

Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study.

Lecture 1, Introduction, Inductive Versus Deductive

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This is Dr. David Bauer teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 1, Introduction, Inductive versus Deductive.

My name is David Bauer and I want to welcome you to this instructional opportunity that focuses upon Inductive Bible Study. I will apply the principles of Inductive Bible Study to the book of James and perhaps also to 1st Peter and to some extent to the book of Jude as well.

As I say, my name is David Bauer. I have taught here at Asbury Theological Seminary since 1984. I am a native of Mansfield, Ohio.

I did my undergraduate work at Spring Arbor College, now Spring Arbor University in Michigan. I did my Master of Divinity here at Asbury Theological Seminary and my PhD in Biblical Studies at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. I also did postdoctoral studies at Princeton Theological Seminary.

I have, as I say, been teaching Inductive Bible Study here for over 30 years. And I do think it would be helpful to begin by giving you some sense as to what Inductive Bible Study is. Inductive Bible Study actually involves a movement that emerged at the end of the 19th century.

It had especially to do, at least initially, with the work of William Rainey Harper and Wilbert W. White. William Rainey Harper was a professor of Hebrew at Yale University. He was also, incidentally, the founding president of the University of Chicago.

He was a biblical scholar, an Old Testament scholar, a Baptist. And he, of course, taught at the end of the 19th century at a time when historical criticism, as we call it, that is to say the critical study of the Bible, was coming into its own. One of the hallmarks of the critical study of the Bible at that point was the identification of sources and focusing upon sources, written sources, that lie behind the text of our Bible.

And so, scholars at that time were very much interested in reconstructing those written sources that our biblical writers used and focusing their attention not so much upon the biblical text as we have it, but rather upon those earlier sources. Harper was concerned that this kind of historical focus, this kind of critical focus, really took the Bible away from the church and did not prepare a person to minister,

particularly to preach and teach the Bible in the church. In a sense, it involved dissecting the Bible into sources that the people did not have.

Along with his teaching of these critical approaches, Harper, in his Old Testament courses, also included the study of the Bible as such, the Bible as we have it, encouraging his students to read the Bible for themselves in whole books or large swaths of the Bible and to encounter the Bible that way. He saw that his students had a kind of excitement about this direct engagement with the biblical text itself that they did not have when they were talking about or studying critical approaches that, as I say, dissected the text, separated the text in terms of these earlier sources and focused upon them. Now, William Rainey Harper was teaching at a number of places during those years, and one of his students was Wilbert W. White, who was a Presbyterian.

White became very excited about what Harper was doing in terms of the study of the text in what we call its final form, the text as we have it, as a theological document, which should be studied directly. The focus would be upon the direct study of the text with a view toward personal spiritual formation, as well, of course, as a basis for preaching and teaching the Bible within the church. And so, Harper and White really joined together here in this enterprise.

W. W. White went on and did a Ph.D. at Yale in Semitics, in Hebrew especially, and taught at a theological seminary, a denominational seminary, but was quite dissatisfied with the curriculum at the seminary where he taught because it did not really focus upon the study of the Bible as a church of scripture and did not focus upon the study of the Bible as we have it in its, as we say, its final form. He began to lecture at various places around the world. As a matter of fact, he traveled to India and, on his back to Great Britain, found that people in other cultures, in India, for example, not just missionaries, but also those people from India to whom they ministered, became very excited about the studies that White was doing, which focused upon encouraging people to read and study the Bible for themselves, to make sense of the Bible for themselves as a basis for spiritual formation and for ministry within the church.

White went on to found a seminary, which was called the Biblical Seminary in New York, which became something of the center of the inductive study of the Bible around the world. This then spread greatly throughout the 20th century. Inductive Bible study was taught at places like Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, Princeton Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, Eastern Mennonite Theological Seminary, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Azusa of Pacific University, and many, many other places, not only in the United States but really around the world.

