses or text that forms one coherent thought." It may be an entire passage or story or even a set of integrated passages or stories.

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- 3.4.5 **Conclusion: Our concern – ultimately – is not “what happened?” but “what did God say and mean?”** The textual material of Scripture came to us in a form we could both understand and respond to. Zondervan’s New International Dictionary of the Christian Church states: “The Biblical revelation comprises the utterances of prophets and apostles and the record of the life and teaching of our Lord, which have authority because they are inspired by the Spirit of God (2 Tim. 3:16). *For Christians, the Biblical writings transcend all other claims to religious authority.* Some claims [have been made in some Christian denominations] to the authority of church tradition, but these have been played down recently in favor of discovering biblical and early church roots of authority for faith.”
- Context is important... especially in determining the translation of a word within a particular verse. However, much less so in determining the meaning of a larger text such as event telling.

### 3.5 Two errors are common when reading or studying Scripture:

- 3.5.1 Concluding that there is no artistic form included or intended in Biblical literature. The Bible includes wonderful and intricate literary qualities as does any literature or history. The beauty of Scripture adds to the experience of the truth, and in many instances is a part of the revelation. Structural organization such as Chiasm, are direct attempts by the author to state to his readers what he thought was important.
- 3.5.2 Concluding that the historical nature of the Bible is not necessarily the meaning or message. Truth is not about the event the story relates, but the author’s point in relating the story... it is all about God’s intended message and meaning.

## 4. Theory of Interpretation: “Literal” versus “Literary and the Cultural-Historical” sense of the text:

### 4.1 Meaning of the term, “Cultural-Historical”

- 4.1.1 Much of the “Author’s Intended Message” meaning that which God wants humanity to hear and understand, is couched in literary packages in a cultural-historical context – thus the literary use of prosaic or poetic imagery within the cultural-historical setting are critical for interpretation and understanding.
- 4.1.2 Interpreters should work seriously with the wording provided in Scripture, accepting the literary precision and intentionality by the author. At the same time, interpreters shouldn’t force a more rigid standard than the author intended. The apostle Paul for example, was a scholar and used a highly sophisticated form of Greek in his writings, while the apostle John was a fisherman and used a very simple and straightforward form of Greek. Both had a huge impact on the Christians of their day and ever since. Don’t forget that the authors in describing the events they wrote about were referring to real spiritual concepts that occurred in a specific cultural-historical context and expressed with widely different writing styles.
- 4.1.3 Work seriously with the cultural-historical context; assuming meaning is synchronically based in the historical & cultural setting. What would a contemporary of the Biblical writer have presumed about the message?
- 4.1.4 For the revelation to have been meaningful to the original hearers, they would need to understand it from their own cultural-historical perspective. As modern-day interpreters, we need to “catch up” with what the hearers of the original message would have understood, only then can we properly interpret it and apply it.
- 4.1.5 The Work of the Spirit is to prayerfully open our hearts and minds so we can render the message fresh and vital to my own congregation. This is definitely not to reinvent meaning, but to reinterpret it afresh making it applicable to the present.



**4.2 Deconstruction – Many denominations argue for a meaning of the term “Literal”,** in reference to the Bible as a “word for word” translation of the text... the Biblical language as employed in Scripture. As Biblical scholars, our focus is to render the author’s intended meaning relevant to our audience. We should understand that the proper meaning may well be illustrative or figurative. Again, this is based on the “Sender’s Intended Message” [SIM] – which is fixed, though the illustrations we employ in interpreting (hyperbole, simile, etc.) would need to be refreshed for succeeding generations. Deconstruction essentially says, “meaning comes from neither sender nor the text; rather it comes from the receiver/interpreter.” This is categorically false, the deconstructional approach is inherently inaccurate because it is by nature fluid and diverse, and it results in multiple meanings to multiple persons. This causes confusion, not wisdom and Biblical enlightenment.

- 4.2.1 “Single Meaning” contrasted to “Multiple Meanings” – Deconstruction is necessarily a subjective interpretative method, it is based on the receiver proving meaning rather than discovering what the sender was inspired to say. As such, the meaning is always in flux, thus deconstructional approaches can result in meaning anything the interpreter wants.
- 4.2.2 “Interpretation by Literary Genre” – Allegorical Interpretation like the genre of poetry, is inherently non-literal. Approximately one-third of the Bible is written in poetry. The genre of narrative is a literal literary form. Narrative involves story and narration by the author, and approximately two-thirds of the Bible is written in narrative. These genres are based upon the literary form or genre of the literature. On the other hand, Augustine taught that there were four Types of meaning expressed in Scripture based upon what the author was expressing. These are: 1) Allegorical, 2) Spiritual, 3) Eschatological, and 4) Moral. Scripture is inherently “Artistic Literature,” and Biblical Literature is some of the most beautiful artistic literature of all times.
- 4.2.3 Noted Biblical scholar DA Carson stated, “Occasionally a remarkable blind spot prevents people from seeing the meaning.”
  - 4.2.1.2.1 People tend to see what they want to see – beware the “brilliant observation” unsupported by conventional hermeneutical thinking and scholarship. New insight doesn’t mean it isn’t true, therefore it is wise to proceed with caution... it might not be what you think it is and then you would be guilty of promoting false truths.
  - 4.2.1.2.2 Approach all thoughts and personal revelations with humility – there are a lot of very wise people who have wrestled with these things for thousands of years with many different observations and conclusions.
  - 4.2.1.2.3 Beware the “Spiritual Insight” that is in contradiction with the facts. Maintain an open mind and a soft heart – pray for brutal honesty in understanding yourself and seeing God’s Truth.
  - 4.2.1.2.4 Look for the obvious meaning first, and then dig for secondary meanings.
- 4.2.2 A combination of “direct” and “figurative language” is normal conversation in human language. By “literal meaning” – the writer refers to the usual or customary sense conveyed by words or expressions at the time or writing. This view of literal meaning is not to be confused with the idea that language, like the multiplication table, is made up of units that always have the same value. This is far from the truth. By “figurative meaning” – the writer has in mind the representation of one concept in terms of another because the nature of the two things compared allows a meaningful analogy to be drawn.
- 4.2.2 Objective Truth – Contrast to Subjective:
  - 4.2.2.2 “Reader-centrism” – Biblical revelation will often be both ‘personal’ and ‘objective’ – such

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is the Nature of the Spirit Who leads us into all Truth.

- 4.2.2.3 “Neo-orthodoxy” – orthodoxy was the norm of the 1800’s. In the 1900’s ‘liberalism’ was the new Moralism. The counter to liberalism is ‘conservatism’. Neo (new) Orthodoxy was the resurgence of orthodoxy in the modern-church age.
- 4.2.2.4 “Fundamentalism” – generally replaced Neo-orthodoxy and is a more extreme form of conservatism distilled down into certain core concepts. Fundamentalism tends to be fixed, rigidly legalistic, inflexible, and divides people into “us-them” camps – this runs counter to the call of Unity in the Body.
- 4.2.3.1 Meaning is Definitive:
  - 4.2.3.1.1 Literal and cultural-historical interpretation requires a defining of the material where one meaning primarily prevails. This definitive view becomes the new-orthodox view of main-stream churches.
  - 4.2.3.1.2 Meaning is finite, not infinite... meaning God revealed His Truth which we should proclaim. God’s Truth is often uncomfortable and may not necessarily be the truth I prefer. Wise leaders will give people room in a range they accept as being orthodox.
  - 4.2.3.1.3 Application of the Meaning... however, can be infinitely diverse. One meaning with a myriad of applications is part of the wonder of Scripture, and evidence of creative Spiritually vital leadership.
- 4.2.3.2 Textual Understanding
  - 4.2.3.2.1 The text is not the same as the event – a description of an event is not the same as the event. We cannot go back and witness the event; we can only understand what the observer reveals to us in their description of the event.
  - 4.2.3.2.2 The event is illustrative of the meaning the author wants to declare. What does the event declare (certainty) and reveal (subtlety) about God, about a person, or a people?
  - 4.2.3.2.3 Interpretation is rightfully ‘of the text’ – rather than ‘of the historical, cultural or even Biblical events’ related in the text.
  - 4.2.3.2.4 The context is critical for interpretation; ultimately the author wrote what they wrote for a specific purpose with well-chosen words, and with artistic literary devices, all within an historical-cultural context. Finding that purpose is the art of hermeneutical interpretation.
  - 4.2.3.2.5 Unlike the English language, which has a plethora of words and word usages, Hebrew and Greek are languages with few words – the meaning of the usage is formed out of the literary-context in which the word is used. Thus, looking at a Hebrew or Greek Lexicon, you can see the variety of word usages available determined by context. Which use is right one depends on the subtleties of the context. The English language has some words that are dependent on context, but most have a precise and specific meaning. When interpreting, don’t allow your presumption that all languages are like our modern usage to guide your thinking – they are not alike. Please note:
    - 4.2.3.2.5.1.1 Ancient Hebrew – comprised of some 3,500 words
    - 4.2.3.2.5.1.2 Ancient Greek – comprised of some 5,000 words
    - 4.2.3.2.5.1.3 Modern English – comprised of over 200,000 and more are added every year. There is great specificity of language that we are accustomed to, therefore it is obvious that the written word would have to communicate differently throughout the ages.

