

**Fuller Theological Seminary**

**NE 505**

**BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS  
SYLLABUS AND COURSE NOTES**

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## Index

01-11	Introduction, syllabus
12-19	March 30
20-24	April 6
25-32	April 13
33-36	April 20
37-39	April 27
40-45	May 4
46-48	May 11
49-54	May 18, 25
55	June 1
56	Academic integrity statement; statement on students with disabilities
57-59	Last year's opening questions

# Course Description

## 1 Course Description

The course aims to enable students to reflect on the authority of Scripture and gain expertise in the interpretation of Scripture by developing as imaginative and disciplined interpreters.

## 2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should have:

- formulated an understanding of the authority of Scripture;
- formulated an understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament;
- developed skill as interpreters of narrative, imperatival, prophetic, and experiential texts;
- developed skill in considering the range of scriptural material on different topics and in formulating a scriptural view on them.

### 3 Assignments and Evaluation

(These are the same for students registered for a grade and for pass-fail students)

#### a) Preparation Homework Notes for Classes (48 hours)

There is specified homework in each week from week 1 to 7 and 9, detailed on the schedule in this syllabus. Each homework is designed to take about six hours; you should write 1000-1500 words. Some involve you in seeking to summarize the biblical material on a topic; some involve studying biblical passages.

Each week you post your homework on Moodle by 11.59 p.m. on the Friday of that week. To do this, log in at [moodle.fuller.edu](http://moodle.fuller.edu) and click on the course number. When viewing a forum's main page (e.g., Homework 1), the following should appear near the top left of the page: "Separate groups: Group A" or "B" or "C" etc. If you do not see a group designation there or have any other problem with Moodle, get in touch with my Faculty Assistant (see page 3). Do not post your homework until you are in a group.

Note that homework is listed under the week in which the homework is due (so you do "Homework 1" in Week 1 and we discuss it in class in Week 2). Post by copy-and-paste, not by posting an attachment. Keep a copy of your work on your own computer (Moodle has been known to lose homework!). Make one post for each homework assignment (that is, don't post half the homework and reckon to come back to it later). When asked what is the "Discussion Topic," simply put your own name as the topic.

For this homework, notes with bullet points are fine for much of the work. Don't turn it into a mini-paper; get straight into the work without wasting space on preambles. Note that your primary text is the Bible. The point about the course and the homework is to get you yourself reading and using the Bible. It will be graded not according to whether you agree with the professor's view (or for that matter, with Brueggemann's or with Wright's, or anyone else's) but according to whether you have engaged the biblical text with vigor, courage and attentiveness.

Do use a Bible concordance (e.g., <http://bible.crosswalk.com>; choose NRSV). But don't try to follow it in the way it uses Hebrew and Greek words. But the need for your personal engagement means not cutting and pasting swaths of biblical quotes without commenting on their significance. Nor should you just restate the text without giving your own thoughts and reflections about it. Don't feel you have to cover every text on a subject where there is lots of material; but don't just stop at two or three unless you can argue that these do cover the scriptural material as a whole. What we will be looking for in grading the homework is you reading the Bible carefully and thoughtfully, analytically and synthetically, with indications that you have thought about what was especially interesting or difficult or encouraging or illuminating.

Ask: How does this passage suggest I reframe or develop my thinking about God or covenant, or whatever it is? What do I find difficult, hard to understand, interesting, encouraging, puzzling, enlightening about it, and why? How does each passage relate to other passages on the same subject? How can I stand back to analyze and synthesize the material? If you cannot come to a single answer to a question set, discuss possibilities and the strengths and weaknesses of them.

When you have done your own work on the biblical text, if you wish you can have a look at a Bible Dictionary or commentary. But don't do that too soon. This is not a course in reading Bible dictionaries but in reading the Bible. Going too soon to such secondary sources will mean the aim is not achieved (and you will get a poorer grade!).

Don't assume that secondary sources on the internet and on Bible software are reliable (there is a reason why they are free or cheap). Start with material available via library databases, especially iPreach. Don't use any other online sources without asking the professor or a TA what they think of it. And whatever material you use, check what it says by the Bible itself. Use secondary sources to help you answer concrete queries you have, or to help you to spot things you have not spotted, or to help you see flaws in your own work. Don't let them be substitutes for the Bible itself. Use sources such as Wikipedia, but don't trust it and don't quote it; check out things it says.

At the end of your 1000-1500 words, make a list of any questions you are left with, which I will then try to handle in class.

### **Accessing library databases in connection with homework**

- Go to the Fuller Library webpage: <http://www.fuller.edu/library/>. Click on "Online databases."
- For dictionaries and commentaries, under "Theology and Religion" click on iPreach.
- For articles, click on "ATLA Religion" and at the top of the following page click on "Basic Search."
- On that page type the article title (e.g., "Costly Loss of Praise") into the search field next to the tab that now shows "Find." Hit "Search."
- If you get a choice, look for the right item and click on the link that offers you full text.

### **(b) Participation in online discussion groups (8 hours)**

Each student is assigned to an online group (e.g., "Group A," "Group B"). After 11.59 p.m. Friday and before 12 noon Monday log onto Moodle again and you will be able to see the homeworks for the week that have been posted by the other people in your group. Make comments on most or all of them. Put your comments underneath the other person's homework by clicking "reply" to their homework post. Spend an hour doing this and write at least 150 words altogether. Some comments can be short (along the lines of "this is a good point" or "I don't understand this" or "this is an interesting idea but what is the evidence?"). Some should be more substantial. By all means try to respond to questions the person articulates at the end of the homework. You can also add to other people's comments or respond to people's comments on your homework, and all this would count towards your 150 words.

You can be critical, but don't be disrespectful or nasty; remember that written comments can come across more harshly than spoken comments.

Everything must be done by 12 noon Monday (the day of class). On Monday, I look at the homeworks and comments and on that basis decide what topics to cover in part of the class time.

### **Grading**

In the days after the class the TAs look more systematically at the homework and the comments. They may then add their comments, but they will also email you with their general comments on your work and with a grade for your homework and comments. They will look for indications that you have (e.g.)

- carefully studied the scriptural material for yourself,
- thought about its significance
- shown you have an inquiring, inquisitive mind

Note that you will be graded on the way you have interacted with the biblical text. As noted above, you can use secondary sources (as long as you cite them), but this may not mean a better grade if it looks as if you got the “answers” from there rather than through having read the Bible for yourself.

The TAs grade the homework on a pass-fail basis for the purposes of your final grade for the course, but to give you feedback they will be given A, B, C, or F:

“A” notes are thorough and perceptive

“B” notes are thorough or perceptive

“C” notes are not very thorough or perceptive

“F” notes are seriously incomplete or thin.

The grading is purely for your feedback; I do not take it into account in generating your grade for the course. To satisfy this aspect of the assignments for the course, you simply have to pass the homeworks. (If the TAs think a homework is an F, they will refer it to me for me to decide.)

### **What If You Have a Crisis or Miss Doing the Homework or Miss Taking Part in the Group or Get a Fail?**

There are no extensions for this schedule except in case of something unforeseeable and out of your control such as illness. In such a situation, email me. If (for instance) you are out of town for the weekend, you must still post your work and your comments in accordance with the schedule.

Unless I accept an excuse such as illness, if you are late in posting your homework or your comments, your final grade for the course is reduced by .05 each time (e.g., 4.0 becomes 3.95). If your homework or comments are more than a week late, that counts as not turning in at all. In other words, you can post your homework or comments up to a week late and the TA will simply register it as late. If you want to post them more than a week late, email me with your sob story. Otherwise, if you do not post your homework or comments, or get a fail for a particular week’s homework or comments, your grade for the class is reduced by .1 (e.g., 4.0 becomes 3.9).

If you do fail to post homework or comments more than once, or get a fail for the homework or comments more than once (or any combination of these), you fail the class. But if you fail a week’s homework and/or comments, you may resubmit them directly to the TA by email within one week of receiving the fail grade; if they then pass, they are simply treated as if they had been late.

(I am sorry that some of these rules seem legalistic; most of you won’t need to worry about them but I have to think out how we deal with marginal situations.)

### **d) Two papers (each 4-5 pages, single space, 2500-3000 words) (37 hours)**

1. You write a first paper surveying the scriptural material on one of the following topics: Anger; Election; Fear; Suffering; Worship; Prayer; Penitence; or Speech. If you want to do a different topic, email me.

This paper is a more developed version of the kind of homework that involves surveying the scriptural material on covenant or sabbath, and the basic instructions for those homeworks apply here. Work out a scriptural view of the topic as a whole, and comment on its significance for us. Remember that you are surveying the scriptural material. Don’t make it a general discussion of the topic; be wary of using insights from (e.g.) Wolterstorff on suffering unless these are illustrative of points from scripture.

Don't stick to the single word relating to the topic; for instance, for "anger" you could also look up angry, wrath, rage, fury, etc. Don't start from an English dictionary definition of your word – or if you do, remember that the Bible's use of the word may be different from English usage. As with homeworks, you can use material such as Bible Dictionaries, and these may then put you on the track of other books, but you do not have to do that, and be wary of having your thinking shaped by these other resources rather than by scripture. You do not have to mention every text; but don't confine yourself to one or two, because the idea is to get an understanding of the Bible's perspective as a whole.

Email the paper to [johnsgold@fuller.edu](mailto:johnsgold@fuller.edu) (not as a PDF) by 11.59 p.m. on Monday May 25. There is more information on the form of papers, turning them in, etc, after the instructions for the second paper.

2. You write a second paper on one of the following topics.

*Either (a) The Authority of the Bible*

Read the following three articles

The "Chicago Statement on Inerrancy"

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/history/chicago.stm.txt>

Print version in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978): 289-296

N. T. Wright on scriptural authority

[http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_Bible\\_Authoritative.htm](http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Bible_Authoritative.htm)

Print version in *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991)

Phyllis Bird on scriptural authority

<http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/bird.htm>

Print version in the *New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 1 (and thus also at iPreach)

In light of them and of your class notes, work out what are the key issues in thinking about biblical authority. Note: do not provide a summary of the articles in your paper. Use them as a basis for deciding what the key issues are and working out an approach to them.

*Or (b) The Relationship of OT and NT.*

Analyze the way Paul uses the OT in Romans. You can take as a model the analysis of the way Matthew uses the OT (page 50 below) and produce an equivalent for Romans. (Note that this does not mean using the actual analysis of how this works in Matthew; Romans is different. But that outline may help you see what kind of thing to try to do.)

