

**Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 5,
Translations and Early Interpretation**

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

In our last session, we discussed issues related to translation and particularly translation philosophy, looking at the two major philosophies that kind of stand on opposite ends of a spectrum. More formal equivalent that focuses on reproducing the form of the text, more dynamic equivalent that focus more on a clarity in the response of the reader being able to understand accurately, and an equivalent response in the modern reader as the ancient text. We, and ancient readers to the ancient text, we also talked a little bit about gender-neutral translation and ended by giving some examples.

And what is important to understand about gender-neutral translations is that they are simply attempts to not necessarily, although they can be, not necessarily promote an agenda or to tamper with scripture by prioritizing, updating it, and promoting a feminist agenda as opposed to being more accurate. But gender-neutral translations are an attempt to capture the meaning of the ancient text where the Hebrew-Greek language used, masculine language, such as the pronouns masculine or masculine words that we usually translate him or he or man. But when they use those in a context where it was clear that all humanity is intended, both male and female, then a gender-neutral translation tries to capture that and wants to make that clear that that's what the original text is intending.

Whereas the examples that we looked at from Psalms and Hebrews were examples of where previous translations that maintained the gender language, the masculine language, might have the potential of being misunderstood in our modern-day society where often, and this is sometimes the debate, but it appears that often masculine language in English is understood to refer exclusively to males. But if the

context clearly makes it the case that male and female are being referred to, then a gender translation brings that out clearly. Whereas if only males are being referred to in the original context, then gender translations still maintain that masculine language to make it clear that males are being referred to.

So issues of gender translations kind of fit within our discussion of more formal equivalent. Do I maintain the exact form in a more wooden literal translation or do I change the form and sometimes sacrifice form in order to communicate more accurately? How do I use translations then in interpretation or what translation is the best one? And what I want to do is just give you four guidelines that I see, in my opinion, as important. And again, these are just general.

There are other things that could be said, but four guidelines for using translations in interpretation of the is simply to know what kind of translation you're dealing with when you use a modern-day translation, whether or even whether it's an ancient translation like the King James Version or a more up-to-date modern translation is know what kind of translation you're dealing with. Know where it falls on the spectrum from more formal equivalent, more wooden types of translations to more dynamic equivalent translations as well. So know where your translation falls.

The second thing is understand that no translation, and we'll bring this up in the last point as well, but understand that no translation captures, completely captures, the meaning of the original text. And that's because again, not only back to our discussion of the distance that exists between us and the original readers and the context and author and the original political and historical situation that cannot always completely or exhaustively be overcome, even if it can substantially. So not only is there a distance, but we've already seen languages don't overlap.

Part of that linguistic difference or distance that we've talked about. And since languages don't completely overlap, no one translation can completely capture all of what is involved in understanding a biblical text. For example, sometimes, especially in some of the Psalms and some of the Hebrew poetry, you might have a text that is arranged according to the alphabet.

Each line or each verse begins with a Hebrew letter of the alphabet. The first word does. That's impossible to capture in English.

Or certain types of poetic structures are sometimes sacrificed, or even sometimes figures of speech in one language might not be a figure of speech in another language. Some of those will obviously be missed, or we might not fail to capture it precisely. Again, there may be a motive or effectual impact of a text that's going to be lost in a modern day translation.

So the point is, recognize that no translation captures all the nuances and meaning of a biblical text. Even if it can capture its meaning substantially and accurately, no one claims necessarily that it does so exhaustively and perfectly. So recognize that.

The third thing is, for non-Hebrew and Greek students, usually the standard advice is to use a fairly literal translation, at least as one of the tools you use. A translation that captures is more formally equivalent, that will at least to some degree be close to and expose you to the structure and expose you to the grammar and the form as closely as possible of the original text. So most who do not read Greek or Hebrew will probably at some point avail themselves of a more wooden translation that might be, again, not perfectly or exhaustively, but somewhat closer to the structure of the original languages themselves.

There's a variety of more wooden or often called literal translations that are more formally equivalent that do that. The last thing I want to say about translation, actually I'll say two more numbers. Actually the other thing I want to say in connection with no translation can completely capture all the meaning is that the goal of interpretation is not just to produce a translation.