Now, many people associate inductive Bible study with lay reading of the Bible. In my own country, here in the United States, Kay Arthur and her inductive Bible study program is very popular, and that has spread to other countries around the world as well. So, as I say, many people identify inductive Bible study with a kind of lay reading of the Bible.

It's been very effective that way. But that may lead, and that has led some folks to think that inductive Bible study is not really very rigorous, that it doesn't have really much to say for those who are involved in full-time or professional ministry. But that really is not the case.

One of the great advantages of inductive Bible study is that it not only can relate well to lay people but also has a kind of sophistication to it that allows it to contribute in very significant ways to scholarship and to the academy. And so, and of course I mentioned the various theological seminaries, including places like Princeton, where inductive Bible study has been taught. It has influenced really some scholars of global reputation and significance.

Brevard Childs, for example, who is arguably one of the great Old Testament, greatest Old Testament scholars in the 20th century, was very much influenced by inductive Bible study, which he acknowledged. As a matter of fact, I received a few years ago a letter from his last student. That last student said that even to the end of his life, Childs insisted that his doctoral students become acquainted with inductive Bible study and the history of inductive Bible study because he thought it was so very, very important.

Incidentally, that contributed to Childs' so-called canonical approach to the study of the Bible. But other scholars as well, including folks like James Luther Mays and Patrick D. Miller, Patrick D. Miller taught at Princeton as well, have been influenced by the inductive approach. And so, I think you'll see in our presentations here over the next several hours that inductive Bible study has a kind of rigor to it.

It is academically respectable and academically responsible and academically challenging in some ways. And as a matter of fact, you'll see here that that we will get into some technical sorts of issues along the way. And we're going to be pretty thorough in terms of our presentation of an inductive method to the study of the Bible.

I urge you, as kind of an introduction to this series, to have your Bible with you and open. We are going to be making constant reference to the biblical text. As a matter of fact, I think that you'll find it helpful to pause the video or maybe to go back and review some of the videos after having looked at passages that we will be discussing here within the video presentation itself.

I do want to mention here, and I'm going to mention it again, that in our presentation of the method, which is really, we call it inductive Bible study method, but it is really biblical study method. This really is a kind of an introduction to biblical hermeneutics so that you'll see that what we do in inductive Bible study is really not different qualitatively from what is done in biblical studies, what we call biblical exegesis around the world. There's no specific thing that we do in inductive Bible study that is absolutely unique to inductive Bible study itself.

All the things that we do are done by exegetes around the world. The significance of inductive Bible study and its uniqueness has to do with certain of its emphases, which we'll talk about in just a moment, certain of its emphases, its methodological rigor. That is to say, it is more methodologically reflective than is quite often the case in biblical study or with biblical exegesis in general.

We think a little more thoroughly, a little more deeply about what we're doing and why we're doing it in terms of method. Also, in terms of its comprehensiveness, it attempts to be comprehensive in terms of how all of these various aspects of the study of the Bible are put together into a kind of program, a kind of package that many, many people over many, many years around the world have found to be very, very helpful in their study of the Bible.

So, we begin with a basic definition of a methodical approach or a methodical Bible study approach according to the inductive method. The basic definition of this methodical Bible study according to the inductive approach is that it is a step-by-step procedure that makes it possible, one, to discover the precise and specific past historical meaning of the biblical text. That is, the meaning that was communicated by the biblical writer to his original audience.

And two, to relate this original historical meaning to contemporary situations and problems. That is to say, to apply that original historical meaning to our historical life, our historical context. Really, a kind of thumbnail definition of inductive Bible study is that it is a comprehensive, holistic approach that is intentional in allowing the Bible to speak on its own terms, resulting in accurate, precise, penetrating interpretation and application.