Last year, a student commented:

When I first looked at this assignment, I felt pretty overwhelmed. However, as I started reading Romans and looking at the OT references, Paul's strategies seemed to come alive. I was able to see the book in a whole new light. Things that I had not noticed before seemed to just jump out at me. When I read Romans in one sitting, it made so much more sense because I was able to see Paul's themes throughout the book and see it tie together.

So don't feel overwhelmed!

## **4 Policies**

### **(a) Attendance at classes**

You must attend all classes. If you miss an evening your grade is lowered by .1. If you miss more than one evening, you fail the course. If you have to miss class through some unexpected event beyond your control such as illness, send me an email and I will excuse you. Otherwise you do not have to inform me if you expect to miss class.

### **(b) Your grade for the course**

Your grade is determined by the two 4-5 page papers, but missing a class, or failing to post satisfactory homework or comments, or posting homework or comments late, means your grade is lowered. Missing more than one evening, or failing more than one homework or comments, means you fail the course. The grade reduction is detailed under “What If You Have a Crisis?” above.

Suppose then that you write two papers and one gets A-, one B+. In GPA numbers this is 3.7 and 3.3, averaging 3.5. Normally I would then round up your letter grade to A-. But if you have missed (say) one class and one homework, the grade reduces to 3.3 and your letter grade for the course is B+.

Or suppose that you get A for both papers, which means 4.0. If you have missed one class, this reduces to 3.9. But rounded up, that is still A. If you missed one class and one homework, it reduces to 3.8, and that is rounded down to A-.

Again, sorry this is legalistic. It is because there is just the occasional student who tries to get away with the absolute minimum! Nearly all of you need not worry about it.

### **(c) Incompletes**

If you are unable to complete your paper(s) because of a serious problem that was unpredictable and unavoidable, I can grant you an “Incomplete.” Email me about the problem, and if I agree to the Incomplete, download the form from the Registry and email my Faculty Assistant to get him to sign the form on my behalf. I do not have the power to grant an Incomplete on the basis of (e.g.) your agreeing to take on extra work or pastoral or mission commitments, or other busyness that you could have foreseen (see Student Handbook on “Academic Policies”). I do not grant Incompletes with regard to the homework, because it is preparation for the class.

### **(d) Academic Integrity Commitment**

In doing your homework and writing your papers, I expect you to:

- Use your mind energetically in your study

- Look to see what scripture and other reading has to say to you personally

- Be faithful to God

- Not to say anything that you do not think

- Attribute quotations or paraphrases or sources of information that you could not check

There is a longer seminary academic integrity commitment at the end of the syllabus and course notes. There is also there a note to students with disabilities



## 5 Recommended Reading

You are not required to read any of these books, but they give background material on the course. Most are on my Reserve shelf. Most of what I say in the first half of each evening appears in my two books.

- Barton, J. (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*. Cambridge: CUP, 1998.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Bloesch, Donald G. *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994.
- Collin, John J. *The Bible after Babel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Day, Linda, and Carolyn Pressler (ed.). *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World: An Introduction to Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Louisville: WJK, 2006.
- Ellens, J. H., and W. G. Rollins. *Psychology and the Bible*. 4 vols. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.
- Goldingay, John. *Models for Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Gunn, David, and D. Nolan Fewell. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: OUP, 1993.
- Miranda, J. P. *Marx and the Bible*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1974.
- Oliver, Gordon. *Holy Bible, Human Bible: Questions Pastoral Practice Must Ask*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Perdue, Leo G. *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.
- Sugirtharajah, Rasiyah S. (ed.). *Voices from the Margin*. New ed., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.
- Swartley, Willard M. *Slavery, Sabbath, War & Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation*. Herald Press, 1983.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Trible, P. *Texts of Terror*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.
- Wright, C. J. H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004.
- Methods of Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004. Online at iPreach

## 6 Course Schedule and Activities

The course requires 120 hours of work. This comes from the regular formula that sees a four quarter-hour course as involving 120 hours of study: 35 hours in class (27 hours physically in class, 8 hours online), 48 hours homework, and 37 hours writing two papers

Classes run on Mondays from 6.30 to 7.50 and 8.10 to 9.20. Each evening combines lecture, comments on questions from the homework, and plenary discussion. Most weeks, in the first half of the evening we will cover general issues to do with questions such as the authority of scripture. In the second we will look at particular topics in interpretation of scripture.

Please bring an NRSV or TNIV Bible to each class.

## Week 1: March 30 (pages 12-19)

### Schedule

- .30 Introduction to the Course
- .45 Worship
- 7.0 Groups: What are the questions in your mind after the OT and NT courses?  
Email results to [johngold@fuller.edu](mailto:johngold@fuller.edu)
- .15 Introduction to the subject:  
Approaches to a doctrine of scripture and to interpretation of scripture (page 13)  
Approaches to the relationship of OT and NT (page 14)
- 7.50 Break
- .10 Guidelines for interpreting scripture  
Studying a Text (pages 15-16)  
Examples: Psalm 147 (page 17); Genesis 1 – 4  
Guidelines for interpretation (pages 18-19)  
Looking at a topic

### Create a Moodle account by tomorrow

### Homework by Friday 11.59 p.m.:

Discovering the scriptural teaching on a topic

Survey the scriptural material on “Covenant.”

- (1) In scripture, what is a covenant?
- (2) How many covenants are there?
- (3) How are they similar and how different?
- (4) How does the way scripture talks about covenant compare and contrast with the way we talk about covenant?
- (5) Are there any questions you would like to ask about covenant in light of the study?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.

# Approaching the Interpretation of Scripture and a Doctrine of Scripture

Interpretation = exegesis + hermeneutics

Avoiding error and resolving disputes

Getting distance from ourselves and opening ourselves more fully:

Premodern (e.g., Christological, doctrinal, devotional)

Modern (e.g., historical, sociological)

Postmodern (e.g., feminist, ethical, postcolonial, canonical, intertextual)

Hebrews 1:1.

The many different ways God speaks in Scripture:

Narrative

Torah

Prophecy

Apocalypse, prayer, testimony

In light of that, think of scripture as:

A Witnessing Tradition (starting from narrative)

Acts 1:1

Luke 1:1-4; 1 Cor 11:23; 15

An Inspired Word (starting from prophecy)

The idea of “inspiration” and “the word of God”; also “infallibility” and “inerrancy”

2 Tim 3:16; Mark 12:36; Acts 28:25

Isa 40:6-8; 1 Peter 1:25

Luke 1:4

2 Tim 3:16

An Authoritative Canon (starting from the Torah and the Sermon on the Mount)

The idea of “authority” and “canon”

Matt 7:29; 8:9

Gal 6:16; Matt 4

An Experienced Revelation (starting from the apocalypses and poetic books)

The idea of “revelation”

Heb 11; Dan 2; 7-12

## The Relationship of OT and NT

2 Tim 3:14-17

Narrative: Act I and Act II.  
Matt 1

Torah: Ideal and Condescension  
Mark 10

Prophecy: Promise and Fulfillment  
Rom 15:4

Revelation: Complementarity  
Hebrews 1:1  
1 Cor 7 in relation to Song of Songs  
This life – resurrection life

## Studying a Text

The object of exercises in studying a text is to help you develop a skill in the study of scripture that enables you to do justice to the meaning of texts in themselves and also discover what it has to say to us. These notes incorporate some ideas about manuscript Bible Study from IVCF workers Shannon Lamb and Una Lucey. Although I express them linearly, in practice, you will keep going backward and forward. This list is merely logical.

- (1) Print out the passage off the internet. This will help it to seem fresh and help you to read it as if for the first time. In addition, many people like to use colored pens to trace the phenomena noted in (5), (6), and (7).
- (2) Begin by praying that God will open your eyes to the scriptures and meet you during this time.
- (3) Read the passage through carefully twice. Then try to answer some of these questions:
- (4) What is the thrust of this passage? Can you express in a sentence its theme and aim? For instance, one might say that Psalm 147's aim is to encourage people to worship God with enthusiasm, because of who God is and because of what creation is.
- (5) What is the structure of the passage – i.e. what are the elements that contribute to the thrust you have described? What are the different points the psalm makes, and how do they contribute to the whole? The structure might be linear (see Psalm 107) or it might be like the petals of a flower (see Psalm 119) or it might be a spiral (see Psalms 42-43).

Note that the aim is analysis not merely summary of the content – you're trying to get inside its thinking. To avoid being impressionistic and missing the text's own point, look for objective marks of structure such as

- changes in forms of speech (past verbs, present verbs, imperatives),
- uses of link words such as for, therefore, then, but, so that
- changes in the subjects of verbs (I/we, you, they)
- changes in the subject matter

For an example, see the page on Psalm 147 (page 17)

If you can't see a structure (I can't see one in Psalm 72), what is the structure of the *thinking* in the passage? What is its underlying theology, and how do the elements of *that* relate to each other?

- (6) Give a title to each of the sections you have discerned. Mark all the repeated words, logical connectors, and laws of composition. Note the repeated words from other Psalms. Note any new elements in the psalm. A new emotion or theme is an important piece of the puzzle. Write down your questions in the margins
- (7) What are the passage's emphases? Look for words that recur (e.g. "good" in Gen 1), or different expressions for approximately the same idea (e.g., "worship," "praise," "exult"), or opposites (e.g. "remember" and "forget").
- (8) Look for the way it makes its points. For instance, does it

- use comparisons (an image will often express something concretely and vividly)?
  - or spell out its generalizations in particulars? – e.g., Ps 23 moves from “The Lord is my shepherd” to how that works out (pasture, water), which helps you see the point of the image
  - or move from particulars to generalizations
  - or move from stating an idea or relating an event to explaining its meaning?
  - or move from cause to effect or from effect to cause or from an act to its aim?
  - or ask rhetorical questions?
- (9) Be aware that there might be aspects of what you have discovered so far that might be a peculiarity of your translation. Read the passage in two other translations. Don’t build anything on a point that comes only in one translation.
- (10) What do we learn from the place of the passage in the book where it appears? What does this context tell us?
- (11) Do we know anything about the historical, cultural, or social context to which it was addressed? Are there any matters it mentions that you need to look up in a reference work?
- (12) What questions does the passage raise for you? Try to make them questions that help you get inside the passage some more – “friendly” questions you would like to ask the author of the passage. Be concrete and specific. Think through two or three possible answers for each of your questions and look in the passage for evidence for each option.
- (13) Does the passage say anything that contrasts with
- something a pastor said in a sermon once
  - your sense that “God wouldn’t do/say that.”
  - things you are comfortable saying to God
  - what you have always reckoned must be theologically true.
- If so, do think the question through again, but none of those are evidence for what scripture actually says, here or elsewhere.
- (14) What implications does the passage have for (e.g.) worship/mission/spirituality/the nature of the gospel/ what we believe/ethics/pastoral care/seminary life/what you do for the rest of your week? In other words, look at the passage in the light of other subjects you are studying, other issues that interest you, Christian service or secular work you do. Remember that a clue to seeing how scripture applies in fresh ways is to think about application to the church or community not just to the individual.
- (15) Look up the passage in a commentary or two, and perhaps in some other work available to you which might help you with regard to the passage’s meaning and its significance for us, including word dictionaries.
- (16) Ask if there is anything you have learned which makes the Bible worth reading – anything that confronted you rather than simply confirmed what you already thought. If not, start again?

