

The Importance of Exegesis and Contextualization for Preaching and Teaching

Exegesis (drawing out the meaning of a biblical text, and discovering its main idea or point) is important because the Revelation was originally given, inscripturated, documented, and compiled in an *ancient* world that was distinct and different from our *contemporary* world. Since there is a time gap, you have to go back in time and come back closing the gap... that is the essence of the exegetical process. Exegesis is discovering the MEANING of what the original author stated and homiletically asks “how the original author would say it if he were speaking to my audience.”¹

Contextualization (correlating significance or application of biblical meaning in contemporary context) is important because the same MEANING and IMPACT of ancient biblical-theological truth intended by the original author and received by the original readers is to be carried to a contemporary audience. “The task is to ensure that the Word speaks as clearly today as it did in ancient times...Contextualization is the mortar that binds the two worlds together, as the preacher attempts to help the congregation understand the relevance of the text for their own lives.”² Contextualization is determining “how what was asked of the original audience can be relived by my audience.”³

Contextualization is important and you must be careful in doing it. Why? Because what you are actually attempting to do is to 1) bring and TRANSLATE timeless theological truth *through time*, 2) TRANSPORT its meaning, and 3) TRANSFER its impact for application in our day. In doing this, you are accomplishing a very important task: making Scriptural truth MEANINGFUL and RELEVANT for our day. Scripture is best made meaningful and relevant through:

- 1) order and structure (presenting it in a way people can understand)
- 2) comprehensible vocabulary (communicating it in a vocabulary people can understand)
- 3) linkage to life experience (relating it to people’s life experiences)⁴

In homiletics (preaching) and pedagogy (teaching) you are (re)presenting and communicating *presumably* biblical-theological truth. INSIGHT: Homiletics (preaching & application of truth) and pedagogy (teaching & application of truth) are tethered to the correlation and contextualization of presumed theological truth, but MORE IMPORTANTLY is the fact that one's theology is tethered to exegesis (i.e., theology is derived from exegesis, or exegesis determines theology). That's why exegesis is essential and must be engaged thoroughly.

There is a grave DANGER in SKIPPING the EXEGETICAL PROCESS: If you bypass exegesis you will probably practice eisegesis (reading meaning *into* a text rather reading a meaning *from* a text). The result of this is that in your preaching and teaching you will be more prone or vulnerable to "import" and "transport" error and/or "impose" your own thoughts as Scripture (i.e., purely what you think Scripture is saying). If you practice eisegesis, you will not transfer the intended MEANING of the original author or the intended IMPACT of Scripture as experienced by the original hearers / readers.

¹ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 333.

² Ibid, 318, 339.

³ Ibid, 333.

⁴ Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* Revised and Expanded ed., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 115-120.

- **CAVEAT: A Cavalier Approach Is Too Costly!!** James 3:1; Revelation 22:18
(cavalier = a lofty disregard of others' interests or offhand dismissal of important matters)
- **IMPERATIVE:** *adequately INVESTIGATE before you presumably IMPLICATE.* Take the time to do proper exegesis. Exegesis precedes exposition. It is a means to an end, a step toward exposition.