



Introduction to the Bible Study Tools

REVIEW: From “What is Covenant Theology” (series)

- Redemptive Historical Hermeneutic
- Tri-Covenantalism:
 - Covenant of Redemption (covered last month, available on the app)
 - Covenant of Works
 - Covenant of Grace
- Distinguishing Works And Grace (Law And Gospel)
- Identifying Types And Shadows
 - Types and Antitypes
 - Shadow and substance

Biblical Genres

The following genres are represented Scripture:

- Narrative (comprises 43 percent of the Bible)
- Poetry (comprises 33 percent of the Bible)
- Discourse (comprises 24 percent of the Bible)

NARRATIVE

- Historical narrative is Scripture that gives factual retellings of real events.
- These books of the Bible are not based in myth, they are based in fact.
- As we read, it’s important for us to pause and reflect on the fact that these events actually happened!
- Historical narrative comprises 43% of the Bible. God loves to tell stories of His faithfulness.

Old Testament narrative is found in:

- Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther
 - Parts of Job and the Prophets

New Testament narrative is found in:

- Matthew, Mark, Luke, John (see ‘The Gospels’ below for more) and Acts (2)

LAW

NOTE: This helps clarify a Law / Gospel distinction in scripture.

Biblical law is Scripture that outlines God’s commands to His covenant people.

Laws come in several forms:

- *Moral Law* - laws about how to live, for all people in all times



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- *Ceremonial Law* - laws about tabernacle and temple worship for the Israelites
- *Civil or Judicial Law* - laws that governed, preserved and protected Israelite society
- Biblical law is found in
 - Leviticus, parts of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (2)

Threefold use of the law: (3)

1) Mirror:

Its first function is to be a mirror reflecting to us both the perfect righteousness of God and our own sinfulness and shortcomings. As Augustine wrote, "the law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements, and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace." The law is meant to give knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11), and by showing us our need of pardon and our danger of damnation to lead us in repentance and faith to Christ (Gal. 3:19-24).

2) Civil:

A second function, the "civil use," is to restrain evil. Though the law cannot change the heart, it can to some extent inhibit lawlessness by its threats of judgment, especially when backed by a civil code that administers punishment for proven offenses (Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21; Rom. 13:3, 4). Thus it secures civil order, and serves to protect the righteous from the unjust.

3) Guide

Its third function is to guide the regenerate into the good works that God has planned for them (Eph. 2:10). The law tells God's children what will please their heavenly Father. It could be called their family code. Christ was speaking of this third use of the law when He said that those who become His disciples must be taught to do all that He had commanded (Matt. 28:20), and that obedience to His commands will prove the reality of one's love for Him (John 14:15). The Christian is free from the law as a system of salvation (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:15-19, 3:25), but is "under the law of Christ" as a rule of life (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2)."

POETRY

The power of poetry comes through the use of vivid figurative language ("As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." Ps. 42:1.) Also, ideas are repeated, sometimes with the same words, other times with synonyms (synonymous parallelism). The Psalms and other poetic sections of the Bible communicate ideas, but they especially express emotion. They show life in its fullness. (1)

- This type of Scripture is full of symbolic language, metaphors, word pictures and expressions of feeling.
- Psalms make up the majority of biblical poetry, but poetry can also be found in:



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- Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and several OT narratives
- There are several authors of Psalms, with David being the most well-known author.
- Types of Psalms (Psalms have been categorized in many different ways. These come from the ESV Study Bible.):
 - Laments (laying a troubled situation before the Lord and asking for help)
 - Hymns of Thanksgiving
 - Hymns of Praise
 - Hymns Celebrating God's Law
 - Wisdom Psalms
 - Songs of Confidence
 - Royal Psalms (dealing with the Davidic monarchy and the coming Messiah)
 - Historical Psalms
 - Prophetic Hymns (2)

