

## Dr. David Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 27, Application in the Interpretative Process Resources from NotebookLM

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

### 1. Abstract of Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 27, Application in the Interpretative Process, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Mathewson's lecture** discusses the theological interpretation of Ephesians 2:11-22, focusing on its themes of **reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles**, the **death of Christ**, and the **church as God's temple**. He connects this passage to the overarching biblical narrative of God's redemptive plan, highlighting its fulfillment in Christ and its ultimate climax in Revelation. The lecture then explores the crucial aspect of **applying biblical texts to contemporary life**, emphasizing the importance of understanding historical and literary context to avoid misinterpretations. Finally, he proposes a three-step method for application, involving understanding the original meaning, identifying timeless principles, and applying those principles to modern contexts.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 27 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Introductory Series → Hermeneutics).**



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### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts:

#### **Briefing Document: Theological Analysis and Application of Biblical Texts**

##### **Introduction:**

This document summarizes the core ideas presented in Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture on hermeneutics, specifically focusing on theological analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22 and the crucial importance of application in the interpretation of scripture. The lecture emphasizes understanding biblical texts within the broader narrative of God's redemptive plan, and stresses that interpretation is incomplete without a corresponding response of obedience and application to contemporary life.

##### **I. Theological Analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22:**

- **Reconciliation as a Central Theme:** The lecture highlights reconciliation as a key concept in Ephesians 2:11-22. It is not simply a personal reconciliation to God but also the breaking down of barriers between Jews and Gentiles, who were previously hostile to each other.
- **Quote:** "...reconciliation is an important term, the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile into two entities that were formerly at odds with each other are now reconciled and brought together into a peaceful relationship and existence."
- **The Work of Christ and a New People of God:** Mathewson emphasizes the death of Christ as the means of this reconciliation, creating a new people of God consisting of both Jews and Gentiles.
- **Quote:** "So this is a story of God through the death of Jesus Christ reconciling Jew and Gentile...into a new people of God who actually function, therefore, as God's temple, as God's dwelling place."
- **Temple Imagery:** The passage uses temple imagery to describe this new community. The community itself becomes the dwelling place of God through the Holy Spirit.
- **Quote:** "...the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

- **Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy:** Paul's vision in Ephesians 2 is presented as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies of restoration, where those far and near would be united in worship of God.
- **Quote:** "...Paul intends to see this uniting of Jew and Gentile through the death of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Isaiah's program of restoration."
- **God's Overarching Plan:** This specific reconciliation in Ephesians is seen as a microcosm of God's larger plan to restore all of creation, fractured by sin, under the headship of Christ.
- **Quote:** "So sin has entered the world and caused dislocation, has caused trouble, has caused fragmentation in the world and has caused hostility, and God intends to restore all things in creation, in heavens and earth, under the one head, which is Jesus Christ."
- **Climax in Revelation:** The themes in Ephesians 2 find their ultimate fulfillment in the book of Revelation 21-22, which portrays a new creation where God dwells with His people, a unified people comprising of Jews and Gentiles.
- **Quote:** "So that Revelation 21 and 22 is the ultimate climax of what one sees already taking place in Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 11 through 22, the ultimate dwelling of God with his people, consisting of both Jew and Gentile, in a new creation, his people temple."

## II. The Importance of Application:

- **Application as an Integral Part of Interpretation:** The lecture argues that application is not an add-on but an essential component of interpretation. It begins the very moment the reader interacts with the text. The goal of interpretation is to conform our lives to scripture.
- **Quote:** "Instead, I would argue that application, or what some call contextualization, is already taking place at the very beginning of the interpretive process as we try to understand it for our own culture and day...the very goal, in my opinion, application is the very goal of interpretation."
- **Biblical Justification:** 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is cited as a justification, with the text highlighting the utility of scripture for instruction, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. The goal of which is to equip God's people for good work.

- **Quote:** "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man or woman of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- **Difficulty of Application:** The lecture acknowledges that effective application is challenging but vital. The lecturer noted, "...making good application was the most difficult aspect of interpretation."
- **Context is Key:** Application must be rooted in the sound interpretation of the biblical text in its original historical and literary context, as intended by the author and understood by the original readers.