## Psalm 147

Three times the Psalm urges us to praise God. But why should we? Three times it goes on to give us the reasons, and three times it refers to creation in doing that. (If you are a preacher, the threefold structure of the Psalm thus gives you the structure for the sermon.) So it has:

- ③ three invitations to worship
- ③ three reasons for worship (though the reasons in vv. 13-14 overlap with those in vv. 2-6)
- ③ three appeals to aspects of God's work in creation that provide backup for the reasons.

### **1. Praise the Lord - because God is one who gathers the outcasts and heals the broken (vv. 1-6)**

Outcast/broken - sometimes how we are inside even if we look fine on the outside?

How many people in our society are also outcast/broken on the outside. This sets an agenda for us, because if God is one who gathers the outcast and heals the broken, so are we called to be. A criterion for evaluating political parties.

How do we know God can do that? God is sovereign in the cosmos (vv. 4-5). Some of Israel's neighbors thought the stars decided what happened in the world. But who controls the stars? Israel's God.

### **2. Sing to the Lord - because God is one who loves people who revere him and hope in him (vv. 7-11)**

God is not impressed by the humanly impressive (v. 10).

God responds to people who revere (not fear) him and look to him in hope (v. 11).

Another important insight in election season.

How do we know God does that? Look at the way God cares for and responds to wild animals and birds in their helplessness and vulnerability (vv. 8-9)

### **3. Praise your God - because God is one whose word runs swiftly (vv. 12-20)**

"His word runs swiftly" (v. 15)

Two images combined.

- The word of a powerful person is effective - God is like that.
- When a powerful person sends an aide to do something, that person runs!

He declares his word to his people (v. 19)

They are in a position to understand what he is doing in the world and to embody his vision for the world (cf. vv. 13-14)

If only we did! How do we know that about God's word? Look at the effect of his word in nature. He sends out his word (v. 18): see what it does (vv. 15-18). That gives us grounds for encouragement about what God still do through his people.

So how good it is to sing praises to our God!



## Guidelines for Interpretation

- 1 Look for the way the text “works.” Look for patterns, structure, repeated words—and variations from patterns. These are signals of what the text thinks is important and what it wants to draw your attention to (e.g., Gen 1).
- 2 Be aware of questions in our minds that may mis-focus our attention and make us miss what the text is saying (e.g., Gen 1 on creation and science).
- 3 Ask about the questions the text is answering (e.g., Gen 1 is confronting Babylonian beliefs about the power of the sun, moon, and stars, which were also a temptation to the Israelites).
- 4 Be conscious of the way Christian beliefs reinterpret the text. This is not necessarily wrong—the way the NT uses the OT involves the Holy Spirit inspiring a reinterpretation of the text. But it may make you miss the point in the text itself (e.g., in Gen 1 does “spirit/wind of God” = “Holy Spirit” and does “let us make” suggest the Trinity?).
- 5 Read verses in their context (contrast the Devil in Matt 4).
- 6 Evaluate alleged applications of scripture in light of other things that scripture says (as Jesus does in Matt 4; contrast the Devil in that story.)
- 7 If you can, interpret scripture historically—that is, in light of the historical circumstances it was addressing (e.g., Gen 1 in the context of the Babylonian exile).
- 8 Consider whether the text invites literal or figurative interpretation (e.g., are the seven days of creation literal chronology or a metaphor?).
- 9 But beware of basing this merely on scholarly theories or on church traditions about when it was written, where there is not direct evidence for these in the text (e.g., reading the Psalms in the context of David’s life or Gen 2—4 against the period of the early monarchy).
- 10 Interpret scripture in light of the recurrent, time-transcending human questions they raise (e.g., questions discussed in Gen 1—3).
- 11 But beware of reading our concerns into scripture (e.g., our concern with the relational).
- 12 Let scripture shape your understanding of what it means to be human (e.g., Gen 1—4).
- 13 Look at texts in light of our experience (e.g., looking at Gen 1—3 in light of women’s experience).
- 14 Look afresh at texts in light of what makes sense to us (e.g., the description of womanhood in Gen 1—2).
- 15 Beware of the prejudices of our culture that bias our interpretation or make us think the text must be limited in its perspective (e.g., our stress on feelings or experience or relationships or the individual).
- 16 Allow symbols to be suggestive, to provoke thought and reflection (e.g., the image of God or the kingdom of God).
- 17 Look at symbols against their background in the cultural context (e.g., the image of God).
- 18 Look at images and other material in light of their place in the scriptural story (e.g., the image of God).
- 19 Be open to learning from the way the church has interpreted the text in the past.
- 20 Be prepared to be critical of the way the church has interpreted the text in the past (e.g., its patriarchal interpretation of Gen 1—3).
- 21 Look at whose interest is being served by the way the text is being interpreted (e.g., men interpreting Gen 1—3 in a sexist way).
- 22 Look at all of scripture, including the texts you don’t like.
- 23 Let the Holy Spirit say new things to you through taking the text in a different direction from its intrinsic meaning (e.g., the reference to stars in Gen 1 suggested to someone that there is light in the darkness even when everything seems bleak).
- 24 Look at the text in light of sociological and cultural factors (e.g., the place of women in Gen 2—both their high status and the stress on the need for children). How our culture impacts how we read texts, and how their culture impacts how they write them.

- 25 Let different passages of scripture interpret each other (“intertextuality”) (e.g., references to God’s grief in Gen 6).
- 26 Be aware that the kind of questions we ask from scripture decisively affect the kind of answers we get (e.g., looking for good examples, or for theology, or for insights on human experience)—so try different sorts of questions.
- 27 Notice when scripture does not seem to answer our questions (e.g., Luther and Calvin looking for good examples), and try different questions.
- 28 Be wary of letting the NT’s use of the OT shape our understanding of the OT’s own meaning—remember that the NT is using the OT to answer its questions (e.g., Gal 4 on Sarah and Hagar).
- 29 Be aware of the positive and negative affect of our theological or spiritual tradition (e.g., Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Mennonite…) (e.g., our concern about peacemaking).
- 30 Have in mind classic ways people misinterpret scripture (e.g., it’s all designed to provide examples).

## **Looking at a Topic in Light of Scripture as a Whole**

The instinct to simplify Scripture

(a) “The OT God is a God of wrath, the NT God is a God of love”?

Matt 5:22, 29; 6:15; 7:21-23; 10:32; 12:32; 13:41  
 (Just half of a Gospel, and it is the one with the Sermon on the Mount)

Ex 34; Isa 28; Lam 3

(b) Are God’s People Supposed to Fight?

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus: not much  
 Numbers – Esther: from time to time  
 Psalms: not really  
 Prophets: not really  
 Gospels: not really  
 Epistles: not an issue

## **Week 2: April 6 (pages 20-24)**

### **Schedule**

- .30     Worship
- 6.40    The nature of scripture as witness to what God has done (pages 20-21)
- 7.50    Break
- 8.10    Covenant in scripture; with responses to online questions (pages 22-24)

### **Homework for the next four days:**

#### **Interpreting Stories**

Read the stories of Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21, and also the story of Jonah. You can then use a Bible dictionary or other books if you wish as long as you do your own work first.

- (a) What do you think these stories are about?
- (b) Why would they have been included in scripture?
- (c) What helps you understand them?
- (d) What would be right and wrong interpretations of them?
- (e) Consider this process of interpretation in light of pages 15-19: Does this suggest any insights on interpretation
- (f) Are there any questions you would like to ask about interpreting narrative in light of the study?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.

# Scripture as Witness to What God Has Done

## 1 Scripture as Witness and Tradition

Most of scripture is narrative.

Luke 1:1-4 as a clue: witness and tradition. Cf. John 20:30-31.

Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8.

1 Cor 11:23. 15:1-3.

Deut 4:9; 6:20-23; Josh 4

Isa 43:9-10

Exod 6:7; Ezek 37:13

So most of scripture being narrative reflects the nature of Christian faith. It shows why these scriptures have a significance that does not attach to the Book of Mormon or the Qur'an and why there are limits to the insight you can see in a movie. The "authority" of scripture issues from the nature of the gospel

Barth – scripture is merely witness (and therefore fallible). This is not the emphasis in the scripture's use of this language.

## 2 The Factuality Involved in Witness

Witnesses have to be open to being cross-examined

But that needs to be done in an open-minded way

The presuppositions of historical criticism:

That investigating history matters

That we work with Western values (e.g., offering of Isaac, slaughter of Canaanites, it is the individual that counts)

That we work with the principles of openness, analogy, and cause-effect

Living with trust and with ambiguity

## 3 Scripture as Pointing Us to What God Has Done

Sometimes it's providing examples – but not so often

Sometimes it's illustrating how God regularly relates to people

Most significantly it's relating what God did once-for-all

#### **4 Some Questions to Think About**

- a) Do you agree that Christian faith is basically a gospel about something God did once for all? Is that a scriptural idea?
- b) Is that a good enough explanation for the special status of the scriptures?
- c) Can we investigate the historicity of scripture in an open-minded fashion?
- d) Can we do that and still trust the scriptures?
- e) If the scriptures are centrally about something God did once for all, does that make them irrelevant to us?

