

# Digging Deeper 3

Thinking about Scripture



# Presentation Outline

1. Thinking about the Bible and Religious Knowledge Claims
2. The Bible in Our Cultural Context
3. Special topic: Canonicity and Transmission/Translation
4. Postscript on hermeneutics (if we have time)

# The Bible

# What is the Bible

- It is **God's special revelation to man**, given in order that man might know how to have salvation and relationship/reconciliation with God, ourselves, our fellow man, and the world.
- It is the **inspired word of God** (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and therefore inerrant
- The Bible was **written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit**--it was not dictated by God (as opposed to something like the Quran).
- When we make the claim that the Bible is the inspired word of God we are making a **propositional knowledge claim**. This means it is an idea that is either true or false.

# Is This A Reasonable Claim

1. Epistemology is the study of knowledge and broadly speaking seeks to provide a means for discriminating between justified and unjustified beliefs.
2. The classical definition of knowledge = Justified, True Belief (JTB)
  - a. Justified--What reasons do you have for holding the belief that you do.
  - b. True--We need to split this one for a better breakdown
    - i. Coherence Theory--something is true if it is internally consistent or coherent
    - ii. Correspondence Theory--something is true if it objectively corresponds to reality
  - c. Belief--These are mental propositions that we give intellectual assent to.

# Epistemology and the Bible

1. We have a *justified, true belief that the Bible is the word of God*
  - a. Scripture is ultimately self authenticating
  - b. Jesus testified to the authenticity of the scriptures Matthew 4, Luke 4:17-18, John 1:1
  - c. Justification and Truthfulness—a criteria for testing claims
    - a. Tom and Bo handled this
    - b. I am going to take a different approach...Let's talk about culture



# Asking Big Questions

- Why are these types of arguments even needed?
- What type of culture are we speaking in to?
  
- **A good Bible reader is a good reader of both modern and ancient culture**

# The Bible in Modern Culture



# God Has Spoken

- The Bible makes an **inherent claim to authority** over us. Example 1  
Thess 4:1-8
- Authoritative claims, particularly religious and moral claims, are out of step in this culture.
- Some Reasons
  - **Higher Criticism**
  - **Postmodernism** and its derivative...
  - **Expressive Individualism**

# Higher Criticism, Scientific Rationalism, and the rise of Modernism

- An outline of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century skepticism
  - The modern university fabricates a conflict between Science and Faith
  - Darwinism allows for the intellectual atheist
  - German higher criticism questions the historicity of the Bible
  - Religious modernism seeks to adjust the Christian faith to modern culture
  - Higher criticism and scientific rationalism resulted in a modernist movement that's primary effect was to minimize the authoritative aspects of Christian teaching.

# Postmodernism

- Following WWII, a philosophy developed that was suspicious of all metanarratives. It saw any claim to overarching truths as inherently oppressive a simple power play.
- Postmodernism Summarized
  - Skepticism about objective reality
  - The perception of language as the constructor of knowledge
  - The "making" of the individual
  - And the role played by power in all of these
- These ideas have trickled down into society as a general suspicion of authority and particularly institutions—so the Bible/Church and its universal claims are a big problem

# Expressive Individualism

- Personal fulfillment and happiness are the new defining traits of what it means to be part of society. This is a stark contrast to previous eras where being part of society was always focused outwards
  - Aristotle—Political Man
  - Aquinas—Religious Man
  - Today—Psychological Man
- The “social imaginary” now dissociates internal attributes with public facing actions...the necessary social aspects of man are psychological
  - You are not human unless you are fulfilled
- As such, “a right to psychological happiness” is formed in society. The result is that the self becomes the *ultimate authority as only the self can understand what makes a person happy.*

# Why Trace Out This History?

- Bill Brown has described that here are three ways of knowing (doing epistemology).
  - The pre-modern way was revelation. This is when the Bible was understood to have authority.
  - The modern way was reason. This is when the Bible was attacked on rational grounds.
  - In the Post-modern (hyper modern) way is experience. In this period, often the Bible is attacked as not being good or useful.