Now, I want to highlight one phrase there at this point, and that is to allow the Bible to speak on its own terms. This is one of the emphases of an inductive approach to the study of the text. Biblical hermeneutics, in general at the present time, tends to emphasize a kind of, at least some aspects or some practitioners of biblical hermeneutics, tend to emphasize what they call a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Let me pause here, incidentally, and just say a word about this term, hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of meaning, the science of meaning. As such, it is not limited to biblical study.

There is a philosophical hermeneutics that has to do with, as they say, the science of

meaning. But biblical hermeneutics, or hermeneutics applied to the Bible, has to do with deriving all the issues involved in deriving meaning from the biblical text. So, just to let you know, when we're talking about hermeneutics, we're talking about the task and the process of deriving meaning from the biblical text.

But to come back to what I was just saying a moment ago, many practitioners today, at least in the Western world, which is also influencing other parts of the world, of course, will talk about a hermeneutics of suspicion. And by that, they mean that they come, when they come to the biblical text, they suspect the text and the message of the text as being oppressive, unjust, or even violent. Therefore, they engage in a kind of judgment of the text, to make a judgment on the text, and to identify, say, violence or oppression within the text in order, in a sense, to use a text against itself.

Now, in our inductive approach to the Bible, we also have a kind of hermeneutic of suspicion. But in our case, the suspicion is not directed toward the biblical text. We're not so much suspicious of the text as we are suspicious of ourselves.

There's a kind of self-suspicion, a kind of self-criticism that is central to the inductive approach. That is to say, we suspect that when we approach the text, we are inclined to bring our own ideas and our own meanings into the text. In a sense, this is not perhaps the best way of putting it, but it captures the idea, in a sense, the biblical text needs to be protected against us, against our prejudices, our biases, and the presuppositions that we bring to the text and read into the text only to read them out again.

The thing that concerns us most of all in an inductive approach is that we might fall into a kind of ventriloquism, using the text as a kind of dummy for us to speak our own message out of it. So, that's why, as I say, we emphasize that it is intentional to allow the Bible to speak on its own terms, not on our terms, reading our own ideas into the text, but really allowing the text to speak to us its own different word, its own different message, which, as we're going to see in a moment, quite often will contradict or at least challenge the ideas that we may bring to the text. Now, to develop this a bit, we want to begin by talking about the working assumptions of inductive Bible study.

This is kind of a broad general framework. The first assumption that we work with is that the precise, specific, and penetrating interpretation of the Bible is central to Christian ministry and to the nurturing of the people of God for its life and mission in the world. Now, this actually insists that the Bible is central to the Christian faith, both individually, for us as individual Christians, the Bible is the central concern, is the book that we must know better than any other book, but also for the corporate

life of the church, for its teaching, its preaching, for every aspect of the life of the church, the Bible is absolutely central.

The more cultures drift away from or are at odds with the Bible, the less, in other words, a culture embraces the Bible, the more important it is for the church to embrace its Scriptures as absolutely central and self-defining. You remember in the 11th chapter of Acts when the gospel finally comes to Antioch, Luke tells us there that it was at Antioch that the disciples were for the first time called Christians. Now, that is a very significant statement, actually, because in the context of chapter 11, we read that Antioch was really the first mixed church, the first church that was made up not only of Jews who had become Christians or made up of Gentiles who had become Christians, but it was Jews and Gentiles together in the Antioch church.

But even more important there in the 11th chapter of Acts is the recognition that Antioch was really a cosmopolitan community. And so, what you have was for the first time a church being formed in an environment that recognized that the church was not simply a sect of Judaism. It was a separate religion, as it were, a separate kind of faith.

In that cosmopolitan community, it was so very important for Christians to establish self-identity so that those there in that cosmopolitan setting could recognize what it meant for the church to be Christian and what it meant for these people to identify as Christians. They were not simply Jews, a variation of Judaism. It was not simply a variation of Judaism, but it was a separate faith that needed to establish itself and its identity in a very diverse sort of environment.