#### **5 Witness to One Story**

The OT as Act One

The NT as Act Two

Exodus and exile, exodus and Christ

Implications for liberation theology

#### **6 The Basis of Typology**

God's acts are consistent and similar

The second act goes further than the first

The first act is literal, the second metaphorical – the first becomes a symbol

See esp. Hebrews

#### **More Questions to Think About**

- f) If you can't understand Act II without Act I, how does trying to do that skew understanding of Act II?
- g) If Act I is incomplete without Act II, how does not having Act II skew understanding of Act I?

## Covenant

A covenant is a formal commitment made by one party to another party, or by two parties to one another, when there is no “natural” relationship between them.

1. *The Noah Covenant.* A one-sided commitment on God’s part. Its sign – the rainbow.

2. *The Abraham Covenants.*

a. A covenant with Abraham to give the land of Canaan to his descendants (Gen 15:18-20; J). The covenant is based on grace (see Paul).

b. God’s second covenant with Abraham (Gen 17; P) focuses on the promise of offspring. There is a covenant requirement laid on Abraham, circumcision, a sign (to God and to people), which is a kind of condition.

c. The Abraham covenant is to apply to his offspring. Does it apply to his first son, Ishmael, and his offspring, or only to Isaac and his offspring?

d. When the Israelites became serfs in Egypt and groaned out, “God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exod 2:24). God adds, “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God” (Exod 6:7).

3. *The Sinai Covenant.*

a. When Israel reach Sinai, in Exod 19:1-8 Yahweh points out that the first covenant undertaking has been fulfilled and the people are out of Egypt; it is therefore possible to move onto the second. This will involve Israel keeping God’s covenant.

b. The people’s initial commitment to keeping the covenant (Exod 19:8) clears the way for their meeting with Yahweh at Sinai. Exodus 20 – 24 is “the covenant book.”

c. The people’s making a gold calf brings about a crisis in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel as Yahweh contemplates annihilating the people. This is the moment when Yahweh declares, “I hereby make a covenant” (Exod 34:10).

d. Near the end of the time at Sinai, Yahweh restates the point, in Leviticus 26. Yhwh will not break the covenant.

4. *The Moab Covenant.* A generation on from Sinai, on the edge of the land, Yahweh commands Moses to make a covenant with the Israelites to supplement the covenant at Horeb (Deut 29:1, 12-13). Deuteronomy talks more about covenant than any other book in the Bible. Deuteronomy as a whole can be seen as a covenant document, a book structured to reflect and expound Israel’s covenant relationship with Yahweh. This structuring parallels that of a treaty between an imperial power and an underling such as Israel.

5. *The Broken Covenant.* Joshua 9 and Judges 2; Solomon; Elijah’s critique of Ephraim; the basis for the fall of Samaria and Ephraim’s exile. Jeremiah 11:1-13; Ezekiel 16:59; cf. 44:7.

6. *The New Covenant.* Jer 31:31-34; cf. 32:40; 33:23-26. Isaiah 55:3 promises “an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” Yahweh will be true to the covenant with David by extending its application to the people as a whole. Israel can thus be “a covenant to the people” (Isa 42:5; 49:8). The Second Temple period saw Israel indeed keeping the covenant in a way they had not before. Yet by NT times they are again under the domination of a foreign empire and once again need God to “remember his holy covenant” (Luke 1:72).

7. *The Jesus Covenant.* Jesus came because God did “remember his holy covenant,” and Jesus looks at his death in light of the OT talk of covenant: “My blood of the covenant... is poured out

for many” (Mark 14:24). In Luke 22:20 Jesus speaks of “the new covenant in my blood” (cf. 1 Cor 11:25). Apostles such as Paul are thus “ministers of a new covenant,” whose novelty lies in its being “not of letter but of spirit” (2 Cor 3:6). But Paul can also see the implementation of Jeremiah’s new covenant as lying at the time when God’s ultimate purpose is fulfilled and all Israel is saved; “as it is written... ‘And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins’” (Rom 11:25-27). Hebrews develops the notion of the new covenant most systematically. The Jesus covenant is thus a reworking of the covenant. It is the means whereby the gentile world is drawn into the covenant relationship that goes back to Abraham. (There is not one covenant for Jews and one for gentiles.

(Also covenants between God and individuals or groups:

*The Priesthood Covenant:* Malachi 2:1-9

*The David Covenant:* 2 Sam 23:5; cf. Ps 89:3-4, 28, 34).

### 7. *Some Questions of Interpretation.*

1. Do we interpret the references to covenant in light of the way the OT itself works (in which case the Noah and Abraham covenants come first) or in light of the history of the way the covenant idea developed (in which case they come last?)

2. A subset of that: Are ancient near eastern treaties the key to understanding covenant? In what sense is the Jesus covenant the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s promise of a new covenant?

3. A theological question that runs through the story: What is the relationship between God’s commitment and our commitment? What is the difference between a covenant and a contract? Marriage as a covenant.

4. Can we talk about covenant when the Bible does not? E.g., was there a creation covenant? Note the significance of covenant in U.S. history.

5. Is covenant a useful idea for the therapist? What would be the nature of the covenant? With God or the client or what?

6. How are the Noah covenant, the Abraham covenant, and the Mosaic covenant relational?

## Week 3: April 13 (pages 25-32)

### Schedule

- .30           Worship
- 6.40    Scripture as history and story (pages 26-27)
- 7.50    Break
- 8.10    Approaches to the Interpretation of the Hagar stories and the Jonah story (pages 28-32);  
          with responses to homework questions

### Homework for the next four days:

Seeing how scripture applies themes to contexts and questions

Study the material on the sabbath in scripture.

- (a) What does the sabbath mean in the different contexts in which it is mentioned? What is its purpose? What is its function?
- (b) In light of that, what might be the significance of sabbath in your context?
- (c) Are there any questions you would like to ask about the sabbath, in light of the study?
- (d) Are there any questions you would like to ask about seeing how scripture applies themes to contexts and questions in light of this study?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.



# History and Story

## Factuality and Interpretation

Witnessing tradition suggests interpretation as well as factuality.

Chronicles and Kings: e.g., their accounts of the fall of Jerusalem; and of Solomon's prayer.  
Matthew 1:1-17

Interpreting it suggests an interest in the way the story is told as well as the facts behind it.  
Direct eye witness testimony and significance emerging over time.

Genesis to Kings throughout provides facts and interpretation – but there are more facts and less interpretation the more you move on and get nearer the writers' day.

The Gospels are written backwards – in light of cross and resurrection  
Mark and Luke: e.g., the rejection at Nazareth  
Mark 4:35-41 and Matt 8:18-27  
John

## How Stories Work

They create a world and seek to draw us into it.

Hans Frei (*The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*): until the eighteenth century people assumed

- (a) a oneness between story and event
- (b) a oneness between the story and our story

The usefulness of the parabolic in a historical story  
E.g., Chariots of Fire  
Imaginative portrayal of people's feelings  
An imaginative account of creation  
Job

History is limited to describing what has been; parable can describe what could be (Aristotle)

But it's very hard to distinguish a story meant to be taken as fact and one meant to be taken as parable.

## Some Questions

1. Do you agree that the phenomena in the OT and NT narratives indicate that they are not wholly factual?
2. Do you agree that we judge whether the scriptural story is relevant rather than seeking to see our story in its light?
3. What do you think is the special power of the parables in the gospels?
4. Do you agree that parabolic elements elsewhere in scripture might be an advantage rather than a weakness?
5. Do you agree that it's hard to tell a factual story from a fictional one?
6. Does the idea that there is non-historical material in the Bible conflict with its being God's word?

## Interpreting Narrative

Looking behind the story for the actual events?

Asking when the narrative was written?

Look at the narrative itself – e.g., its structure, plot, characterization

Looking for structures underneath the surface of the narrative (structuralism)

Looking for the way the story deconstructs

But the story was told by someone who wanted to do something to some people

What kind of people were trying to do something to what kind of people for what purpose?

How did they try to communicate?

The way they drew the audience to take part – filling in the gaps

What we bring to stories

Is it the listeners who “make sense” of stories? Do the stories have a sense?

- (a) all texts have some openness about them
- (b) some have more openness than others
- (c) some stories are rich and complex
- (d) a story may have one meaning but many significances

## Approaches to the Interpreting the Story about Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar

What kind of information do interpreters find in the story? I have illustrated different approaches from different commentators for clarity, though the commentators themselves do mix the approaches. To what extent the different writers get their material from the text and to what extent from elsewhere? What helps them see things? And mis-see things?

### 1. Parenetic or hortatory material - examples of how to behave or how not to behave

**M. Luther** (*Genesis*, 1539): Abram and Sarai model how to act in faith, how spouses take counsel together when their faith is tried, how to resolve disturbances in the family. They receive from Hagar the world's typical hostility; Hagar is puffed up and lording it over Sarai. Sarai's dealings with her are justified though overdone. Abram and Sarai realize their mistake but Hagar does not, though she is later an example in her response as God shows mercy to her. God fetches her back so that she can fulfill her vocation in domestic life.

**J. Calvin** (*Genesis*, 1554): Sarai departs from the word of God (concerning the marriage order) in order to see the word of God fulfilled (his promise). Abram and Sarai illustrate the ease with which we can use the wrong means to find the fulfillment of what is indeed God's will and the ease with which we can be led astray by the people nearest to us. Abram rightly surrenders Hagar to Sarai, Sarai rightly disciplines her, and Hagar wrongly flees rather than acknowledging her fault.

### 2. Theological material - illustrations of the nature and purpose of God

**B. F. C. Atkinson** (*Genesis*, 1954): Whereas Abram and Sarai represent the new covenant with its heavenly Jerusalem, Hagar and her child picture the old covenant made at Sinai whose members are in bondage (Hagar is an Egyptian and a slave) and the earthly Jerusalem. The union of Abram and Hagar suggests the putting of law alongside gospel or the expectation that an unredeemed humanity can fulfill the law, which are both futile. Hagar's despising of Sarai recalls the Jews' despising of Gentiles. Her fleeing recalls the Jews' efforts to evade the old covenant obligations. Her having a son suggests the way the old covenant engendered a people, but to bondage (Cf. Galatians 4:24). [Note the context in Galatians 4:21-31, which suggests the approach.]

**C. Westermann** (*Genesis*, 1981): God has closed Sarai's womb and has announced to Hagar the birth of a son. He grants new life; he denies new life. The declaration about God that dominates the narrative is laid down in the name of the son, a name of praise, "God hears." The description of God, "You are the God who sees me," is in fact saying the same. In the messenger's greeting Hagar has met God in action, reaching the earth and beholding the human in her distress. Cf. Luke 1, "for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." The person of the messenger of Yahweh, both God and man, suggests a biblical (rather than Greek) starting point for thinking about the incarnation.