# This Culture Asks Two Questions

Is it reasonable to believe—that is make a knowledge claim that—the Bible is the word of God?

Is it good to be under the authority of God's word?

All apologetics is done is a cultural context. If you miss the context, you miss the person.

# But Is It Good?

- Is it good to be submitted to the Bible's authority?
  - Examining the argument from desire

- We desire purpose, peace, relief from suffering, life beyond death, deep things that nothing material can satisfy. How can we account for this?
  - Naturalism is too reductionist
  - Eastern Mysticism calls it an illusion or a curse
  - Christianity claims this is due to humans being made to fellowship with God, but sin has alienated us from him.
- C.S. Lewis/David Naugle and fulfilled desire (or lack there of)
  - Sensual, Material, Ego
  - Observably, we remain dissatisfied and search for new things to worship and more and more aesthetic desires.

# The Bible and Existential Fulfillment

- The Bible offers an answer to this deep existential desire (restored relationship), *but only if we submit to its authority.*
- The deep irony for the modern person is that in submitting to the Bible's authority we receive existential freedom and satisfaction.
- The Bible is a metanarrative, an overarching account or interpretation of events and circumstances that provides a pattern or structure for people's beliefs and gives meaning to their experiences.
- It allows us to live according to our design—in right relationship with God our creator, each other, ourselves, and creation.