WISDOM

Wisdom literature invites us to consider the complexity of wise living and gives us general rules for life. These sayings, proverbs and writings communicate principles that are usually true, but not universally true. Here we find principles, not promises. Wisdom Literature is found in: Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. (2)

PROPHECY

They are mostly oracles, later written down. We gain spiritual lessons from them about the disposition of God (e.g., disappointed, indignant, sorrowful, tender, caring), and the condition of the people addressed (e.g., frightened, disobedient, humbled, arrogant). (1)

Biblical prophecy is Scripture that recounts visions or specific messages from God about the future. Prophecies were directed at God's own people, but also to other kings and countries during the time of the prophets. Some prophecies were meant only for their original audience, some were meant for an audience much later in the future, and some for both.

Not all prophets have their own books of the Bible! There are also prophecies interwoven throughout historical narrative in both Testaments.

Old Testament examples: Moses, Balaam, Elijah and Elisha.

New Testament examples: John the Baptist and John the apostle.

Books dedicated totally to prophecy are separated into major and minor categories; not due to the level of their importance but due to their length.

Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel

Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

Gospels



(Better: Life and work of Jesus Christ)

- Eyewitness testimonies about the life of Jesus.
- Special type of historical narrative that focus completely on Jesus.
- The four gospels in the Bible are:
 - Matthew, Luke, Mark and John
- Each gospel has a different author and includes a different retelling of Jesus' life.
- Some of the events overlap, but many do not.
- Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the "synoptic gospels" because they include many of the same events. (2)
- The teachings of Jesus we know as parables are their own genre. These unique stories communicate lessons embedded in extended similes and metaphors.

PARABLES

- Parables are short stories with a purpose to impart a message
- Look for the intended message, without overlooking possible other meanings
 - Example: Prodigal son
- Understand what the main details stand for, but don't overanalyze the parable
- Look for the question the parable is trying to answer or the doctrine it is trying to teach
- There are parables in other places besides the Gospels. They actually occur a lot in the prophets as well, and even in the narrative books.
 - Read 2 Sam. 12:1-4. What is the main point of this parable? What do the rich man, the poor man, and the sheep represent in the parable? How do you think David would have responded if Nathan would have delivered his message differently, such as a speech, or an accusation? (4)

EPISTLES

The letters of the New Testament were communications to specific individuals or groups for specific and varied purposes. The apostle Paul meant Romans to be an overarching description of Christian faith, whereas 1 Corinthians was occasioned by problems, including a list of questions they had for Paul ("now concerning the matters you wrote about," 1 Cor. 7:1), and the letters to Timothy were to encourage and guide a younger church leader in a challenging spot. Epistles are "occasioned" texts, and so we need to get at the circumstances that led to them being written. (1)

Technical notes:

- The epistles are Scriptures written in the form of a letter.
- Letters take up half of the New Testament.
- The twenty one epistles were written by six authors:



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- Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude, and the anonymous writer of Hebrews
- The epistles, by author:
 - Paul: Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon
 - Peter: 1-2 Peter
 - James: James
 - John: 1-3 John
 - Jude: Jude
 - Anonymous: Hebrews (2)

APOCALYPSE

- Apocalyptic literature is Scripture that describes what the end times will be like.
- This genre uses symbolic language and numbers, word pictures and images that often seem strange to us.
- In the Old Testament, apocalyptic literature is sometimes mixed in with narrative, which can make interpretation difficult.
- Old Testament apocalyptic literature can be found in:
 - Parts of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah and Daniel
- New Testament apocalyptic literature can be found in:
 - Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation

(1) <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2016/03/the-many-genres-of-scripture/>

(2) <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/570bc781b6aa60017e66cca4/t/5c6c4f40eb393136fc7d0e70/1550602049454/Quick+Guide+to+Biblical+Genres.pdf>

(3) <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/threefold-use-law>

(4) <https://studyingtheword.wordpress.com/2009/11/25/genre-parable/>