Especially if you work with Hebrew and Greek, the primary goal is not just to produce a translation. Again, because translations don't capture the entirety of the meaning. That's where at times commentary and explanation and your exegesis, and that's why you do interpretation.

So don't think that a translation will or has to capture everything in the text. In my Greek exegesis classes I teach, I'm at times a little bit flexible on translation. There are good ones and there are bad ones, but at the same time I'm not looking for the translation to capture everything.

I'm looking at the explanation, the commentary, the exegesis, and the interpretation itself to capture all the meaning and nuances of the text. But that brings me to my last comment. Probably the best use of translations, in my opinion, is to use as many as you can.

Because of the things that we've just said, because there are different philosophies of translation, because no translation can capture everything, it's probably best to use as many translations as possible. Because sometimes the differences in the translations can do one of two things. Probably more, but I'll highlight these two.

Number one, the differences might capture nuances that are both intended in the text, the Greek and Hebrew text, but can't be brought out in one English translation. The other thing is that sometimes where translations differ will reveal an interpretive

issue or difficulty that you need to deal with. If you're reading three or four translations and they all, or at least a couple of them, differ significantly, sometimes it's that difference in the way they've translated that might reveal an interpretive problem.

Sometimes the differences are just stylistic as far as making it smoother reading or something like that, but at other times the differences might reveal a significant interpretive issue that you're going to have to deal with in interpreting and understanding a biblical text. For example, in Ephesians chapter 5, and this is verse 21, it's interesting when you compare translations. Chapter 5, verse 21 comes halfway through chapter 5. And why I say that is the first half of chapter 5, towards the end of that first half, we find that famous text, be filled with the spirit.

Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the spirit. And then what follows are a number of, in the Greek text, a participles, or a number of phrase clauses that further define or describe what it means to be filled with the spirit. Now, if you start looking at translations, what is interesting is some translations actually begin a new paragraph.

In most English translations, not all of them, but a lot of them, kind of to make it easier to read and digest, will break the text down and give you headings, paragraph headings. A lot of them begin a new paragraph at chapter 5 in verse 21 of Ephesians. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

And then the rest of the text talks about wives, submit to your husbands, husbands love your wife, and the long comparison between the husband's love for the wife and Christ's love for the church. But verse 21, some translations will begin a new paragraph at verse 21. They'll break it off from verse 20 and perhaps even have a paragraph heading.

Other translations, such as the one I'm looking at, actually include verse 21 with verse 20, actually with verses 19-20 of Ephesians chapter 5. That makes quite a big difference. In other words, with verse 21, submit to one another out of reverence, does Paul begin a new topic at this point? Is he beginning a new section in his letter? Or, if I take verse 21 with the previous verses, then submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ is further explaining what it means to be filled with the Spirit. In verse 18, do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery, instead be filled with the Spirit.

And then verses 19 and 20 give examples of what this means, and should we include 21 with that, so that submitting to one another is an example of what it means to be filled with the Spirit? Or, does 21 begin a brand new section in Paul's letter? So, looking at a number of translations and where they divide Ephesians 5 reveals, I think, an interpretive issue in the text that you're going to have to deal with. And that's true elsewhere, as hopefully you know, the paragraph divisions and headings in your Bible are not placed there by Paul, or Matthew, or Mark, or Isaiah, or Daniel, or whoever, but are the result of the modern translators and the additions and the translations they've produced. And they're there just to help us kind of break the text down.

It'd a little bit unwieldy and difficult to read the entire book of Ephesians without a break. But just so you know that these are human inventions. These are the decisions of the translation committee.

They are not put there by Paul, so they're not inspired, and they're going to differ at times. But you'll notice the more you read translations, sometimes, not always, but sometimes, where a translation committee divides a text, where that differs between translations, sometimes might reveal an interpretive issue and might make

a difference in how you read the text. So it's important to compare translations to not only perhaps see some added nuance, but to see where they differ and where they may reveal an interpretive issue or significant problem.

