

HERMENEUTICS 101

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BIBLE

NORTH PARK CENTER FOR EQUIPPING | DR. LUKE JOHNSON





BASIC TOOLS

(come back next week for more!)



OBSERVATION: “WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?”

- **BECOME A MASTER QUESTIONER!**
 - **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW...**
 - **WHY IS THIS DETAIL INCLUDED IN THE STORY?**
 - **WHY IS THIS STORY INCLUDED IN THIS PERSON’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH?**
 - **HOW DOES THIS COMMAND/LAW MAKE GOD’S PEOPLE MORE LOVING?**
 - **HOW DOES THIS METAPHOR TEACH ME SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT GOD IS LIKE?**

OBSERVATION: “WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?”

- FOLLOW YOUR CROSS-REFERENCES
 - WHY DO BIBLE TRANSLATORS/EDITORS CONNECT THESE TWO PASSAGES?
 - HOW DOES ONE PASSAGE HELP INTERPRET ANOTHER?
 - WHAT BIBLICAL THEMES ARE FOUND IN BOTH PASSAGES?

INTERPRETATION: “WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?”

- **USE A GOOD STUDY BIBLE**
 - **ESV STUDY BIBLE**
 - **GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE**
 - **REFORMATION STUDY BIBLE**
- **WATCH THE BIBLE PROJECT VIDEOS**
 - **DOWNLOAD THE APP OR GO TO THE WEBSITE:**
[BIBLEPROJECT.COM](https://www.bibleproject.com)
 - **WATCH OVERVIEW VIDEOS, THEME VIDEOS, ETC.**



INTERPRETING VARIOUS GENRES OF SCRIPTURE

(part 1: narrative and discourse)



NARRATIVE

WHY STORIES?

- 40% OF OT AND 60% OF NT ARE CONSIDERED NARRATIVE
- NARRATIVE COMMUNICATES WORLDVIEW
- NARRATIVE ILLUSTRATES THE HUMAN CONDITION
- NARRATIVE CAPTURES THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE
- NARRATIVE REJECTS THE OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF A COMPLEX REALITY
- STORIES ARE RELATABLE
- STORIES CAPTURE THE IMAGINATION

WHY STORIES?

- **Biblical narratives are prose accounts which dramatically chronicle the unfolding of God's mighty deeds in the history of redemption.**
- **They are historical-rhetorical-theological accounts that have theological and practical significance for the people of God throughout all ages.**

DYNAMICS OF NARRATIVE

- **SETTING- WHERE IS THE STORY TAKING PLACE? HOW DOES THE SETTING AFFECT THE FEEL OR THE PLOT OF THE STORY?**
- **EX. 1- “MOVING EAST” IN GENESIS**
- **EX. 2- “EGYPT” AND GOD’S RESCUE FROM OPPRESSION**
- **EX. 3- “WILDERNESS” AND PLACE OF TESTING**
- **EX. 4- “40” DAYS OR YEARS IN A PLACE**
- **EX. 5- “SEA” AND PLACE OF CHAOS AND DESTRUCTION**

DYNAMICS OF NARRATIVE

- **CHARACTERS- WHO IS IN THE STORY? IS GOD IN THE STORY? ARE THE HUMANS GOOD OR BAD?**
- **HEBREW DOES NOT WASTE DETAILS**
 - **SAUL IS TALL (PRIDE) & DAVID IS THE “RUNT” (HUMBLE)**
 - **ESAU IS HAIRY, LIKE AN ANIMAL**
 - **NAMES REFLECT CHARACTER/STORY**
 - **JACOB=DECEIVER**
 - **ABRAHAM=FATHER OF MANY NATIONS**

DYNAMICS OF NARRATIVE

- **PLOT- THE ARC OF DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CONFLICT TOWARD RESOLUTION. HOW DOES GOD INTERACT? DOES MAIN CHARACTER SUCCEED OR FAIL?**
- **COMPRISED OF EPISODES THAT CUMULATIVELY DEVELOP A PARTICULAR STORYLINE.**
 - **WHY DID THE AUTHOR CHOOSE THE EPISODES HE CHOSE?**
 - **HOW DOES THIS EPISODE IMPACT THE GREATER PLOTLINE?**
 - **EXAMPLE: GIDEON AND THE FLEECE**