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- 4.2.3.3 The Net Effect – the proper interpretation or meaning is in the whole thought or statement... it is the sum of these parts, not merely a specific piece of it.

### **4.3 MEANING COMES FROM CONTEXT WITHIN THE TEXT, NOT FROM DICTIONARIES THAT STUDY SPECIFIC WORDS OUT OF CONTEXT.**

Dictionaries and commentaries are valuable tools in evaluating Scripture, because they are the results of scholars who have great experience and knowledge in interpreting Scripture, translating & contrasting language to understand what the text means. However bright or wise these people are, they were not inspired to write Scripture, they may only provide their evaluations of it. A serious problem that confronts Christians is those teachers who would “cherry-pick” words out of a passage or even a verse out of the greater Pericope in which it resides and hope to understand its meaning and worse to develop theology around this out of its context. Because of the way translation works, the meaning of the word comes out of the greater passage and pericope... meaning is shaped and formed by the surrounding text. For Scripture, meaning is birthed out of its context. This is especially true of ancient texts where the limitations of words and word usage necessitated a different form of deriving meaning. We presume in arrogance that the great specificity of vocabulary we enjoy in our time and culture existed throughout time... it did not. Though they used words, there were far fewer word choices. Thus, they used the context within the pericope to determine what a specific term actually meant. Ancient literature versus modern literature employed a significantly different means of literary communication taken in whole, not in part.

**Therefore, always work from macro to micro (i.e. the analytical continuum works downward from: book, section, paragraph, sentence, word).**

- 4.3.1** Scripture is Literature in its Highest Form – it was written and it was meant to be read as a whole... not merely in part.

4.3.1.1 “He jumped” is a declarative statement – our initial thought is that we know what this means. However, without context it is meaningless. Who was it that jumped? What compelled him to jump? What did they jump into – or out of? Was it a positive or negative act? What are/were the consequences of the act? What does this statement say about the Nature of God... or about the nature of a person or humanity as a whole? Is there a principle to be applied to my life today? Etc.

4.3.1.2 “Jesus wept” – is a similar declarative statement. Again, out of context what does it mean? Bear in mind that the great portion of the text revealed that Jesus knew that Lazarus would die and deliberately remained where He was to allow his friends death to happen – this was a good thing for the faith of the disciples and all who witnessed it. Jesus knew what he was going to do, raising Lazarus wasn’t a spur of the moment decision – Lazarus is only sleeping.... So why did Jesus weep? What was the message of the author? That knowing all these things, Jesus entered into the emotional pain of the friends and family around Him. He was moved by their emotions. God cares about how we feel – that’s the message the writer wanted to communicate. And further, since Lazarus was dead in the tomb for four days he wasn’t merely dead he was decomposing... “there will be a stench.” The pericope begins at John 11:1 and ends at 11:50. It is in this whole story that the meaning can be drawn out and therefore properly applied.

- 4.3.2** It is acceptable to focus on a smaller portion of the whole, but only after you have determined its meaning within the whole.

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- 4.3.2.1 Meaning thus is derived in relation of the synthesis of the macro and analysis of the micro.
- 4.3.2.2 Meaning comes primarily from the ‘macro’ - the whole story and proceeds then into the ‘micro’ – the sentence and words used to comprise the macro.
- 4.3.2.3 Basic unit of meaning – is the whole work.
- 4.3.2.4 Basic unit of language – is a word. A word is not a basic unit of meaning.
- 4.3.2.5 Analysis requires moving from the whole down into the word.

### 4.3.3 Dictionary Definitions:

**Analysis:** “the separation of an intellectual or substantial whole into its constituent parts for individual study.”

**Synthesis:** “the combining of separate elements or substances to form a coherent whole.” Thus, the basic unit of language is a word, but the basic unit of meaning is the whole thought or story.

### 4.3.4 THEOREM: THE BASIC UNIT OF MEANING IS THE NOT THE SMALLEST PART (SENTENCE OR WORD) BUT THE LARGEST WHOLE, THE WHOLE PIECE OF LITERATURE:

#### 4.3.4.1 EXAMPLES:

1. Heb 6:4-6 – you cannot understand these verses without a good knowledge of the whole epistle.
  2. Utilize discussion of the “Tree of Life” – Gen 3 and Rev 2 – you cannot understand God’s purpose without knowledge of the whole Bible.
  3. John 16:13 & Rom 3:27 – ambiguity & clarity are deliberately employed literary and oratory devices. They may be demonstrated in a play on words, or a cloaked statement such as the parables.
- 4.3.4.2 Thus, don’t add words to Scripture – let the text speak for itself. Our job is to give the text a voice – our voice – In time, space, culture, situation, predicament, etc. – but the Word of God remains itself.
- 4.3.4.3 **“Context does not merely help us understand meaning—it virtually makes meaning.”**
- 4.3.4.4 *“The biblical author has an idea to convey, and it takes the entire biblical document to communicate that idea. . . . words must be understood within the context of a phrase; phrases within a sentence; sentences within a passage; passages within a section; sections within a book.” (student, Fall 94)*
- 4.3.4.5 *“It is not the thread, but the **whole tapestry** of text that conveys meaning.” (student, Fall 00)*
- 4.3.4.6 *Consciously or unconsciously, **PEOPLE ALREADY HAVE SETTLED THE BIG PICTURE, CORRECTLY OR INCORRECTLY**, before they go to the detail. The reality is that it is impossible to go to the detail at once without settlement of the big picture.*
- 4.3.4.7 If we have not consciously, carefully, and accurately appraised the big picture, it is doubtful (though not impossible) that one will have the same sense of the details as the author meant.

### 4.5 DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN INTERPRETATION AND PRE-INTERPRETATION:

- 4.5.1 Pre-interpretation is the preliminary work you invest in to understand the genre [the type of literature and the means by which it communicates]; the context of the historical situation, the cultural values and normative life of the people in the story, and the word usages. This allows us

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to catch up with what the author's original audience would have known so we can approach the text from the position of the writer's context.

- 4.5.2 The goal of the interpreter is to think like the author... until the text becomes as comfortable as reading a newspaper today where you already know the surrounding context... issues, values, struggles, etc. Think how hard it would be to comfortably read a newspaper from an earlier historical period such as even 1800 or 1900... historical and cultural dissonance would remove us from an intimate understanding of what was going on.

4.5.2.1 We must realize that most of the historical data in the author's setting was already known by their readers. We must go and place ourselves in that context – through our study and imagination. The reason the author wrote was to convey a prophetic & theological message to the people of God.

4.5.2.2 **Catching up with original readers is what we are calling “pre-interpretation”** – it is the necessary background work to know or at least to better understand what the original audience of the message would have heard when the message was originally presented. This includes the study of extra textual, and cross textual related things – such as theology, commentary, word knowledge lexicons, and dictionaries.

- 4.5.3 **Interpretation begins after we have caught up with the things the ancient writers and readers understood and took for granted.**

4.5.3.1 Start with the Date:

4.5.3.1.1 The date of the publication is crucial to catch up with who the message was written to, where they lived, what was going on in the region and community, and why the message was important to them, etc.

4.5.2.2.1 The date allows us to cross-reference other period resources and historical writings that would shed light on the text and help us interpret the meaning.

4.5.2.3 Understand the Historical Setting:

4.5.2.3.1 What was happening in the social, political, and cultural world at that time into which the message spoke?

4.5.2.3.2 Many if not most messages of Scripture occurred at times of trials and testing of God's people. We need to understand why the message was written.

4.5.2.4 Understand the Structure of the Message:

4.5.2.4.1 Structural outlines help focus the entire scope of the text; they are a means whereby the author makes known their priorities in writing.

4.5.2.4.2 Structural schemes in Scripture include chiasm, parallel or mirrored texts, Inclusio, etc. These were employed for emphasizing the meaning as well as displaying artistry.