And again, the Ephesians 5 text, I think, is a good example. I think you could make a good argument based on the Greek text itself, that verse 21 goes with verses 18 through 20. It's a further explanation of what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

So verse 19, speak to one another with psalms, hymns, sing to the Lord. Verse 20, always giving thanks to the Father for everything. And verse 21, submitting or submit to one another out of reverence.

That goes with back to verse 18, further describing what it means to be filled with the Spirit. So be aware of even how a text will divide or how a translation will divide the text in the paragraphs. And again, realizing those are, we're not Paul's or John's or whoever, those are the decision of the translators.

And sometimes you might disagree with those. And having said that, even more generally, chapter division and verse divisions, hopefully you know to ignore those as well. They're simply there to help us get to the same place Sunday morning.

You can imagine a pastor trying to help his audience find the right text somewhere in the middle of the book of Isaiah without chapter and verse divisions. But other than that, they may or may not indicate how the text is to be divided or how it develops or unfolds. Another example, again, I use a New Testament example.

One that we've already mentioned is back in chapter five of Galatians, the well-known fruit of the spirit passage where Paul contrasts the works of the flesh, which I think he's referring to the works of the law, that the reliance on the law ultimately does not overcome the works of the flesh. What does? It's by living in the spirit in

chapter five. However, what is interesting in verse 516, when he introduces this contrast between the flesh and the spirit, and the spirit referring to Holy Spirit, again, as kind of aside, this is interesting, because the Greek New Testament, for example, did not use capitalization or use lowercase letters.

In fact, on our discussion of textual criticism, we talked about unseal script or manuscripts, that most likely the original manuscripts would have been written in capital letters and would have had no spacing in between. Because of that, it's interesting when you come across a word like spirit, if you find that capitalized in your English text, that's an interpretive decision. Again, Paul did not originally capitalize the word spirit or the Greek word pneuma.

He did not write that as a capital P in Greek, or for pneuma, or a capital S in English. So that whether we say spirit with a small s, referring to just a spirit or the human spirit, or capital S, the Holy Spirit, again, is an interpretive decision by translations. And there may be some verses where some translations would translate it with a small s, referring to the human spirit, where in the same verse, another translation may use a capital S, referring to the Holy Spirit.

So even things like punctuation, again, punctuation was not present in the original text, whether a word is capitalized or small letters, most of that is the decision of your translator. So chapter 5, verse 16 of Galatians begins, so I say, live by the Spirit, capital S, making clear that the translators thought this word refers to the Holy Spirit. So I say live by the Spirit.

And this is where it becomes interesting, is again, I'm going to contrast the older NIV and the new 2011 NIV. The older NIV translates it like this. So I say live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Notice that phrase, the sinful nature, suggesting perhaps that they have interpreted this to mean that we have some impulse, some inclination, some nature inside that is bent towards evil. But the Greek word there is, we've talked about this already, the Greek word is actually the word sarx, a single word sarx, which, interestingly, other more literal translations try to find a single word in English, and the word they usually choose is flesh. So we're prone to think of this phrase, this text, in terms of the contrast between the Spirit and the flesh.

But interestingly, again, the word Paul uses is the Greek word sarx, the Spirit and the sarx. But in chapter 5, verse 16, the old NIV said, translated it the Spirit and the sinful nature. Now notice what the new NIV does.

The 2011 says, live by the Spirit, almost using the identical wording as found in the old NIV, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. They've gone back to the more, the single word flesh. So now, again, my purpose is not to try to solve this issue right now.

We'll actually talk about the word flesh later on in this course when we deal with semantics and word study, lexical analysis. But the point is, when I compare even the two same translations, the NIV, one an updated edition, but as well as other translations, and I see one translation translating the sinful nature, and another translating a flesh, that then raises a question in my mind is, how should I understand this word? What is going on? Why the difference in translation? I mean, at one level, one can see that the word flesh in 21st century English might suggest that the physical body, that something is wrong with the physical body, or it is the the seed of sins is somewhere in the physical body, that maybe Paul has Gnostic tendencies, where he denigrates the physical body itself. But the original NIV was trying to avoid that, I think, by trying to bring out what Paul meant by flesh, by saying sinful nature.