DYNAMICS OF NARRATIVE

- **NARRATOR- THE STORYTELLER WHO SEES BEYOND THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS**
 - **PROVIDES IMPORTANT POINT OF VIEW**
 - **OFTEN GIVES “BEHIND THE SCENES” INFO**
 - **IS “OMNISCIENT” AND CAN TELL WHAT PEOPLE ARE THINKING OR FEELING**
 - **IS “OMNIPRESENT” AND ABLE TO SPEAK OF INTERACTIONS AT DIFFERENT PLACES AT THE SAME TIME**

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **THE READER/LISTENER IS EXPECTED TO MAKE MORAL JUDGMENTS**
 - **THE NARRATOR RARELY STEPS IN TO DIRECTLY EVALUATE ACTIONS**
 - **THIS SHOULD CAUSE US TO BE CAUTIOUS AS WE READ/INTERPRET/APPLY THESE STORIES**
- **OFTEN, THE AMBIGUITY OF REAL LIFE IS PORTRAYED IN NARRATIVES (WAS IT RIGHT OR WRONG FOR MOSES TO KILL THE EGYPTION?)**



DISCOURSE

MAIN SECTIONS OF DISCOURSE

LAW (EXODUS 20-DEUTERONOMY)

EPISTLES (ROMANS-JUDE)

PURPOSE OF LAW

- EXPOSES MAN'S SIN (ROM. 3:19-20; 7:7-13)
- REVEALS GOD'S HOLINESS (1 PETER 1:16)
- INHIBITS EXPRESSION OF SIN (1 TIM. 1:8-10)
- TO GUIDE TO THE MESSIAH (GAL. 3:23-24)

TYPES OF LAW

- **SOMETIMES CATEGORIZED AS A TRIPARTITE DIVISION:**
 - **CIVIL LAWS- THE LAWS GIVEN TO GOVERN THE NATIONAL/CIVIC PEOPLE OF ISRAEL**
 - **CEREMONIAL LAWS- THE LAWS GIVEN TO THE PRIESTHOOD AND ISRAELITES TO GOVERN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS**
 - **MORAL LAWS- THE LAWS GIVEN THAT ARE UNIVERSAL IN NATURE AND NOT NATIONALLY/ETHICALLY BOUND**

TYPES OF LAW

- **AGAINST THE TRIPARTITE DIVISION: THERE IS NO CLEAR BIBLICAL DELINEATION, AND SOME LAWS FIT INTO MORE THAN ONE CATEGORY (I.E. COMMITTING ADULTERY WOULD 1) BREAK A CIVIL LAW, 2) MAKE ONE CEREMONIALLY UNCLEAN, AND 3) IS MORALLY WRONG**
- **FOR THE TRIPARTITE DIVISION: IT PROVIDES A HELPFUL FRAMEWORK TO CATEGORIZE WHY SOME LAWS ARE STILL OBSERVED AND OTHERS ARE NOT (SUCH AS THE DIETARY LAWS)**

PRINCIPLES OF THE LAW

- LIMITED EFFICACY: CANNOT SAVE
- THEOLOGICAL ORIGIN: FLOWS FROM GOD'S CHARACTER
- TEMPORAL SPECIFICATIONS: BOUND WITH MOSAIC COVENANT
- ETERNALLY RELEVANT: IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL TIME
- EX. "HONOR THE SABBATH"
 - FLOWS FROM GOD'S CREATION DESIGN AND REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES
 - SABBATH AS A RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE NOT EXPLICITLY CARRIED FORTH IN NEW COVENANT
 - JESUS "WORKED" ON SABBATH (MATT 12:1-8), PAUL DECLARED FREEDOM RE: SABBATH (COL. 2:16), JESUS IS FULFILLMENT OF SABBATH (HEB. 3-4)
 - REST FITS WITH HUMAN DESIGN (EX. 20) AND REDEMPTIVE WORSHIP (DEUT. 5)

ALWAYS REMEMBER THE SUMMATION OF THE LAW!