4.5.2.5 Understand the Theology of the Writer:

4.5.2.5.1 The human author's theology is part of the message.

4.5.2.5.2 Every author is saying something about God – what is the message?

4.5.2.5.3 How does the theology fit into the scope of the overarching themes of Scripture.

- 4.5.3 **The original writers employed papyrus “paper” mats, vellum and parchment as their writing material. Often writings may have been written in parts over time, however the “human author” or ‘editor’ who finally assembled the materials into scrolls as one integrated work, is the one who bestowed the final prophetic ministry of the writing.** All were inspired to do their part of the work in providing God's message to humanity. What they provided in Scripture is what humanity needed to know and be obedient to. In faith we trust God's leading on these writers at that time, as well as we trust God's leading of us today. A



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great example of this is the compiled works of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and Psalms – all had several authors and editors who compiled these into the integrated work we now have.

### 4.5.4 Applied Meanings:

4.5.4.2 The struggles the Hebrew tribes had during the period of the Judges demonstrated they were preyed upon by neighboring Kings who stole from them and/or demanded tribute.

4.5.4.2.1 Tithes – were the involuntary tribute required by the Law or treaty or ordinance – where the vassal king was compelled to support the Suzerain Lord or Emperor. The amount of tribute was specified, and terms of support the Suzerain provided were spelled out in a formal agreement or treaty [AKA: covenant], as were penalties if the parties failed to give the required tribute [blessings and curses]. Tithing is tribute imposed on a weaker kingdom and it was paid because you must on the penalty of death.

4.5.4.2.2 Offerings – were the voluntary gifts presented out of love and respect. An offering is a form of worship; tithing is tribute paid to the overlord by compulsion, not worship [like taxes].

4.5.4.2.3 Tithing to God is the norm of the Old Covenant... while love offerings to God are the norm of the New Covenant.

4.5.4.3 Kings and Chronicles are examples of extended history interspersed with prophetic revelations. Same also with the writings of the prophets and the prayers of Daniel.

4.5.5 Big Picture Thinking – when you can see the big picture Scripture paints throughout redemptive history, then you can move into the specifics of the individual texts, the themes that were employed and words used, then you can begin interpreting on the basis of the text.

4.5.6 Developing Hypothesis – Once you get into the “macro” where you see the over-arching ideas, then meaning begins to emerge. It is like the blue-print of a building – looking at the prints is not the same as looking at the building, and the building is more than the prints can hold; the builders know this but this is how we get to building the building. The building is the essence of macro. The micro helps put the finishing touches... the “meat on the bones” of the macro. The blueprint is the essence of the micro.

4.5.7 Sometimes pre-interpretation involves hypothesizing – or using your God given brain and imagination to put yourself into the situation the story or pericope.

4.5.7.2 An example is 1 John 2:19 – who are “they” that John is speaking about? John knew, and his readers knew – they all probably knew their names and identities, their faces and addresses – but we don’t know.

4.5.7.3 1 John 4:1-3 is another example – these 2 events speak of the aftermath of a church split. John is reassuring the remaining believers, and affirming what is right about remaining, and asserting those who left were wrong. He is comforting and encouraging the faithful believers.

4.5.7.4 1 John 2:1-6 “we know that we know Him if” – John and his readers knew all about this event as well. Reconstructing the background is pre-interpreting. In doing so, we come up with an opinion or hypothesis as to what shaped the meaning of the text, and then we test our hypothesis against itself and other pertinent texts to see if it is a valid understanding. Is it consistent with the whole of the message of 1 John? Does it make sense in light of John’s other writings? The “Insight” of meaning should flow logically in conformance with the entirety of the message.

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- 4.5.8 Pre-interpretation is always partial – we cannot reach a 100% understanding of the original writer and readers. However, the meaning in the text and a valid interpretation and application of it is still possible. We don't have to enter into the original language to interpret either, we can interpret from the pages on an English written text. But it is wise to utilize other resources to shape our thinking along the way – to keep us out of the weeds and gullies of false teachings. To this end, comparing the passage against those of other interpretations, cross reference with commentaries and dictionaries. There are several very good resources that combine many references in cd or app form, or online through the web for the serious Bible student. AD uses Zondervan's Pradis 5.0 Bible Study Library Scholar's Edition, an interactive program linking many Bible versions, commentaries, encyclopedias, dictionaries, lexicons, etc.

### **5. Method of Interpretation**

#### **5.1 The Basics:**

- 5.1.1 There are alternative interpretations of individual texts, but the meaning cannot be different from that intended for the original hearers/readers. If the meaning you see would make no sense to them then, throw it out. The test of Scripture is that it remains valid and speaking Truth to each generation.
- 5.1.2 “Who, what, when, & where” – are observational questions made upon the recorded event – they are the raw data of the Biblical equation. These are *objective information*.
- 5.1.3 “How and why” are interpretative questions that are used in explaining meaning – they connect the dots of the data; they explain what the relevance is. These are *subjective information*.
- 5.1.4 The proper goal of the serious student is to understand the material presented on the pages. It is to get the content into the brain so you can process it and form preliminary conclusions – which are working hypothesis that need to be tested. Resist the temptation to jump to conclusions. Study the information first, but don't ignore the elephant in the corner of the room. 1 Tim 2:11-12 is the elephant ... this is not a discussion of “headship” or “covering” as many assume, rather Paul is teaching about servant leadership and mutual responsibility in submission to God and each other.
- 5.1.5 Logic – God has stamped the human brain with categorical logic – that is we have a pre-disposition to accept and follow logic. It is part of the nature of Truth that draws us in when we hear the story presented in Scripture. How you “feel about it” is subjective, whereas logic is objective.
- 5.1.6 A vast array of evangelical tools are now available to us – but it is not enough to have a toolbox full of tools, we also need to know which are the right tools to apply and when & how to apply them.
- 5.1.7 Submission to God in humility is foundational – it leads us to the place of faith and obedience in interpretation. The better work you do in faith believing, the more you'll see and learn God's ways. Knowing God in this manner will compel you to your knees.
- 5.1.8 The main text has priority to extra texts and support materials, but each of the latter has an important place in interpretation.
- 5.1.9 Synthesis is part of an adequate analysis – and analysis must always precede hypothesis and prayerful conclusion.
- 5.1.10 Always major on the majors, and minor on the minors – stay with the main message and don't be confused by minor issues. God wants to be found, He wants to be known – He

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is not a God of confusion, but He has provided the means by which He can be found and known. We must submit to Him and pursue Him under His terms.

**5.1.11** Interpret what is in the text before looking for what is not in it – don't force a thought pattern that doesn't exist. Preach the Word, and let God do the work of conviction and illumination.

5.1.11.1 Revelation has a penchant for numbers: chapters 2-3 has 7 churches; chapters 6-8 has 7 seals; chapters 8-11 has 7 trumpets; 12-14 has no sevens; 15-16 has 7 bowls; 17 on has no sevens.

5.1.11.2 Obviously 7 is an important number because in the Hebrew thought pattern it is a complete number – but this is not the main message of Revelation.

5.1.11.3 We can get lost in secondary things and overlook the primary things. Be aware of the secondary as subservient to the primary.

**5.2 Primary Textual considerations** (2 Tim 3:16; *the writing [he graphe] is the Word from God for us. All Scripture is inspired God Revelation – it reveals different things and different aspects about God, and gives us enough information to be drawn into relationship with God, but Scripture is not all that God is – it is an introduction, not the sum-total of all Truth.*

**5.2.1 Macro-exegesis** (Synthesis) “Instead of several parts that are seemingly unrelated, the reader attains a whole piece with parts that are harmoniously interconnected.” (Student fall 01) **BEGIN BY READING FOR THE BIG PICTURE.**

5.2.1.1 Macro-exegesis is all about literary themes, writing structure, and genre.

5.2.1.2 After your macro analysis, then begin micro-exegesis analysis.

**5.2.2 Literary Theme** – what is/are the main point(s) that the author is trying to communicate? We have to presume that the author intends his message to be found and understood. We also have to presume that the audience to whom the message was delivered had the tools and the means to appropriate and apply the message.

**5.2.3 Writing structure** – the form the message is presented in is part of the message. Attention to the structural make-up and flow of the text will shine light on the author's intended message. Part of the beauty of Scripture ensues in the form the author used to convey his thoughts. Everything about Scripture is very deliberate and purposeful.

**5.2.4 GENRE** – BIBLICAL LITERATURE INCLUDES THESE GENRE: PROSE/POETRY, NARRATIVE, WISDOM, EPIC, PROPHECY, APOCALYPTIC, PARABLE, EPISTLE.