Now, one may disagree with that. I myself think sinful nature is not a good translation of *sarks*, the word Paul used. But at the same time, you can understand that you can see the difference in translation philosophy in trying to avoid, perhaps, a misunderstanding.

But when I read these two texts, at the very least, I have to ask, why the difference? That probably reveals an interpretive issue. So I need to go back and figure out, what is it Paul is trying to communicate at this point? And then see if you can explain the differences between translations. So in my opinion, then, I think the best move in utilizing translations in hermeneutics and an interpretation is to use as many translations as possible, to compare them.

Number one, to perhaps see different nuances from different translations. But second, also to note where they differ. Again, some differences may be rather inconsequential and a result of style.

But other differences, whether it's the way they divide a text, the words they use to translate, where they might stop a sentence and begin a new one, those kinds of differences may reveal an interpretive issue that, as an interpreter, you're going to have to deal with. So hopefully, now you understand a little bit more about what a translation is, the philosophy that lies behind it, and also how to use translations in an effective way. All right, what I want to do now is move down the line a little bit further, and even historically and talk about, we've looked at the origin of scripture in the process of inspiration, and how that influences hermeneutics.

We've looked at the transmission process in terms of reconstructing through textual criticism what most likely was the original text of the Hebrew and Greek Old and New Testament as a basis for interpretation. And then even further in the process of

transmission is how that has been translated through translation, how that text has been made available to readers in our contemporary world and their languages. But now I want to move along a little further and talk about early biblical interpretation, begin to talk about hermeneutics or biblical interpretation especially.

And actually, I want to begin at the beginning, that might sound kind of silly, but why I say that is when you pick up a text, and I've said this already, but it's worth reiterating, when you pick up the Bible and begin to interpret it, you are not the first one to do so. You stand, you are not the first one to interpret the Bible, but you stand in a long tradition of interpreting the biblical text, of engaging the biblical text, of trying to make sense of it and understand it, that goes all the way back not just to the first Christians of the first century, but all the way back to the Bible itself. Yes, the Bible itself reveals that interpretation is already taking place in the biblical or within the biblical text.

That is, biblical authors, and as you're already aware of, the Bible is produced over quite a span of time, so that often biblical authors will pick up earlier texts, biblical texts, and interpret them and apply them for their own day and age and for their own unique situations. So the author would pick up and reformulate and reinterpret for his own day and for his own audience previous biblical text. Scholars often refer to this as inner biblical interpretation, but the point is that interpretation is already taking place within the Bible itself.

Authors take earlier texts and try to make sense of them, try to apply them and make sense of them and understand them for their own context. Again, the goal was to make previous text relevant to the modern reader, so it wasn't just theoretical necessarily to explain the meaning of an obscure text, although that could be true, but it was often to demonstrate that the text was still relevant, as the Word of God was still relevant to later generations of God's people. One very good example of

this, and we'll look at a couple of examples in detail, but especially the prophetic literature in the Old Testament.

Sometimes earlier predictions and prophecies of prophets are picked up by later prophets, such as after the exile, when Israel goes into exile and then they finally return back to the land. Sometimes you have prophets after the exile picking up earlier text and interpreting them and demonstrating that they are still relevant, and they are reasserting them for their people to demonstrate that God is still in control. God still keeps his promises.

The promises haven't failed. The prophecies haven't failed, that God will indeed bring them to pass and bring them to fulfillment. So let me give you some examples in both the Old Testament and also some of the Jewish interpretations of the day, and then in the New Testament, and again my purpose is not to give a detailed account of the interpretive activity in the Old or New Testament, or the theory or theological assumptions behind it, or exactly what they were doing, but mainly to give you just a flavor of how, within the Bible itself, earlier texts are being interpreted and applied and utilized in a way to make relevant to later generations of God's people.