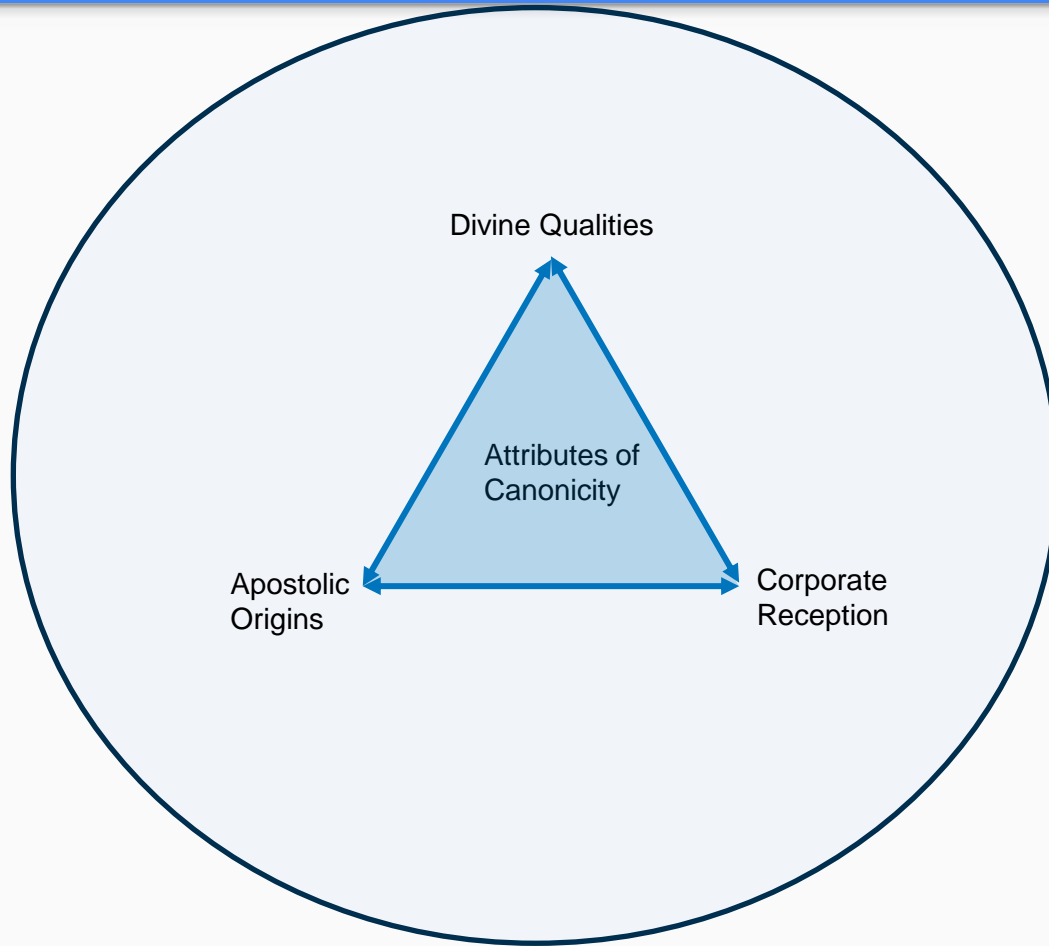


# Special Topic: Canonicity and Translation/Transmission

# Canonicity

1. Canon is discovered not determined. “The books of the bible are not considered God-given because they are found to have value in them; they are valuable because they are given of God--the source of all value.”--Geisler and Nix
2. Some attributes of canon
  - a. Was it written by a prophet of God?
  - b. Did the writer have credentials from God?
  - c. Did it tell the truth about God, man, etc?
  - d. Did it possess the life transforming power of God?
  - e. Was it received or accepted by the people of God for whom it was written?