5.2.4.1 **Definition of Genre** – A category of artistic composition marked by a distinctive style, form, or content. Genres develop by evolving – it's a natural process of communication. Writers cannot invent something brand new, but they can tweak or hybridize existing methodologies to communicate in new ways. Genres constitute a group by reason of significant characteristics held in common with one another in distinction from others. Genre's may include companion books which convey a similar style – 1) Chronicles, Ezra & Nehemiah; 2) Genesis & Deuteronomy; 3) Daniel & Revelation, etc.

5.2.4.2 **E. E. Johnson** – Defined genre as a kind of distant literature, where the group is subject to a known rule of operation.

5.2.4.3 **Poythress** – Group of discourses from a culture that would be recognized by that culture as having distinctions and rules governing the subject and form.

5.2.4.4 **Longman** – Writings are not created out of whole cloth; they are a patchwork pieced together. Hence, there must be a connection to a known tradition for

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effective communication. They use similar forms through which the writer sends signals to the reader – some are intuitively known, some are not obvious – but they are there to be discovered by the astute reader.

5.2.4.5 \*\* “We don’t open a phone book and start reading as if it were a love letter.”  
(Student, 6/02)

5.2.4.6 **Adler** – The book of Revelation could not be written in another genre – the message could only be carried by poetry, never narrative/story or a comic strip.

5.2.4.7 Different genres will have different study value to exegete meaning. The issue is utility that is the appropriate strategy to discover the meaning intended. Genres are different methods of communication – a one-size study approach does not fit all.

### **5.3 Attention to Genre – In this Section We’ll Look at Each of the Biblical Genre’s and Elements of how they Communicate:**

**5.3.1 Poetry** – *Poetry, like the rest of literature, is the interpretation of human experience in an artistic form. It differs from other literary types by being a more stylistic and tersely concentrated form of discourse and being a more consciously artistic form than other literary types. This form is achieved through the use of 1) images, 2) symbols, 3) allusions, 4) metaphors, 5) similes, 6) emotive vocabulary, and 7) multiple meanings. A unique feature of Poetry is that it impacts the emotions and draws out an emotional response from the reader. Poetry is language intended to convey heightened experience. Poetry engages the reader in a predictable emotional manner whose beauty and power is overlooked if improperly read. The fact that poetry is stylized means that as an object of beauty a poem will display in fuller measure and with greater frequency the components of artistic form, including pattern or design, unity, theme, or centrality, balance, harmony, contrast, unified progression, recurrence, and variation.*

5.3.1.1 Poetry is closely related to musical verse and communicates in an unscientific manner – it is the language of emotion... of love and longing, sadness and lament. Trying to force a literal interpretation of poetry just doesn’t work. The message is couched in metaphor and simile which lifts the thought to another level – an experiential level and a contemplative level – where the soul connects with the soul of the author.

5.3.1.2 “Only a Philistine could not love the psalms.” – Pastor/Professor Brian Morgan

5.3.1.3 Poetic verses are an extremely lyrical and dense form of writing. It is difficult reading, and more difficult to derive meaning from as we Westerners usually struggle with this writing form. Plus, Hebrew Poetry is a most challenging poetic art form. The disciple will need to meet the poet on his terms to derive his meaning, which is the object of hermeneutics.

5.3.1.4 Poetry is a means to join the poet in an experience – the meaning is separate from the experience, but the experience is foundational to the meaning.

5.3.1.5 Meter is more relevant to modern poetry than to many ancient and traditional forms of poetry. Where modern songs have beats per measure and words that complement the measure with rhyme, Hebrew poetry had *strophes* where the thoughts are conveyed in twists and turns [strophe means “to turn”] in the verse, which is how the Hebrew poets created the rhythm in their poetry.

5.3.1.6 More than a third of the Hebrew Scriptures contain poetry.

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- 5.3.1.6.1 Poetry is the main vehicle in Scripture for expressing prayer & praise [Psalms], wisdom [proverbs], love [Song of Songs], complaint [Job], and prophecy.
- 5.3.1.6.2 Because so much of Scripture is poetic, we cannot properly understand the text apart from a concerted effort to both identify and digest the poetic genre. Most Bibles identify poetry by displaying it in shortened text-lines.
- 5.3.1.6.3 Many books are a blend of genre, where you have to pay attention to see which is the poetic portion.
- 5.3.1.7 Poetic example – Job, like other wisdom literature is poetic. The conversations in Job are not literal... they were deliberately crafted. The writer used the experience to communicate a truth he learned. Interpreting poetry is not to try and recreate the conversation or the event, but to allow the poet to draw us into his world and take us on a journey. Job and his friends shared a theology where virtue = blessing, and evil = punishment. This was pretty typical of Old Testament theology. In the book of Job, God is communicating through the poet a notion of a higher calling beyond the here and now that we can't see, but we can feel and accept through faith. We can never know and understand the sum-total of what God is up to, but we can trust Him to be Faithful, because it's His Nature to be so.
- 5.3.1.8 Structural Levels in the Poem:
  - 5.3.1.8.1 The poem should be taken as a whole.
  - 5.3.1.8.2 Sections within the poem.
  - 5.3.1.8.3 Stanza [usually 2 or 3 strophes].
  - 5.3.1.8.4 Strophes – literally 'turns' within the text that accent a rhetorical or argumentative design. A strophe has an internal as well as external cohesion: the strophe may:
    - 5.3.1.8.4.1 Constitute one syntactic unit, such as one compound sentence, or a sentence extended in a different way.
    - 5.3.1.8.4.2 Formulate or explain one thought.
    - 5.3.1.8.4.3 Present its *cola* [one poetic line] as a clear series.
    - 5.3.1.8.4.4 Be an imbedded speech, as a quotation.
    - 5.3.1.8.4.5 Present or work out a metaphor or simile.
    - 5.3.1.8.4.6 Demarcate itself by means of an Inclusio or a frame that opens and closes a unit.
  - 5.3.1.8.5 Verse – demarcated by semantics or meaning
  - 5.3.1.8.6 Versets – or *cola* is one poetic line... such lines are usually paired with a complementing or contrasting thought to expand its meaning. Take the example of Proverbs 15... the author offers a thought in the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence, then expands it in the following. This pairing is a typical form of Hebrew poetry.
  - 5.3.1.8.7 Words – word choices were carefully made, but word meaning is contextually derived by the emotion-feeling it draws out.
  - 5.3.1.8.8 Syllables – in the original language syllables were often paired to create meter.



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5.3.1.8.9 Sounds – in the original language the sound of the words were paired for interest and beauty. An example of this is found in Genesis 1:2 – what is translated as “formless and void” is in Hebrew “Bohu and Tohu.” The sound of the original language is part of the stylized message.

5.3.1.9 Hebrew poetry is very complex, but much of its intricacies are observable only in the original text.

5.3.1.9.1 Poets made a point to create beauty as they revealed truth.

5.3.1.9.2 Poets counted *strophes* and *colas* throughout the poem, and these numbers had significance as part of the revealed message.

5.3.1.9.3 Poems almost always had ideas or thoughts stated in Pairs – which has the effect of binocular vision – stated one way, and then restated another provided focus for the thought and promoted understanding.

Example: Isa 40:3bc –

‘A’ cola - In the desert prepare... the way for the Lord;

‘B’ cola - Make straight in the wilderness... a highway for our God.

5.3.1.9.4 Poems often had features where thoughts or emotions were developed into a crescendo.

Example Micah 6:1-8 the crescendo rises to gargantuan proportions.

Imagine the prophet railing at his audience until he is practically screaming by 6:7. Then in broken hearted grief in 6:8. Feel the emotion of the moment – this is what poetry helps convey.

5.3.1.9.4.1 6:1-2 – In this poem God is using the mountains as His jury... why? Mountains are majestic, imposing, and permanent compared to fallible humanity. It also conveys that there were no worthy people to act as leaders in this capacity, because all had been corrupted.

5.3.1.9.4.2 6:3-5 – God sets the relational tone of the poem to rebuke and embarrass His people.

5.3.1.9.4.3 6:6-7 is hyperbole – the ridiculousness of the magnitude in the offerings indicates that God doesn’t need these things and isn’t impressed by it.

5.3.1.9.4.4 6:8 – the problem is stated clearly – their moral and ethical failure is what God has convicted them of.

5.3.1.9.5 Much Hebrew poetry was written so it could be chanted as part of their worship at Temple and later in Synagogue.

5.3.1.9.6 Poems also had a descending feature where the thoughts started in general and then focused in particular.

Example Ps 2:2

Why did the nations...	rage,
And the peoples...	devise futile things?
The kings of the earth...	took their stand
And the rulers...	were gathered together
	Against the Lord, and
	Against His anointed One.