So for example, in the Old Testament, just to give some very common typical examples, but not spend any time in them, First and Second Chronicles take up material, for example, from First and Second Kings, and there may be a similar relationship between those books as there are between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the so-called Synoptic Gospels that we'll talk about later, but First and Second Chronicles probably takes up material from First and Second Kings and now interprets it for a new setting that is for a time after the exile, perhaps, a post-exilic perspective on these events. Again, the goal is to reassert God's Word or to make God's Word relevant to a new situation, to demonstrate how it addresses God's people in a new setting, to show that God's Word is still valid, God's Word still

speaks, God's promises in His Word have not failed. We find, as I've already said, something similar going on in the prophetic literature.

Often, I think, later prophetic texts and writers will pick up earlier prophetic texts sometimes, and especially those prophecies that were unfulfilled, that for some may have seemed to be failed predictions or prophecies, but the authors pick them up to demonstrate and to reassert them, to demonstrate that indeed God will fulfill them. Especially, the basis seems to be that these prophecies are still valid, these prophecies are still the Word of God. God is faithful to keep His promises, so the prophets can pick them up and reassert them and demonstrate that they still will indeed be fulfilled and God will indeed accomplish His purpose.

So, they take up these prophecies and assert them for a new generation. So, for example, a number of earlier prophets and a number of prophets anticipated a restoration of the temple when Israel is in exile and the temple is destroyed. A number of prophets promise and predict that God indeed will fulfill His promises by bringing His people back into the land, restoring them to the land, and rebuilding the temple.

You find that perspective especially in the first 39 chapters of Isaiah. Ezekiel 40 through 48 goes into some detail about the reconstruction of and rebuilding of an eschatological temple, of a new temple, where God will dwell with His people. And so, early prophets anticipate this restoration of the people from exile and the rebuilding of a temple where God in a new covenant relationship would dwell with His people in the temple and in the land.

But, interestingly, the situation in exile, according to some of the prophets, doesn't quite measure up to and match up to those expectations as you find in Isaiah or Ezekiel. And so, because of that, you do find later prophets still anticipating the

rebuilding of a temple and the restoration of God's people. For example, if I can find it tucked away in the prophets, the book of Haggai and chapter 2. Listen to Haggai chapter 2. How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? But now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord.

Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehoshadak, the high priest. Be strong, O you people of the land, declares the Lord. And work, for I am with you, declares the Lord Almighty.

This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, and my spirit remains among you. Do not fear. So it's as if the prophet is assuring them, after they've come back from exile, God indeed is still with his people.

And you notice even the repetition of the covenant formula. I am with you. But then he goes on and says, this is what the Lord Almighty says.

In a little while, I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations will come. And I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord Almighty.

The silver is mine. The gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty. The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house, says the Lord Almighty.

And in this place, I will grant peace. So it's almost as if the situation after exile, when the people returned to the land, now don't quite measure up to some of the great prophets and their prophecies. So that now Haggai reaffirms that God still will fill this house with his glory and still make it the spectacular vision that one finds in the prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel.

So later prophets often take up earlier prophetic text. Again, not because they're trying to save face or correct a mistake, but I think because they're convinced that despite appearances, God's promises are still valid. God is still in control and will indeed fulfill his promises.

So they pick them up again and demonstrate how they are still relevant for the people of God. God has not forgotten his people and God will indeed fulfill his promises. So the Old Testament itself reveals that the process of interpretation is already taking place.

Again, whenever you pick up your Bible to read it, you stand in line of a long tradition of taking up and reading and understanding and interpreting biblical texts, attempting to make them relevant to yourself and to the modern reader. Interpretation is nothing new. It's already taking place within the biblical texts themselves by the biblical authors themselves.

To move on, especially in a relationship to the Old Testament, we have other examples of very early attempts to interpret the biblical text. For example, Rabbinic Judaism, the Judaism of the early centuries, even leading up and into the first century, the New Testament era, reveals and beyond reveals a number of attempts and a number of ideas related to how the Old Testament text was taken up and interpreted and understood. And again, the main goal, it appears to me, is what as we saw with the Old Testament was to demonstrate how these texts are relevant.

It wasn't only just intellectually to uncover the bare meaning of the text, but to ask how are these texts relevant? How do they continue to speak to the people of God? And what I want to focus on is three or four main bodies. Actually, I'll focus on four main bodies of work that is associated with Rabbinic Judaism. Judaism's attempt to come to grips with its own scripture and understand it and make it relevant.