### 3. Anthropological material - illustrations of what it can mean to be human

**P. Tribble** (*Texts of Terror*, 1984): Hagar is a fleeting yet haunting figure in scripture. Her story depicts oppression in three familiar forms: race, class, and sex. Hagar is one of the first people in scripture to be used, abused, and rejected. All sorts of women who go through those experiences themselves find their story in hers. She is also the first person in scripture whom a divine messenger visits, the first woman to hear an annunciation, the only woman to receive a divine promise of descendants, and the first person who dares to name God (“Hagar is a theologian”). She experiences exodus without liberation, revelation without salvation, wilderness without covenant, wanderings without land, promise without fulfillment, unmerited exile without return.

**E. Tamez** (*New Eyes for Reading*, ed. J. S. Pobee and B. von Wartenberg-Potter, 1986): Hagar and her son belong to the marginalized; they complicate the history of salvation, upsetting God’s magnificent plans for Abram and Sarai, but now they cannot be erased from it. She is surprised to find God coming near her, a slave (“Can it be that I have come to see the one who sees me”, v. 13 JB): is God really interested in a slave, an Egyptian, a woman? But she is the one who gives God a name. “Women...will never take as a norm any text that seems to sanction their submission.” [Contrast Carolyn Osiek (*Beyond Anger: On Being Feminist in the Church*, 1986): “Any theory of revelation in Scripture that distinguishes one biblical text as revelatory from another that is not, instead of dealing with the *whole* of scripture as revelation, is creating as many problems as it seems to be solving.”]

**R. J. Weems** (*Only a Sister Away*, 1988): for black women, the story of Hagar is a haunting one. It is a story of exploitation and persecution suffered by a slave woman at the hands of her mistress. It is a story we have read in our mothers’ eyes those afternoons when they came home after a hard day’s work as a domestic. And if it not our mother’s story, it is our grandmother’s and our great grandmother’s. The similarity of our stories as black and white women in the U.S.A. to the stories of Hagar and Sarah warrants taking the enormous risk of opening up the deep festering wounds between us and beginning to explore the possibilities for divine healing.

Cf. also **J. C. Exum** (*Fragmented Women*, 1993): the stories of a man passing off his wife as his sister illustrate issues about men’s attitudes to their wives’ sexuality.]

### 4. Political/Missiological material

**Dr. Evelyne Reisacher** (SIS, in a chapel sermon): Hagar is a Palestinian woman, an ancestor of the Arab peoples. She is outside the chosen line and she is ill-treated by the members of the chosen line. But God listens to her and reaches out to her, and she relates to God.

## The Place of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16; 21)

In his book *Bible Lives* Jewish scholar Jonathan Magonet shows how Genesis 12 – 22 works as a “chiasm” or stepped structure (it’s chi-shaped, cross-shaped; it goes up and down like a pair of steps).

- 12a** The call; blessing promised
  - 12b** Abram in a foreign land; wife-sister motif
    - 13-14** Lot in danger; Sodom
      - 15** Covenant
        - 16** Hagar and Ishmael
          - 17** Covenant
            - 18-19** Lot in danger; Sodom
              - 20** Abraham in a foreign land; wife-sister motif
                - 21** Hagar and Ishmael
- 22** The call; blessing confirmed

Magonet says that in Genesis 12 – 22 “the center of the stage belongs to Isaac.” Actually, Isaac shares it with Ishmael. Center stage was his destiny, but before his birth his father gave it away

In his commentary on Genesis, Gordon Wenham similarly notes a smaller chiasm near the close of chapter 17. He sees chapter 17 as the “watershed” of the Abraham story, so this chiasm also comes at a highpoint, in God’s fifth and final speech. Again Ishmael is central:

- 19a** Sarah will bear a son for you, Isaac
  - 19b** I will establish my covenant with him
    - 20** But I will bless and multiply Ishmael
      - 21a** I will establish my covenant with Isaac
- 21b** Sarah will bear him for you

Not only is the large-scale chiasm “disturbed” by Ishmael at its center; a small-scale chiasm in the chapter that allegedly forms a “climax” is also “disturbed” by Ishmael at a highpoint.

When we come to the out-of-pattern chapter 21 we find that this further story dominated by Ishmael is also the chapter that relates Isaac’s birth - though it relates this so-vital event more briefly than its duplicate story of Ishmael that follows. In his commentary on Genesis, Walter Brueggemann observes that it is thus “peculiarly understated.” In turn, Wenham also notes that there is a close parallel between chapters 21 and 22 - that means that the story of Abraham’s abandoning of Ishmael anticipates the story of Abraham’s offering of Isaac. The effect is to put more emphasis on the horror and the wonder of the first story and to take the edge off both the horror and the wonder of the second. What is going on here?

The narrative reflects and advertises the fact that the birth of Isaac could not in the event be the uncomplicated joy it might have been. At the centerpoint and climax of the narrative is an episode in which the whole threatens to abort. Cf. Elsa Tamez’s description of Hagar as “the woman who complicated the history of salvation.” That Hagar complicates the history of salvation is reflected in the way she complicates the rhetoric of Genesis 12-22. The chapters would be much neater without her and her son. But once Sarai has allowed the two of them into it, they will not be elbowed out, and the chiasm cannot come to its end without another story about them. There are two stories about Hagar and Ishmael as there are two about Abraham and the blessing, two about Abraham passing off his wife as his sister, two about Lot and Sodom, and two about the covenant.

That leads into a paradox. Magonet describes the call of Abram as a “most particularistic act” designed to achieve a “most universalistic hope, blessing for all humanity” (pp. 27-28). Yet the very sharing of center-stage by Ishmael and Isaac expresses the same tension between particularism and universality as the words of promise do; but Magonet’s analysis does not recognize that. Conversely, the Christian interpreters might have been expected to see anything that points to an openness to people outside the ancestors of Israel (such as themselves). The fact that they do not do so perhaps reflects the influence of the Christian Jewish appropriation of the narrative by New Testament writers such as Paul who were in a position to identify with Isaac and had no need to identify with Ishmael. For whatever reason, Paul does invite his readers to identify with Isaac (Galatians 4:21-31). For more than one reason, gentile readers may also want to identify with Ishmael, but they tend not to do so. Jewish and Christian exegetes have both missed a key feature of the text which would please them if they saw it, but the exegetical traditions of their respective confessions have made them unable to recognize it.

# Jonah

1. What is the aim of the Book?

\* to warn about how prophets can go wrong?

\* to bring out the problem of running away from responsibility and challenges, pain and loneliness?

\* to encourage Israel to a more open attitude to other nations?

\* to encourage us to care about the animal world?

\* to encourage Israel to repentance (“if Nineveh can, you can”)?

\* to provide a figure who is a type of Christ?

\* to assure us that God can have a change of mind?

\* to show us how to recognize God’s rescue (e.g., a large fish swallowing you) and respond to it?

\* to make us think (note the ending)?

2. Some people think Jonah is a historical story, others that it is a parable. How are we to decide that? Does it matter?

Consider the parables in Luke 15:11-32; Luke 16:1-8; Luke 16:19-31 (not called parables):

- a) They are formulaic, neat, self-contained
- b) They leave the listener put on the spot
- c) They are funny or ironic.
- d) They are larger than life.

Luke as a whole is not formulaic, ironic, or larger than life (except on the vast scale!)  
The parables are fictions set in the context of historical story; they are supportive of it and supported by it.

## Week 4: April 20 (pages 33-36)

### Schedule

- 6.30 Worship
- 6.40 The authority of scripture (page 34)
- 7.50 Break
- .10 The sabbath in scripture (page 35); with responses to homework questions. Tithing as another example (page 36)

### Dessert after Class

Come to 111 South Orange Grove Blvd (drive west to the end of Walnut, turn left onto Orange Grove Blvd, after crossing the freeway turn left into Green St; our front door is at the southwest corner of Green and Orange Grove Blvd)

### Homework for the next four days:

When scripture has a variety of attitudes to a question (and we don't like some of them)

The position and the role of women

Survey the way scripture speaks of the position and role of women. What are the implications of

- (a) Gen 1 – 3
- (b) Prov 31:12-31
- (c) Hos 1 – 3
- (d) Luke 6:12 – 8:4
- (e) Eph 5:21-33
- (f) 1 Tim 2:8-13
- (g) Any other passages you wish
- (h) Are there any questions you would like to ask about the passages concerning the position and role of women, in light of the study?
- (i) Are there any questions you would like to ask about interpreting scripture when it has a range of attitudes to a question?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.



# The Authority of Scripture

## Authority in scripture

Authority not a term scripture applies to scripture

But cf. “it is written.”

Personal authority and official authority (Matt 7:29; 8:9).

Jesus’ attitude to the OT.

## Scripture and other authorities:

The church and its tradition

Human reason and secular thought  
Issues raised by “biblical counseling”

Human experience (religious and other)

The commitments we make

## For discussion

In what areas do you think Christians unconsciously ignore scripture’s authority?

What other authority are we most inclined to accept instead of scripture, and why?

What is the relative authority of scripture and psychological theory?

What aspects of scripture’s authority do you find it difficult to accept? How do you handle that?

## Sabbath

- 1 Exod 20 – Recognize that it belongs to Yhwh (like tithes). God stopped – you stop
- 2 Exod 23:12 – Let other people rest and be refreshed, like God
- 3 Exod 31 – Rest in the middle of work for God
- 4 Deut 5 – Remember the exodus
- 5 Amos 8:5; Neh 13:15-22 – Don't give in to commercial pressures
- 6 Isa 56 – Accept that in this context it is the key marker of faith
- 7 Matt 12 – Do good on the sabbath and beware of “legalism”
- 8 Luke 4 – Treat it as a day for prayer and teaching
- 9 Col 2:16 – Don't be judged about it

### **Implications:**

“There is always new truth to break forth from God's word” (John Robinson)

So which of these significances are especially significant for us?

Are some insignificant or even misleading?

What new implications might sabbath have in our context?

In each case, what are the arguments for your view?