# A Self Authenticating Model of Canon

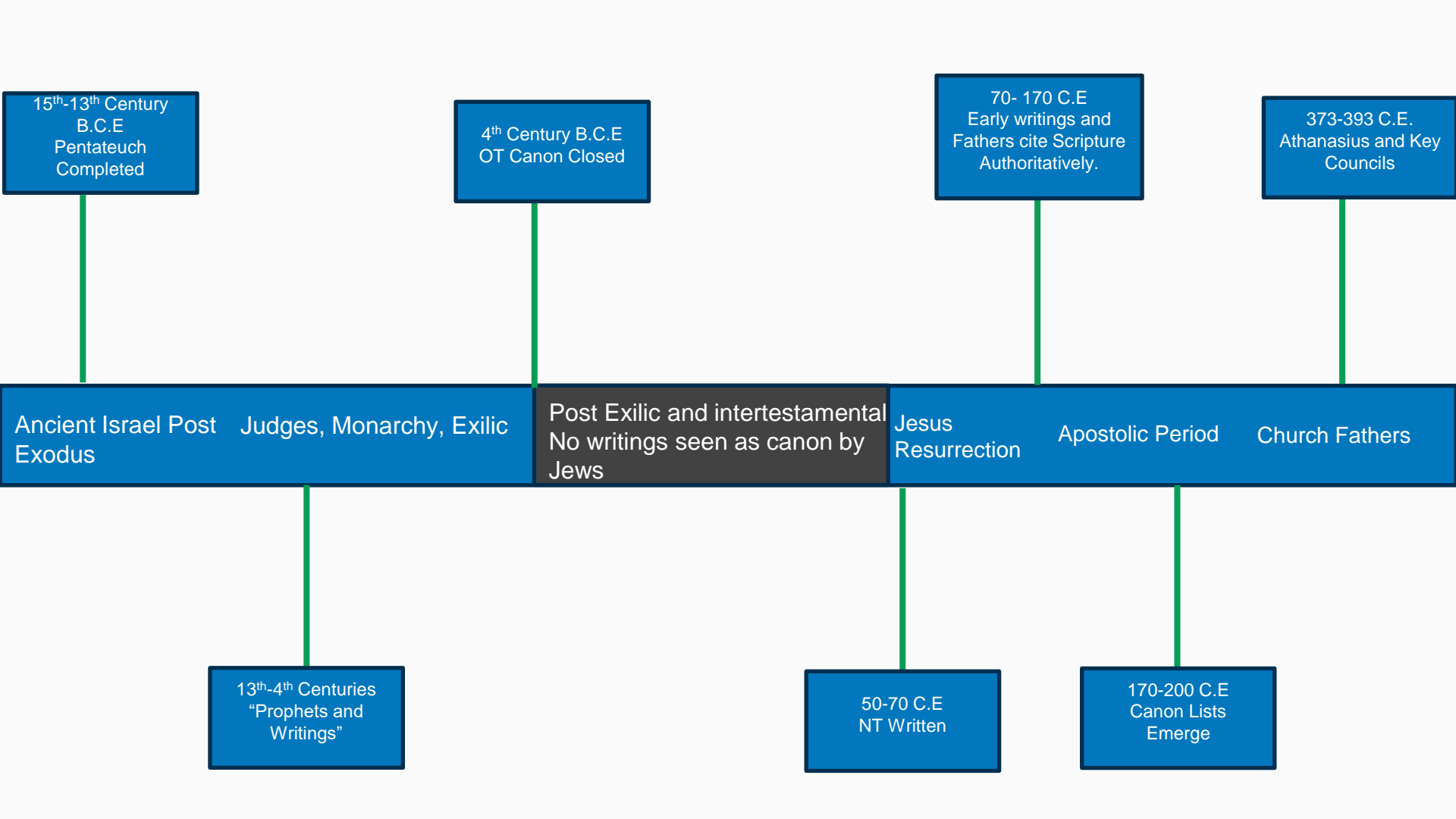


# Canonicity Cont

1. The OT canon we know in protestant churches today was recognized corporately by the 4th century BC with very minor disputes
  1. Major disputes around the apocrypha is based mostly on the Septuagint and Augustine's influence, not the Hebrew text

1. NT official council canonization was in the 4th century AD, but "In the second century, there was verification of this literature by quotation of the divine authority of each of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament." (Giesler) The apostolic writings were clearly circulated and accepted as authoritative scripture (Kruger) from the beginning and also have self referential authority (2 Pet 3:15-16)

"The organized church did not create the canon, but recognized it...The church therefore, functioned as a witness, not as the judge in the process of canonization. In that sense, the church gave us the Bible. It received and preserved the sacred Scriptures."--Ferguson



15<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Century  
B.C.E  
Pentateuch  
Completed

4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E  
OT Canon Closed

70-170 C.E  
Early writings and  
Fathers cite Scripture  
Authoritatively.

373-393 C.E.  
Athanasius and Key  
Councils

Ancient Israel Post  
Exodus

Judges, Monarchy, Exilic

Post Exilic and intertestamental  
No writings seen as canon by  
Jews

Jesus  
Resurrection

Apostolic Period

Church Fathers

13<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Centuries  
"Prophets and  
Writings"