### III. Errors to Avoid in Application:

- **Neglecting Overall Context:** The most common mistake is failing to consider the broader historical and literary context of a passage, such as the danger of isolating verses and treating them as self-contained units. Examples used were Philippians 4:13, Haggai 1, and Psalm 127.
- **Example Quote (Philippians 4:13):** "But the point is, this verse is taken as a principle that gets applied to any situation that seems overwhelming and too difficult for me to accomplish, then I'm reminded in Philippians 4.13, I can do all things through Christ." But this ignores Paul's discussion about contentment in all circumstances.
- **Example Quote (Haggai 1):** "So he looked now in Colorado, a state full of mountains, the Rocky Mountain state. Now he found in Haggai a call for him to go to Colorado. Now, again, I don't want to question his move to pastor this church in Colorado back then, years ago." But this ignores the call to rebuild God's house (the temple)
- **Example Quote (Psalm 127):** "Now often this verse is used as a justification for having large families, even a command to do so. Especially the reference to having a full quiver." But this ignores the historic and legal context of sons providing protection.
- **Failing to Recognize Salvation History:** Ignoring the redemptive-historical structure of the Bible, especially the relationship of promise and fulfillment between Old and New Testaments, is a common mistake. For example, treating Old Testament food laws as still applicable.

- **Ignoring Literary Genre:** Applying different literary genres in the same way is an error, especially between narrative and epistles. Using Exodus 18 as a business management guide while ignoring that it was meant to highlight God's power by showing Moses' weakness.
- **Insufficient Analogies:** Applying texts based on faulty analogies between the original context and contemporary situations, such as applying promises made to national Israel to modern nations, or mistaking master-slave relationships for employer-employee relationships.

#### IV. A Method for Application:

- **Three-Fold Process:** A common method of application is to extract an abstract principle from the biblical text and apply it to modern situations. This is presented as a three-step process, analogous to dynamic-equivalent translation:
  1. **Original Context:** Understanding the text's meaning in its original historical context, paying attention to authorial intent, historical background, and literary genre.
  2. **Underlying Principle:** Discovering the timeless, cross-cultural principles that transcend the specific original historical context.
  3. **Contemporary Application:** Identifying appropriate ways to apply the principle(s) in the modern context.
- **Dialogical Approach:** Application is not just a mechanical process but interactive and dialogical, engaging with the text and its potential relevance from the beginning, while also remaining consistent with the text's intent and purpose.
- **Guiding Principles for Application:**
  - **Coherence:** The principles derived and their application must be guided by and consistent with the broader context of the book.
  - **Intention:** The application must also align with the intention and purpose of the original text.
  - **The Reader's Role:** The reader must enter the world of the text, weigh possible correspondences between the original and modern worlds, and allow the questions and insights gained from reading the text to be challenged by the biblical text itself.

## V. The Service of the Church:

- **Application in the Context of the Church:** The ultimate context of interpretation is the church, where scripture is meant to shape the community of believers. Interpretation and application should ultimately serve God's people.
- **Transcultural Perspective:** God's community of believers is transcultural, so we must listen to the perspectives of those from different cultural and historical backgrounds as they often see new interpretations or blindspots in our own readings.
- **Quote:** "I need to interpret in light of what my brothers and sisters in other cultures and countries, how they are reading the biblical text as well, and to listen. Because they might help me see through my own blind spots in interpretation and application."

### Conclusion:

The lecture emphasizes that application is not an afterthought but the very goal of biblical interpretation. True interpretation requires a faithful understanding of the historical context, the principles at play, and a submission to the transformative power of the Word of God. Without this application, our understanding is incomplete and fails to lead to obedience, a core calling of all believers.

## 4. Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 27, Application in the Interpretive Process

### Hermeneutics Study Guide: Ephesians 2 & Application

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to the lecture, what are the main themes present in Ephesians 2:11-22?
2. How does Ephesians 2 relate to the overarching narrative presented in Genesis 1-3?
3. How does Paul's use of temple imagery in Ephesians 2 relate to Old Testament themes and expectations?
4. What is the relationship between the events described in Ephesians 2 and the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22?
5. Why is application considered an integral part of the interpretive process, not just an "add-on," according to the lecture?
6. What are some dangers of neglecting context when applying scripture, and how does Philippians 4:13 serve as an example?
7. What was the key error made by the pastor in the lecture who used Haggai 1 as a call to move to Colorado?
8. According to the lecture, how does understanding the salvation-historical structure of the Old and New Testaments affect application?
9. Briefly describe the three-fold method of application presented in the lecture, using 1 Corinthians 8-9 as an example.
10. What are two factors that must guide the principles and their application according to the lecture?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The main themes in Ephesians 2:11-22 include reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles, the death of Christ, the concept of the people of God consisting of both,

and the idea of the church as God's temple. It describes how God reconciles previously hostile groups into a unified people.

