

BIBLIOLOGY 25 – HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE PART 2

INTRODUCTION

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We have concluded that the 66 books of the Bible are the Word of God, and the Bible is the authoritative Word of God in all aspects of our lives: theological, metaphysical, ethical, and socio-political. In other words, the Bible is the single source for our worldview and principles of life. We believe that the original autographs are perfect in form and function. We believe that we have an accurate representation of the original autographs in the Greek and Hebrew Bibles. We understand that the translations are good and useful for study, but how do we study?

REVIEW

In the last lesson, we discussed the various methods of biblical interpretation that are prevalent in Christendom and are widely used and encouraged. These methods include Allegorical, Moral, and Christological. We showed some examples of the allegorical method and demonstrated that it took away from the authority of Scripture and placed it upon the interpreter.

The last question we ask is, “Does the Bible give us the method of interpretation itself?” If the Bible prescribes a method for understanding the text, should we follow it? If there are no other methods prescribed, should we not stick to the method in Scripture?

BIBLICAL MANDATED METHOD

The method of interpreting the Bible is found within Scripture itself, so we don’t need to be puzzled about how to interpret the text. By examining key books (Genesis, Job, and Revelation), we can see how the Bible consistently employs a literal, grammatical, and historical approach to convey meaning.

This approach respects the text’s natural reading flow, follows linguistic rules, and preserves the historical setting while being mindful of the culture. It ensures that the author’s intended meaning and the audience’s understanding are maintained.

We must remember that we are a third party in reading the Bible. It is God’s Word given for us, but it is not written to us. Therefore, we carefully consider the people and history of the content, understanding what it reveals and the principles it embodies, and exercise extra caution not to misapply promises or warnings that were not intended for us.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE LGH METHOD

Genesis: A Literal Historical Narrative

The book of Genesis serves as a foundational example of the LGH method in practice. Genesis presents itself as a historical narrative, intended to be understood literally unless a specific text signals otherwise. Key features of Genesis that support the LGH method include:

- Narrative Structure and Historical Detail:

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Genesis 1–11 recounts the creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the dispersion at Babel with precise genealogies and chronological markers. These details suggest a historical account intended to be taken literally, rather than allegorically or mythically.

For example, the creation account in Genesis 1 employs sequential language (“the first day,” “the second day”) and defines “day” as a 24-hour period, marked by “evening and morning,” indicating a literal interpretation. The LGH method respects this plain reading, whereas allegorical or theological hermeneutics might reinterpret “day” to fit external frameworks (e.g., theistic evolution).

- **Cross-References:**

The basis for the week with a Sabbath rest for Israel is derived from the creation account (Exodus 20:11; 31:17). The New Testament likewise treats Genesis as a historical account. Jesus references the creation of male and female (Matthew 19:4-6, citing Genesis 1:27) and the Flood of Noah (Matthew 24:37-39) as factual events. Paul’s argument in Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 assumes a literal Adam whose historical actions impacted humanity. These references affirm that the LGH method aligns with how Scripture interprets itself.

Genesis’s literal presentation, coupled with its affirmation elsewhere in Scripture, mandates an LGH approach. Deviating to allegorical or spiritualized readings risks undermining the text’s authority and the theological truths it establishes.

- **Grammatical and Historical Context:**

The Hebrew grammar of Genesis employs straightforward narrative prose (e.g., waw-consecutive verbs), signaling historical intent. The LGH method respects this grammatical structure, ensuring that the text’s meaning is derived from its linguistic form.

Historically, Genesis reflects the cultural context of the ancient Near East, addressing real people and events (e.g., Abraham’s interactions with the Hittites, sons of Heth, Genesis 23). The LGH method considers the context to avoid allegorical or modern reinterpretations. It views Genesis as a historical record rather than a debate against modern science.

Job: The book’s historical and poetic elements are presented in a way that assumes a literal understanding of events and dialogues, reinforcing the LGH approach.

- **Historical Framework:**

Job begins and ends with prose narratives (Job 1-2, 42:7-17) that detail Job’s life, family, trials, and restoration. Specific details, such as Job’s wealth (1:3), the names of his friends (2:11), and God’s direct intervention (38:1), anchor the book in a historical context. The LGH method takes these as factual events, not allegorical constructs.