## **Lending, Jubilee, Tithing**

### **Lending**

Ex 22:25-27 – no interest (lending is to benefit poor)

Lev 25:35-38 – it's your brother

Deut 23:19-20 – lending at interest OK outside the community

### **Sabbath Year and Jubilee**

Ex 23:10-11 – The seventh year was also harnessed to the needs of the poor

Deut 15 – The seventh year also made an occasion for releasing of debts

Lev 25 – The fiftieth year an occasion for land to revert to its owners

Isa 61 uses jubilee as a metaphor for release from oppression

11 Q Melchizedek promises a release from sins in these last days

Luke 4 – Jesus does the same thing

Jubilee 2000 again applies this image to a new need

### **Tithing**

Gen 14 – a natural human instinct

Gen 28:22 – a way of looking generous

Lev 27:30-33 – beware of evading its demand

Num 18:21-32 – tithing as a means of supporting the ministry

Deut 14:22-29 – tithes to benefit the needy

1 Sam 8:15-17 – tithes a means of oppression

Amos 4:4 – tithing a means of evading real commitment

Put tithing and jubilee together. Let Christians tithe for nourishment, education, basic health care, and health education in the Two-Thirds world. Then maybe God would bless us (Mal 3:8-12)

### **Implications**

Sabbath year and tithing harnessed to varying concerns

Left-brain and right-brain approach to working out scripture's authority

## Week 5: April 27 (pages 37-40)

### Schedule

- 6.30 Worship
- 6.40 The canon of scripture (pages 38-39)
- 7.50 Break
- .11 The place of women in scripture (page 40); with responses to homework questions.

### Homework for the next four days:

When scripture offers us various resources for our thinking and pastoring/counseling:

Consider the various passages in scripture that describe or talk about dying.

- (a) Sarah
- (b) Abraham
- (c) Isaac
- (d) Jacob
- (e) Joseph
- (f) Moses
- (g) Joshua
- (h) Samuel
- (i) Saul
- (j) David
- (k) Simeon (in Luke)
- (l) Jesus
- (m) Stephen
- (n) Paul (2 Tim 4:6-18)
- (o) also Ecclesiastes' comments on death
  
- (p) How does this material resource us in our own thinking and in our pastoring or counseling?
- (q) Are there any questions you would like to ask about this material in scripture?
- (r) Are there any questions you would like to ask about utilizing these resources?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.

# The Canon of Scripture

## How Is It That These Books make Up the OT?

It's a historical process

Exod 19 – 24; 2 Kings 23; Neh 8 – 10.

The narrative?

Prophecies?

2 Macc 2:14-15

Ecclesiasticus Prologue

2 Esdras 14:45

Jesus

“The Synod of Jamnia” (Yavneh)

Christians worked with a wider range of books, esp. at Alexandria (cf. “Ecclesiasticus”).

Jerome

The evangelical view: accept the Jewish canon

The catholic view: accept the church's canon, with the “apocrypha”

The liberal view: abandon the idea of a canon

## Some Questions to Think About

If you could argue against the canonical position of any books of the OT, which would they be, and why?

Similarly about any books of the NT?

Is it worrying that the development of the scriptures was a human process?

Can we trust that God ensured that it worked out OK?

Which of those attitudes to the OT canon (evangelical, catholic, liberal) makes more sense?

## **How Is It That These Books make Up the NT?**

The OT as the church's original scriptures  
The oral Gospel  
Copying letters (2 Peter 3:15 – some count as scriptures)  
Written gospels

The late-second century crisis:  
Faith in Christ and Gnostic beliefs  
Marcion  
Montanus

Thus the need to clarify  
The relationship with the faith of Israel  
The gospels and epistles that expressed the true Christian faith – a broad but limited list

The main outline established – the Four Gospels, Acts, Paul's letters

Synods in the Western church in the fourth century agree the canon that we have, though things stay vaguer in the Eastern church.

The criterion of apostolicity:  
Do the books express the apostolic (i.e., true) faith (in its diversity)  
Do they come from the apostles (or their associates)?  
Has the whole church accepted them?

Hebrews and Paul, Torah and Moses

### **Questions:**

If you could argue against the canonical position of any books of the NT, which would they be, and why?  
Is it worrying that the development of the scriptures was a human process?  
Can we trust that God ensured that it worked out OK

### **The Shaping of the Scriptures**

Establishing a canon of scriptures fits with their nature  
Ongoing hearing of God's demands (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy)  
Ongoing hearing of God's word (Isaiah)

Canonical shaping (Brevard Childs)  
Ecclesiastes  
Psalms  
Ephesians 1:1  
1 Cor 1:2  
"The Gospels for All Christians" (Richard Bauckham)

Why the canon stopped

## The Place of Women in Scripture

### A cross-section of the scriptural material:

1. Sharing in God's image (Gen 1:26-28; 5:1-2). No hierarchy.  
Able to take initiative in the relationship (Song of Songs)  
Able to prophesy (e.g., Miriam), lead worship (1 Cor 11),  
Accompanying Jesus (Luke 8:1-4) and engaged in mission (Rom 16:7)  
Equal in privilege and responsibility (Deut; Gal 3:28)
2. Designed to help men (Gen 2:18-25).  
Through motherhood (Gen 3:16, 20; Gen 4:1-2, 17, 20-25; Luke 1 – 2)?  
In authority over the household (Prov 31:12-31)
3. Leading men astray (Gen 3:1-7). Cf. Prov; Hosea 1 – 3.  
But faithful when men are not (Deborah; cross and resurrection)
4. Experiencing pain in motherhood (Gen 3:16; 4:1-16)
5. Under men's authority (Gen 3:16, 20; 4:1, 17, 19, 25) (and even the victims of heavenly beings: Gen 6:1-4). Cf. 1 Timothy 2:8-13.  
God chooses men as priests.  
Jesus chooses men as his twelve disciples and gives them the "Great Commission."
6. Semi-disappearing from the story (Gen 5; 6:9-10; 9:1, 8; contrast 11:10-26, 27-32).  
Cf. Luke-Acts and then Christian history.
7. The need of strategies. E.g., Ruth, Esther.  
Eph 5:21-33 reworks the general view of husbands and wives

### Comments:

1. Mark 10:1-9 as a hermeneutical key to scripture.  
Your prior commitment determines the way you configure the data?  
Allowance for sinfulness as a feature of NT as well as OT.
2. Specifically, scripture works with androcentrism and patriarchy
3. The paradoxical status of Gen 3:14-19: warning or declaration of intent? Something to accept or resist?
4. The people of God/the church as a place where hardness of heart operates.
5. The value of the realism of scripture in helping women and men face facts, live with reality, and find strategies for that.
6. The importance of letting scripture critique our culture. To our culture, what happens outside the home (politics, business...) is more important than what happens inside the home – thus motherhood is devalued (and so is fatherhood).

## Week 6: May 4 (pages 41-45)

### Schedule

- 6.30 Worship
- 6.40 How Scripture Shapes People's Life (page 42)  
Ideal and condescension in scripture (page 43)  
"Slavery" as an example (page 44)
- 7.50 Break
- 8.10 Dying in scripture; with responses to homework questions (page 45).

### Homework for the next four days:

How scripture critiques us

Here is a list of what some students have reckoned to be U.S. values: things that many U.S. people view positively:

Freedom of thought	Separation of religion	Convenience
Respect for the individual	from public policy	Efficient use of time
Rule of law	Achievement and success	Speed
Entrepreneurship	Science and technology	Self-reliance
Equality irrespective of	Individualism	Self-expression
race and gender	Freedom	Power
Philanthropy	Work	Fame
Social mobility	Personal ownership	Efficiency with money
Self-criticism	Spirituality	Size
Experimentation	Youth	Personal space
Religious pluralism	Beauty	
Opportunity	Geographical mobility	
	Enjoyment	

If you think some should not be there (that is, they are not values that U.S. people view positively), you can omit them. If you think there are other values that U.S. people view positively, you can add them. If you prefer to draw up a list of values from your own culture and work with this, that is fine.

- (a) How does this list of values compare with scripture? What would scripture take away?
- (b) What would it add?
- (c) What else do we need to learn from scripture about values?
- (d) Are there any questions you would like about scripture's material on values, in light of the study?
- (e) Are there any questions you would like about how scripture critiques us, in light of the study?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.



## **How Scripture Shapes People's Life**

What changes people? Rewards and punishments?  
What changes people's convictions?  
Not so much commands as by stories?  
But commands have a place

Don't exaggerate the difficulty of understanding!

### **Ways Jesus Handles Diversity**

Mark 10

Mark 7

Mark 2:23-28

### **Jesus as Fulfillment**

Confirming, embodying, broadening, extending, interpreting

Yes and No

Ideal and condescension

Foundation and superstructure

Boundaries and what fills them

### **Variety of Levels?**

A canon within the canon?

A hermeneutic of suspicion?

The necessity of compromise

### **Questions for discussion**

What is it that makes people do the right thing – commands, stories, or what?

What is your canon within the canon? What is your justification for it?

What do you do when you think scripture can't be right?

## Factors That Shape Israel's Rule for Life

In the Garden of Eden/On top of Mount Sinai/On the Mount of Beatitudes/On the top of Mount Wilson

MonoYahwism, fairness, generosity, joy,  
egalitarianism, separation, beauty, community...

**On top of Mount**

e.g., Deuteronomy 6:5

e.g., Deuteronomy 22:4

e.g. Deuteronomy 22:10

Flat roofs  
Barter economy  
Pastoral/ urban

Sacrifice  
Tithes  
Taboo

**Contextual**

**Contextual**

**Givens**

**Vehicles**

Multi-ethnicity  
Informality  
Technology

Comedy  
Music  
Theatre

e.g., Deuteronomy 24:1-4

|

Marriage breakdown	Marriage breakdown
Slavery	Racism
Poverty	Poverty
Patriarchy	Pollution

Cf. If scripture is inspired, why is it so sexist?  
Cf. Stephen Carter (*Integrity* 45-47): compare Lincoln and Jefferson on slavery

**At the bottom of Mount Sinai      At the bottom of Mount Wilson**

# Slavery

The problem of the word

A slave – someone who is someone else's property, with whom they can do what they like.

Not an OT idea? – Hebrew has *'ebed* for slave and servant

NT has *doulos* as well as *pais* etc.

*'ebed* = worker?

It's a social/relational term

## From the Beginning It Was Not So

Gen 1 – 2: all have authority, all serve.

