

DAILY ORAL THEOLOGY

Exegesis and Eisegesis

Exegesis n.

Originates from the Greek to mean “lead out,” and in the context of hermeneutics (the study of biblical interpretation), it refers to drawing out meaning from the text within its immediate and broader place in Scripture. Exegesis exams the grammatical and historical context of the text by looking at Scripture interpreting Scripture.

Eisegesis n.

Is the presupposing or imposing of meaning upon Scripture by a reader who thrusts personal conviction, experience, assumption, and/or conclusion in his/her analysis.

While these two approaches of biblical inquiry vastly differ, it is conceivable that a faithful expositor of the Word can preach properly the meaning of the text based on solid exegetical study, but then (intentionally or not) abandon the pericope of his sermon text during the course of delivery by appealing to other biblical references that underscore a personal point, theme, or topic. Allowing Scripture to elucidate Scripture is proper, but proclaiming varied passages to bolster a proposition that does not flow from the prescribed text is at best drifting and at worst propping up an argument that is not within or neighboring the parameters of the preached verse. Some of the great past pulpiteers, including the “Prince of Preachers” Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd Jones could majestically move away from the immediate text of their sermons, not saying things that were untrue, but declaring biblical propositions that were largely tangential to the pericope of said text. These men and others were solid exegetes, not at all guilty of eisegesis in the narrow sense, but could be accused on occasion of leaving a text to make a triumphant point that eclipses original textual meaning. Some could argue, that such liberty is just the Holy Spirit leading, but others could say that passion got the better of the man. All faithful ministers of God’s Word preach God’s Word as God’s Word, so it can be boldly and truthfully declared, *“This saith the Lord.”*