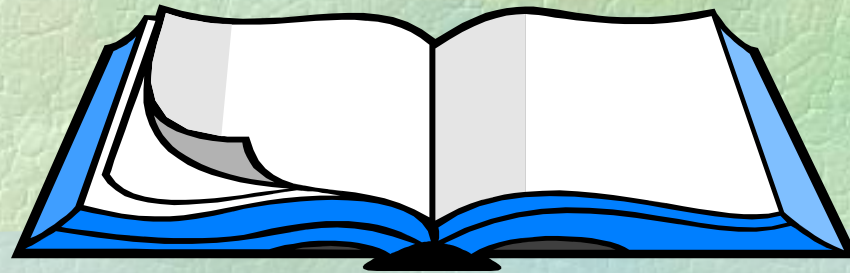


How To Read The Bible



For All Its Worth!

Goals For This Class

- To give a basic approach to understanding the biblical text
- To examine historical methods of interpretation
- To consider other methods of interpretation
- To promote unity of shared understanding
- To relate elders' views on interpretation

Not Goals For This Class

- To ensure everybody believes what I do
- To ensure everybody believes the same thing
- To debate controversial passages of scripture
- To negate or endorse any particular interpretative approach
- To confuse, frustrate, or agitate truthseekers

Understanding Apocalyptic Literature



The Nature of the Revelation

- The Revelation as Apocalypse
- The Revelation as Prophecy
- The Revelation as Epistle

The Revelation as Apocalypse

- Born of O.T. Prophecy; looks to the end
- Has particular written structure and form
- Contains visions, dreams, symbolism
- Images of fantasy rather than reality
- Very formally stylized with time divisions

The Revelation as Prophecy

- Combines apocalyptic and prophetic
- Non-pseudonymous
- Book called “this prophecy” (1:3)
- Testimony is “spirit of prophecy” (19:10)
- Was told not to seal the prophecy (22:10)
- Directed to seven specific churches

The Revelation as Epistle

- Has form of letter (1:4-7; 22:21)
- Speaks to readers in first/second person
- Is sent as a letter to the seven churches
- Remember that epistles are *occasional*
- Occasioned by needs of the churches
- Must understand historical context

The Necessity of Exegesis

- What did it mean to the original readers?
- Secondary meanings come after exegesis
- Keys to interpretation must be in the text
- Respect apocalyptic imagery
- Apocalypses generally do not give a detailed, chronological account of the future

Apocalyptic Imagery

- Images do not necessarily mean what they meant in their sources
- Several types of images -general & specific
- John's interpretation of images must be the starting point
- Must see visions as a whole and not focus on allegory of details

The Historical Context of Revelation

- Read it through in one sitting
- Who were “companions in suffering” (1:9)
- Who was “the one who overcomes”
- Note martyrdom because of “testimony”
- Where was John? Why?
- What was meant by “refuse to worship the beast”

The Historical Context of Revelation

- Church and state were on collision course
- Initial victory belongs to state
- Suffering and death await church
- It will get worse before it gets better
- John is concerned they may capitulate
- Letter encourages that God is in control
- Church is ultimately victorious

Tribulation vs Wrath

- Tribulation (suffering & death) was what the church was enduring
- Wrath is God's judgment on his enemies
- God's people do not endure his wrath
- They do suffer tribulation from enemies
- Opening of seals raises two questions
 - How long?
 - Who can stand?

The Literary Context of Revelation

- Content vs Function
- Chapters 1-3 set stage, introduce characters
- Jesus described from Daniel 10 (1:12-20)
- Church is introduced (2:1-3:22)
- Chapters 4-5 extend the stage
- Chapters 6-7 unfold the drama

The Literary Context of Revelation

- Chapters 8-11 reveal God's judgment
- Chapter 12 is theological key to the book
- Chapters 13-14 Vengeance is the empire
- Chapters 15-16 Empire is doomed
- Chapters 17-22 Tale of two cities

Imagery in the Revelation

- White horseman = Conquest
- Red horseman = War
- Black horseman = Famine
- Pale horseman = Death

Numerology in the Revelation

- 3 = Godly number
- 4 = Earthly number
- 7 and 12 = Perfect numbers
- $3\frac{1}{2}$, 666 = Imperfect numbers

Hermeneutics with the Revelation

- Pictures of the future are just pictures
- Certainty of judgment doesn't mean "soon"
- "Temporal" and "End Time" pictures may not be simultaneous
- We have no knowledge of "secondary" meanings
- Pictures intended to be "end times" should still be interpreted as such

Questions or Comments?