1. LOVE GOD
2. LOVE NEIGHBOR

AS FOREIGN OR CONFUSING AS A LAW MAY SEEM, KNOW THAT IT CAN ALWAYS CONNECT BACK TO THIS.

EPISTLES/LETTERS

- PERSONAL (PHILEMON, TIMOTHY, TITUS)
- CORPORATE (CHURCH OF CORINTH, CHURCH OF PHILIPPI)
- TYPICAL STRUCTURE OF GRECO-ROMAN EPISTLE:
 - SALUTATION & THANKSGIVING
 - BODY
 - DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION
 - PRACTICAL EXHORTATION
 - CLOSING PERSONAL WORDS & FAREWELL

OCCASIONAL IN NATURE

- ADDRESSING SPECIFIC SITUATION (I.E. CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS TAKING ONE ANOTHER TO COURT IN 1 COR. 6)
- ANSWERING SPECIFIC QUESTIONS (I.E. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S RETURN IN 1 THESS. 4-5)
- ENCOURAGING IN SOME SPECIFIC TRIAL (I.E. JEWISH CHRISTIANS TEMPTED TO RETURN TO JUDAISM UNDER PERSECUTION IN HEBREWS)
- PRESENTING SPECIFIC REQUESTS (I.E. PAUL REQUESTING PHILEMON ACCEPT ONESIMUS IN PHILEMON)

DEVELOPMENT OF ARGUMENTATION

- **LINEAR DEVELOPMENT**

- **GOD ELECTED UNTO SALVATION (EPH. 1)**
- **SALVATION IS GOD'S FREE GRACE (EPH. 2)**
- **GLOBAL REDEMPTION WAS THE PLAN (EPH. 3)**
- **LIVE AS ONE IN HARMONY & UNITY (EPH. 4)**
- **DON'T LIVE AS THOSE IN DARKNESS (EPH. 5)**
- **THE REAL BATTLE IS AGAINST SPIRITUAL FORCES, NOT OTHER HUMANS (EPH. 6)**

DEVELOPMENT OF ARGUMENTATION

- **CYCLICAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **EX: 1 JOHN**
 - **GOD IS LIGHT & GOD IS LOVE**
 - **WALK IN TRUTH & TRUST GOD'S TESTIMONY**
 - **BEWARE ANTICHRISTS & TEST ALL PROPHECIES**
 - **LOVE ONE ANOTHER & LOVE IS THE MARK OF FAITH**



KJERGAARD



INTERPRETING VARIOUS GENRES OF SCRIPTURE

*(part 2: poetry, prophecy, and
sub-genres)*



POETRY

Finding Poetry in Your Bibles

- **Poetic Books of the Bible: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Lamentations**
- **Major Sections of Books: Ecclesiastes, the Prophets, & Apocalyptic Literature**
- **Intermittently in Narrative Passages: Songs & Other Indented Verses**

Defining Hebrew Poetry

A genre of writing, which comprises approximately one-third of the writings of Scripture, that engages the senses with vivid language, figurative speech, images, scenes, and pictures in order to stir the heart and imagination through engaging both the intellect and the emotions.

Defining Hebrew Poetry

Reading and understanding poetry requires us to think in terms of our senses

- **Physical Senses: Seeing, Smelling, Touching, Tasting, Hearing**
- **Emotive Senses: Joy, Exuberance, Terror, Rejection, Adoration, etc.**

Literary Devices Used in Hebrew Poetry cont'd

Synonymous Parallelism- expressing the same or similar thought in line 1 and line 2 of a couplet.

- **Ex. Ps. 1:5**
 - **Line 1 “the wicked will not stand in the judgment”**
 - **Line 2 “nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous”**

Literary Devices Used in Hebrew Poetry cont'd

Antithetic Parallelism- making a point by making line 2 state the truth of the line 1 in a negative or contrasting way.

- **Prov. 15:1**
 - **Line 1** “A soft answer turns away wrath”
 - **Line 2** “but a harsh word stirs up anger”

Literary Devices Used in Hebrew Poetry cont'd

Synthetic Parallelism- The content of line 2 develops or expands the truth in line 1.