Then it goes wrong: Gen 3:16-17; 5:29; 9:25-27

Gen 12:16; 20:14 (later e.g., Gideon, Boaz, Job.

But Gen 14:15; 24:1-67

Also Exod 21:20-27

## The Causes

Circumstances

Personal and economic pressures

War

## Israelite Servants

Workers

Part of the family

Lifelong servants

## Debt Servitude

Lev 25

Exod 21

Deut 15

## In the New Testament

Something more like slavery

No repudiation of slavery – contrast Essenes

Gal 3:28

Col 3:22 – 4:1

Titus 2:9-10

1 Peter 2:18

Philemon

No attempt to regulate for the social order in the NT

## Implications

Importance of understanding different social contexts

For us, freedom is an ultimate value – not for the Bible; our stress on rights

Ways in which the biblical assumptions confront ours – labor as something you sell

All have authority, all serve

## Dying in Scripture

Sarah

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

Joseph

Moses

Joshua

Samuel

Saul

David

Zachariah (in Luke)

Jesus

Stephen

Paul

also Ecclesiastes

## Week 7: May 11 (pages 46-48)

### Schedule

- 6.30 Worship
- 6.40 The inspiration of scripture (page 47)
- 7.50 Break
- 8.10 Values in scripture (page 48); with responses to homework questions.

### Dessert after Class

Come to 111 South Orange Grove Bvd (drive west to the end of Walnut, turn left onto Orange Grove Bvd, after crossing the freeway turn left into Green St; our front door is at the southwest corner of Green and Orange Grove Bvd)

### Homework for the next four days:

The New Testament's use of the Old Testament

Study Matthew 1:18—3:3. Six prophecies are referred to. Look each up in their OT context and work out what it means there. Then consider what Matthew does with it.

- (a) Matt 1:23 (Isaiah 7:14)
- (b) Matt 2:6 (Micah 5:2)
- (c) Matt 2:15 (Hosea 11:1)
- (d) Matt 2:18 (Jeremiah 31:15)
- (e) Matt 2:23 (this is a tricky one because there is no passage that says quite this, but Matthew may refer to Judges 13:5 [Nazarene/Nazirite] or Isaiah 11:1 [branch = *nezer*, so as a Nazarene he is the branch-man])
- (f) Matt 3:3 (Isaiah 40:3)
- (g) What are your reflections on this study?
- (h) Are there any questions you would like to ask arising out of it?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.

## The Inspiration of Scripture

2 Tim 3:16

Word of God – a particular saying (e.g., 1 Sam 9:27).

Spirit of God comes on people and causes them to speak (e.g., Num 24:2)

But esp. *the* Prophets.

Yet they also stress human and historical origin. E.g., Hos 1.

Ezekiel 12:26-27: It's not for the far future

### Two implications

(a) The word of God is certain to come about. Isa 40:8; 55:8-11. Heb 4:12.

Thus it is infallible. Ps 77:8 1 Kgs 8:56. Rom 9:6.

It is true. 1 Kgs 17:24. 2 Sam 7:28.

(b) The inspired word is significant beyond its original context

2 Tim 3:15-17

Prophecies for today?

### How does it work?

It's like using an instrument. God speaks "by the hand/mouth of" someone. Haggai 1:1. Acts 1:16. People speak "by the Spirit." Mark 12:36. 2 Peter 1:20-21.

It's like dictating to a messenger. Jer 36:4-6. But it may leave something to the messenger. 2 Kings 18:19-25.

God stands behind the prophet's words. Isaiah 5:1-7. Jer 12; 14; 15; 20

### Questions for Discussion

When you think of the "inspiration of scripture," what does it mean to you?

When you think of God speaking through someone, how do you think of that working?

Do you think in terms of the infallibility or inerrancy of scripture? What do they mean to you?

Is literal interpretation of scripture important?

What is the relationship between intellectual study and faith?

How does that play in therapy

### Inspiration and narrative: Inerrancy/infallibility

Before the nineteenth century

The nineteenth century elaboration

Limiting inerrancy

The trouble with the "therefore"

The disadvantages of the stress on inerrancy

The God-giveness of a broadly accurate text

### Human word and holy scripture: Analogies

The incarnation

The Spirit's activity in the church

Creative inspiration

The sacraments

God's acts in history

## U.S. Values?

Freedom of thought  
Respect for the individual  
Rule of law  
Entrepreneurship  
Equality irrespective of race and gender  
Philanthropy  
Social mobility  
Self-criticism  
Experimentation  
Religious pluralism  
Opportunity  
Separation of religion from public policy  
Achievement and success  
Science and technology  
Individualism  
Freedom  
Work  
Personal ownership  
Spirituality  
Youth  
Beauty  
Geographical mobility  
Enjoyment  
Convenience  
Efficient use of time  
Speed  
Self-reliance  
Self-expression  
Power  
Fame  
Efficiency with money  
Size  
Personal space

## **Weeks 8 and 9: May 18 and 25 (pages 49-54)**

### **Week 8: May 18**

#### **Schedule**

- 6.30 Worship
- 6.40 How the NT Interprets the OT (page 50); with response to homework comments  
Interpreting prophecy (page 51)
- 7.50 Break
- 8.10 Issues Such as Abortion and Homosexuality in Light of Scripture (pages 52-54)

#### **Homework for the next four days:**

None, because you are completing your first paper to turn in by May 25  
Please read the turn-in instructions

### **Week 9: May 25**

#### **Schedule**

Memorial Day: no class

#### **Homework for the next four days:**

(1) Review what you have studied this quarter so far and work out what are the questions you would like more help with at the last class. Post these on Moodle.

(2) Go the Course Evaluation on Portico and complete the questionnaire (this may not be available until Friday)

(3) Hermeneutical approaches to scripture that may help us to see things there. Read Dr Goldingay's papers "Hermeneutics of the Pentateuch" and "Hermeneutics of the Poetic Books and the Short Stories" ([www.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay](http://www.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay) under "OT501" and "OT504"). Write your 1000-1500 words on the following questions:

- (a) Which of these approaches do you find illuminating, and why?
- (b) Which do you find not very illuminating, and why?
- (c) How and where could these approaches be applied to the narrative books of the OT, the prophets, and the NT books?
- (d) For which of these approaches do you need more explanation, if you are to understand them or use them?

Post your homework by Friday 11.59 p.m. and comment on the homework of other people in your group by Monday noon.



# The NT Interpretation of the OT:

## How Matthew 1 - 5 Sees the OT

### 1 The OT is Act I to the NT's Act II (1:1-17)

It establishes who Jesus is  
Matt appeals to real history (so we are interested in the real history)  
But it schematizes (so we are interested in the way the story is told)  
And the history does not have to be read this way

### 2 The OT declares the promises that Jesus is fulfills (1:18 - 2:23)

Five vignettes whose point is clinched by a reference to something being fulfilled (filled out?)  
1:18-25 (Isa 7:14). 2:1-12 (Mic 5:2). 2:13-15 (Hos 11:1). 2:16-18 (Jer 31:15)  
2:19-23 (Isa 11:1? Isa 52:13 - 53:12? Judg 13:5?)  
The usual way all Christians have interpreted the OT!  
For the approach to interpretation, cf. John 11:50.  
But it's worth trying to understand the OT in its own right!

#### [For discussion:

Do you think this approach to the fulfillment of OT prophecy works?  
Do we lose anything by adopting it?  
Have you had God speak to you by that kind of use of scripture?

### 3 The OT provides images, ideas, and words for understanding Jesus (3:1-17)

The theological dictionary presupposed by Matt 3:1-12  
The source of God's words in 3:13-17  
Ps 2:7; Gen 22:2; Isa 42:1

### 4 The OT lays out the kind of life God expects Israel to live (4:1-11)

Jesus responds to the devil from Deut 8:3; 6:16; 6:13.  
But the Devil can also use scripture!  
Watch for the actual meaning and the broader context

### 5 The OT describe the kind of life with God believers can live (5:1-12)

The Blessings mostly come from the OT (esp. Isaiah and Psalms)  
But Jesus creates something wholly new from this raw material

### 6 The OT provides the foundation for Jesus' moral teaching (5:17-48)

Not to annul the Torah and the Prophets but to fulfill.  
He confirms, embodies, broadens  
He is not working out the implications of the Torah or bringing a more developed revelation  
He builds on the Torah's foundations, fills its boundaries  
He reasserts the possibilities that go back to creation

## Interpreting Prophecy

Taking it as God's word  
The beginning of prophetic books  
E.g., Ezek 1:1-3; 2:8 – 3:3

Taking it as addressing a context  
The beginning of prophetic books  
E.g., Ezek 1:1-3; 2:8-3:3

Taking it as relating to God's long term purpose  
E.g., Ezek 34 – 48.  
Cf. Revelation

## Homosexuality

Dear Minister,

I wonder whether you can help me with the interpretation of some of the Old Testament laws. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, I remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination. I know that God's word is eternal and unchanging. But I do need some advice from you about some other laws.

When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord (Lev. 1:9). The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. How should I deal with this?

I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as it suggests in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?

I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness (Lev. 15:19-24). The problem is, how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

Leviticus 25:44 states that I may buy slaves from the nations that are around us. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans but not Canadians. Can you clarify?

I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself?

A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination (Lev. 10:10), it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this?

How would you argue that the prohibition on homosexual acts applies now, but others don't?

Gen 18-19

The OT does not see the wickedness of Sodom as lying in the area of sex but of violence – Gen. 18-19 speaks of the cry of the oppressed; and see e.g., Ezekiel 16:49-50. The problem in Genesis 19 is rape, as in Judges 19.

Lev 18:22; 20:13

The only actual OT references to homosexuality. They fit with other OT prohibitions on combining things that do not belong or fit together – see Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:9-11. If you are not sure whether your clothing mixes linen and wool, you can go to the Shaatnez Service of Seattle and they will check your clothes for you. The Shaatnez Service argues that this is a way of fitting in with the way God created the world rather than trying to improve it. But Acts 10 then changes this.

You need a broader biblical theological view of (e.g.) cleanness/stain, food, and sexuality if you are to do that.

While we cannot prove that David or Jonathan or Ruth and Naomi did not have homosexual relationships, there is no indication that they did.