The New Testament reinforces Job’s historicity, with James 5:11 citing Job’s endurance as a real example. This cross-reference affirmation supports a literal reading.

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- **Grammatical Nuances in Poetry:**

The poetic dialogues (Job 3-41) use figurative language (e.g., Job's lament in 3:3-10), but the LGH method recognizes these as rhetorical devices within a historical framework. The grammar and structure of Hebrew poetry guide interpretation, ensuring that figures of speech are understood in their intended sense without imposing allegorical meanings.

For example, God's description of creation in Job 38-41 employs vivid imagery (e.g., "the storehouses of the snow," 38:22), but the LGH method interprets these as poetic expressions of literal truths about God's sovereignty over creation, rather than as mystical or symbolic abstractions.

- **Historical-Cultural Context:**

Job's setting reflects an ancient patriarchal culture, with references to practices like burnt offerings (1:5) and tribal interactions (1:15-17). The LGH method considers this context to understand the text's meaning, avoiding modern or theological reinterpretations that might see Job as an allegory rather than a historical account of suffering and divine interaction.

Job's blend of prose and poetry demonstrates Scripture's expectation of a literal interpretation, with grammatical and historical analysis that guides the reader to the intended meaning.

Revelation: Despite its symbolic language, the text provides internal clues that guide a literal interpretation of its intended meaning, avoiding speculative allegory and require a literal, grammatical, and historical reading to understand its intended meaning.

- **Internal Interpretive Cues:**

Revelation frequently explains its own symbols, guiding readers to a literal understanding of their significance. For example:

The "seven stars" and "seven lampstands" (1:20) are explicitly identified as angels and churches, respectively, indicating that these symbols have concrete referents.

The "dragon" (12:3-9) is identified as Satan, ensuring a literal interpretation of his role despite the symbolic imagery.

The LGH method follows these cues, taking the text literally where it intends (e.g., future events like Christ's return, 19:11-16) and recognizing symbols where indicated, without resorting to allegorical speculation.

- **Grammatical Structure:**

Revelation's Greek text uses a mix of narrative, letter, and prophetic styles, but its grammar consistently points to a coherent message. There is no reading between the lines or seeking a deeper hidden message.

Using the LGH method, one can carefully analyze grammar to distinguish between literal and figurative elements, thereby ensuring fidelity to the text's intended meaning.

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- **Historical Context:**

Written to first-century churches under various pressures and circumstances, Revelation addresses real historical situations while prophesying future events. Babylon means Babylon, Jerusalem means Jerusalem, and so on.

Allegorical approaches, which spiritualize Revelation, or treat the language as “Apocalyptic,” one can conclude anything. This can be a timeless allegory of good versus evil. Or the events were hyperbolic, referring to the destruction of Israel in AD 70. Or some treat this as simply a bedtime story to scare children. All of which ignores their historical and prophetic specificity.

- **Biblical Consistency:**

Revelation draws heavily on Old Testament imagery (e.g., Daniel’s beasts, Daniel 7; Revelation 13), interpreted literally in its original context. The LGH method maintains this continuity, ensuring that Revelation’s prophecies align with earlier Scriptures rather than being reinterpreted through external theological lenses.

The book’s opening (1:1) declares it a revelation “to show His servants what must soon take place,” signaling a clear, literal intent to communicate future realities, not obscure allegories.

SUPERIORITY OF THE LGH METHOD:

This approach minimizes subjectivity and ensures fidelity to the text; it is the only approach which is objective, we can observe and discuss and let the text be the authority. Scripture, combined with the LGH method, provides a stable worldview that aligns with Scripture’s authority and sufficiency.

- **It Reflects Scripture’s Self-Interpretation**
- **It Ensures Consistency**
- **It Respects Divine Intent:**
- **It Contrasts with Unbiblical Alternatives:**

Implications for Bible Expositors

For Bible study students, the LGH method is not optional but obligatory, as it is the only approach grounded in Scripture’s own interpretive principles. Students who adopt alternative methods will misrepresent God’s Word, leading to flawed theology and practice. By adhering to the LGH method, students can faithfully proclaim Scripture’s intended message, and when mistakes are made, it is Scripture that will correct, rebuke, train, and reprove.

Prayerfully, this lesson has convinced you that this is the method you need to employ to study the Bible. In the next lesson, we will explore how to apply the method.