- **Prov. 21:27**
 - **Line 1 “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination”**
 - **Line 2 “how much more when he brings it with evil intent”**

Literary Devices Used in Hebrew Poetry

cont'd

Chiasm- A literary technique that centers significance through the use of mirroring lines.

Line A

Line B

Line C

Line B'

Line A'

Literary Devices Used in Hebrew Poetry cont'd

Chiasm in Psalm 67

Line A (vv. 1-2) Show Yourself by blessing us

Line B (vs. 3) Let the peoples praise You

Line C (vs. 4) Let the nations be glad and sing for joy

Line B' (vs. 5) Let the nations praise You

Line A' (vv. 6-7) Show Yourself by blessing us

Literary Devices Used in Hebrew Poetry

cont'd

Metaphors/Simile- Comparison between two things as meaning is transferred from a concrete object to the other abstract object (ex. “As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants after God.”)

Personification- Speaking of something non-human as having human characteristics/qualities (ex. “Rivers clap their hands”)

Anthropomorphism/Zoomorphism- Applying characteristics of man (*anthropos*) or animals (*zoo*) to God (ex. “In His hands,” “under His wings”)

Symbolism- A concrete image that points to or embodies other meanings (ex. “Light” communicates goodness, knowledge, or purity, especially in contrast to darkness and evil)

Literary Devices Used in Hebrew Poetry cont'd

Repetitions- Repeated use of words or phrases to increase degree of significance (ex. “Holy, Holy, Holy”)

Hyperbole- Conscious exaggeration for the sake of effect—not to be pressed into literal statements, rather take as is to express emotional sentiments (Ps. 56:2 “my enemies trample on me all day long)

Choice Economy of Words (Terseness)- Hebrew is notorious for its minimal use of words, making each word important

Couplets- Pairing two lines together to make one point

Interpreting Hebrew Poetry

Reading and understanding poetry requires us to slow down in order to plumb the depths of the significance and meaning.

- Demands meditation—the reading and re-reading of the text, mulling it over again and again in our minds
- Requires safeguards—allowing Scripture to define itself and unpack imagery, along with known colloquialisms and cultural understandings of the original readers (in other words, you can't make it mean whatever you want!)

Interpreting Hebrew Poetry

Look for narrative that couples with poetic elaboration

- **Ex. 14:27-28** “So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.”
- **Ex. 15:7-8**
“In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.”

Interpreting Hebrew Poetry

Know the world/context in which it was written:

- **What was the situational context of the author and/or recipients?**
- **At what stage is the redemptive narrative and Biblical revelation?**
- **What is the heartbeat (longing of the heart) expressed in the poem?**
- **What is the emotional temperature of the poem?**

Interpreting Hebrew Poetry

Grasp the theology of the poem:

- **What does this reveal about man's condition?**
- **What does this reveal about God's nature/character?**
- **What does this depict about life in a fallen world?**
- **What does this teach about the nature of salvation?**
- **How does the imagery give depth and substance to propositional truths of the faith?**

Interpreting Hebrew Poetry

Embrace the tensions of difficult statements.

- **Psalm 137:9 “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rocks!”**
- **On the surface, this looks like praise to the person who bashes children’s heads against rocks and kills them.**
- **Psalm 137:7-8 supply the context that aids our understanding:**
 - **This is the natural overflow of a mourning father**
 - **This is a cry for the retributive justice of God**



PROPHECY

HURDLES IN INTERPRETING PROPHECY

FORETELLING & FORTHTELLING

- **FORETELLING IS THE PROPHETIC PRONOUNCEMENT OF REVEALING THAT WHICH IS TO COME**
- **FORTHTELLING IS THE PROPHETIC PRONOUNCEMENT OF CONDEMNING PEOPLE FOR BREAKING COVENANT WITH GOD AND CALLING THEM UNTO REPENTANCE**

HURDLES IN INTERPRETING PROPHECY

VARIOUS LITERARY STYLES FOUND IN PROPHETIC LITERATURE

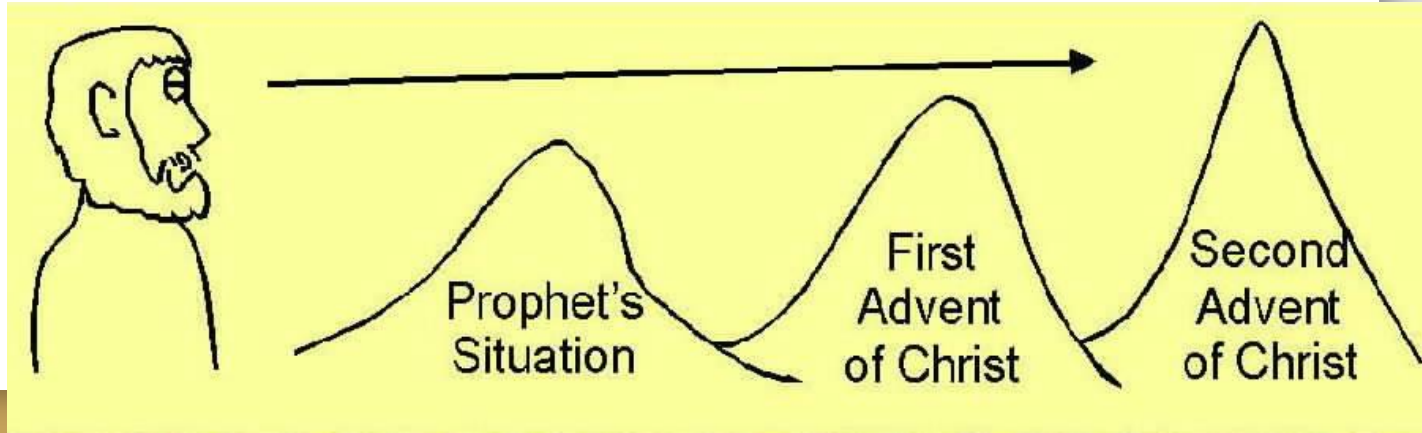
- APOCALYPTIC (DANIEL, ZECHARIAH, EZEKIEL, ETC.)
- ALLEGORICAL (HOSEA, ISAIAH, EZEKIEL)
- POETIC (MUCH OF PROPHETIC LITERATURE IS WRITTEN IN POETIC FORM, USING METAPHORS AND HYPERBOLE)

THESE LITERARY STYLES CAN MAKE THE INTERPRETIVE PROCESS MORE INTRICATE, BUT WHEN RIGHTLY HANDLED, IT YIELDS A GREATER EFFECT ON THE READER/HEARER

HURDLES IN INTERPRETING PROPHECY

TELESCOPING PROPHECY

- IMMEDIATE FULFILLMENT (EX. BABYLONIAN EXILE)
- 1ST ADVENT FULFILLMENT (EX. SINS ATONED FOR AT CROSS)
- 2ND ADVENT FULFILLMENT (EX. BANQUET OF GOD'S KINGDOM)



FUNCTION AND MESSAGE OF PROPHECY

FUNCTION

1. PROSECUTION
2. PERSUASION
3. PREDICTION

MESSAGE

1. JUDGMENT
2. REPENTANCE
3. RESTORATION



SUBGENRES



GOSPELS

DISTINCTIVES OF GOSPELS

- **A SUBGROUP OF NARRATIVE (BIOGRAPHICAL)**
- **DISTINCT FROM MODERN-DAY BIOGRAPHIES:**
 - **NOT CONCERNED WITH WHOLE LIFE**
 - **EPISODES ARRANGED TOPICALLY OVER CHRONOLOGICALLY AT TIMES**
 - **REPORT VARIOUS RENDITIONS OF TEACHINGS**
 - **HEAVY EMPHASIS ON FINAL WEEK**
- **HYBRID REPORTING OF NARRATIVE (HISTORY) AND DIDACTIC (TEACHINGS SUCH AS SERMONS & PARABLES)**

PARABLES

DISTINCTIVES OF PARABLES

- 1. EARTHLY DETAILS WITH HEAVENLY TRUTHS**
- 2. CONCRETE REALISM EASILY GRASPED BY AVERAGE PERSON**
- 3. MARKED BY SIMPLICITY REGARDING DETAIL AND UNCOMPLICATED PLOT**
- 4. OPENING EVENT AROUSES CURIOSITY AND SUSPENSE**
- 5. HEIGHTENED FOIL/CONTRAST RESULTS IN INSTANT POLARIZATION TO TAKE SIDES**

INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES

1. ANALYZE LITERAL DETAILS
2. ASSESS POTENTIAL SYMBOLISM
3. DETERMINE PRIMARY THEME(S)
4. CONSIDER MODERN APPLICATION
5. BEWARE OF ALLEGORIZATION



APOCALYPTIC

INTERPRETATION OF APOCALYPTIC

A SUBGENRE OF (1) PROPHECY AND (2) LETTER

HEAVY USE OF SYMBOLISM

- **SELF-ATTESTING USE OF SYMBOLISM (REV. 1)**
- **GENERALLY AGREED UPON SYMBOLISM (SWORD COMING FROM MOUTH OF RIDER IN REV. 19)**
- **NUMERIC SYMBOLISM (144,000, 7, 3, AND 12)**
- **DEBATED SYMBOLISM (1,000 MILLENNIAL REIGN)**

INTERPRETATION OF APOCALYPTIC

WHILE APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE CAN HAVE MUCH THAT IS CONFUSING AND DIFFICULT, ALWAYS COME BACK TO:

- 1. THE BIG PICTURE: CHRIST WILL BE BACK, HE WILL WIN, AND HE WILL MAKE ALL THINGS GOOD AND RIGHT AGAIN FOR THOSE FOUND IN HIM.**
- 2. MAJOR THEMES: (1) PERSECUTION IS EXPECTED, (2) GOD IS SOVEREIGN, (3) GOD WILL JUDGE EVIL, (4) REDEMPTION IS THROUGH THE LAMB, (5) ENDURE TO THE NEW CREATION**



WISDOM

INTERPRETATION OF WISDOM

- JOB-SONG OF SONG, SERMON ON MOUNT, JAMES
- PRINCIPLES, NOT PROMISES (SEE JOB)
- SITUATIONALLY DISCERNED, NOT UNIVERSALLY COMMANDED
(ANSWER A FOOL, DON'T ANSWER A FOOL IN PROV. 26:4-5)
- PROVERBIAL WISDOM (PROVERBS) VS. SPECULATIVE WISDOM
(JOB & ECCLESIASTES)
- CREATION WISDOM (HOW THINGS WERE DESIGNED TO BE)
VS. REDEMPTIVE WISDOM (HOW TO NAVIGATE A FALLEN
WORLD)



ALLEGORY

INTERPRETATION OF ALLEGORY

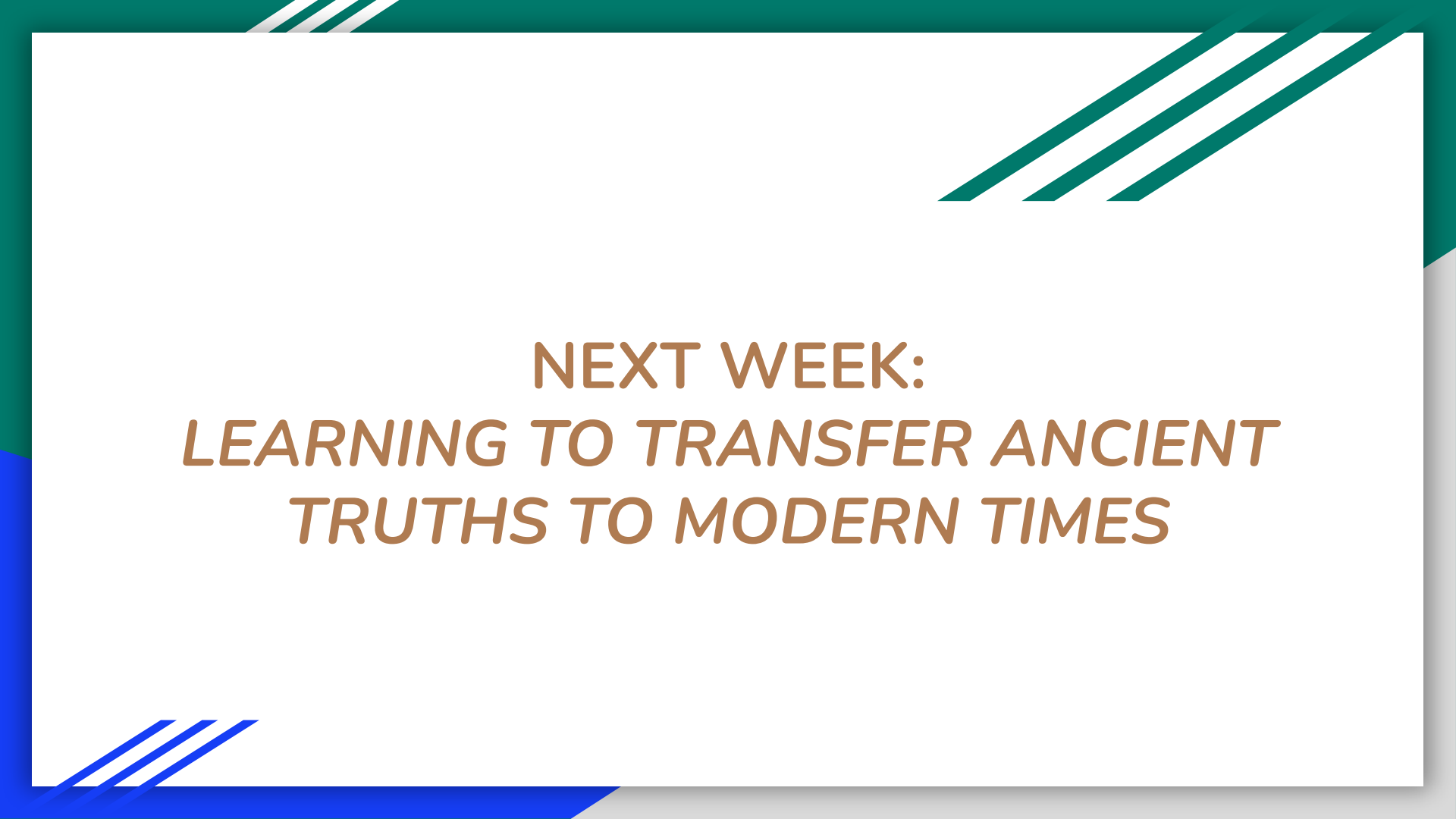
- **BIBLICAL EXAMPLES: HOSEA, EZEKIEL, SARAH AND HAGAR (GAL. 4)**
- **GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING ALLEGORY:**
 - **DON'T ALLEGORIZE WITHOUT BIBLICAL WARRANT**
 - **DON'T ALLEGORIZE WITHOUT GENERAL CONSENSUS**
 - **SCHOLARLY CONSENSUS**
 - **HISTORICAL CONSENSUS**

INTERPRETATION OF ALLEGORY

- **INTERPRET ALLEGORIES WITHIN BIBLICAL PARAMETERS**
 - **CONCLUSIONS CAN BE REINFORCED ELSEWHERE**
 - **THEMES ARE CONSISTENT BIBLICAL THEMES**
 - **NO “NEW” REVELATION FROM THE ALLEGORY ITSELF**
 - **SHOULD SERVE AS A “PICTURE” OF A GRANDER BIBLICAL MOTIF**

A FINAL WORD...

- **SCRIPTURE IS MULTIFACETED AND COMPLEX, WHICH ENHANCES ITS DEPTH, BEAUTY, AND RICHNESS**
- **DIFFERENT GENRES IMPACT US IN DIFFERENT WAYS, RECEIVE EACH FOR WHAT EACH IS INTENDED TO DO IN YOUR HEART AND MIND**
- **ENJOY THIS INCREDIBLE BOOK! IT IS A GIFT FROM GOD!**



NEXT WEEK:
*LEARNING TO TRANSFER ANCIENT
TRUTHS TO MODERN TIMES*