

# Hermeneutics

Bridging the Literary Gap

# Significance of Literary Analysis

- “The more you know of the patterns, styles, and forms of the various units in a book of the Bible the more you will know of that book’s purpose and unique character, and the better you will understand it. This aspect is often neglected in Bible study and interpretation” (Zuck, p. 124).
- Literary analysis “helps give a sense of the overall thrust of the Bible book, so that verses and paragraphs can be seen in light of the whole” (Zuck, p. 138).

# What is Rhetorical Interpretation?

- “‘Rhetorical interpretation’ refers then to the process of determining how the *style* (particular verbal elements or ways of expression) and *form* (organizational structure) influence how it [a literary work] is to be understood” (Zuck, p. 124).
- Of particular importance are genre, structure, and figures of speech.

# Literary Genre

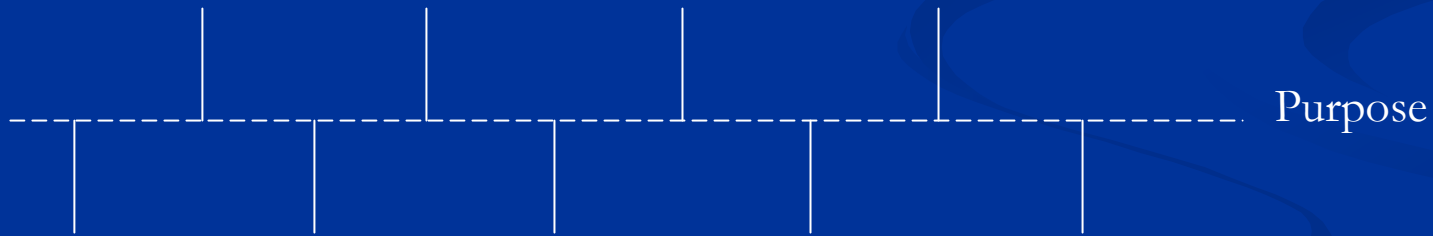
- “Literary genre” refers to the category or the kind of writing characterized by a particular form(s) and/or content” (Zuck, p. 126).
- Some literary genres in Scripture:
  - Legal (parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)
    - Apodictic - commands
    - Casuistic – case law
  - Narrative – biblical narrative is a story told for the purpose of conveying a message through people and their problems and situations. (Chap. by Deuel).
  - Poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs; portions of many other books). A distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry is *parallelism*.
  - Wisdom Literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes). Two Types:
    - Proverbial – based on broad experience and observation.
    - Reflective – involves a discussion of the mysteries of life.
  - Gospels – biographical, but include both doctrine and narrative to set forth the person and earthly ministry of Christ.
  - Epistolary (Romans through Jude) – includes:
    - Expository discourse – expounds certain doctrines or truths.
    - Hortatory discourse – exhortations to follow certain courses of action in light of the doctrine.
  - Prophetic Literature (Latter Prophets, Revelation) – includes predictions about the future, often with injunctions that those who hear adjust their lives accordingly.

# Aids in Interpreting Psalms

- Classify by category (lament, descriptive praise, wisdom, etc.) and note the elements within such a category.
- Recognize the figures of speech that are included.
- Note the kinds of parallelisms.
- Study the historical background of the psalm.
- Identify the central idea or unifying theme.

# Structural Analysis

- “Structural analysis” is the effort to analyze the relationship of the parts within a Bible book to the whole.



# Structure of Matthew

- Matthew's purpose is to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah who will establish His kingdom in the future, despite Israel's past rejection.
- There are 3 major movements within this gospel:
  - The presentation of Jesus Christ as the indisputable King of the Jews (chaps. 1 – 10)
  - Large-scale rejection of Christ by those to whom He ministered, and opposition to Christ by Israel's leaders reaching "critical mass" (chaps. 11 – 12)
  - The remainder of Jesus ministry in light of His rejection (chaps. 13 – 28)
- Matthew's gospel is organized around 5 discourses of Jesus, with each one concluded with "When Jesus finished these sayings" or something similar:
  - Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5 – 7; 7:28)
  - Sending out of the twelve (10:1-42; 11:1)
  - Mysteries of the Kingdom (13:1-53; 13:53)
  - Kingdom Character (18:1-35; 19:1)
  - Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46; 26:1)

# Structure of the Book of Acts

- “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
  - Jerusalem (chaps. 1 – 7)
  - Judea and Samaria (chaps. 8 – 12)
  - The remotest part of the earth (chaps. 13 – 28)
- Within this broad framework is a series of six progress reports on the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30–31).

# Structure of Romans and Ephesians

- Romans – The Gospel of God’s Grace
  - The presentation of gospel righteousness as opposed to alleged law righteousness (chaps. 1 – 8)
  - The facts in the case regarding Israel’s present rejection (chaps. 9 – 11)
  - Christian conduct flowing from gospel righteousness (chaps. 12 – 16)
- Ephesians – God’s Eternal Plan and Our Part in It
  - What we were and what God has done (chaps. 1 – 3)
  - Walk worthy of your calling as children of light (chaps. 4 – 6)

# Structure of the Book of Revelation

- “Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things” (Rev 1:19).
  - The things which you have seen – John’s vision (chapter 1)
  - The things which are – the letters to the seven churches (chapters 2 and 3)
  - The things which take place after these things – future events which will occur just prior to the return of Christ to the earth (chapters 4 – 22)
- The 7 sealed scroll provides a sequential framework for chapters 6 – 22.

# Smaller Structural Patterns

- Parallelism – will examine more closely when we look at Hebrew poetry.
- Chiasm – See page 140 in Zuck.

# Resources for Genre and Structural Analysis

- *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy & Ronald L. Giese, Jr.
- *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* by David Dorsey

**Next Class: October 25**

Figures of Speech

&

Hebrew Poetry

# Additional Assignment

- Go to the Berachah website ([www.berachahbiblechurch.org](http://www.berachahbiblechurch.org)), to the “Institute” tab, then to “BBI Schedule.”
- Go to the discussion forum for Hermeneutics
  - Login: users
  - Password: blessing
- Establish a sign-in and password for yourself.
- Post a response to the question there between now and next Friday, October 20.