

Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 3, Exegesis of Mat. 2, Magoi Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 3, Exegesis of Mat. 2, Magoi, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Newman's lecture introduces the concept of exegesis, emphasizing the importance of proper interpretation and avoiding eisegesis. He outlines key features for improving exegesis, including Bible knowledge in one's native language, biblical language competency, and a broad understanding of the Bible's historical and cultural background. **Newman stresses the critical role of spiritual insight in effective interpretation.** The lecture then explores different genres within the Synoptic Gospels, focusing on narrative and its components like characters, events, scenes, and plots. **Finally, the lecture applies these principles to an analysis of the visit of the wise men in Matthew 2, examining narrative features, clarifying key aspects, and suggesting possible purposes behind the narrative.**

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Synoptic Gospels).



**Newman_Synoptics
_Session03.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 3, Exegesis of Mat. 2, Magoi

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Robert C. Newman's lecture on Synoptic Gospels and the introduction to exegesis, focusing on the narrative of the Magi's visit in Matthew 2.

Briefing Document: Synoptic Gospels - Introduction to Exegesis and the Magi Narrative

Main Themes:

- **Exegesis vs. Eisegesis:** The lecture begins by defining exegesis as "leading the meaning that's in the text out of it," contrasting it with eisegesis, "when people put meaning into the text that the author did not put there." The emphasis is on interpreting the text based on its inherent meaning, not imposing external ideas.
- **Building Exegetical Skills:** Newman outlines four key features to continually develop for better exegesis:
- **Bible Knowledge (in Native Language):** A deep understanding of the entire Bible is crucial for interpreting specific passages. He recommends reading through the Bible annually, utilizing different versions, and using study Bibles. "God really did design the Bible so that the Scriptures will help you to interpret Scripture."
- **Biblical Language Competency (Hebrew and Greek):** Maintaining proficiency in the original languages is essential for accurate interpretation. He recommends daily or weekly practice, translating passages, and using lexical aids.
- **Bible Background:** A broad understanding of ancient history, culture, and religions of the biblical world is necessary. This requires wide reading of primary sources (Josephus, Dead Sea Scrolls, etc.) and secondary works on ancient life.
- **Spiritual Insight:** Spiritual insight is paramount for proper exegesis. "Even so, the most complete set of... mental and bibliographic tools for interpreting the Bible are going to be counterproductive without a real spiritual life and without real spiritual insight." Close communion with God and a love for Him are essential.
- **Genres in the Synoptic Gospels:** The lecture introduces the concept of *genre* as a kind of literature with identifiable features that distinguish it from others. It discusses various genres found in the Synoptic Gospels, including narrative, miracle accounts, parables, controversial accounts, discourses, symbolic actions, genealogies, and dialogues.

- **Narrative Genre:** A narrative is defined as "a story, an account, or a tale of events," which can be factual or fictional (though biblical narratives are considered factual unless otherwise indicated). The components of a narrative include actors/characters, events/actions, scenes, and plot(s). Ryken's narrative types are included in the Gospels, the enunciation narrative, the calling or vocation stories, the recognition stories, the witness stories, the encounter stories, conflict or controversy stories, pronouncement stories, miracle stories, passion stories, and hybrid stories.
- **Exegesis of Matthew 2 (The Magi):** The lecture provides a detailed verse-by-verse exegesis of the story of the Magi, exploring various interpretations and background information.

Key Ideas and Facts (with Quotes):

- **Importance of Consistent Bible Study:** Reading the Bible every year to improve Bible knowledge. "To get through the Bible in one year, 365 days, let's say, you need to read several chapters a day. To be exact, to get through once in 365 days, you need to read 3.26 chapters per day."
- **Genre Definition:** Genre is "a term in English literary studies for a kind of literature, a kind of writing, or a kind of speaking." And genres need to be able to "construct some kind of list of features of the genre that distinguish it from other genres."
- **Narrative Definition:** "A narrative, pretty briefly, is a story, an account, or a tale of events."
- **Components of Narrative:** Actors, events, scenes, and plots. "The plot is the interconnection or development of the events in the narrative."
- **The Magi:** They are described as "a Magos... a Babylonian or Persian wise man, and priest, an expert in astrology, dream interpretation, etc." and "seers of the stars."
- **The Star of Bethlehem:** Newman discusses various suggestions for the star's nature and favors the interpretation of a rare close conjunction between Jupiter and Venus, stating it was "so close that the two planets would have appeared as a single star of unusual brightness to the naked eye." and also "would have occurred only once in the whole history of human civilization."

- **Herod's Character:** Herod is portrayed as paranoid and ruthless, willing to kill to protect his throne. "It probably means it had been some significant fraction of a year or something like that, maybe a full year, just to make sure he got rid of the children that were anywhere near that age."
- **Matthew's Purpose:** Matthew's gospel is to show the reaction of Gentiles to Jesus and contrasts this to that of King Herod. Also, that God had been reaching out to gentiles even though they were "ensnared in idolatry and false religion."

Quotes Highlighting Key Points:

- "Exegesis comes from a Greek construction meaning to lead out, and the idea is leading the meaning that's in the text out of it."
- "God really did design the Bible so that the Scriptures will help you to interpret Scripture."
- "Even so, the most complete set of, what shall we say, mental and bibliographic tools for interpreting the Bible are going to be counterproductive without a real spiritual life and without real spiritual insight."
- "A narrative, pretty briefly, is a story, an account, or a tale of events."

Overall Significance:

The lecture provides a foundational understanding of exegesis, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive preparation and a spiritual approach. The detailed analysis of Matthew 2 serves as a practical example of applying these principles, encouraging careful examination of the text, historical context, and potential interpretations. The information regarding the star of Bethlehem is especially relevant in understanding the historical basis for the biblical story.

4. Study Guide: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 3, Exegesis of Mat. 2, Magoi

Synoptic Gospels: Introduction to Exegesis Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the difference between exegesis and eisegesis?
2. Name three things one should continually work on to improve exegesis.
3. Why is spiritual insight considered important for exegesis?
4. Define "genre" in the context of literary studies.
5. What is "inclusio" and how is it used in sermon construction?
6. Define "narrative" and explain its broad nature as a genre.
7. Name three components of a narrative.
8. List three types of narratives found in the Gospels, according to Leland Ryken.
9. What are the typical elements of a miracle story, according to Ryken?
10. According to the lecture, what made Herod upset about the birth of Jesus?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Exegesis is the process of leading the meaning *out* of a text, based on careful study and understanding of the author's intent. Eisegesis, on the other hand, is the act of inserting one's own ideas or interpretations *into* the text, potentially distorting the original meaning.
2. Three things to work on are Bible knowledge (understanding the rest of the Bible), Biblical language competency (Hebrew, Greek, etc.), and Bible background (ancient history, culture, etc.). Continuous improvement in these areas will improve your overall understanding.
3. Spiritual insight, including close communion with God and love for Him, is essential because it allows us to see things in Scripture we might otherwise miss. Without it, our exegetical skills alone can become unproductive or even counterproductive.

4. In literary studies, "genre" refers to a specific kind of literature, writing, or speaking, distinguished by a recognizable list of features that differentiate it from other kinds of literature. Genres can be broad (prose vs. poetry) or narrow (sonnet, limerick, etc.)
5. "Inclusio" is a literary device where a story or idea is introduced at the beginning of a text (or sermon) and then revisited or completed at the conclusion, creating a sense of unity. In sermons, this often involves beginning with a story and finishing the story at the end of the sermon.
6. A narrative is a story, account, or tale of events. It is a broad genre, typically a subclass under prose, that relates a series of events and can be either factual or fictional, although biblical narratives are generally considered factual.
7. Three components of a narrative are: actors or characters (the people involved), events or actions (the occurrences described), and scenes (the time and place where the events occur). Other important elements may include plot, conflict, resolution, etc.
8. Three types of narratives in the Gospels, according to Leland Ryken, are: enunciation/nativity stories, calling/vocation stories, and recognition stories. Ryken also identifies: witness, encounter, conflict/controversy, pronouncement/saying, miracle, passion, and hybrid narratives.
9. According to Leland Ryken, typical elements of a miracle story include: a need is established, Jesus' help is sought, the person in need expresses faith or obedience, Jesus performs the miracle, and the characters respond to the miracle or Jesus. While all these elements may not be present in every miracle story, these can be considered the basic structural elements.
10. Herod was upset because he saw the birth of a new "king of the Jews" as a threat to his own rule and the succession of his descendants. Josephus reports Herod killed three of his own sons for that same reason.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of understanding different genres in interpreting the Synoptic Gospels. Provide examples of how misidentifying a genre can lead to misinterpretation.
2. Explain the role of Bible background knowledge (ancient history, culture, etc.) in improving exegesis. How does this knowledge enhance one's understanding of the biblical text?
3. Examine the narrative of the visit of the Magi in Matthew 2. Analyze the characters, events, scenes, and plots within the narrative, and discuss the message it conveys.
4. Evaluate the arguments for and against the historical reliability of the star of Bethlehem narrative in Matthew 2. How does the potential astronomical explanation of the star impact the interpretation of the passage?
5. Describe the characteristics of the "calling/vocation story" genre as it appears in the Gospels. What elements are typically included, and what do these stories reveal about the nature of discipleship?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Exegesis:** The process of interpreting a text by drawing out its meaning based on careful study and understanding of the author's intent and the context.
- **Eisegesis:** The process of interpreting a text by inserting one's own ideas or interpretations into it, potentially distorting the original meaning.
- **Genre:** A category of literary composition characterized by particular style, form, or content.
- **Inclusio:** A literary device in which a theme, word, or phrase is repeated at the beginning and end of a section of text, creating a sense of enclosure or completeness.
- **Narrative:** A story or account of events, whether factual or fictional.
- **Miracle Story:** A type of narrative that recounts a supernatural event, often involving healing or the overcoming of natural laws, and typically includes

elements such as a problem, a request for help, an act of faith, the miracle itself, and a response.

- **Calling/Vocation Story:** A narrative that describes the calling or recruitment of an individual to a particular task or role, often involving Jesus calling his disciples.
- **Recognition Story:** A narrative in which a character recognizes the true identity or significance of another character, often involving the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah.
- **Pronouncement/Saying Story:** A narrative that culminates in a significant saying or teaching of Jesus, often connected to a specific event or question.
- **Bible Background:** Knowledge of the historical, cultural, social, and political context of the biblical text, which aids in its interpretation.
- **Spiritual Insight:** The ability to understand and apply spiritual truths through a deep relationship with God and a reliance on the Holy Spirit.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, so called because they share a similar structure, content, and perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus.
- **Midrash:** A rabbinic method of interpreting biblical texts by expanding on the original meaning, often through storytelling, allegory, and creative interpretation.
- **Euphemism:** A mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.
- **Conjunction:** In astronomy, an apparent close approach of two or more celestial bodies (such as planets) in the sky.
- **Messiah:** A title meaning "anointed one," referring to the expected king and deliverer of the Jewish people.
- **Christ:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah."

5. FAQs on Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 3, Exegesis of Mat. 2, Magoi, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Biblical Exegesis and Synoptic Gospels

1. What is exegesis, and how does it differ from eisegesis?

Exegesis is the process of interpreting a text, with the goal of "leading out" the meaning that is already present within the text itself. It emphasizes understanding what the original author intended to convey to their audience. Eisegesis, on the other hand, involves "putting into" the text a meaning that the author did not originally intend or that is not supported by the text itself. The goal of exegesis is to discover the objective meaning, while eisegesis introduces subjective interpretations.

2. What are some key areas to focus on to improve one's exegesis skills?

Several key areas can be developed to improve exegesis:

- **Bible Knowledge:** A thorough knowledge of the entire Bible is crucial, as Scripture often helps interpret Scripture. Using cross-references and topical concordances can help to discover connections and relevant passages. Reading through the Bible regularly is helpful.
- **Biblical Language Competency:** Understanding Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Bible, is essential for accurate interpretation. Translating passages regularly, reviewing grammar, and practicing sight-reading in the original languages helps to maintain and improve language skills.
- **Bible Background:** Familiarity with ancient history, culture, and the social context of the biblical world is vital. Reading primary sources (like Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Apocrypha) and works on ancient history provides a broader understanding of the time period and can illuminate the text.
- **Spiritual Insight:** A genuine spiritual life and a close relationship with God are indispensable. Exegetical skills are less effective without spiritual insight gained through personal experiences, struggles, and communion with God.

3. What is a literary "genre," and why is it important in biblical interpretation?

A literary genre is a specific category or type of literature characterized by a distinct set of features, conventions, and forms. Identifying the genre of a biblical text is crucial because it helps to establish the proper interpretive framework. Different genres (e.g.,

narrative, poetry, parable, miracle account) have different purposes and conventions, and understanding these differences is essential for interpreting the text accurately.

4. What are some common genres found in the Synoptic Gospels?

The Synoptic Gospels contain a variety of genres, including:

- **Narratives:** Stories or accounts of events, which can be either factual or fictional (especially within parables).
- **Miracle Accounts:** Stories of Jesus performing supernatural acts.
- **Parables:** Short, illustrative stories with a moral or spiritual lesson.
- **Controversial Accounts:** Narratives of disputes or debates.
- **Discourses:** Extended speeches or teachings.
- **Symbolic Actions:** Actions performed by Jesus that carry symbolic meaning.
- **Genealogies:** Lists of ancestors.
- **Dialogues:** Conversations between two or more people.

5. What are the key components of a narrative, and how do they contribute to its meaning?

Key components of a narrative include:

- **Actors/Characters:** The individuals involved in the story.
- **Events/Action:** The occurrences and actions described in the narrative.
- **Scenes:** The settings and locations where the events take place.
- **Plot:** The interconnected development of events, often involving conflict, tension, and resolution.

These components contribute to the meaning of the narrative by creating a coherent story that conveys specific themes, messages, and lessons. Understanding these elements helps to analyze the narrative's structure and significance.

6. According to Leland Ryken, what are some types of narratives that occur in the Gospels?

Leland Ryken categorizes Gospel narratives into types including:

- **Enunciation/Nativity Stories:** Announcements and accounts of births.
- **Calling/Vocation Stories:** Narratives of Jesus calling people to follow him.
- **Recognition Stories:** Stories of people recognizing who Jesus is.
- **Witness Stories:** Accounts of Jesus, or others, testifying about who Jesus is.
- **Encounter Stories:** Stories of Jesus interacting with individuals.
- **Conflict/Controversy Stories:** Narratives of Jesus in conflict with others.
- **Pronouncement Stories:** Accounts connecting an event with a striking saying.
- **Miracle Stories:** Narratives of Jesus performing miracles.
- **Passion Stories:** Narratives of the events surrounding Jesus' trial, death, and resurrection.
- **Hybrid Stories:** Combinations of various narrative types.

7. In the story of the Magi (Matthew 2), what narrative features are present?

- **Characters:** Joseph, Mary, Jesus, the Magi, Herod the King, Jewish religious leaders, and the Angel of the Lord.
- **Events:** The birth of Jesus, the arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem, Herod's inquiry, the Magi's journey to Bethlehem, their worship of Jesus and presentation of gifts, their warning in a dream, the flight to Egypt, the slaying of the infants, and the return to Nazareth.
- **Scenes:** Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Egypt, and Galilee.
- **Plots:** A threat to kill Jesus is averted, Gentiles seek and worship Jesus, Herod tries to protect his throne by killing Jesus, and God uses the actions of opponents to accomplish his purpose.

8. What are some possible explanations for the Star of Bethlehem?

Various explanations for the Star of Bethlehem have been suggested, including:

- **A comet:** Though not a specific candidate is named, the idea has been posited.
- **A supernova:** A star that collapses and becomes extremely bright.
- **A conjunction of planets:** A close alignment of planets that appears as a single bright star. One possibility is a series of planetary conjunctions occurring in 3 and 2 B.C., culminating in a close conjunction of Jupiter and Venus in the constellation Leo on June 17, 2 B.C.
- **An angel:** A supernatural manifestation.
- **A literary invention:** A symbolic element created by Matthew or his source.