

4 - Profiting from Biblical Narrative

“One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts. I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works.”

~Psalm 145:4-5~

“For a man solemnly to undertake the interpretation of any portion of Scripture without invocation of God, to be taught and instructed by his Spirit, is a high provocation for him; nor shall I expect the discovery of truth from anyone who thus proudly engages in a work so much above his ability.”

~John Owen~

A Refresher

Character: The Bible is redemptive-historical in character

Focus: The Bible's focus is on Jesus Christ

Force: The Bible's application is to the church

General Considerations: Ferguson, *From the Mouth of God*, chapter 5: **Keys**, 71-84

- I. **Context:** Meaning: Reading each word as part of a sentence, sentence/paragraph, paragraph/chapter, chapter/book, book/author's writings, author's writings/timing in history/place in Bible.
 - A. Reading Scripture in context clarifies passages that may have puzzled us
 - B. Reading Scripture in context safeguards us against a concordance mentality
 - C. Reading Scripture in context preserves us from the amplified mentality
 - D. Application
 - *“Patient reading and reflection on a passage within its context leads us to see how God's truth applied to the first readers serves as a bridge to the application of the same truth to our own lives.”* [Ferguson, 74]
- II. **Jesus**
 - A. Key Question: How is this passage connected to Jesus and how is Jesus connected to this passage?
 - B. This remains true through the entire Bible
- III. **Unfolding Drama**
 - A. The Grand Narrative
 1. Begins in Gen 1:1-2:3
 2. Continues in Gen 3-Revelation 21-22
 - B. The Big Picture
 1. Genesis 3:15
 2. Conflict, continuity, climax
 - C. The Plot Line
 1. How will God bring this to pass? He establishes his Kingdom of Grace by fulfilling his covenant promises.
 - a. Always keep an eye on the plot line
 - b. Always ask: What is happening to the promise as God keeps his word and builds his kingdom, or as his people rebel/fail and face his judgment?
 - c. Always remember Genesis 3:15 colors everything!
 - d. Those who advance God's kingdom purposes will in some way have their lives conformed to the pattern which God ultimately fulfills in his Son.
 2. Joining the Dots: Covenant Theology
 - a. Adam Promise
 - b. Noah Promise

- c. Abram/Abraham Promise
- d. Moses Promise (national!)
 - Old Covenant: its provision were always intended to form an interim covenant, not the final one. *They were to function so long as God's people all belonged to a single nation.* [80-81]
- e. David Promise: the Serpent crusher would come through his line!

IV. Biblical Logic

- A. Indicative/Imperative Order
- B. Helps us to see that salvation is always by grace.

V. Each Part of Scripture Should be Read according to Its Literary Character

- A. Genres
 - 1. Prose
 - a. Narrative
 - b. Law
 - 2. Poetry
 - 3. Wisdom
 - 4. Prophecy
 - 5. Gospels
 - 6. Epistles
 - 7. Apocalyptic
- B. Context is King

Questions to Ask of Narrative Text (Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Flesh, 1-10*)

I. Why (intention)?

- Why did the writer include this text?
- What was he trying to get across by relating it?
- What does he mean to teach by/in it?
- What is it doing here (at this point)?

II. Where (Context)?

- Where does this occur?
- Where does it occur literarily?
- What story comes before it?
- What account follows it?

III. How (Structure)?

- Does it have a symmetrical development?
- Is it put together after a definite pattern?
- Does the structure reveal an intended emphasis?

IV. What (Context)?

- Carefully observe what is in the text.
- What is puzzling (word, phrase, idea)
- Isolate conundrums, solve as many as possible.

V. So What (Appropriation/Application)?

- What difference does all this above make for anyone?
- What should the hearer want to pay attention?

Workshop: 2 Sam 5:17-25