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### 5.3.1.10 4 Characteristics of Hebrew poetry:

5.3.1.10.1 Parallelism – the most dominant characteristic of Hebrew poetry – you need to ask how is line “B” like line “A”, and how do they differ?

#### 5.3.1.10.1.1 Example 1 - Is 40:3 –

Clear the way in the wilderness for the Lord.

Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

Note – The “A” line makes a statement, the “B” line echoes the statement and intensifies it, expanding its thought.

#### 5.3.1.10.1.2 Example 2 – Is 1:3 –

An ox knows its owner, a donkey its masters manger.

Israel does not know, my people do not understand.

Note – This is a very unflattering statement about Israel. An ox was considered a noble beast, the donkey not so much.

Israel’s nobility was lost, and God’s people were dumber and more stubborn than a donkey.

5.3.1.10.2 Gapping – AKA terse expression as an economy of words is used to force the hearer/reader to fill in the blanks.

#### 5.3.1.10.2.1 Example 1 – Is 59:9 –

We hope for light, but behold, darkness.

For brightness, but we walk in gloom.

#### 5.3.1.10.2.2 Filling in the gaps we should understand:

We hope for light, but behold, we walk in darkness.

We hope for brightness, but behold, we walk in gloom.

5.3.1.10.3 Heightened style – be prepared to look for figures of speech that evoke strong emotions, for style forms and structure that elevates thought.

“The word sublimity [best describes Hebrew poetry, and is] that force of composition which strikes and overpowers the mind, which excites the passions, and which expresses ideas at once with perspicuity [made clear by specifics of perspective rather than reason] and elevation. The language of reason is cool, temperate, and humble, well arranged and clear... while the language of emotion is hot, extreme, noble, often scattered and unclear... reason speaks literally, while passion speaks poetically.” It is interesting that theology has been entrusted to poets.

5.3.1.10.4 Meter & rhythm – strophe:

5.3.1.10.4.1 Hebrew poetry is characterized by rapid shifts and changes of thought – strophe means “turn” or “twist.”

5.3.1.10.4.2 Example – Ps 13 consists of three strophes:

#### 5.3.1.10.4.2.1 Strophe 1:

13:2a How long Yahweh; will you ignore me forever?

b How long will you hide your face from me?

:3a How long will I have cares on my mind,

b grief in my heart all day?

c How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

#### 5.3.1.10.4.2.2 Strophe 2:

:4a Look at me, answer me Yahweh!

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- b My God, restore luster to my eyes,
- c lest I sleep the sleep of death,
- :5a lest my enemy say, I have overcome Him,
- b lest my foes exult when I totter.
- 5.3.1.10.4.2.3 Strophe 3:
  - :6a But I trust in your faithfulness,
  - b my heart will exult in your deliverance.
  - c I will sing to Yahweh, for he has been good to me.
- 5.3.1.10.4.2.4 Cohesion in the first strophe is found in the chain of questions “how long” 4 times.
- 5.3.1.10.4.2.5 Cohesion in the second strophe is found in the contrast of the positive (4ab) and negative (4c-5b). The positive has 2 commands and 2 vocatives for God in a neat Chiasm, after which the negative.
- 5.3.1.10.4.2.6 Cohesion in the third strophe is shown in personal positive statements of faith, and a positive expected outcome.

**5.3.2 Historical Narrative** – these are stories couched in a specific historical context with distinct real people [generally historical entities], who are acting out a drama the author is utilizing to make their point. The question is “How do we enter into this?” First, we need historical and cultural context, and then our imagination can help lead us through the experience. Remember that historical narrative is NOT merely history. There is a theological meaning behind the story, and that is what’s important.

5.3.2.1 Example: Num 15:32-36 – the Sabbath breaker was put to death – what does that mean to us today?

5.3.2.1.1 Literary context 15:22-31

5.3.2.1.2 The issue is “unintentional sin” versus “intentional/defiant sin”. Forgiveness was provided for unintentional sin through prescribed sacrifice which covered for this sin. There was no method of providing forgiveness for intentional sin. In the community of God’s people, the deliberately sinful person was to be cut off from community fellowship, and from God.

5.3.2.1.3 Chapter 15: has didactic [morally instructive] prescriptions for sin. Chapter 16: is historical narrative – for the Sabbath breaker [one who doesn’t love and long for God], looking at the event described in the text doesn’t make sense. For the Sabbath keeper [one who loves God and longs for His presence], looking at the text from their perspective makes sense. Rebellion against God and His purpose has many subtle facets, and all are utterly sinful.

5.3.2.2 Example: Hebrews 10:26-31 – plays off on Number 15 & 16 – there is one ordinance for Jew and Gentile alike... both are equal under the Law and Grace.

5.3.2.2.1 Sinai covenant – obedience resulted in blessing, and the worst thing for willful defiance in sin is death.

5.3.2.2.2 New covenant – believing in Jesus is blessing, and the worst thing for

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defying Jesus is separation from God in hell.

5.3.2.3 History is the vehicle of the prophet's message, but it is crucial to remember that **the text IS the message**. The author in effect, invents meaning to attach to the event described.

5.3.2.3.1 It can be useful to approach historical narrative as if it is fiction in order to see the meanings intended. Many apologists are so busy looking for a literal meaning that they miss the message. Look for the whole message in the story!

5.3.2.3.2 Remember that the author wants their reader to understand their message – it may be subtle or couched in cultural/historical obscurity, but it is there for the patient and diligent disciple to find.

5.3.2.3.3 In the case of the event, what happened? You cannot analyze the event which happened in the past – your reconstruction is doomed to failure. Rather, in the use of the text, what does it say about God and humanity? From this perspective we can analyze the text and the meaning is preserved there, whereas you cannot analyze the event.

5.3.2.4 Narrative Story is a genre. It is a communicator's means of communicating. The message is found in the place where we can enter into the story through our imagination and discover the meaning of the message.

Example: What is the message of the story of David & Goliath?

5.3.2.4.1 It demonstrates that Saul was unworthy of being king. He would not take up Goliath's challenge – his fear overcame his sense of Godly outrage.

5.3.2.4.2 David was worthy – his Godly outrage overcame his fear. More appropriately, David feared God more than men.

5.3.2.4.3 When Saul proved himself faithless, David became God's choice for king. That is the literary/hermeneutical message of this story. Reliving the event is not useful for hermeneutics.

5.3.2.4.4 There are other thoughts that may be extrapolated from the story, but this is what the context primarily focuses on.

5.3.2.5 Hermeneutics verses Homiletics – Hermeneutics is all about receiving the author's intended message. Homiletics is all about preaching the author's message through retelling the story in modern day situations.

Hermeneutics [Interpreting] and Homiletics [preaching] are two very different things.

Example – Sermon on the Mount: The story of feeding the 5,000 is in all four gospels – which is significant. Matthew and John both were there and personally observed the event.

5.3.2.5.1 In Matthew's version, the 5,000 were the Jews, and the 4,000 were the Gentiles.

5.3.2.5.1.1 Matthew organized his book on five discourses and employed historical narrative to lace them together: chapters 5-7 is the sermon on the mount, chapter ten is the sending out of the disciples, chapter thirteen are parables, chapter eighteen is the Kingdom of Heaven, chapters 24-25 is the end of days.

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Through all of the story, the focus is on Jesus declaring the Truth of the Kingdom of Heaven to the people. The miracles validated His authority.

5.3.2.5.1.2 The 5-fold discourse structure suggests that Matthew was employing a pattern of the 5-fold Pentateuch written by Moses.

5.3.2.5.1.3 This is a deliberate and strategic use of literary structure to punctuate the message that Jesus was more important than Moses – a message that would polarize the Jews... Moses was God's chosen Prophet/leader, Jesus is God incarnate and thus has not just the greater authority, but the ultimate authority.

5.3.2.5.2 In John's version, Jesus is God and is clearly portrayed as greatly superior Moses.

5.3.2.5.2.1 Moses delivered the Israelites out of slavery [bondage] to Egypt with the miraculous sign of crossing through the Red Sea. Jesus delivered humanity from the bondage to Sin, with the miraculous sign of walking on the water. Moses crossed on land, while Jesus walked on the water. Jesus can go and do what Moses [and man] cannot.

5.3.2.5.2.2 Where Moses spoke face to face with God, Jesus is God and spoke face to face with humanity. Jesus communed continually with the Father and announced that He and God were ONE.

5.3.2.5.2.3 Moses introduced the Sinai Covenant based on animal blood sacrifice and The Law – ritual and faith with the Temple practices at the center of community life. Jesus introduced a New Covenant – based upon His Own Blood whose value is appropriated by faith – the Temple is no longer valid as the place where God resides and must be worshiped, God now resides in the Hearts of each believer and it is not exclusive to the Jews... all humanity is included. The center of community life is now the indwelling Spirit that unifies all true believers – disciples who are progressively being transformed into the character and nature of Jesus.