It's important to understand much of this, much of the bodies of literature that I'm going to talk about, much of it was written down even after the New Testament era, especially with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. And even after that, much of this was committed to writing, but it's still probably in many places reflects interpretive activity that was already taken place long before it was ever written down. So for example, one body of literature is known as the Mishnah.

The Mishnah is basically the written codification of the oral interpretation of the law by the rabbis of the day. In other words, along with the written law of Moses grew up a body of oral teaching and oral literature that later on about AD 200, so 200 years roughly after the birth of Christ, 200 years later after that event, you have the Mishnah produced, which is then the literary encoding of this oral tradition. So again, although the Mishnah occurs and emerges in written form much later than even the New Testament writings, which probably the last one written towards the very end of the first century, it probably still embodies interpretive activity and understanding of the law that occurred much earlier than that.

So the Mishnah, the written form of the oral law, the oral law committed to writing in the form of the Mishnah. Another body of literature is what is known as the Talmud. And again, I'll just giving very brief descriptions.

There are actually two Talmuds, we might say. One was known as the Palestinian Talmud, and the other one was the Babylonian Talmud. You might see those two names utilized.

The produced about 400 AD and 600 AD respectively. Again, although these were committed to writing much later, they once again may embody a very, very early

interpretive activity by Jewish interpreters. Basically, what the Talmud was, is further commentary on the Mishnah.

Again, the Mishnah itself seemed in need of updating, so the Talmud is further commentary and further explanation of the Mishnah, which as we said, itself was the committing to writing of the oral law. Another, the third body of literature, briefly to emphasize, is the Midrash. Midrash was basically kind of a running commentary on the biblical text, where often a biblical text was treated like this.

A line of a verse of a text was quoted, and then it was unpacked and interpreted. Often other texts were brought in from the Old Testament that were used to interpret it, and the compilation of what rabbis were saying about this verse. So the Midrash was kind of a running commentary on the biblical text, not unlike what some preachers do Sunday morning, where they work verse by verse through a text with their commentary and their explanation.

And then a final, a fourth body of literature is, could be the Targums. The Targums were basically Aramaic translations or paraphrases of the Old Testament. As Aramaic became the standard language, there was a need then for the Bible to be communicated in Aramaic.

And most think that the Targums had their origin in the teaching of the Old Testament scriptures in the synagogue in Aramaic. And again, later on, those were committed to writing in the form that we now have as the Targums. And once again, the Targums were written, most of them much later than the Old Testament, or New Testament, but probably a lot of times embody and contain interpretive activity and paraphrases that are much earlier than the date that they were actually committed to writing.

Within the rabbinic literature, there were often rules that characterized the rabbinic interpretive activity known as the Middow. One feature of this, or just without going through all the rules, there are plenty of textbooks that go through them, but just to highlight a couple of them, a couple of the rules, and there's even debate whether they're really rules they followed or simply explanations of what they did and where those originated. I won't go into that.

But, for example, one of the so-called rules of rabbinic interpretive activity was to argue from the lesser to the greater. That is, if something that is less important is true, then the greater must also be true. And perhaps we find this type of argumentation present in Jesus' parables, where frequently he argues from the greater to the lesser.

So in the Sermon on the Mount, he argues that if God cares about the birds and clothing them and caring for them, the lesser, certainly he cares about the greater, which would be humanity, which would be the climax of creation, which is human beings. So you'll see Jesus arguing that way, and even in his parables as well. If an unjust judge, if a human unjust judge would finally treat a woman justly, certainly, if the lesser is true, certainly the greater is true, that God will seek justice for his people who ask him.

So one feature was arguing from the lesser to the greater. Another one feature is that you often find, and I mention these two because I think you do find them often in the New Testament, is another feature is interpreting a text, an Old Testament text, in light of other Old Testament texts that have similar wording or vocabulary. Sometimes it's only one word that links them together.

And taking a biblical text with a word and finding another Old Testament text with a similar word and using it to help fill out and unpack and interpret that text. They're

kind of linked together by common vocabulary or theme. But again, the importance of this activity is to demonstrate how early interpreters understood their own scripture.

The importance of studying how Old Testament authors used earlier Old Testament text or looking at rabbinic bodies of literature and how they interpreted Old Testament text. Is they shed light on how early interpreters understood their own scriptures and how they interpret it. And also they raise the question, how might this affect how New Testament authors interpreted and read and utilized Old Testament text as well? Another non-biblical source of interpretation and attempt to interpret and wrestle with Old Testament text is the Qumran literature that comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Qumran community was a sect that secluded themselves in a community near the Dead Sea, hence the title of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and found themselves at odds with what was going on in the establishment, the status quo, and the priesthood in Jerusalem. And they responded to that influence by secluding themselves and forming their own community where they would await God's kingdom and even expected God would rebuild the temple. In the meantime, they were the temple, the eschatological temple of God where God dwelled.

No one else, not even other Jews, they were the true people of God and God dwelt in their midst. They were the true temple that one day God would build a temple in their midst. But the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for understanding biblical interpretation is that the Qumran community found, actually found in the Old Testament, justification for their own existence.

They read Old Testament text almost prophetically as anticipating and justifying their existence. Some of us might read some of the Qumran text and think that they're

allegorical and they're playing fast and loose with scripture. But again, they're attempting to provide justification for their own existence.

They're trying to explain and provide a reason for their own existence and their own activity and their own expectations and hope given their situation. And there's all kinds of examples in the Qumran literature. Sometimes the Qumran literature reveals simply editions or manuscripts of Old Testament text, just copying of Old Testament text.

Sometimes it reveals text that are more geared towards providing guidelines and rules and regulations for life in the community. But at other times, some of the texts are interestingly more, they're more like the midrash we talked about. They are commentaries on biblical text.

A very interesting one and revealing one is one of the more famous ones is the commentary on Habakkuk, the Peshar and Habakkuk. But an even more interesting one, I think, or at least as interesting as the Isaiah Peshar or the commentary on Isaiah. And what it does, much like we talked about with midrash, and some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are fragmentary, so we don't have complete commentaries or complete text.

But often what they do is they'll work their way through a biblical text line by line and interpret each line. They'll quote a line, and then they'll interpret it and expound on it, again, demonstrating how it applies to their own community and how it applies to their own situation. And one of the intriguing texts is the commentary or the midrash on Isaiah chapter 54.

And chapter 54 is a prophecy of restoration. Again, Israel has gone into exile because of their idolatry and their sin. And Isaiah anticipates a time of restoration, where God

will bring his people back to the land and restore them and enter into a covenant relationship with them, ultimately in a new creation towards the end of the book.

But chapter 54 is very intriguing. And in verses 11 and 12, we find a very interesting explanation of the restoration of Jerusalem and its people. You can remember they're in exile, and now Isaiah anticipates a time of restoration.

Chapter 11 and 12, O afflicted city, be God's people Israel and Jerusalem, that is to be destroyed and overtaken by foreigners to take them into exile as a punishment for their sins. Now the prophet says, O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted. Now here's the contrast.

I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. And then verse 13, all your sons will be taught by the Lord and great will be your children's peace.

In righteousness, you will be established and tyranny will be far from you. So the situation in exile will be reversed. They will be brought back, the city will be restored.

But the author describes it in terms of being rebuilt with these precious stones and jewels. And notice that he itemizes the main features of the city, the foundations, the stones that make up the city, the battlements, the gates, the walls, etc. So the city is portrayed in terms of these precious jewels that will make it up when it is rebuilt.

Now the point I want to make about this is it's interesting what the Qumran community does with this text. What they do is they take all of the stones and the parts of the city and they allegorize them to refer to members of the community. So the original founding members of the community, the council of the Qumran

community, the chief priests and other groups are equated with these pieces of the city, these architectural features of the city and the jewels that make them up.

So that the Qumran community again found in this text a justification for their own existence. They thought that Isaiah was really predicting and anticipating the founding of the Qumran community. So it's interesting they found in this not a prophecy of a literal rebuilt city, but they allegorized the parts of the city in Isaiah 54, 11 and 12 to refer to actual persons.