And it was in that context, in chapter 11, where the disciples are for the first time called Christians, that Luke also emphasizes that the church was a taught church, that for over a year, the church was taught by Barnabas and by Saul of Tarsus so that the necessity for the church being taught really stems from the necessity of the church understanding its own identity in an alien or a diverse environment and to be able to project its identity and to make clear its message in that kind of an environment. So, the less really a particular culture knows regarding the Bible, the less it knows with regard to what Christianity is all about and what it means to be Christian, and the more important it is for the church to be instructed, and especially instructed in its Scriptures. One of the main things that the Scriptures do is to instruct us as to what it means to be Christian and what it means to live out the Christian life in its depth in an alien sort of environment.

Now really what this means then is that we must be committed to exerting real effort in understanding the message of the Scriptures. We must exert real effort in understanding the message of the Scriptures. No effort really is too great to do that.

In a sense, this is part of our essential task as Christians and certainly as Christian ministers and the like. When we come to the Bible, we really encounter God. It is in the biblical text that we have the revelation of God to His people and ultimately to His world.

But the revelation of God is not synonymous with the words on the page. The words on the page are absolutely essential for the revelation of God, but the revelation of God is actually the message of Scripture that comes through the words that are on the page. And therefore, it's not enough simply to know what the Bible says.

We must also commit ourselves to understand fully what it means because we encounter God. We encounter, in a sense, the Word of God through a process of encountering God through the message that lies behind the words of the text and that we derive from the words of the text. Now, this is difficult work, of course, for one thing, because the Bible comes to us out of different time, different cultures.

The cultures from which the Bible comes, of course, do not exist anywhere today. So, really, any study of the Bible is transcultural. And, of course, beyond that, the Bible was countercultural in the first place.

Beyond that, what we have in the Bible, of course, is a divine or transcendent revelation. Your thoughts are not my thoughts, God says to us through Isaiah 55. He says, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

So insofar as the Bible involves God's revelation to us, it is, in a sense, difficult not only because it comes from different times, different cultures, and was countercultural to begin with, that's to say, challenges all human cultures, but it is divine. It is a transcendent revelation. It is a word of God that is higher than we are.

All of this means that understanding the Bible fully involves real effort. It's not an easy task. Now, of course, we need to keep in mind the fact, as we say this, that there is a kind of understanding.

Calvin referred to it as the perspicuity of Scripture. Luther, the clarity of Scripture. There is a kind of clarity in the Bible so that anyone who reads the Bible, who has anywhere near normal intelligence, can come to faith through the study of the Bible.

But to understand the Bible in depth, which the church needs for its ongoing life, to understand the Bible in depth requires real effort and real intentionality. And it's an effort and intentionality that is very much worth it, as I say, because of the centrality of the Bible for Christians and for the Christian church. The second working assumption is that all Christian ministers are professional Bible interpreters.

Now, by professional, I do not mean detached or that this is simply a job. But by professional, we mean that this is at the heart of their calling, of what they do. It is at the heart of our vocation.

We are professional biblical interpreters. If you are a pastor, you are the Bible authority, the biblical interpreter in residence, even as, in a sense, you are the theologian in residence. God has placed upon you, incumbent upon you, is a responsibility to lead your people in terms of their study of the Bible and their understanding of the Bible, to help them, really, to understand the Bible for themselves and to apply the Bible to themselves, to help them in the process of allowing the Bible to shape and to form them as God wants it to do.

Again, this points, really, to the necessity on the part of biblical ministers and the part of the preparation of persons for Christian ministry of the study of the Bible itself. P. T. Forsyth was a great British theologian at the beginning, early years of the 20th century, who famously said that the Christian ministry must be a bibliocracy. That is to say, it is a community of Scripture, a community that is shaped by Scripture, and that Christian ministers must, and the education of Christian ministers, must be bibliocentric, centered on the Bible, and on the interpretation of the Bible.

A third working assumption is that the interpretation of the Bible is foundational for all ministry and for all theological disciplines, which is really another way of saying that it is central to all Christian ministry, but it goes a little bit beyond that in terms of relating the study of the Bible to other things that ministers deal with. Pastors, of course, need to have experience and need to have expertise in a variety of areas, obviously in theology. But we do believe that the Bible is foundational for theology, that all Christian theology really is a matter of trying to understand the Bible to systematize the teaching of the Bible in ways that help us to make even better sense of the Christian faith for ourselves in our own intellectual situations, our own intellectual climates, and the like.

Of course, all Christian ministry, at least the pastoral ministry, has some concern for things like counseling. Again, we do believe that counseling should be biblically centered and that it must work out of a foundation of the Scriptures. At least in the Western world, a great deal of Christian counseling involves really making use of secular, non-Christian, and in some cases implicitly anti-Christian notions and then lightly baptizing them, as it were, that is to say, putting a Christian veneer on them, and then putting that forward as Christian counseling or Christian pastoral care.

A number of persons, of course, of scholars, have reacted against this and have urged a coming back to the Bible as the center, as a driving force of counseling and the like. But then fourth working assumption kind of complements the third. On the other hand, the interpretation of the Bible is informed and enriched by experience and by all true insights from whatever discipline they come.

So that it's not a matter of saying that the study of the Bible does not have anything at all to do with other disciplines or with the experience that we bring to it. As a matter of

fact, one of the emphases of the early inductive Bible study folks like William Rennie Harper and W. W. White was the whole notion of comprehensive knowledge. They believed that all knowledge in the world is related to all other knowledge in the world.

And so, an understanding or knowledge is really a vast universe, and one can enter it at any point. At any point that one enters this world of knowledge, it will impact really other aspects of knowledge so that the understanding of the Bible is related to truth wherever it is found throughout the whole of the world. So the Bible informs other disciplines, other areas or aspects of truth, but these other aspects of truth also inform our study of the Bible.

Moving on then to a further assumption, and that is that there is an inextricable, that is to say unavoidable, a necessary connection between the authority of the Bible and the issue of the proper method of its interpretation. Now, this really has to do with the notion that biblical authority, the authority of the Bible, the supreme authority of the Bible in the church, is not rhetorical, it's not creedal, but it is functional. The most significant thing is not what we say we believe about the authority of the Bible.

It's not the creeds that we utter with regard to the authority of the Bible, not to say that that is unimportant. That has importance in its own way. But what we really believe with regard to the Bible's authority will necessarily be expressed functionally in terms of what we do.

A person, let's say a pastor or a preacher, might utter the most insistent and complete, and one might even say radical, notions with regard to the authority of the Bible, talking about its verbal and plenary inerrancy or the like. But if that person in preaching is not careful to proclaim the biblical text, the biblical message if that person in his or her ministry does not spend time in the Bible, does not make the study of the Bible really central to his or her ministry, if that person takes a passage as a basis for a sermon and then preaches a sermon that has nothing to do with that passage, or maybe even contradicts that passage, then one has to say that in practice, in reality, no matter what that person may say with regard to the authority of the Bible, in terms of what he or she believes about the authority of the Bible, that really is not making a difference in that person's life or in that person's ministry. No, believing in the supreme authority of the Bible means submitting to the message of the text, which implies the importance of ascertaining the message.

If one believes in the authority of the Bible, one is actually affirming, embracing the notion that the message of the Bible is the most important thing in the world and is a necessary corollary to that conviction, is a conviction that we must do everything we

can. We do not hold back at all in terms of any effort, in terms of ascertaining as accurately as we possibly can the message of the Bible, and that is method. The process of ascertaining the message of the Bible is the Bible study method.

As I say, this points then to the importance of proper methods in the interpretation of the Bible. A corollary to the insistence upon the ultimate authority of the Bible is an insistence upon the necessity of reflecting seriously, taking seriously the process or the method by which we ascertain the message of the Bible from the text. A sixth working assumption is that the method of Bible study should correspond to the nature of the Bible itself.

This is absolutely central to an inductive approach. An inductive approach insists on reflecting upon, giving careful consideration to, Bible study method. But then also, in the process or as we think about Bible study method, we really need to make sure that the method that we pursue is in accord with the very nature of the biblical text itself, so that the nature of the Bible determines for us what is the best way of studying it.

Now, there are really three major or broad characteristics to the nature of the Bible. The Bible is historical, it is literary, and it is theological. It is historic in terms of its primary reference.

The Bible is, really, the Bible involved as scholars and even Christian readers in general are coming to understand more and more, you have what is called, what is often called a meta-narrative in the Bible. Actually, I don't think that's the most precise word to use because meta-narrative means a narrative alongside. What they really mean is a mega-narrative.

That is to say, there is a large narrative, a historical narrative, a story that lies behind the entirety of the Bible, and that actually provides the Bible in part with its unity. From the very beginning of creation, which of course we have there in Genesis 1 through 3, but not just there, to the very end of the world as we know it, the cosmos as we know it, the consummation, which of course is described as it happens at the end of Revelation, the book of Revelation, but not only there, throughout from beginning to end, you have this great mega-narrative, this story. It really is historical.

It's a story of especially God's dealings with his people Israel. Obviously, the earlier parts of Genesis have to do with pre-Israelite history, but the dealings of God with his people, which begins even before Israel, but of course centers upon Israel from Genesis 12 at least onwards, to its culmination in Jesus Christ and his people. It is historic in terms of its primary referent.

It is also historical in that God revealed himself to persons, historical persons, at specific points in time, and the biblical books that we have, quite obviously, have a

history of their own. They were produced by certain historical persons at certain points in the historical past and to other persons in the historical past in order to address the kinds of problems and the kinds of challenges that these persons were experiencing. So, if one is going to study the Bible according to its own nature, one must take those aspects of its historical fixedness seriously into account.

If you don't do that, you're not really studying the Bible according to its own nature. You're not letting the Bible itself determine how it should be studied, which again goes back to the notion of biblical authority. This is one aspect, actually, of the expression of the authority of the Scripture.

Part of what's involved in the authority of the Scripture is to allow the very nature of the biblical text to determine how we ought to study it. But the Bible is not only historical, it is also, of course, literary. This is, if it's historical in terms of its primary referent, it is literary in terms of its primary mode.

That is to say, it comes to us as literature, as text. That means then that we cannot avoid the text-centeredness of the process of studying the Bible. It really involves literary study, understanding what's involved in literary communication, and taking all that understanding that we can possibly amass of what's involved in literary communication and bringing that to bear upon the interpretation of the biblical text.

As you're going to see, we're going to see an inductive approach to the study of the Bible really does take the literary approach seriously. And really, as you'll see, the inductive approach is really a text-centered approach. It is not text-exclusive.

We just talked about history, which involves historical study. So, it's not text-exclusive, but it is text-centered. And we make no apology for that because of what we're saying, and that is that we believe it's quite manifestly the case that the Bible is, in terms of its primary mode, literary literature and must, therefore, be studied accordingly.

The Bible is also theological in terms of its primary purpose. The primary purpose of the Bible, from beginning to end, is theological. The primary concern of the Bible, every book of the Bible, we believe, the primary concern is God.

Now, this is more obvious in some parts of the Bible than in other parts of the Bible. I think it's obviously the case for most of the Bible. If you're inclined to be critical, and I hope you are, think critically about what I'm saying and determine whether you think it's true or not, right or not.

Have a book like Song of Solomon, for example, where the emphasis, unless one interprets it allegorically, which I think is not the best way to do so, according to its own intentionality, its purpose seems to be the celebration of human love, of the

love between a man and a woman. One might even say sexual love, erotic love, and the like. Nevertheless, even there, it is from the perspective of God, from the divine perspective.

And there's a sense that even in Song of Solomon, the experience and the expression of human sexuality is part of the celebration of God in His creation. And, of course, in the book of Esther, you have the one book where God is not mentioned at all explicitly, but there's no doubt, of course, that you can see the divine hand there. As a matter of fact, what you have is, I think, going back to the character of the Bible, a literary device according to which the primary referent of being God there is actually expressed precisely through or communicated precisely through the absence or the omission of any explicit reference.

The fact that God must be inferred from the text actually suggests the centrality of God in this book, where God is not specifically mentioned. Now, one reason why I want to emphasize the theological character of the Bible and how that plays into its interpretation is that, in the Western world at least, and I know that many of you are not in the Western world, but we have to be realistic and understand that ideas in one part of the world, in the kind of global village that we now live in, necessarily find their way and affect thinking in other parts of the world. And I think it's simply a matter of realism to understand that ideas that emerge in the academy in the West actually, especially, tend to filter out throughout the rest of the world so that even if you're not in the West, you experience some of these ideas.

But over the last several years, there has been an emphasis in some circles to talking about communities of interpreters. The idea is that all of us come from a particular community. And the community that we come from, that we represent, that we've been nurtured in, determines really the presuppositions that we come to the Bible with, determines really the questions that we address to the Bible, and therefore determines essentially our understanding of the Bible.

Some scholars, as a matter of fact, have gone so far as to say that communities of interpreters cannot talk to each other. Because I represent one interpretive community and you represent another interpretive community, I have such a different agenda when it comes to the study of the Bible that I really cannot talk to you or talk with you in any meaningful way about what the Bible means because you have such a different agenda. And the Bible will necessarily mean something different for you than it does for me and the like.

And this really, and this, but even those who do not go that far will say that to a certain extent, the community out of which we come actually does determine the questions that we address to the Bible and the answers that we get. In other words, it determines our interpretation and our understanding of the Scriptures. And there's some truth, of course, to that.

And so, there are communities of interpreters who will come to the Bible primarily, let's

say, out of a kind of historical reconstruction, purpose, or orientation. This has been the case, at least, with much critical biblical scholarship over the last couple of centuries. The community of interpretation of biblical scholarship over the last couple of centuries has tended to focus on historical reconstruction.

What really happened? Can we reconstruct these events? Often, historical Jesus studies involve this kind of thing, a kind of coming to the Bible with a view towards saying, okay, let's derive from our study of the Bible a reconstruction of events as they actually happened. And so, they move in that direction. That's the focus.

It is possible also to approach the Bible from what's called a history of religions approach, which studies, say, the New Testament, so as to come to an understanding of the social and intellectual dynamics of emerging Christianity with a view toward comparing emerging Christianity, early Christianity, to the other great religions of the world. The purpose is, really, to come to a sense or an understanding of the religious nature of humanity. How can the study of the emergence of earliest Christianity that we derive from the New Testament, that relate to the emergence of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and the other great religions of the world so that we look at all these together and then derive some sort of understanding about the religious character of humanity? For some years, I was co-chair of the Matthew Group at the Society of Biblical Literature here in North America, and we had a paper one year in the Matthew Group on a Jungian understanding of Matthew's Gospel.

By that, we mean Carl Jung, J-U-N-G, the great psychologist. And you perhaps will not be surprised to know that we came away with a much better understanding of the psychology and psychological theories of Carl Jung than we did of the text of Matthew's Gospel. But again, it's possible to be part of a community that approaches a Bible from that perspective.

The point we want to make here, is that we are operating also out of a community of interpretation. And our community of interpretation is a church. And that means that the focus that we have is really theological.