5.3.2.5.2.4 Thus, Jesus is the new and vastly superior Moses, and God's people [Israel] should obey Jesus as historical Israel obeyed Moses.

5.3.2.6 Biblical authors were not particularly concerned about historical or scientific accuracy, instead they were more focused on proclaiming God's message – which is the Bible... God's Word. We do a disservice to read the Scriptures as mere history... it is theology delivered in a story in a particular historical setting. We also do a disservice to treat Scripture as science... Truth emerges but it is not intentionally scientific, it is intentionally Spiritual.

Example: The book of Job is wisdom literature – Solomon is the father of wisdom literature. The book starts with a conversation between God and Satan – the readers are made aware of a celestial challenge of Satan against God, while Job



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never knew about this conversation, so Job labored and suffered in ignorance about the true nature of the challenge.

5.3.2.6.1 What was the author telling his readers? Both Job and the readers are made aware that they cannot understand God's purposes, but we can trust Him and continue to be faithful to Him.

5.3.2.6.1.1 Understanding is not the solution; faith is the solution.

5.3.2.6.1.2 The author of the book of Job is unknown but was probably Solomon, who also wrote Ecclesiastes – another very difficult book. What was he telling his readers? Whether we understand the matter or not, God can be trusted. Understanding is wonderful, but God is more interested in relational intimacy with obedience and faith.

5.3.2.6.1.3 The message is that God will bless and test His servants and loved ones. Testing is a common theme throughout Scripture. In the dialogue with God and Satan boundaries are set for what Satan is allowed to do to test Job. Job couldn't understand what was going on, but he could and did continue to believe and hold to his faith... because of that, he was ultimately vindicated and blessed.

5.3.2.6.2 The Bible is a unified and integrated literary work – the message is in the text. The proper work of the interpreter is to discover the meaning God intended us to find [hermeneutics]. The proper job of the preacher is to deliver the message in a manner that people can understand and apply to their lives [homiletics].

5.3.2.6.3 The Bible is never merely telling history or a story, it is all about revealing a Spiritual message in the literary context, which is the vehicle for communication of God's Love and Purpose to humanity.

**5.3.3 Epistle** – these are the pastoral letters that were written by the apostles to the church leadership. The New Testament is comprised of the four Gospels, the Epistles, and Revelation.

5.3.3.1 Typical epistle structure is salutation and greeting, followed by the main body of the message, and ending with a conclusion.

5.3.3.2 Typical epistle language is expository teaching, it is direct talk from an Apostle to church leaders, the sort of language as a friend would use in a letter.

5.3.3.3 Epistles are primarily “occasional” – they are each directed to a particular situation in a particular setting to meet a particular need of the church.

5.3.3.4 One of the qualifying requirements of New Testament Scripture was that it was written by an Apostle or under his direct authority through a secretary. Luke was a close companion of Paul and wrote his 2-volume set of Gospel of Luke and Acts of the apostles. Mark was a close companion of Peter and wrote the Gospel that bears his name, and Hebrews was probably written by Barnabas who was Paul's initial mentor and teacher. The balance of the New Testament was directly apostolic.

5.3.3.4.1 The epistle is a letter written to a particular group of people or a particular church in response to problems they were having within

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- their congregation. There was a sharp focus [purpose] to the letter.
- 5.3.3.4.2 While the letter was read to the entire congregation and often copied and shared with other congregations, the author's message was targeted to a specific purpose. Public reading helped support the necessary changes required allowing the leaders to employ Apostolic authority.
  - 5.3.3.4.3 The purpose of the letter was to shepherd the church, to identify and correct wrong thinking or actions.
  - 5.3.3.4.4 Paul's letters particularly were written for a predominantly Greek/pagan culture – it is reasonable to expect that they would have problems separating themselves from their surrounding culture and past cultural habits.
  - 5.3.3.4.5 Hermeneutically, you cannot take the content literally – you need to factor into the equation the cultural and historical situation the author is writing into [hermeneutic discovery] to find the author's intended meaning. Then you can work on modern-day application [homiletic explication].
  - 5.3.3.4.6 Interpreting Scripture is hard work and one size does not fit all!!! Resist the tendency to add in things that were not included in the original message. Preach the Word – and let it do its work on the hearts and minds of people.
  - 5.3.3.4.7 Example: Ephesians is the most general epistle about theology. We can presume they needed reinforcement about the basic tenants of the faith. Their hearts were good, but their minds were wandering.
  - 5.3.3.4.8 Example: the Corinthians were the most messed up congregations because of their past thoroughly pagan cultural habits. While they seemed to have had a mental grasp of the faith, their hearts were often pulled astray and they were challenged to live a disciplined life out in their cultural setting.
  - 5.3.3.4.9 Example: the letter to the Romans has the most developed theology in the New Testament. Paul had not been to Rome when he wrote the letter, but he knew people who had direct knowledge of their problems and knew the situation there, and was asked to intercede into a difficult matter of a pending church split between Christian Jews and non-Jew converts to Christianity.
    - 5.3.3.4.9.1 The Roman church is presumed to have been founded by Jews who were in Jerusalem for Passover and witnessed the events leading up to and following Christ's crucifixion.
    - 5.3.3.4.9.2 There were several ethnic quarters in Jerusalem, and the Jew were not thought highly of. Their knowledge of the Old Testament brought them leadership prestige in the Christian community as Gentiles were turning to faith.
    - 5.3.3.4.9.3 These Jews had been the leaders and teachers in the church, but in 49 AD they were driven out of Rome. In the several years following the non-Jewish Christians did well in maturing and

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running the church. The Christian Jews were ultimately allowed to return in 53 AD and wanted to reclaim their place of leadership, which caused the problem Paul was writing into.

5.3.3.4.9.4 Paul took the opportunity to make sure the church was given detailed theological teaching, while placing them on equal standing before God. And it is a good thing too... as Romans having been written in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century provides a treasure of the theology of the early church that otherwise would have been lost to us.

### **5.3.4 Wisdom – Knowledge Literature:**

5.3.4.1 This includes Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Job.

5.3.4.2 Wisdom literature is predominantly poetic – expect it to be difficult reading because of its use of density and imagery... not to mention the theological & philosophical heaviness of the content.

5.3.4.3 There are 2 main types of wisdom literature:

5.3.4.3.1 Proverbial wisdom – composed of short sayings whose goal is to promote contentment through proper thinking, and proper living.

5.3.4.3.2 Speculative wisdom – deals with the problems of pain & suffering, the evident disparity of the wicked prospering and the righteous suffering while God seemingly allows matters to continue, and other problems of human existence.

5.3.4.4 The “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” is common and this is an important clue! Always look for such repeated sayings/usages.

5.3.4.5 “Lord” is the most important word – the context is servant to Master.

5.3.4.6 Worship of the “True God” is crucial – in contrast to the idolatry that was prevalent in the “Nations.”

5.3.4.7 “Fear of the True God” is the rational result of even the most imperfect knowledge. In this context, “fear” does not mean being afraid or fearful, rather it relates to Awe and Wonder.

5.3.4.8 Many of the wisdom sayings were borrowed from older literary “pagan” sources – including Egyptian, and other middle eastern cultures. The authors sifted through sayings which resonated with their spiritual hearts, and then expressed the truth they discovered in a new context with their own distinct theological perspective. These borrowings are not particularly troubling... as they bear witness that “Truth” may be known and discovered by the witness of creation [General Revelation].

5.3.4.9 Wisdom literature teaches truth through “aphorisms” or related thoughts that the reader can connect to.

5.3.4.10 Wisdom literature has a “reflective” and “contemplative” style. It invites the reader to enter into the author’s world of quiet and faithful contemplation. Reading in any other mindset will not avail an insightful result. You have to meet the author on his ground to understand what he is communicating to his audience... then after you have understood what he said, you can deduce how to apply it to our situation.