Not unlike what Paul and other New Testament authors do when they equate building blocks of the city or stones of a city or parts of the temple with the people of God. So that even Peter can talk about the fact that God's people are the stones that are being built up. And Paul can talk about the people as a temple being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone.

So the Qumran community read this text as I think a justification for their existence and establishment to show that their very founding as a community is nothing less than what Isaiah himself was predicting. And they could find in the scripture anticipation of their own existence and justification for their existence. So again the Qumran community is another example of taking biblical text and taking them up and interpreting them or reinterpreting them to refer to their own existence, to refer to their own community, to make them relevant as God's people, to demonstrate how they can have ongoing significance and validity.

Again the Qumran community and others are not just trying to, they don't just look at the text as a bare artifact to be exegeted and just to draw out the original historical meaning. But it's interesting they are attempting, whether we would agree with what they're doing or not, or whether however silly it seems to us, they are

trying to take the text and show its relevance and its validity for the people of God of their day. Now moving over to the New Testament, we find that interpretive activity continues into the New Testament.

And one of the questions is because most of the New Testament authors are Jewish or have their background in Judaism, one of the questions is to what extent are they simply reflecting and following standard methods of interpretation such as we find in rabbinic interpretation. And again I don't want to address that issue specifically. We might give a few examples of where they might be following similar techniques.

But the key is, in my opinion, is because of the coming of Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ comes to bring to fulfillment the Old Testament, the New Testament authors, I think for the most part, read the Old Testament through the lenses of fulfillment in Jesus Christ. They saw the entire Old Testament as pointing to Christ. In fact, Jesus Christ himself may be responsible for this very perspective.

One of the most well-known texts that suggests something like this is the one found in Luke chapter 24 and verse 27. After Jesus' resurrection, he appears to two men on the road to Emmaus, and he begins to converse with them. And 24-27 is one of the more intriguing verses.

Verse 25 begins, Jesus said to them, to these two men, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken. Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? It's interesting that Jesus himself seems to think his own suffering is predicted in the prophets. And then verse 27, which perhaps encapsulates Jesus' approach of the Old Testament, however that's understood, and may lay the, this kind of thing probably lays the basis for how his followers interpret the Old Testament.

Jesus says, or Luke goes on and says, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them, Jesus explained to them what was said in all scriptures concerning himself. And so based on the text like this, most likely the New Testament authors read the Old Testament through the lenses of fulfillment in Christ. They ultimately, whatever else they do with it, they ultimately see Jesus Christ as the climax of Old Testament revelation, as the fulfillment, as what the Old Testament was ultimately pointing to.

So they read the Old Testament finally in light of fulfillment in Christ. But to give you some examples of New Testament interpretation and to demonstrate kind of the range of interpretive activity of even the New Testament authors, it's interesting that we can see anywhere from more literal interpretations to interpretations that will demonstrate are more kind of analogical or typological. That is, sometimes New Testament authors appear to find rather straightforward, almost we would say literal fulfillment of Old Testament text.

At other times when you read it, it's not quite so clear as to how the New Testament authors think that Jesus or some event fulfills this Old Testament text. In those cases, the connection may not be one of prediction and fulfillment, but may be more analogical or typological. That is, the author sees repeated patterns.

The same way God worked under the Old Covenant in the Old Testament, now he's working in a similar but greater way under the New Covenant as brought about through fulfillment in Christ. And also a number of other ways that New Testament authors utilized Old Testament text. So in our next session, we will look at a couple of specific examples of how New Testament authors utilized Old Testament text, and then move on in looking at the history of interpretation.

We'll leave some rather large gaps. We'll leap over a lot of the periods of church history again to paint rather broad strokes and touch on main figures of interpretation and how they affect the way we approach hermeneutics and how we participate and engage in biblical interpretation. Again, remembering that we are not the first ones to pick up and read this text.

When you pick up and read the text, you do not do so in isolation. You do not do so in a vacuum. You come to it, whether you realize it or not, as influenced by and taking your position in a long line of those who have gone before you who have attempted to understand and make sense of the biblical text.