We approach the Bible with the question, how is God revealing himself to us through these texts? How can we encounter not only the person of God but also God's ways, God's will, and God's truth through these texts? That is the reading strategy that belongs to the community of interpretation that is a church. Now, I hasten to add, though, that in our judgment, the theological, this theological and ecclesial approach, that is to say, what is God saying to his people through these texts, is more in line with, accords better with, the very nature and purpose of the Bible itself than these other approaches that belong to other communities of interpretation because the Bible does seem to be, in terms of its essential character, theological.

As I say, the primary concern of all of these books, and manifestly, almost all of them, is God. Clearly, all of them arose out of the community of faith, Israel, and the church, and all of them are directed towards the community of faith, Old Testament Israel, Jews,

and the New Testament, of course, the Christian church. Seventh, a biblical study involves, really, the twofold task of interpretation and application, and interpretation precedes and determines the application.

This really derives from the notion that the Bible has two aspects to it. It has an original significance, original sense, that is to say, the message that the writers wanted to communicate to their audience, but also has a continuing sense. Now, the one thing that, the one reality that strikes readers of the Bible, perhaps more obviously than any other, is a sense of an author, that is to say, the sense of being addressed.

But we recognize two things immediately when we experience that sense of being addressed when we read the biblical text. The first thing is that, in the first instance, those who are being addressed were not us, that we were not the first addressees, we were not the original addressees, that there is an audience here, a readership here, suggested by the text that is someone different than we ourselves, who lived at a different time, at the same time, of course, as the author who penned these words. So, we recognize then that there is a past historical meaning.

That's not a modern construct, as many today are trying to claim. That belongs really to the essence of reading. That is an empirical sort of, that arises from an empirical experience with the text.

So that you have then to take, if you're going to take the Bible seriously, you have to take also seriously the process of deriving its historical sense. On the other hand, though, there is also a sense that when we experience this business of being addressed, at one level, the text is addressing us. It's not simply antiquarian.

It's not simply a matter of the text addressing persons in the past. That is true in the first instance, but there is a kind of continuing significance of what we read that suggests to us that we are being addressed as well. That this has relevance not only, say, to the original audience of Matthew's gospel or to the Roman church to whom Paul addressed the great epistle to the Romans, that it has, that its meaning and significance is not completed.

It is not spent simply on them, but it continues to have meaning and significance to each new generation of readers, including our own. And therefore, part of our very experience of the biblical text is that it has not only a past historical meaning but a present historical meaning, a meaning for us ourselves. Now, it is necessary, of course, once we agree that you have both of these aspects of meaning in the text, it

is necessary, if we're going to be methodologically reflective, to explore what is the relationship between the past historical significance and the present historical significance of the scriptures.

And in general, it is our conviction that the task of deriving or of embracing, of encountering the past historical significance precedes that of determining its present historical significance, and that the present historical significance must be in continuity with, and ideally should derive from, its past historical significance. Otherwise, you have a bifurcation within the meaning of the text itself. It's not a unity.

It is bifurcated. You have two different meanings that are separate from one another, and in fact, could actually be in contradiction with one another. But we believe that the message of the Bible is whole, that what God spoke through His inspired writers, wanted to communicate to the original audience, stands in continuity with, is not something different from, but is in continuity with what He wants to say to us today.

Incidentally, there'd be no, just on a practical level, there'd be no way of having a kind of confidence in the present historical meaning, that is to say, the applicatory meaning of the text, if it was not based upon its historical past meaning. The fact that a particular application is derivable is manifestly, clearly derivable from what the authors apparently intended to say to their original audience, gives us confidence, and gives us assurance of the solid basis of the applications that we derive from the Bible. Now, we've gone about an hour here, and so it is true that we have just three more of these to talk about, but there's nothing wrong with stopping here, taking a breath, finishing this up, and then coming back, and when we come back, we will talk more about, especially what's involved in an inductive approach, and start talking about a specific process that we can apply to the text, that will allow the text in the best way to speak to us itself on its own terms.

This is Dr. David Bauer teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 1, Introduction, Inductive versus Deductive.