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5.3.4.11 There are 4 appropriate approaches to wisdom:

- 5.3.4.11.1 Meditation – which is “chewing on a thought or problem over a period of time... much as a dog chews on a bone or a cow chews its cud.” Insight is eventually provided through the Spirit.
- 5.3.4.11.2 Contemplation – is dwelling on God... on His greatness, wonder, etc. It is looking for a fresh experience with Him. “This is like hitchhiking – you deliberately place yourself before God where you may encounter Him and allow Him to take you on an inner journey of discovery.”
- 5.3.4.11.3 Reflection – allowing God’s Spirit to illuminate my heart and mind... it is dealing with my nature in my inner-being before God’s Spirit.
- 5.3.4.11.4 Reception – There is an interesting combination of active work/quest on my part as well as passive reception. God being loving and respectful doesn’t force Himself on us, we have to deliberately seek Him, to put ourselves in His way... through prayer, especially worship, and Scripture. Isaiah, Daniel, and the Apostle John [as well as others] all had visions/experiences with God when they were praying... that is not accidental... it is a clue. As is Jesus teaching on ask-seek-knock in Matthew 7:7 - “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

5.1.1.1 To the ancients, the quest of philosophy/theology meant to have a fundamental love of wisdom and truth. To this extent, wisdom literature is another means of expressing truth. To this end, Ecclesiastes is a commentary on Genesis:

- 5.1.1.1.1 Sin has changed everything, and no amount of wisdom will avail or insulate you from pain, sin, futility, or evil. These are all part of the fallen world in which we live.
- 5.1.1.1.2 No amount of wisdom or knowledge will deliver you from life’s pain and trouble.
- 5.1.1.1.3 No amount of piety or personal holiness will deliver you for these pains and troubles either.
- 5.1.1.1.4 All humanity must faithfully endure these aspects of our common heritage awaiting God’s promised Messiah-Savior.

**5.1.2 Psalms – Worship** – Psalms are poetic lyrics set to music – though the music is lost, the lyrics are preserved.

- 5.1.2.1 One basic component of psalms is a profound love for and appreciation of God. “What is Heaven but a song of gratitude and love and praise by everything created to the Source of its creation?”
- 5.1.2.2 Psalms are love songs devoted to God. Many focus on Praise, Adoration, and Gratitude; while others focus on lament, asking God to intervene in the events of man and bring justice and mercy. Many were used during Temple services much as modern hymns are used in church services. Others were used during the pilgrimage to the Temple for high-Holy days and festivals.
  - 5.1.2.2.1 The New Testament account of Luke includes Jesus being presented at the Temple (2:21-40; 41-52) would be such occasion for a celebratory pilgrimage. As would also be the Triumphal entry into Jerusalem before Passover.

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- 5.1.2.2.2 Ps 2 is about the Messianic King – and is one of the most quoted in the gospels.
- 5.1.2.3 Another basic component is prayerful supplication – knowing that God not only loves hearing from His people, but also loves blessing them.
  - 5.1.2.3.1 Rejoicing in who God is and what He has done.
  - 5.1.2.3.2 Interceding on behalf of the faithful for God’s active involvement in the world and in individual lives.
- 5.1.2.4 Another component is reflecting in piety on the Greatness and Majesty of God
  - 5.1.2.4.1 Ps 119 – the heavens declare – obviously the heavens have no voice, but this personification of creation makes a point about God, not about science or the working of the universe.
  - 5.1.2.4.2 Ps 63 is David’s love poem in the aftermath of Absalom’s rebellion – a banquet in the desert.
- 5.1.2.5 Psalms like wisdom literature are poetic. As such, they are not to be taken literally, but rather figuratively. It is dense imagery with strong emotional import.
- 5.1.2.6 While wisdom literature makes its appeal to the mind, psalms are all about the heart. They are dripping with feelings and emotions. The psalms display a genuine appreciation for the Greatness of God, and this is foundational for the love of God.
- 5.1.2.7 It is noteworthy that David wrote Psalms, while Solomon wrote proverbs.
  - 5.1.2.7.1 David was described as “a man after God’s own heart.” While we merely accept this that God loved David, the reciprocal is often overlooked... David literally loved God and sought His heart.
  - 5.1.2.7.2 Solomon proved that wisdom alone won’t lead you into a love affair with God. Wisdom and knowledge cannot sustain an abiding relationship, but love can. It is not by accident that Jesus is Messianic in the line of David and that Jesus appeal is both mind (IQ) and heart (EQ).
- 5.1.2.8 Psalm types include:
  - 5.1.2.8.1 Lament – pouring out one’s complaint to God.
  - 5.1.2.8.2 Praise & worship – expressing love and appreciation.
  - 5.1.2.8.3 History – recalling God’s Glory/action in the past and hope for the future.
  - 5.1.2.8.4 Kingdom – Kingdom of God is a major Biblical theme – worldly kings were to rule as vassals under the dominion of the Suzerain... God is the Lord of all.
  - 5.1.2.8.5 Messianic – God’s Anointed who would establish God’s perfect kingdom on earth.
- 5.1.3 Prophecy – “And God gave us Prophets”**
  - 5.1.3.1 God provided three roles to lead His people – the priest, the king, and the prophet.
    - 5.1.3.1.1 The Priest mediated worship and God’s Word with the people.
    - 5.1.3.1.2 The King was God’s vassal king in protecting the people and providing for the nation.
    - 5.1.3.1.3 The Prophet helped in keeping the king and priests aligned with God’s will and purpose. The three offices together led and managed God’s



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people.

- 5.1.3.2 Prophetic writings were intended for the benefit of God's people to direct them and their leaders and/or redirect them as appropriate. Thus, the historical and cultural context is crucial to understand for the proper hermeneutic interpretation of prophecy. Prophetic writings are profoundly theological, and they consciously display God in all His glory and majesty.
- 5.1.3.3 We need to think of God's people [ourselves included] in terms of our "Spiritual Trajectory" – we are always moving toward or away or often on a tangent in relation to God's redemptive will and purpose. Prophets rely on the Spirit to keep God's people in alignment knowing it is God's perspective that's important. God frequently needs to realign us... this is prophetic ministry.
  - 5.1.3.3.1 Prophetic writings are closed... as is all of Scripture. The Bible is a completed work – the ongoing work is in the Spirit using the Bible as foundational resource. There are new insights and applications, but no new Scriptural revelation.
  - 5.1.3.3.2 The "Office of Prophet" in the Old Testament was to serve as part of the "Triumvirate" of prophet, priest, and king. The role of prophet was to call God's people to Him, to identify and anoint the king, and to keep the king, priest and people aligned with God. John the Baptist was the last Old Testament prophet... he came preaching repentance then identified and anointed Jesus. Afterward, his role was to diminish as his purpose had been fulfilled. From this point on, Jesus would fill all three roles as King, Priest and Prophet.
  - 5.1.3.3.3 Prophetic ministry continues – it is those who continue to "make straight" the Way of the Lord. Prophetic ministry is Word Ministry.
  - 5.1.3.3.4 "Compelled to Preach" is an outstanding characteristic of the Holy Spirit inspired gift – you are unable to do otherwise, or you do otherwise to the detriment of your soul.
- 5.1.3.4 Prophecy is God's message being delivered to His people.
- 5.1.3.5 Prophecy tends to have a dual focus – looking backward to the past, and forward to the future. By delivering a message into the here and now the prophet connects their audience to past revelation and action, to find application in the immediate situation, and looking forward to an uncertain future that only God knows.
- 5.1.3.6 Prophecy is hopeful – we can rely on God because of His past Goodness; we remember His past actions as a stimulus to faith in present and future actions.
- 5.1.3.7 Prophecy is not prediction; it is God's anointed messenger speaking for God. Prophecy is all about making straight the path that leads to the Lord – it is instructing God's people about how to live and act as God's Holy Nation while living on sinful earth; and awaiting God's Glorious promise of restoration, that is restored humanity and a restored creation.
- 5.1.3.8 Prophets were individuals who were called and set apart for God's exclusive use.
  - 5.1.3.8.1 With the exception of Jonah, prophets were sold out for God and aligned to His purposes. Jonah did not want Nineveh saved, he wanted them destroyed. God had to go to great lengths to redirect Jonah.
  - 5.1.3.8.2 Prophets were not automatons in a trance... they were people

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submitted to God, and God used their personality, temperament, etc. to achieve His will and purpose.

5.1.3.8.3 Prophets were supernaturally enabled to perform God's work.

5.1.3.9 AW Tozer in his book The Pursuit of God observed, ***“God is so vastly wonderful, so utterly delightful that He can without anything other than Himself meet and overflow the deepest demands of our total nature... mysterious and deep as that nature is. Hearts that are ‘fit to break’ with love for God are those who have been in the ‘Presence’ of God and looked with open eye upon the Majesty of Deity. Those of the ‘breaking heart’ had a quality about them not known to or understood by common men and women. They had been in the Presence of God and they reported what they heard and saw there. They were prophets... not scribes – for the scribe tells us what they have read [studied], and the prophet tells us what he has seen [experienced]. Such experience is open to all of God’s children who decide to intentionally press into God and know Him experientially... such is the gifting and enabling of the Spirit. The question is... why don’t we do it?”***

5.1.3.10 The point of prophecy is the future – meaning the Messiah. The point of the past – is Moses. God's people's identity is defined and redefined by each.

