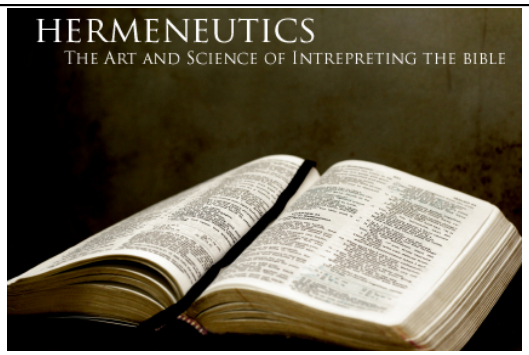


Biblical Interpretation & Presuppositions

Introduction

- What is biblical interpretation?
- Why the need for biblical interpretation?

Introduction

- In front of the text – reader centred
- In the text – text centred
- Behind the text – authoured centred

In Front of the Text

- Reader-centred
- 3 exercises

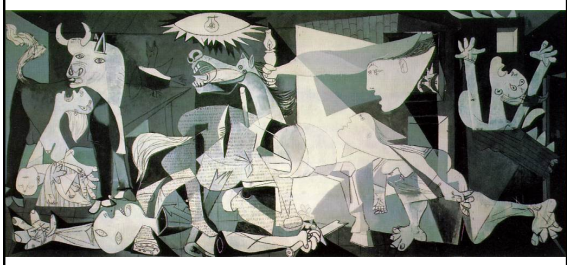
Paintings = 1000 words?

Exercise 1

Take a look at the following painting.

1.Express what you think or believe the painting is all about.

2.If you were asked to say something about the painting in 2 minutes, what would you say? How would you describe your observations?



Background of the Painting

- Painted by Picasso, *Guernica*
- Story of Guernica in World War II
- Spanish civil war, Guernica – strongest resistance to Nationalist movement
- April 27, 1937 – used as a testing ground for the new Nazi strategy of carpet-bombing to demoralise resistance.

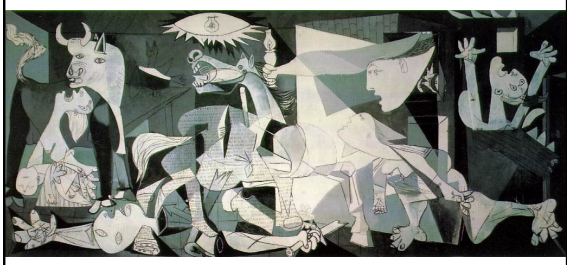


Exercise: Relook at the Painting

Relook at the painting again. After having some knowledge of the background of the painting, how would this affect your answers?

1.Express what you think or believe the painting is all about.

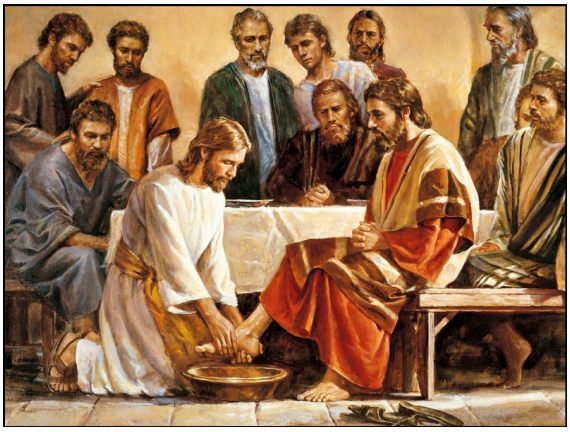
2.If you were asked to say something about the painting in 2 minutes, what would you say now? How would you describe your observations based on what you know about the painting?



Exercise 2: Painting about Jesus

- In your opinion, which of the following paintings appears to portray the essence of the Olivet Discourse in a more accurate manner?









Exercise 2

- What do all the 4 paintings on Jesus washing the feet of the disciples tell us about the presupposition of the artists?
- What do you think each of the artists brings to their understanding of Jesus washing the feet that informs them of their work of art?

