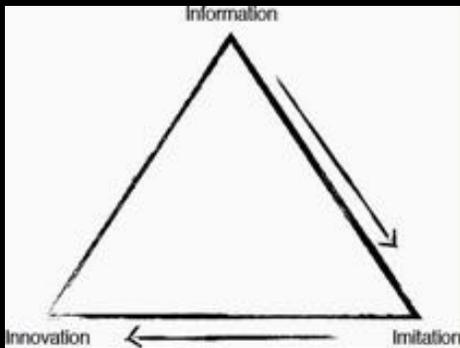


Scripture and the Life of God

Session 1:
The Anatomy of a Biblical Book

Why Biblical Study?



Views of the Bible

- Inerrancy - the Bible contains no errors "in its original manuscripts"
- Infallibility - the Bible is infallibly true and contains no falsehood
- Authority - the Bible contains all things necessary for life and faith

Reading is Interpretation

- The very act of reading is interpreting - one perceives a text based on how one understands words and concepts
- The problem is that we tend to read Scripture through a highly individualistic lens, when it was written to be read and understood in community
- When we read the Bible, we are reading it with the church over time
- We must be careful to read through the proper lenses

Adjusting Your Lenses

- Most people read the Bible through the lens of a 21st century worldview, but that is not the lens of the biblical writers
- Reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience and requires learning some background
- We have to understand “What goes without saying” in a particular culture to understand the message.

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes

- “We can easily forget that Scripture is like a foreign land and that reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. to open the Word of God is to step into a strange world where things are very unlike our own. Most of us don’t speak the languages. We don’t know the geography or the customs, or what behaviors are considered rude or polite...The most powerful cultural values are those that go without being said.”
- Randy Richards and Brandon O’Brien

Examples

21st Century Culture

- Individualistic
- Rights & conscience
- Standing out
- Conform to self
- Success

Biblical Culture

- Collectivist
- Shame & honor
- Fitting in
- Conform to family
- Patronage

A Tour Guide

- If Scripture is about entering into a foreign land, we need proper guides who speak the language, know the culture, and can teach it to us.
- We must choose our guides wisely - understand their biases and worldview
- We must weigh them against one another and against our own interpretive bias

Assembling the Tools of Interpretation

- Bible translation (several versions)
- Study Bible
- Bible dictionary
- Commentaries (several from different authors)
- Maps

Setting the Context

Identifying the Major Players

- Who is the writer?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the situation/occasion for writing?
- What is the historical/social setting of both the writer and the readers?
- When was this likely written?
- "A text without a context is just a pretext for whatever you want it to say."

The Original Text

- Old Testament - Hebrew
- Septuagint (LXX) - Greek translation of the Old Testament
- New Testament - Greek (lingua franca of the Roman Empire)
- Scrolls
- Codex
- Paper



Textual Transmission

- The “original autographs” of the biblical text have not been found.
- What we have are copies and fragments of copies written over time
- Textual experts compare these copies to form the biblical text as we see it
- Earlier manuscripts carry more weight



The Earliest Manuscript of Galatians

- Known as “P46”
- Dated between 175-225AD
- In the form of a codex on papyrus





Ancient Letters

- Particular form and function
- Written to be read aloud in front of the whole community
- Not written directly to *us*. We have to understand what it meant to them before we can discern what it means to us.



The Exegetical Ripple

- Word
- Sentence
- Paragraph
- Section
- Letter
- Corpus
- New Testament



Galatians

- Author: Paul of Tarsus
- Type: "Deliberative Rhetoric"
- Date: compared to Acts 15, post Jerusalem Council, probably late 50s AD
- Situation: Paul battling Jewish Christians who have settled in Galatia and insist on circumcision for salvation



Galatia in the 1st Century

- Originally settled by Phrygians, then Celts (270BC)
- “Galatae” - named after Celtic tribes
- Roman province established in 25BC by Augustus
- Paul visited the region during his first missionary journey (47-48AD) - Acts 13:1-15:35



Paul's Own Background

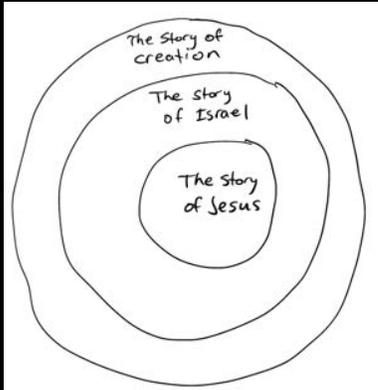
- From Tarsus - Center of Greek philosophy after the Romans sacked Athens
- Raised as a Jew, but also born a Roman citizen
- Uniquely immersed in both Judaism and Hellenism



The Central Symbols of Paul's World

- Judaism - all things Jewish taken for granted (“What goes without saying”)
- But what happens when those symbols are gone?
- The central symbol for Paul was the church as the new human race, where Jew and Gentile are both incorporated because of Christ
- Saw the church as the fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel

Paul's 3-Layered Worldview



Paul's Jewish Worldview

- Monotheism
- Election
- Eschatology

Monotheism

- A declaration of allegiance
- Not a theory but a commitment
- Paul believed that, in Jesus, God had come back to his people as promised
- He uses the Jesus story to explain what God has done
- God has conducted a new Exodus in Jesus

Election

- Too often applied to individuals (again, misreading with Western, Reformed eyes)
- Israel is God's chosen people through whom God will bless the world
- It is in the Messiah that the renewed people of God find their identity
- God has been faithful to his covenant promise
- "Justification" viewed through this lens

Eschatology

- Paul believed that he was living between two "ages" - the "present (evil) age" and the "age to come."
- Christian ethics in the present formed by the age to come, made manifest in the death and resurrection of Jesus
- Paul engages a covenantal worldview and theology

Galatians: The Situation

- A different sort of "gospel"
- Galatians under pressure from these new missionaries to see salvation as connected to circumcision, a badge of membership in the people of God (old covenant)
- Why is Paul opposed? If you get circumcised, you are joining the family of Abraham as it was in the pre-Messianic age
- With Jesus, the age to come was launched - you are part of that new Exodus. Don't go back!

Galatians 1:1-4

- v. 1 - Paul opens letter with commission - not human but from God
- v. 2 - mentions those with him as “members of God’s family” (inc. Jews & Gentiles - new humanity!)
- v. 3 - greeting - from the Father and the Lord Christ
- v. 4 - statement of the gospel

Paul’s Gospel Statement

- 1:4
- [Christ] gave himself for our sins (**election**)
- to set us free from *the present evil age* (**eschatology**)
- according to the will of God the Father (**monotheism**)

A Bookend “Inclusio”

- 6:14-15
- Jesus crucifixion was a cosmic shift
- At the beginning and end of the letter, Paul is talking about the new world inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus (“new creation”)
- The power of the present evil age has been dealt with - therefore, “the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”

Paul's thesis

- Celebrate! You get to be part of this new world, this new creation
- Reject this other "gospel" which will only take you backward
- What is at stake is the truth of the gospel itself
- 1:6-9 - There is only one gospel, one good news
- 1:10 - What matters to Paul is Jesus, and everything he says and does is grouped around that, not "pleasing people"

A Summary of Paul's Gospel

- Christ gave himself for our sins
- to enable us to live in God's new creation
- which has been part of God's covenant plan

Assignment

- Read the introduction and chapters 1 & 2 of *Scripture and the Life of God*
- Read Galatians several times this week. Look at how Paul's argument unfolds. How does his argument back his thesis about the gospel?

Questions?