5.1.3.11 Old Testament prophets used Moses as the standard [Mosaic/Sinai Covenant] but looked forward to the Messiah and the New Covenant.

5.1.3.11.1 The Law was the custodian for the people of God until the Messiah was revealed and the New Covenant in Grace enacted.

5.1.3.11.2 Most of the Old Testament writers had problems with Grace being poured out upon all the nations. Instead, they wanted it only for Israel. They saw themselves as the inheritors of Abraham's faith and Moses' Law, which they did not want for the Gentiles.

5.1.3.11.3 Most had a very imperfect understanding of what God was doing.

5.1.3.11.4 Example 1: Jonah was called to preach to the Assyrians in Nineveh who were hated by the Jews. When Jonah got the call instead of going East to Nineveh, he went West to the sea. When the storm threatened the boat to turn back, Jonah had the sailors throw him into the sea... he was willing to die to refuse his calling. The giant fish saved Jonah so he could complete his task. He ultimately preached and the Ninevites repented... and Jonah was depressed. He did God's work begrudgedly. Jesus is the antithesis of Jonah – He joyfully did God's work, He calmed the sea, He entered the belly of the earth for 3 days and returned... etc.

5.1.3.11.5 Example 2: Parable of the Prodigal Son – the son that left was the nations [Gentiles]. The son who stayed was Israel. The nations ultimately are convicted and return to God who is delighted and celebrates. Israel begrudges the celebration because they wanted to be God's only chosen people. They were not aligned with God's redemptive purpose for all of humanity.

5.1.3.12 Occasionally, they had revelations leading to profound breakthroughs of God's plan of redemption and the Grace that was to come.

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- 5.1.3.12.1 Example 1: Joel 2:28 – “I will pour out my Spirit upon them” – is fulfilled at Pentecost. Until then the Spirit would come for a while upon someone, and then leave... He did not remain forever. The indwelling of the Spirit was somewhere most Jews couldn’t go.
- 5.1.3.12.2 Example 2: Psalm 51 – verses 1-17 were written by David. Textual criticism and study have revealed that the last 2 lines (18 & 19) were written by a later scribe/editor, because the Jews could not reconcile Law and Grace, so they couldn’t accept the Grace David saw through the Spirit.
- 5.1.3.13 Much of the OT prophecy takes three forms:
  - 5.1.3.13.1 Oracles against the nations – the non-believers who have rebelled against God and His chosen people, who will be judged and punished. Habakkuk is a good example of this.
  - 5.1.3.13.2 Condemnation of Israel’s failed leadership – including the kings, prophets, priests, and secular leadership – who followed the nations rather than God. Micah 6 is a good example of this.
  - 5.1.3.13.3 Clarification of the Abrahamic, Mosaic [Sinai] and Davidic covenants.
- 5.1.3.14 Prophetic writings have both poetic and narrative aspects – and you need to be mindful of which is being used to properly interpret the text. Most modern translations use a different script or indentation to give you a hint what is poetic and what is narrative – it is clear in the original language.

### **5.1.4 Apocalyptic – The End of the Age/End of Days:**

- 5.1.4.1 Apocalyptic writings are a form of prophecy focused on the last days of fallen & sinful earth, and the inauguration of God’s Kingdom on a redeemed and perfected earth.
- 5.1.4.2 Apocalyptic verses wander throughout Scripture but predominate in Daniel and especially Revelation.
- 5.1.4.3 There are “Non-canonical” apocalyptic writings such as Enoch and Baruch – they focus on destruction and fantastic imagery. They are non-canonical because they were not written by a known and accredited prophetic source... they were instead anonymously written.
- 5.1.4.4 “In those days” is a common referral to the “end of days” or “end times.”
- 5.1.4.5 Apocalyptic writings speak about the ending of the failed past because of humanity’s many moral, ethical, and faith failures. They look forward hopefully to the triumphant new era when God establishes His rightful rule on earth as it is in Heaven.
- 5.1.4.6 Heaven and earth thus intersect, and the fantastic and fanciful scenes described in visions of heaven, which will astonish and bring joyful praise to God’s people and bring dismay and judgment to God’s enemies.
- 5.1.4.7 God’s people are encouraged that they can endure the present state of events, even when cruel or horrific, because of the certainty of God’s faithful love. (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah)
- 5.1.4.8 God’s adversaries are classified as:
  - 5.1.4.8.1 Satan and demons – who are actively involved in Spiritual warfare to

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- subvert God's plans. These creatures are described as inherently evil and will be punished when God's plans come to fulfillment.
- 5.1.4.8.2 Rebellious wicked people – who have knowingly aligned themselves with evil. They will suffer the same fate as the evil spiritual creatures.
  - 5.1.4.8.3 Wicked and disobedient – are people who are more concerned with their earthly pleasures and refuse to submit to God's authority.
  - 5.1.4.8.4 Those who act in ignorance or have been deceived and promote self-interest or disobedience.
  - 5.1.4.8.5 Each classification has their own level of accountability and punishment.
- 5.1.4.9 Apocalyptic writings like prophecy, are both poetic and narrative, and we need to note the change from one medium to another to be interpreted correctly.
- 5.1.4.10 Interpretation Conventions for Apocalyptic Literature:
- 5.1.4.10.1 The standard cultural-critical principles applicable to all prophetic Scriptures apply to Revelation, Daniel, etc. (Pet 1:19-21).
  - 5.1.4.10.2 Apocalyptic is a type of divinely revealed prophetic writing – but it has an end time focus and intense Spiritual imagery that identifies it.
  - 5.1.4.10.3 Since such writings have many figures of speech, it is important to ask the following questions to properly interpret:
    - 5.1.4.10.3.1 What is to be taken literally and what is figurative?  
Because the prophetic visions tend to be fantastic and since the author was attempting to describe what they observed for which normal verbal conventions couldn't suffice, the literal and the figurative may be obscure. Beware claiming clarity where none is intended or given – definitive predictions are unwise, and possibly dangerous.
    - 5.1.4.10.3.2 Does the passage teach about chronological events or not?  
In many cases time is disjunct – it is often not literal and may in fact be cyclical where events turn back upon themselves. The disjunct nature of time in such writings make distinct predictions difficult if not improbable. Again, don't insist for clarity where none is provided – even Jesus explained that He did not know the day or time of the end... only the Father knew.
    - 5.1.4.10.3.3 Is the prediction conditional or unconditional? Are “trigger events” listed – things that must take place first? Can these events be identified or are they obscure as well?
    - 5.1.4.10.3.4 What aspects were of immediate significance to the writer, and what are clearly in the future? Look for clues.
    - 5.1.4.10.3.5 What did the New Testament writers mean or intend when they included Old Testament quotations in their passages that were fulfilled?
      - 5.1.4.10.3.5.1 Some passages have been intentionally fulfilled – as “here comes your King riding upon a donkey” or the Law having been fulfilled.

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- 5.1.4.10.3.5.2 It is often helpful to understand the larger passage of Old Testament writings from which the quote was taken – there may well be something going on in the context of the quote that the author takes for granted that his readers know.
- 5.1.4.10.3.5.3 Some passages were fulfilled during Christ's first Advent (Mic 5:2), others are postponed for Christ's second Advent – such as the final judgment of evil, restoration of creation, etc.
- 5.1.4.10.3.5.4 Some draw upon an apparent incidental point of similarity of past and future events – like Rachel mourning for her children (Matt 2:17).
- 5.1.4.10.3.5.5 Some have multiple applications – past, present, and future (Rev 5:10) may refer to reigning in the present age, a future age, and/or in the new Heaven and Earth.
- 5.1.4.10.3.6 Does a passage refer to God's people individually (Spiritually) or collectively (institutionally)?
  - 5.1.4.10.3.6.1 Are predictions of Israel meaning "Spiritual Israel" referring to the remnant and the Church, or to a restored national Israel?
  - 5.1.4.10.3.6.2 The same idea applies to the "Temple" – is the prediction referring to a restored temple in Jerusalem with a reconstituted cultic practice (institutional) or to the Temple of the human heart (Spiritual)?
- 5.1.4.10.4 Too often people's theology determines what they believe... or what they have been taught by someone with deficient theology and/or hermeneutical conventions. Always let the text inform your thinking through the direction of the Holy Spirit. God gave us a brain, and He expects us to use it. He also gave us the Spirit to guide us, depend on Him to do so.
- 5.1.4.10.5 As always... where God is clear – preach with confidence; where God is vague – preach with caution. Respect the Scripture... it's job is to master you, not for you to master it.