50-70 C.E  
NT Written

170-200 C.E  
Canon Lists  
Emerge

# Transmission

## 1. NT

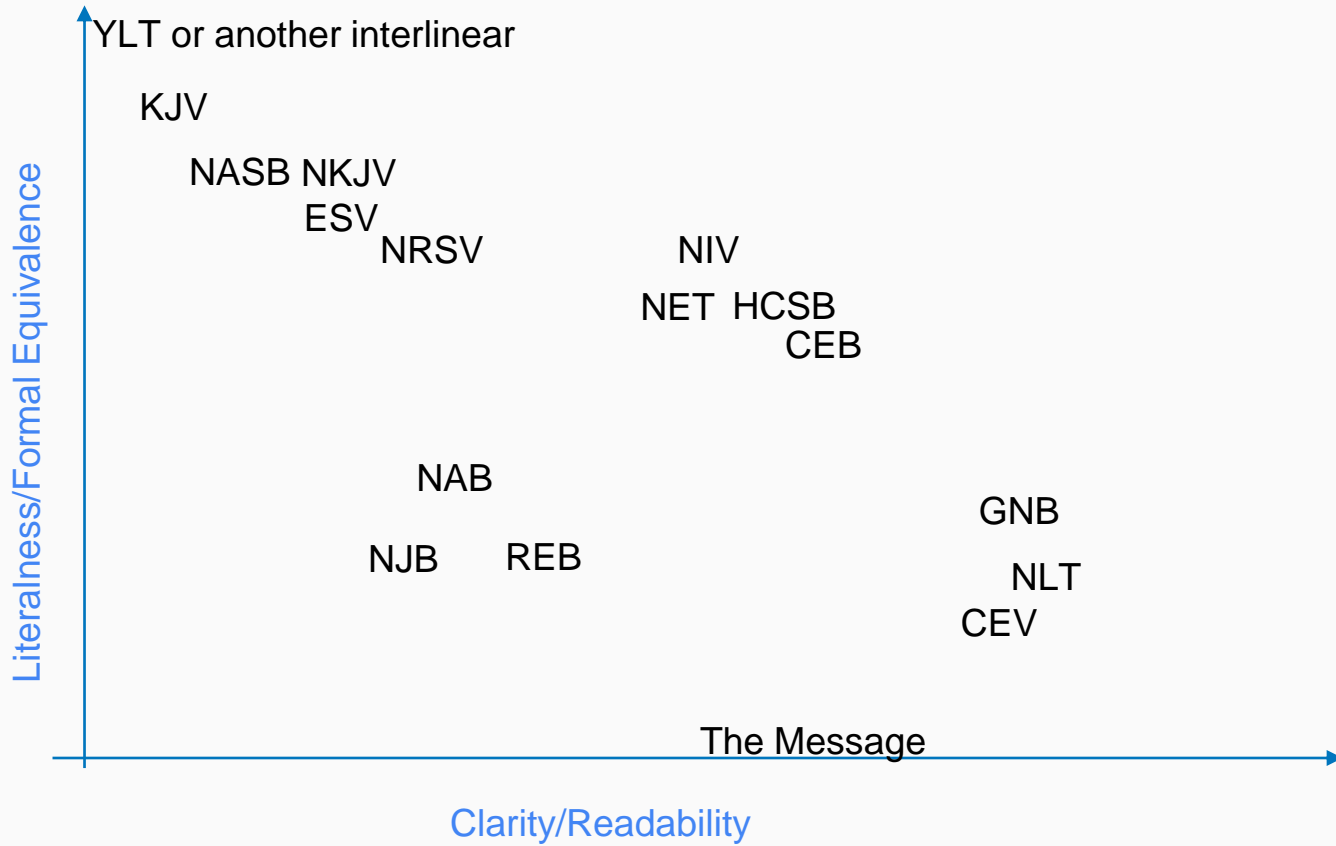
- a. The fidelity of the NT text is established by the widespread agreement of the many different, but relatively poor quality, texts
  - i. “[There are] Three thousand Greek manuscripts, and some two thousand lectionary manuscripts...non biblical literary support for the New Testament from the papyruses, there are numerous ostraca and inscriptions with biblical quotations...from the early church Father’s quotations alone, **much** of the entire New Testament is preserved”-- Geisler and Nix

## 1. OT

- a. OT fidelity is established by very few, high quality texts and the nature of the transmission process.
  - i. Dead Sea Scrolls are a great confirmation of this, consider the great Isaiah scroll and its letter for letter matching with a portion of the Masoretic text.

# Translation

1. There are many ancient and modern translations, but the general rule is they are fairly accurate to the original text
  - a. We don't have time or bandwidth to discuss the history of this
2. Almost every modern American translation is a **single translation from the original text** derived through textual critical methods
  - a. Bibles range from form driven or *formal equivalence* (literal word for word like ESV or NRSV), to meaning driven or *functional equivalence* (thought for thought NIV, HCSB), to semi-paraphrastic (topical summary but still a translation like the NLT)
  - b. I tend not to call many paraphrases translations and I generally would recommend you don't use them for study at all. i.e. the Passion "translation" (not a translation) or the Message



TPT/NWT/Mormon Translations



# Hermeneutics 101

“It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.”