Exercise 3: Another Painting

- What do you notice in the following painting, “St Luke Painting the Virgin Mary”?



Exercise 3

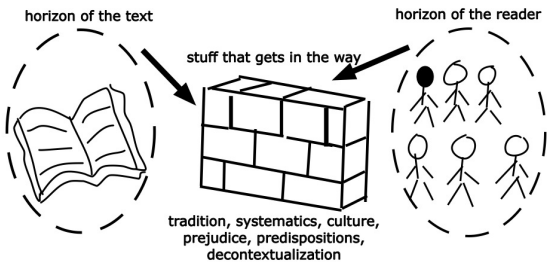
- What does the painting of “St Luke Painting the Virgin Mary” tell us about the narrative of the Gospels?
- How would this affect us in reading and interpreting the Gospels?

Listen to 2 sermons





Are We Ever neutral?



Are we ever neutral?

- What influence us in reading, interpreting, and preaching the text?
  - Your church background/current denominational persuasion?
  - Your theological training?
  - Others?
- Are these presupposition positive or negative influences?
- How much of these affect your reading, interpreting and preaching the text?

The Interpretive Journey

- What are some of the presuppositions we bring to the text?
  - Tradition
  - Culture
  - Social context
  - Values
  - Community
  - Church experience

The Interpretive Journey

- The need to interpret:
  - Gap between the "then" and "now"
  - Historical Context
  - Geographical Context
  - Cultural Context
  - Linguistic Context

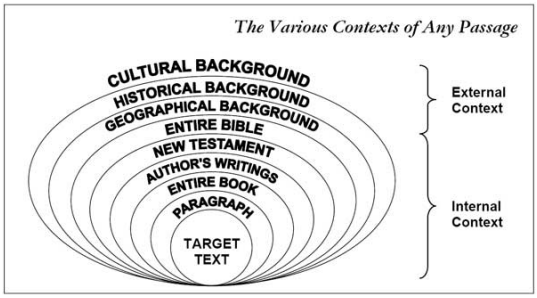
In the Text

- Original language and grammar
- Textual criticism in establishing the text
- Observation: sentence → paragraph → discourse → chapter → book
- Word/lexical studies
- Grammatical and literary structure
- Theological integration/biblical theology

Behind the Text

- Background
- Authorship
- Occasion
- Provenance
- Dating
- Audience/Recipient
- Historical and Cultural background studies

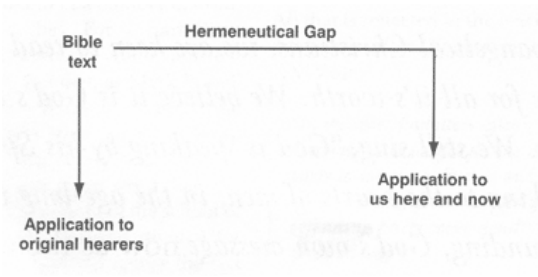
Behind and In the Text



3 Primary Ways:

- In front of the text – reader
- In the text - grammar, literary structure
- Behind the text – background, historical context

3 Primary Ways



Approaches to Biblical Interpretation

- Historical-critical: mother of all exegesis
- Recent approaches:
  - Social-scientific
  - Literary
    - Narrative
    - Rhetorical approach – both ancient and modern
    - Structural approach
    - Linguistic – intertextuality, echoes, actan approach/Griemanian

Approaches to Biblical Interpretation

- Feminist
- Postcolonial
- Use of OT in the NT
- Theological/canonical

Tools for the Task

- Several translations
- Biblical texts – greek and hebrew
- Grammars of biblical langauges
- Lexicons
- Commentaries
- Software/concordance
- Historical background

Tools for the Task

- Dictionaries – bible, theological
- Contemporaneous literature – both Jewish and hellenistic
- Other supplemental works – atlas, encyclopedias

3 Primary Ways:

- In front of the text – reader
- In the text - grammar, literary structure
- Behind the text – background, historical context,