

Hermeneutics — Student Handout

Chapter 6: The Historical-Cultural Context

Lecture 6

Instructor: Dr. Ancel Presnell

What You Should Learn From Today's Lecture

- Understand why historical-cultural context is necessary for proper Bible interpretation.
- Learn what is included in historical-cultural context.
- Recognize how background clarifies the meaning and emotion of a passage.
- Identify dangers to avoid when studying background information.
- Learn the basic tools used to discover the historical-cultural setting of a book and passage.

1. Why Historical-Cultural Context Matters

Key Passage:

2 Timothy 4:6–8

2 Timothy 4:9

2 Timothy 4:21

Notes:

2. Why Bother with Historical-Cultural Context?

Key Ideas:

- God spoke through human authors in real historical settings
- Scripture was God's Word to them before it became God's Word to us
- A valid interpretation must fit the original setting

Notes:

3. What Is Historical-Cultural Context?

Use this section to write notes during lecture.

The Biblical Writer

Who is the writer?

What is his background?

Why is he writing?

Notes:

The Biblical Audience

Who are the original hearers?

What are their circumstances?

What problems or pressures are they facing?

Notes:

Other Historical-Cultural Elements

Geography, customs, politics, religion, economics, family life, etc.

Notes:

4. Examples Used in Lecture

Write notes on examples that help show how background clarifies the text.

Paul and Timothy — “Come before winter”

Jeremiah 29:11

Colossians / 1 John

Good Samaritan / Prodigal Son / Ruth / Acts 16

5. Dangers Associated with Studying Background

Write notes on the dangers discussed in lecture.

Inaccurate Background Information

Elevating Background Above Meaning

Becoming a Walking Database of Facts

Greatest Danger

6. Tools for Identifying Historical-Cultural Context

Write down the tools mentioned in the lecture and what they help with.

Tools for the Whole Book

- Bible handbooks
- Introductions / surveys
- Commentaries

Notes:

Tools for the Passage Itself

- Bible atlases
- Bible dictionaries / encyclopedias
- Background commentaries
- Histories
- Special studies

Notes:

Closing Summary

- God chose to speak in real historical settings.
- Historical-cultural context helps us hear the text correctly.
- Background should clarify meaning, not replace meaning.
- Good tools help us recover the original setting of Scripture.
- A valid interpretation must fit the historical-cultural context of the passage.

THINGS TO KNOW (Exam Anchors)

1. Historical-cultural context includes the writer, the audience, and background elements connected to the passage.
2. God spoke through human authors in real historical situations.
3. Scripture was God's Word to them before it became God's Word to us.
4. A valid interpretation must fit the original historical-cultural setting.
5. The writer's background can clarify the burden and tone of a book.
6. The audience's circumstances often explain the themes of a book.
7. Historical-cultural context may include geography, customs, religion, politics, and economics.
8. Inaccurate background information is dangerous.
9. The background must never be elevated above the meaning of the text.

10. Bible handbooks, surveys, atlases, dictionaries, commentaries, and histories are important tools.
11. A question will be asked if you have completed the assigned reading.

ASSIGNMENT

Read **Chapter 6 — THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT**