

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 23, Literary OT/NT

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Things you can do, you are not ready to move on in the process of interpretation until you can account for what your passage is doing in its context, how it grows out of what comes before and relates to what comes before and how it prepares for what comes after it. And what contribution it makes to the flow of thought and the argument, what would be missing if it were not there. And we looked at chapter 18 of Exodus and ended by noticing that in chapter 18, this account of Moses having to appoint judges and that as Moses functioned as the judge of Israel and his father-in-law Jethro had to point out to him that it was wearing him out, he couldn't handle all these cases.

That story was juxtaposed with another story, the battle of the Amalekites, where once again Moses is portrayed in rather weak and human dimensions and in human terms and we asked the question, why is Moses portrayed as a weak human being who can't do it and who can't handle things? Whereas when you look at the broader context, all the way back with God delivering the people out of Egypt through the Exodus and even into chapter 20, a couple of chapters later where Moses is the one who ascends to Mount Sinai, receives the law, comes back and gives it to the people. The question is, why does the author portray Moses in the midst of that where he's been portrayed almost as a superhero? Now he's portrayed as a weakened individual who gets worn out trying to handle all the cases in Israel. He also gets worn out, he can't hold his hands up in the battle against the Amalekites.

And the next feature to consider is, when you back up even further than the battle of the Amalekites in chapters 17, starting with verse 8, when you look at the first seven verses of chapter 17, we find this story of Moses providing water from the rock for the Israelites and we also find a scene that is repeated in Exodus of the Israelites

grumbling and complaining because of their perceived misfortunes as they're making the trek across the desert to the promised land and they complain and wish they could go back to Egypt. What is intriguing is, and I think the key to understanding this is verse 7, the very end of that story of the water from the rock and the Israelites grumbling. Verse 7 says, and he, referring to Moses, he called the place Masa and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, Is the Lord among us or not? Now it's interesting that the narrative doesn't answer that question.

It kind of leaves you hanging. Well, what did they think? Was the Lord with them or not? Did God answer that question? In my opinion, these next two stories, the story of the Amalekites and also the text that we're considering, chapter 18 and the story of Moses not being able to handle all the cases in Israel, isn't an answer to that question. You see, by portraying Moses as a weak human being who can't handle things, it's as if the author is trying to portray God must be with his people because it's not Moses.

Moses is a weak human being. All these things that have happened must be attributed to God. God must be in the midst of his people because Moses certainly can't do it.

So, by taking chapter 18 and placing it in its context, it's not a story about delegating authority and how to run a business. It's not primarily even about the origin of Israel's court system, but within the broader context, it seems to be part of this notion of portraying Moses in a weak moment as a weak human being who can't do it all. In order to answer that question in the narrative, is God with us or not? Is God really among us? God must be among the people because it can't be Moses.

He's just a weak human being. One other example that we've already looked at, but just another very brief example, in the Old Testament of how context or the argumentation of a text works. We've already looked at Psalm chapter 15, a well-known entrance psalm, and this is a rather straightforward, but still a good example.

It begins by raising a question. Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live in your holy hill? And then basically the rest of the psalm answers that question.

We're starting with verse 2. He whose walk is blameless, and who does what is right, who speaks the truth from his heart, and has no slander on his tongue, and does his neighbor no wrong, and casts no slur on his fellow man, who despises a vile man, and honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury, and does not accept a bride against the innocent.

He who does these things will never be shaken. Now there's a number of things in this text that we could also examine as far as the historical background. What does it mean to lend money without usury? Etc.

etc. There's a couple other details, but overall within the context, this follows a question-answer format. The question in verse 1, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Ascend to the holy hill.

The rest of the psalm answering that question. To move on to a handful of New Testament examples, again where literary context is important and makes a difference in the way you read a text. That is your ability to put the text together and understand how the different parts are functioning in relationship to each other.

And by the way, it's important when we ask the question of context, not just to say, and I read this in both academic and popular literature, someone will say that the

context suggests this, or this means this because of the context. Well, that's not enough. One needs to ask what in the context.

Don't just say the context says this, or the context demands this. Show me in the context what it is that requires or suggests that you have read it accurately or correctly. So to move on to the New Testament, one example that I would want to use is found in the Gospels.

I'll give you an example from narrative from the Gospels, a couple from Paul's letters, and one from Revelation as well. Again, to show how context might work. In Matthew chapter 4, at the very end of the very beginning of the book, this is, if you follow the literary flow and the context, this comes right after, in chapter 2, we read of the accounts of the early life of Jesus, but the author skips immediately to Jesus' adult ministry, so there's a gap.

And you remember narrative isn't interested in giving an, at least first century narrative in the Gospels aren't trying to give us an exhaustive account of the life of Christ. But in chapter 3, it skips right to Jesus' adult ministry and with chapter 4 then, as he embarks upon his ministry, chapter 4 we find this interesting summary statement right at the end of the chapter. And starting, I'll start with verse 23, and this is Matthew chapter 4 and verse 23, What I want to focus on is that phrase, Jesus came preaching the kingdom and teaching the kingdom of God and healing all diseases.

This summary seems to set you up for the next several chapters, because in chapters 5 through 7, we find a record, an account of Jesus teaching that we know is a Sermon on the Mount, and then following that, that's 5 through 7, following that in chapters 8 and 9, we find an account, we've already talked about this before with Pope form criticism, in chapters 8 and 9, we find a collection of healing stories, or miracle

stories, where Jesus heals different diseases. He even heals nature itself, but we find a collection of stories where Jesus heals different individuals of their diseases. So what is going on then, I think, is verses 23 and 24 of chapter, especially verse 23 of chapter 4, is sort of the summary statement.

Jesus teaches and preaches of the kingdom of God, and he also heals diseases and sicknesses, and then chapters 5 through 9 give a detailed account of those two events, the preaching of the kingdom of God and the healing of diseases. So chapters 5 through 7 is an account of Jesus teaching and preaching regarding the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount, then chapters 8 and 9 are an account of Jesus healing disease and sickness among the people. Then, intriguingly, at the very end of chapter 9, in chapter 9 and verse 35 of Matthew, notice how he summarizes once again, he says, verse 35, Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness.

So once again, those two phrases, in 4.23 and 9.35, you have a summary, Jesus preaching the kingdom of God and healing every disease. In between, you have lengthy accounts of Jesus teaching and preaching about the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus healing various diseases and sicknesses in chapters 8 and 9. So Matthew has carefully arranged this section of Matthew, and the rest of Matthew as well, but to just give one example, Matthew has carefully arranged this section with a summary and an expansion, a summary of two ideas, preaching the kingdom, healing, an expansion of both of those, and then another summary that kind of acts as a bracket between those two large sections in chapters 5 and 7, the Sermon on the Mount, and chapters 8 and 9 the healing of various persons with sicknesses and disease. To give a couple examples of in epistolary literature, particularly in Paul's letters, Galatians chapter 1 and 2. In Galatians chapter 1 and 2, Paul is launching an argument that, to demonstrate that his gospel and his

apostleship, we've already looked briefly at chapter 1, 1 through 5, in how Paul expands a typical epistolary salutation and introduction to indicate the key ideas that are going to occupy his attention and to sort of win the readers over and prepare them for what he's going to say.

But one of the things Paul does in chapters 1 through 2 is include a rather lengthy narrative account of certain things surrounding his conversion experience. So he, in chapter 1, especially starting in verse 13, he begins, You have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age.

And he goes on and narrates other events surrounding his life in Judaism, but also his conversion, and then his interaction with some of the apostles in Jerusalem, such as Peter and James and John, after his conversion and how he interacts and makes a couple trips to Jerusalem and interacts with other apostles. And the question is, what is the purpose and intention of this narration or this narrative section in Galatians chapter 1 and 2? And again, we need to ignore the chapter division of verse 2 because it's a continuation of what he's been arguing for in chapter 1. But again, I think the key is, in chapter 1, 11 and 12, we find Paul's kind of the thesis statement or the summary statement of what he's going to argue in chapters 1 and 2. And he says in verse 11, I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man or human being, nor was I taught it.

Rather, I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ. That is the thesis or the main point that Paul is going to argue. And perhaps this may be one of the areas that the false teachers, the so-called Judaizers, that Paul seems to be responding to in Galatians, this might be something they were calling into question, that Paul really is not a genuine apostle.

He is completely dependent on human beings and human teaching and has derived his gospel, which they think is an illegitimate one. And that gospel being that Gentiles can become God's people and can be justified by faith, solely by faith in Jesus Christ, apart from having to submit to the Mosaic Law. And some would say, well, that gospel is a fabrication by Paul.

It was taught by human beings. And Paul, his apostleship is not a legitimate one. So now Paul asserts his thesis in 11 and 12, I want you to know, my gospel does not come from any human being.

I wasn't taught it by a human being, but it came solely as a result of a revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, I think the rest of chapters 1 and 2 are going to develop and argue for that. And so when Paul begins to explain his life under Judaism, when he says, concerning my life in Judaism, I persecuted the Church of God, I was advancing beyond all my contemporaries in Judaism and obedience to the law.

I was zealous for the law. He's again demonstrating that nothing in his previous life prepared him for the gospel. So he's trying to cover all his bases.

How could he say, or at least his previous life under Judaism, did not prepare him for the gospel? Because in fact, it was just the opposite. He was persecuting and trying to destroy the Church of Jesus Christ. He was advancing in Judaism.

So nothing in his previous life prepared him for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and nothing during or after his conversion. His conversion was solely a result, not of reflection or being taught by human beings, but a revelation of Jesus Christ. And then his life after his conversion, he makes it clear, I never consulted any of the apostles immediately.

And when I did consult the apostles, first of all, they never added anything to my gospel, but second, they actually gave me the right hand of fellowship. They acknowledged the validity of my gospel. So again, Paul is, this whole narrative of Paul's life as a Jew, and what happened at his conversion, and these trips to Jerusalem where he finally does interact with the apostles, these are all meant to argue his thesis in verses 11 and 12, that I did not receive this gospel from any human being.

Nothing before my conversion, during it, or after my conversion calls that into question. But everything that took place instead demonstrates that my gospel could have come in no way other than a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. So again, an understanding of the context helps us make sense of some of this narrative.

Why does Paul talk about his prior life in Judaism? Why does he discuss a couple of trips to Jerusalem? Why does he discuss his interaction with the apostles? Why does he have these mentions of time where he says, then three years later I did this, and then chapter 2, verse 1, 14 years later, again, because he's trying to argue for that point, that my gospel did not come about by human beings, it was not taught by a human being, it was not fabricated by myself, but it came only by revelation of Jesus Christ. Another example, in 1 Corinthians 13, and I won't read this, but this is the, again, this is, I think, a rather straightforward one, but there's a couple of things to look at in a little more detail, is chapter 13 is the famous love passage. And indeed, it does have a poetic quality that perhaps allows it to be utilized in different contexts, in that it is almost an encomium on love, or it extols love, the virtue of love, not defining what it is, but describing its characteristic features, and we often utilize it in various contexts.

The most common one is to hear it read at a wedding as the type of love that a husband and wife should show towards each other. And I certainly don't want to say that's invalid. My wife and I had this text read at our wedding as well.

But again, we need to realize, and what becomes obvious when you read chapter 13, if you widen and broaden your vision, is it comes within an argument or a context where Paul is dealing with a problem in the Corinthian church with how they've treated spiritual gifts. So chapter 12 and verse 1 begins, Now concerning spiritual gifts, which, again, to look at the context more broadly of 1 Corinthians, this is often a way where Paul signals different topics or different problems and issues in the Corinthian church that he takes up. I think we said in a previous session that Paul is responding in 1 Corinthians to problems, and after he's established the Corinthian church, later on, he's been made aware of a series of problems that have arisen by both word of mouth, someone has orally communicated to him some of these problems, but also by a letter.

The Corinthians have composed a letter, apparently, in St. Paul, making him aware of some of these problems. So what Paul does in 1 Corinthians is take these problems and deal with them. And one of the ways that he usually indicates the shift to a new topic or problem is by this phrase, Now concerning, or now about spiritual gifts.

So chapter 12 introduces us to or indicates, broadcasts Paul's intention to deal with the problem of how the Corinthians were treating spiritual gifts. Just to go into very little detail, is when you read chapter 12, it appears, and when you look at the background of the Corinthians, it appears that one of the things they were doing is they were emphasizing certain gifts, at least some of the people in the Corinthian congregation were emphasizing spiritual gifts as an indication of their status spiritually. But I would also suggest politically and economically, or socially, that their ability to manifest certain gifts, especially speaking in tongues, was not only an

indication of their spiritual status, but would have been utilized to further distance them socially from each other.

So certain Corinthians who were of high social status and esteem were further bolstering that by indicating their spiritual status through the ability to speak in spiritual gifts, hence causing further division. We've seen that issues like the patron-client relationship, division between the wealthy and the poor, seem to lie behind, in socioeconomic division, seem to lie behind a lot of problems in Corinth. And that is probably what lies behind the problem in chapter 12.

Their ability to speak in tongues, ecstatic speech, ecstatic tongues, seems then to have indicated their arriving at a certain spiritual plane, their spiritual status, but also their social status as elite members of society. Hence, further distancing themselves and causing division from the poorer members in the congregation. And so that's what Paul has to address in chapter 12.

He begins to address the issue of how spiritual gifts are not to be utilized as an indication of division, but instead he uses the imagery of a body. That the Corinthian church is to be seen as a body with all of the parts having equal validity. So Paul is trying to level the playing field basically in chapter 12.

To say that there's no one gift that shows the spirit more than any other. There is no one gift that is more of a sign that someone has the spirit than any of the other gifts. So that's why he has this long list of gifts.

And interestingly he puts tongues at the end of that list. To again perhaps balance or neutralize what the Corinthians are doing with it. So in response to the tendency of the Corinthians to elevate one gift, tongues, as a sign of their true spiritual status and

even social status, Paul levels the playing field by using the imagery of the body and by doing other things.

He tries to level the field and say no, no gift is more important than any other. There can be no hierarchy where one gift shows the spirit more than any other. They all equally demonstrate the spirit.

The church is a body where all members play an equal role. Now what is interesting is chapter 14 ends in, I'm sorry, chapter 12 ends in verse 30. Do all have the gifts of healing? Response, no.

Do all speak in tongues? No. Do all interpret but eagerly desire the greater gifts? Now chapter 14, if you skip 13, chapter 12 merges very naturally into 14. He goes on and says, Therefore follow the way of love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts.

Which is what he just ended with in chapter 12, verse 30. He says eagerly desire the greater gifts. Now he tells them again in 14.1, eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And what he does is in chapter 14, very briefly, in chapter 14 Paul highlights the gift of prophecy as the gift that the Corinthian church should be eagerly desiring. And the question is why does he do that? Probably because prophecy is a gift that is immediately intelligible to the entire church. Prophecy would be of immediate benefit to the entire church when it gathers together.

And it's important to see in chapters 12 through 14, Paul is primarily addressing the Corinthian congregation as they gather for worship. So in chapter 14, Paul encourages them, When you gather for worship, you should pursue the gift of prophecy. Again, why? Because it is immediately intelligible and understandable by everyone there.

Tongues is not. In my opinion, Paul is not necessarily denigrating tongues here. He's just saying when it comes to worship, tongues, Paul would prefer they do not speak in tongues because it's not immediately intelligible.

Aside from having someone to interpret it, it's a primary benefit for the person speaking it. And it does not immediately benefit all the readers unless it's interpreted. So therefore, Paul would rather the Corinthians pursue speaking in prophecy or prophesying because it's immediately intelligible and understandable to everyone there.

It imparts an immediate benefit. Now how does chapter 13 fit into all this? Basically, I think chapter 13 is the key to how the Corinthians should utilize their spiritual gifts. That is, if the Corinthians have the kind of love that Paul describes and depicts in chapter 13, that will be demonstrated by chapter 14.

That is, they will pursue not tongues or gifts in a way that would promote their social and spiritual status, or they would not pursue gifts that are only of benefit to them. If they have the kind of love in 13 that is patient, it's kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it's not proud, it's not rude, it's not self-seeking, it's not easily angered, it does not delight in evil, etc., etc. If they have that kind of love, then they will pursue the gift of prophecy in chapter 14 because it is immediately intelligible and has a benefit for the entire congregation, not just for the person exercising the gift.

So chapter 13 is an important text, and again, I don't want to say that it can't be used in other contexts, but within 1 Corinthians, it comes right in the middle of two chapters, 12 and 14, that address the issues of spiritual gifts. And what chapter 13 does is indicate the means and the way that the gift should be operating. And if they pursue the type of love in chapter 13, then they will pursue those gifts that are a benefit to everyone, not just themselves.

They will stop using the gifts in a selfish manner. One more in Paul's letters, Colossians chapter 3 and verses 1 through 4. In Colossians chapter 3 and 1 through 4, we find a section that could potentially be misunderstood in terms of making Paul out to be far more mystical than perhaps he really is, because in 3, 1 through 4, he says, And I read a text like this, and you wonder, what does it mean to seek the things above and not the things on earth? I've often heard this text explained in almost escapist terms, that the Christian is one who lives their life in a heavenly reality, and the earthly reality really doesn't matter at all. It's insignificant at best, or at worst, it's evil and to be avoided.

And this text has sometimes been used to argue for separating from anything that is physical and worldly. But again, I think the key is to understand how it fits within the context. First of all, chapter 3 is the introduction to or the beginning of the ethical section, the primary ethical section of Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Not that he hasn't dealt with some ethics or imperatives before, but now chapter 3, to the end of Colossians, is heavily exhortational, and you find a lot of imperatives and kind of the ethical section of Paul's letters, like we've seen in some other letters when we discussed the epistolary format of letters. With this text in particular, it's necessary to understand it in light of what comes before and after it, that is to place it within the broader argument and context. The first thing you'll note is chapter 3, 1-4 of Colossians, comes right on the heels of a section where Paul has dealt or responded rather poignantly to this false teaching that he's dealing with.

Back earlier under historical criticism in this course, we talked a little bit about the possible nature of this false teaching, and I won't go into that again, but just assuming that there was a false teaching, is in the latter part of chapter 2, Paul seems to particularly respond in detail to this teaching. And what he does is he exposes the

moral bankruptcy of this teaching. He demonstrates that his problem with it is not just theological, but it's also ethical.

That ultimately, Paul is convinced that this teaching, and what it has to offer the Colossians, is actually bankrupt. It ultimately cannot overcome sin. It ultimately cannot promote a life pleasing to God or promote a life in Christ.

In fact, notice how it ends. The last thing Paul says in Colossians chapter 2, all back up to 21, he says, Why do you follow these things of the world and submit to its rule? Verse 21, Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.

Such regulations, indeed, have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship and false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value for restraining sensual indulgences. But the question then is, well, what can restrain it? What does promote true worship, and what does restrain sinful indulgences? What does promote a life pleasing to God? What does promote that? Chapter 3, 1-4 is the answer. That is, because you've been raised with Christ, seek the things above and not the things on earth.

Instead, set your minds on things above where Christ is now seated, and where you are seated by virtue of being united to him. But that still raises the question, what does it mean to seek the things above and not the things on earth? How is that a response to this bankrupt teaching? How does seeking the things above and not the things on earth restrain sinful indulgences? How does it promote godly living, and a lifestyle pleasing to God? Well, this is where the rest of chapter 3 is necessary. The rest of chapter 3, and all the way to chapter 4 in verse 1, I think further spells out what that means.

So chapter 3, 1-4 is kind of a summary that will now get unpacked in the rest of the chapter, in the rest of chapter 3, and the first verse of chapter 4. Notice Paul begins by a series of vices. We talked earlier about the fact that Paul often used typical or common forms in his day, and one of them was a vice list. A vice list was simply a list of things to be avoided, and Paul includes one here, starting with verse 5. Notice how he describes it.

He says, put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. So this is what it means to not set your mind on earthly things. When Paul says, set your minds on things above, not on things on earth.

What does that mean? Here it is. He says, put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, which is idolatry.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. Then later on he says, rid yourself of anger, rage, malice, slander, and that whole vice list. That's what it means to not set your mind on earthly things.

It means to not pursue and not be characterized by these kinds of vices. But then what does it mean to set your mind on things above? Well, Paul transitions into verse 12 into a virtue list. A list of those things that God's people should embrace.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with each other, forgiving each other. Then he goes on and gives a series of commands. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is what it means to set your minds on heavenly things.

So setting your minds on heavenly things and not on earthly things has nothing to do with somehow escaping to some spiritual existence or ignoring or downplaying things in this life or refusing to do anything physical or belonging to this world. Paul makes it clear in the rest of chapter 3 and 4 that what it means to set your minds on things above and not on the earth is to live life appropriately here on this earth in the present. It's to pursue those virtues that are characteristic of life in Christ that are characteristic, as he says in verses 10 and 11, characteristic of the new self that is being renewed in the image of the Creator.

That's what it means to set your minds on things above, to live consistently with that. And to avoid and not set your minds on things on earth and to avoid the things on earth means to refuse to participate in those vices that are characteristic of the sinful, this present sinful era. To pursue those vices that are destructive and do not promote godly living.

So by being able to place Colossians 3, 1 through 4 in its context helps us to understand it but also helps us to avoid misunderstandings and make it say things that within the text Paul clearly was not intending. It's part of his ethical exhortation. One final passage to give an example from the book of Revelation.

And the reason I do this one is to show that context works in Revelation as well. We often think of it as a collection or series of kind of disjointed visions and all these strange images and visions. Sometimes we fail to put them together and see that at times there is a contextual coherence throughout the book.

The book is put together very carefully and you don't just have a collection of scattered, unrelated visions and symbols and images. So I want to look at one section just very briefly that I think is fairly clear and that is chapter 6. In chapter 6 we see a

series of seven seals. And even chapter 6, to kind of put chapter 6 in its context, chapter 6 begins with these seven seals and the first four seals are the four horses.

Most are familiar with the four horsemen of the apocalypse and we see them in paintings and artistic depictions, even book titles. But this account of these seven seals in chapter 6, first of all, when you place it in its context to go back, this chapter grows naturally out of chapter 4 and 5 where John sees a vision of the throne in heaven and one seated on the throne. But the one seated on the throne is also holding a scroll at the beginning of chapter 5. And this scroll, without going into detail, probably contains God's plan of bringing about both judgment but also bringing salvation and establishing his kingdom in the world.

So by establishing his kingdom that also entails judging this present world to make way for the establishment of his rule and kingdom. In chapter 5 then, John is found weeping in despair because there's nobody worthy to open the scroll until finally he does see someone and that is the Lamb. So then, in addition to God seated on the throne, all of a sudden the Lamb, Jesus Christ, emerges and he is worthy to open the scroll that has seven seals on it, the sealed scroll.

So, starting with chapter 6, we begin to see the scroll unsealed. That scroll that emerges in chapter 4 and 5 sets the stage for what's starting to happen in chapter 6. Now the scroll is being unsealed. And as each seal is taken off, God's judgment... Remember, the scroll contains God's plan for judgment and salvation.

Now in chapter 6, I think we begin to see the preliminary judgments. As that scroll begins to be unsealed, with each seal, a preliminary judgment that comes from 4 and 5, that comes from the throne, begins to be unleashed upon this earth. Now, the very last seal, the very last seal of chapter 6, which is actually seal number 6, the

seventh seal comes later, but I don't want to talk about that right now, as to why that's the case.

But what I do want to emphasize is in chapter 6, verses 12 through 17, we find the last seal of chapter 6, which is seal number 6, we see it opened up. And notice what happens, starting with verse 12. I watched as he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake.

The sun turned black, like sackcloth made of goat hair. The whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to the earth. As late figs dropped from a fig tree, when shaken by a strong wind, the sky receded like a scroll rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Probably, again, this is an indication of the end-time judgment. Now we're at the end of the world. Here is the final, ultimate judgment, where God pours out His wrath and His judgment upon rebellious humanity.

But notice what it says then, to go on in 15 through 17. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free person hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

So they would rather have the rocks and mountains fall on them than have to face the wrath of God's judgment and the wrath of the Lamb. And then verse 17. For the great day of their wrath, the day, this is the final judgment at the end of history, the great day of the outpouring of God's wrath and the Lamb's, the great day of the wrath has come, and who can stand? Again, notice how chapter 6 ends with that question.

God's wrath has come, who is able to stand it? In my opinion then, chapter 7 provides the answer to that question. Who can stand? And in chapter 7 you find this account of the sealing of the 144,000. Which, without going into detail, I would argue is symbolic of the church as God's people, who are depicted as an army who goes out to do battle and is in conflict, though they do that by their suffering witness, not by taking up weapons.

But the point of chapter 7 is to demonstrate those who are sealed with the seal of God, they are the ones who will be able to withstand in the day of God's wrath. They are the ones who will not suffer the wrath of God. So chapter 6 is not just a discreet vision that is unrelated to anything else, but again, chapter 6 grows out of chapter 4 and 5, the vision of the throne and the seven-sealed scroll.

We see the scrolls unsealed in chapter 6 and the preliminary judgments happening. That scroll from chapter 4 and 5 is now beginning to be unleashed. God's plan is now beginning to transpire because Jesus Christ has enacted it.

And then chapter 6 ends with the question, who can stand? When God unleashes His judgment, especially in the day of God's wrath, who is able to withstand? Chapter 7 then pauses to answer that question. That those who are sealed with the seal of God, they are the ones who will be able to stand in the day of God's wrath. So those are just a number or series of examples of how understanding the literary context of New or Old Testament text can make a difference in the way one interprets it.

And again, to summarize, number one, it's very important that you place your passage within the literary flow, within the context by asking, whether you're dealing with a single verse or an entire paragraph or text, is asking how does it contribute to the flow of thought? How does it relate to what comes before it? How does it flow

into what comes after it? What role or function does it play? What would be missing if it were not there? Be able to explain what it's doing there. Until you've done that, you have not understood the text yet. You are not prepared to move on in the process of interpretation.

In fact, I would say this is far more important than even doing word studies and some of the other detailed work. As important as that is, ultimately, I think you'll derive much more benefit from being able to place the text within its broader context and ask what it's doing there. But second, as we said, don't just bandy about the word context and say context demands this, context requires this, or the context suggests, or I hold this view because of the context.

You need to be able to isolate what in the context indicates that this is the way I should read the text. So pay careful attention to the broader context of the Old and New Testament text that you're dealing with. Again, whether it's a verse, at the verse level, or sentence level, or paragraph, or broader section, be able to understand what it's doing there.

Alright, I want to move on in the next couple of sessions and discuss another important feature of biblical interpretation, and that is how New Testament authors utilize the Old Testament. That is how Old Testament texts are picked up by New Testament authors, and how we understand that, how we analyze and explore what New Testament authors are doing when they utilize Old Testament texts. Most of us are aware of that because you don't have to read very far into the New Testament.

You can't even get past the first two chapters of Matthew without finding a series of Old Testament quotations. And as you read through the rest of the Old Testament over and over again, there's a few books that it's not as prominent, but over and over again you are confronted with quotations of the Old Testament. And so clearly New

Testament authors are interested in how the Old Testament relates to their own writing and to the new revelation that has now come through the person of Jesus Christ.

So we want to take a little bit of time and explore how we handle the Old Testament usage by New Testament authors. The first thing to recognize is that the Old and New Testaments stand together in their broader canonical context. That is the Old and New Testaments stand in relationship to each other as promise and fulfillment.

The New Testament, we find over and over again the New Testament and its authors drawing on the Old Testament for their vocabulary, for their concepts, for their structures, as to how they understand God's new unique revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. The New Testament authors understood this new revelation in continuity with the Old Testament and God's revelation through the Old Testament. So the Old and New Testament within our Christian Bible stand in a canonical relationship, a relationship of promise to fulfillment.

So what that means is we need to be aware of how the New Testament draws on the Old Testament text and how it is seen as the fulfillment and climax of what was promised in the Old Testament. And how the New Covenant revelation in the person of Jesus Christ is seen as the fulfillment of God's Old Covenant, God's Covenant revelation under the Old Covenant Scriptures. And what we find is both Jesus himself and the Gospels, but the New Testament authors extensively drawing on the Old Testament.

But again, we're going to see that they do so in a variety of ways. And that in order to understand, I think frequently, in order to understand the New Testament text and the meaning of New Testament text, it's necessary to understand the underlying Old Testament text that now appear as a sort of subtext in the New Testament. So

another way of putting it is the New Testament needs to be read in constant intertextual relationship with the Old Testament.

And we're going to see though that the Old Testament is utilized in a variety of ways. The New Testament authors don't use, there's no one single way or method as to how New Testament authors use Old Testament text. And we'll talk a little bit about the variety of ways that the Old Testament is used in the New Testament.