Isa 56:1-8 contrasted with Deut 23:1 and Lev 21:18-20. "You have heard but I say to you." Frederick Gaiser "Homosexuality and the Message of Isaiah: Open-door Policy." *Christian Century* May 2, 2006. Abbreviated from [www.luthersem.edu/word&world/archives/14-3\\_Sex/](http://www.luthersem.edu/word&world/archives/14-3_Sex/)

[14-3\\_Gaiser.pdf](#). See also Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality* (Louisville: WJK, 2006).

1 Cor 6:9-11. *malakoi* – the “passive” partners in homosexual activity  
*arsenokoitai* – “male-liers.”

Apparently picks up the LXX language of Lev 18:22; 20:13.  
Also in 1 Tim 1:10.

Rom 1:24-27. Includes only scriptural reference to Lesbian acts.

These are not acts that cause God’s wrath but results of God’s wrath. Our culture illustrates it!  
So homosexuals are paying the price for the rest of us.

Homosexual acts involve ignoring the way humanity was made.

They are “against nature.” That is, homosexual acts are against the natural order.  
(They are “natural” for a homosexual; but then, promiscuity is natural for me.)

The call of the church is to live by creation

If sex was designed for expression within a monogamous lifelong heterosexual relationship in order to fill the world (Genesis 1) and to image God in the world (Ephesians 5), then this does suggest that homosexual practice falls short of God’s vision, along with polygamy, prostitution – and divorce, remarriage, masturbation, living together before/without marriage, and the deliberate avoidance of conception?

Rom 2:1!

The witness of tradition

The witness of experience

“No issue divides the church more sharply.” Yet “the Bible hardly ever discusses homosexual behavior.” Contrast the stress on the wealthy sharing with the poor. (Hays, *Moral Vision of the NT*, 380, 381).

“The Bible contains six admonishments to homosexuals and three hundred, sixty-two admonishments to heterosexuals. That doesn’t mean that God doesn’t love heterosexuals. It’s just that they need more supervision.” Lynne Lavner

## Abortion

Whereas the Bible speaks about homosexuality and the question is whether we like it, the Bible does not speak about abortion.

Ex 20:13

Ex 21:22-25.

Does it mean the mother miscarries (the question then is whether she is hurt) or that she gives birth prematurely (and the question is whether the baby is hurt)? In the first case, the implications would be that the mother is person in a fuller sense than her unborn baby.

The second is surely right. Note that the regulation does not use the word for an embryo or foetus (as in Job 3:16) but the word for children. And it does not use the word for “miscarry” (as in Ex 23:26) but the word for “come out” (as in Gen 25:25).

Ps 139

The psalm is a piece of poetry, not a part of a law code, and is not a knock-down proof text to demonstrate that abortion is wrong, but the wonder it expresses at the growth of a foetus and at Yhwh’s involvement in this process is grounds for reckoning that a decision to cause a woman to miscarry is not merely one involving a decision about what happens to her body. It involves terminating a project that Yhwh is involved in. One would need special reasons to do that.

Jer 1:5; Lk 1:44

Hays’ comments:

General attitude to children and childlessness in scripture

Pregnancy is never a problem

Abortion is unthinkable. It is thinkable in NT times – there are many references from NT times and afterwards.

God gives life – it is not our job to decide when God does that, or when it ceases.

The church cares for the needy – that would include the regrettably pregnant or the parent of a disabled child

Rights of the mother. Rights! The key issue lies here?

No sacredness of life – rather sovereignty over life

What if the mother’s life is endangered?

What if the woman was raped?

What if the baby seems likely to be disabled?

These marginal situations are indeed tricky. But that’s not where the energy of the debate lies.

## Week 10: June 1 (page 55)

### Schedule

- 6.30 Worship
- 6.40 Pre-modern, modern, and postmodern approaches to hermeneutics; with responses to homework questions
- 7.50 Break
- 8.10 Review of papers turned in on May 25  
Responses to questions

### Homework for the next four days:

None; but you need to turn in your second paper by June 12  
Please read the turn-in instructions

! ▲

## Questions from NE505 in 2008

- 2 What is the core of Christian belief?
- 2 What is the rule of faith? Are there different ones? Who decides?
- 2 Can the other pieces of literature fit into our faith?
- 2 How do you deal with the brokenness of the world with the narrative of scripture?
- 2 Does the Holy Spirit do the same things today as it did in the past (e.g., Acts)?
- 2 How do we keep hope of the kingdom to come (eschatological) with all of the disappointing, disillusioning realities that we face in the world (especially as mental health workers)?
- 2 Where did all the people go after they died who were gentiles and not a part of the people of Israel?
- 2 Why isn't the view of salvation continuous throughout Scripture?
- 2 How do the Old Testament and the New Testament come together? Both seem different historically and theologically. The connection is unclear.
- 2 Making sense of the differences of God found in OT and NT, making sense of the different themes, why isn't God's personality consistent?
- 2 What is the appropriate perspective on the Old Testament? Are there things "no longer applicable" in light of NT perspective? What is still *incredibly* applicable? How much is addressed to Jews, and what is addressed and applied to everyone?
- 2 What's up with the apparently severe divine wrath all over the Old Testament? Why is God so upset?
- 2 Why does the God of the OT seem so different from the NT? Violence in OT? What does that mean for us now? How do we answer this question? Is God bi-polar?
- 2 It seems like the Old and New Testament have a hard time fitting. The New Testament answers many questions, but what do we do with the things left in the Old Testament?
- 2 What cohesive way can we get to the OT?
- 2 How can the Old Testament notion of war be rectified with the New Testament message of love?
- 4 Why does shit happen to good people?
- 4 What are some other understanding of the problem of suffering (aside from Job)?
- 4 It seems with all we've learned in Old and New Testament has lessened the authority of scripture.
- 4 What does it mean that scripture has authority?
- 4 How do we draw from, yet progress within tradition?
- 4 What should be our lens for interpreting scripture in contemporary culture?
- 5 Why are some books excluded in the canon?
- 5 The inspiration of scripture through the canonization crisis?
- 5 How was the Canon brought together?
- 5 Who determined the authority of what was included in Scripture?
- 6 What do I take as contextual and what do I take as a universal truth or authority?
- 6 How can we ensure understanding the context of Scripture while considering culture, etc. and then applying it therapeutically?
- 6 Why are there many different interpretations of Scripture that have resulted in different denominations and applications to our lives today? Are we supposed to take them literally?
- 6 Things that Paul state in the NT, how much of that was Paul, contextual, or even timeless? Issue of homosexuality: Paul comes out against it, how much of that was Paul, wholly "truth", or just contextual?
- 6 Why are there so many different translations of the Bible, which can be worded so differently? How does this affect the Church, and the faith community?

- 6 To what extent does culture influence scripture? How do we also be sensitive to other cultures? We know scripture is living and organic, but can it also be outdated? Who Jesus is? And reconciling that with the God in the Old Testament...
- 6 What do we do with theological concepts that might have evolved rather than being something that is actually “true”? Such as God-concepts or the concept of a Devil?
- 6 How do we determine what’s timeless versus cultural truth?
- 6 How does demon possession fit into American culture today?
- 6 How do we reconcile Scriptural contradictions?
- 6 How are we to read scriptural paradoxes practically?
- 6 What changed in terms of polygamy to monogamy from the Old to New Testament?
- 6 In the New Testament, what’s up with the primacy of Paul? Why is everyone all about Paul? I mean, seriously.
- 6 One of my professors said he no longer “believed in principles.” What was he talking about? (It was Beaton.)  
Dr Beaton says:  
The issue primarily in view is the tendency among the “principles” crowd that I grew up around to turn scripture into an abstraction divorced from culture and the rich narrative, in search of the universal principles that can then be “contextualized” into the various worlds/cultures they confront.
- 6 How can we live in the space of our church communities which don’t really recognize the humanistic perspective that we have as psychologists and therapists to explain humanity, human problems, sin, etc.?
- 6 How do we reconcile the different interpretations of the scripture? How are we unified (Romans 15) if we have so many different thoughts about the bible? Diversity vs. division?
- 6 Wealthy Christians? Is it possible to be a wealthy follower that also lives simply?
- 7 What does it mean that the Bible be infallible or inerrant?
- 7 What is “Truth” in scripture?
- 7 Why is authorship such a big deal?
- 7 What is the role of the historical-critical method vs. reading on own?
- 7 How does God judge those with traumatic histories, brain injuries, dementia vs. those with normal backgrounds?
- 7 How do we let Scripture shape who we are and our values? (i.e. we have more in common with other non-Christian Americans, than with other Christians around the world)
- 7 Which passages are metaphorical and which should we take literally?
- 7 A Sovereign God who allows suffering?
- 7 How can we correctly interpret the gospel author’s intent?
- 7 Does God really bless America, or have we cursed and deluded ourselves with a capitalistic and consumeristic culture?
- 7 I find it hard to “know God” these days since coming to Fuller. How can I get past that? Will I? Do you really think God loves us?
- 8 How is Scripture relevant for us today if it was written in a certain time period within that sociopolitical context? How do we read Scripture then?
- 8 What’s up with Revelations and Daniel? As a reader today what is it that God is trying to tell me in that text? (Some people take it as a metaphor others take it literally, how are we supposed to take it now at days?) It is a different genre; does it apply to me today?
- 8 How should we interpret end times (i.e., Revelation)?
- 8 How can Paul and Jesus get away with taking verses “out of context?”
- 8 How do we understand NT Gospel writers who misquote the OT scripture or take it out of context?
- 8 Double meanings of passages: when they prophesy about Jesus and are also significant in their context.
- 9 How do I interpret the book of Revelation, based on it being an apocalyptic genre? How do I find meaning there?



- 9 Expand on the concept of eschatology. Is this concept found in the OT and how is it linked between OT and NT?
- 9 Healing as present day reality and its integration into psychology (versus the focus on just getting to heaven/salvation).
- 10 How do you hold the tension between really being able to understand God in books like Job and Lamentations?
- 10 How God uses the Scripture...how are you sure that what you are feeling is the Holy Spirit? Genuinely inspired by the Holy Scripture and not just proof-texting your own theology...
- 10 How has the definition of miracles changed?
- 10 What is an appropriate way to read scripture, and apply it? Is there appropriateness in applying it personally, or should we have a more communal focus?
- 10 Once we understand context and history of scripture, how much is left for contemporary application?
- 10 How do monumental shifts occur over time regarding interpretation of scripture? Also, how do we account for differences in interpretations, whether over time or across different groups?
- 10 How can we read anything in the bible without a ton of academic resources?
- 10 How should we critique our biblical study tools?