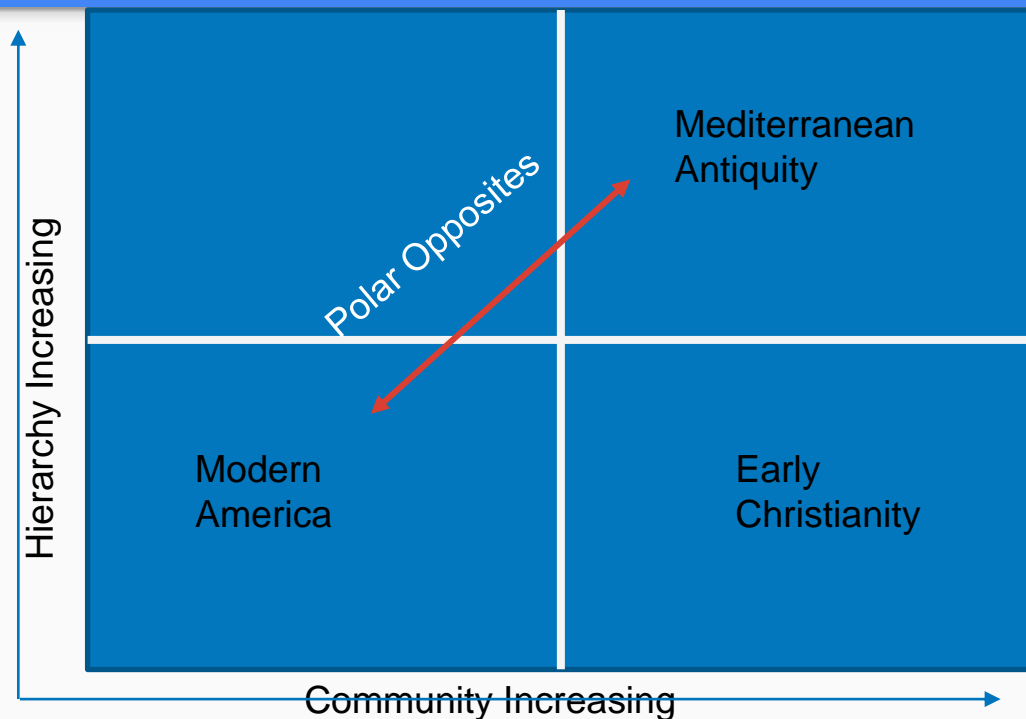
(Proverbs 25:2 ESV)

# Hermeneutics

1. This could be a class in and of itself ~24hr of instruction
2. Many of the issues that arise around Biblical reliability and apologetics in general have to do with bad Bible reading.
3. We will cover some key principles, but I recommend further study on this topic

# The Cultural Divide

- ❖ The Bible was not written to you, or about you, although it was written **for** you
- ❖ What the modern reader has done to the Bible is turn it into just another item for consumption.
- ❖ The focus of both the OT and NT is on the fulfillment of God's plan, not our individual plans.
- ❖ As God works out his plan, personal fulfillment for individual Christians is a *byproduct* of fulfilling our role within God's people, the church



# The Historical Grammatical Method

- Your thoughts and feelings on the passage should proceed from the **locution** (what it says), **illocution** (the speaker's intention), and **perlocution** (the authors intended outcome) of the text rather than shape the text
- Exegete=What does it say?
- Hermeneutic=What does it mean?
- Application=How should we respond?