So what I want to do, I want to divide our discussion of the Old Testament in the New into two separate sections. Number one, we will spend a little bit of time discussing issues surrounding the use of the Old Testament in the New. And what are the main questions that we should be asking and the main questions that have been raised.

How should we go about studying the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament? What are the variety of ways that the Old Testament could be used by New Testament authors? And how does that affect the way we interpret New Testament text? And then in the second session, we will actually work through some specific examples to illustrate how these principles function and work. And to kind of illustrate a method for approaching the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. So first of all, how should we go about studying the Old Testament in the New? What are the most important issues and the most important questions surrounding study of the Old Testament in the New? It's interesting that although this has been important for some time, it's actually been in the last 20 and 30 years where Old Testament and the New Testament studies have really taken off and taken hold.

And there are a number of works available in book form, etc. There are all kinds of books that treat in general the Old Testament and the New or treat specific books in

the New Testament and how they've utilized the Old Testament. Books that discuss methodology, etc.

And I want to draw on some of those in our discussion. But what are some of the issues involved? How should we go about studying the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament? First of all, to begin with just a handful of preliminary observations. As New Testament study of the Old Testament in the New Testament began to take off, a series of questions were usually seen as important.

And in some respects they still are. You still see treatments of the Old Testament in the New Testament asking these questions. But kind of at the start, some of the basic questions that were seen as important to ask of any place in the New Testament that was utilizing an Old Testament text was to ask a series of questions such as this.

What text form does the New Testament author seem to be utilizing? Was the author primarily drawing on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament? Or was the author drawing on the Septuagint? The Septuagint being the Greek translation of the Old Testament as Greek became the common language. Obviously it became necessary to translate the Old Testament into the common language of the day. So the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, appears to have been the Bible of many early Christians.

And frequently in Paul's letters, you'll see him quoting an Old Testament text that seems to be very close to or reflect the Septuagint. The LXX or the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In studies of the Old Testament in the New, students were often very interested in what text form was Paul or Matthew or Peter or John or whoever drawing upon.

Were they apparently quoting from the Hebrew text that would resemble our Masoretic text? Or was he drawing on a text, was he quoting a text that resembled the Septuagint, the Greek translation? And then what difference did that make? Was there a difference in whether Paul quoted one or the other? Did it make a difference if he quoted the Septuagint or the Hebrew text? So that was one of the questions scholars were interested in. That is, what was the text form that the New Testament author seemed to be drawing on? Second, does the author use the Old Testament with the awareness of the Old Testament context? In other words, when an author, a New Testament author quotes an Old Testament text, is he only focusing on that verse, that text? Or does he seem to be aware of the entire context? So for example, if Paul quotes something from Isaiah, the book of Isaiah, is he aware of chapter 42 and maybe verse 2? Is he aware of the entire context of chapter 42? Or even more broadly, obviously Paul did not have chapters and verses in his Bible, I don't think. So I'm using chapters and verses for our benefit.

But was Paul aware of the entire context surrounding that? Or are New Testament authors simply seizing on individual text? And just kind of going through and pulling out snippets of text here and there just to prove their point? An example might be in Matthew 1.23. Matthew quotes from Isaiah 7.14, the virgin will be with child. Is this just the author snatching a text out of the Old Testament without awareness of the broader context in which it occurs? Or is he aware of the context of Isaiah 7? And even more broadly than that. So that's been a question scholars have asked.

Do New Testament authors use the Old Testament when they quote sections of the Old Testament? Whether just a verse or a few verses. Are they aware of the broader context in which that occurs? Or are they just kind of using the Old Testament like a language arsenal? Or are they just finding passages and sections that seem to support what they want to say? Third, in relationship to that. If number two is true.

If they do use text with awareness of the broader context. The third issue that scholars have been interested in is do New Testament authors respect that context? Do they use the passage consistently with the original meaning of that context? Or again, are they just violating the context in using the, even being aware of the context, using the verse in a way that violates or does something very different than what the verse meant in its original historical context. So does, do New Testament authors respect the context of the original meaning of the Old Testament passage that they are quoting from or alluding to? We'll stop there.

And in our next session, we will pick up the question again of what are we to make of the New Testament authors use of the Old Testament? What are some of the important issues and questions that have been raised that we need to think about when we consider the New Testament use of the Old Testament? And then we'll move into consider some examples of how that works.