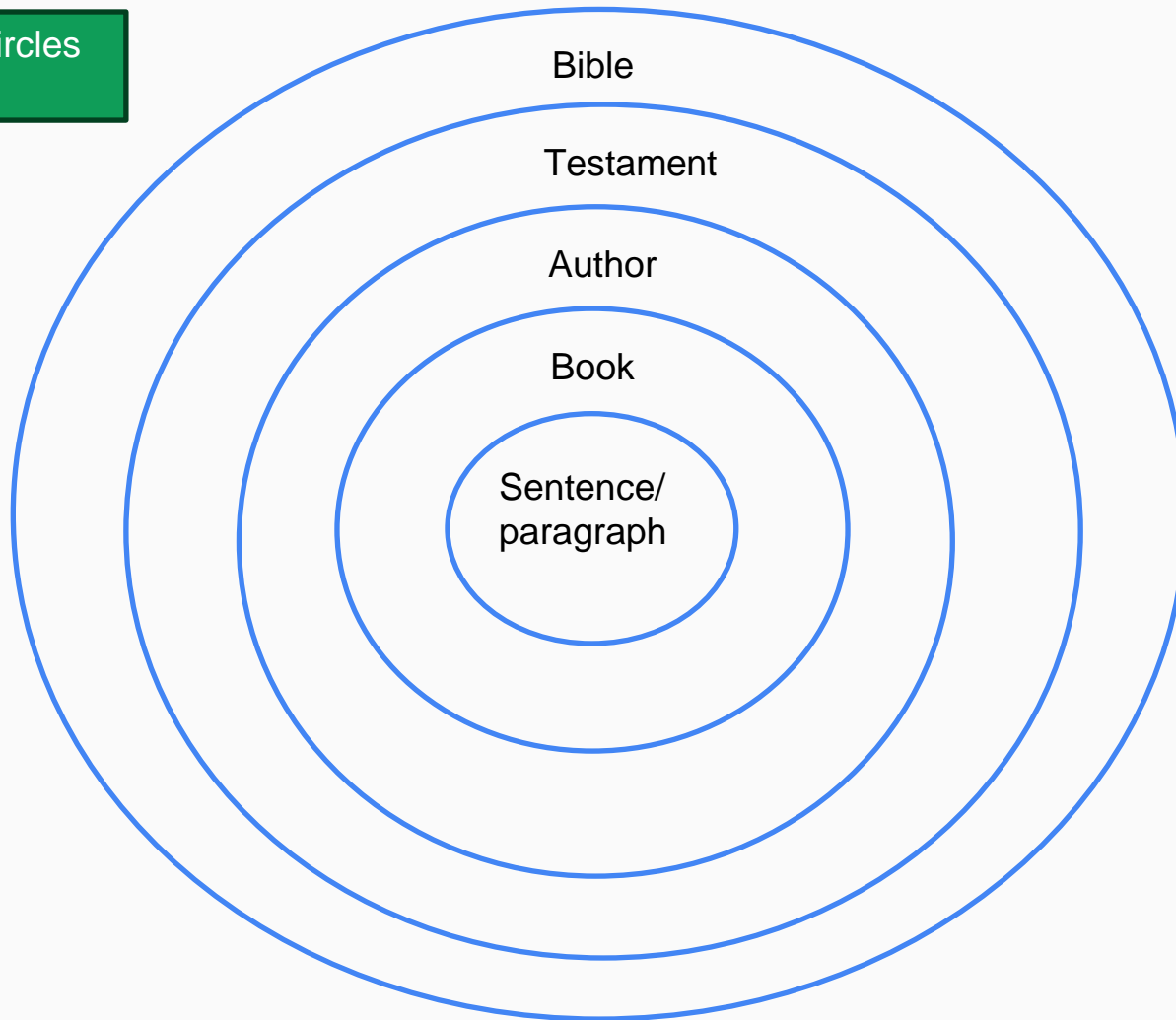
# Common Mistakes to Avoid

- There is no such thing as a “bible verse” and reading bible verses is a bad practice. Bible verses were made up very recently.
  - Randomly picking out verses to read out of context which will lead to many bad conclusions.
- Genre is key to understanding
  - Don't read prose as poetry and poetry as prose
  - Apocalypse is purposefully symbolic—vaccines are not the mark of the beast

# CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

- All words derive their meaning from context—No intrinsic meaning so you can't just grab a lexicon
- The Bible was written:
  - To somebody else
  - Who lived a long time ago
  - In another part of the world
  - Where they spoke a different language
  - And had different cultural values

Concentric Circles  
of Context



# Big Takeaways Open Discussion