2. Ephesians 2 describes the initiation of God's plan to restore what was ruined by sin in the fall of Genesis 1-3. It shows the beginning of God reconciling the world under the headship of Christ by bringing together fragmented parts of humanity.
3. The temple imagery in Ephesians 2 connects to the Old Testament idea that the temple is the place where God dwells with his people. Paul uses this to show how the unified people of God, both Jew and Gentile, have become God's dwelling place, fulfilling prophetic expectations.
4. Ephesians 2 can be viewed as a starting point, or the inauguration, of the ultimate fulfillment of God dwelling with his people in the new creation found in Revelation 21-22. It shows how God's ultimate dwelling will be with a diverse people, both Jew and Gentile.
5. Application is integral because the Bible is considered the Word of God, requiring obedience and transformation. The interpretive process is incomplete until the text is contextualized and prompts a response of obedience.
6. Neglecting context can lead to misinterpretations, for example, applying Philippians 4:13 to any difficult situation. The broader context indicates it refers to contentment in all circumstances, not the ability to do impossible tasks.
7. The pastor misinterpreted the call in Haggai 1:8 to "go up into the mountains" as a personal call to move to Colorado, while the context was about getting timber to rebuild God's temple. He failed to see the original intent of the passage.
8. The salvation-historical structure of the Old and New Testaments affects application because some Old Testament laws were temporary. Their fulfillment in Christ determines whether, or how, they are applicable to Christians today, requiring a redemptive-historical perspective.
9. The three-fold method involves understanding the original context, identifying underlying timeless principles (like giving up rights for the sake of others), and finding appropriate modern-day analogies or applications of those principles. For instance, 1 Corinthians 8-9 relates to meat sacrificed to idols, which teaches the need to give up rights for other's faith.



10. Principles and their application must be guided by the broader context of the text and the intention and purpose of the specific text, ensuring it is consistent with what the text is trying to do and say. This prevents misapplications that contradict the text's intent.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the concept of "reconciliation" as it is presented in Ephesians 2:11-22, and how it relates to the larger biblical narrative of creation, fall, and redemption.
2. Explore the various types of errors one might make when attempting to apply scripture in a modern context, providing specific examples for each. How can we avoid these errors in our own interpretation?
3. Critically analyze the three-fold method of application as described in the lecture, considering both its strengths and weaknesses. What other perspectives or methods might be helpful to consider in applying scripture?
4. Evaluate the claim that application is the "very goal of interpretation" rather than simply an add-on, and discuss how this understanding should impact the approach to interpreting the Bible.
5. Discuss how the application of scripture should be done within the community of faith. How might diverse perspectives enrich the process, and why is it important to be open to diverse interpretations from a global church?

## Glossary

**Reconciliation:** The restoration of friendly relations between two previously hostile parties; in Ephesians 2, the uniting of Jews and Gentiles.

**Temple:** In biblical context, a sacred place where God dwells. It was a central place of worship in Israel's history, but now applies to the people of God.

**Salvation History (Redemptive History):** The historical progression of God's acts of redemption throughout history, from creation to Christ's return.

**Context:** The literary, historical, cultural, and theological background of a biblical text that influences its meaning.

**Application:** The process of relating biblical truths to modern life and applying them to contemporary situations.

**Principalizing:** The method of extracting a general principle from a specific biblical text in order to apply it in a new context.

**Dynamic Equivalent Translation:** A method of translation that aims to convey the meaning of a text rather than sticking to literal word-for-word correspondence.

**Literary Genre:** A category of literature characterized by a particular style, form, or content (e.g. narrative, poetry, law, epistle).

**Exegesis:** The critical explanation or interpretation of a text, particularly of the Bible.

**Hermeneutics:** The theory and practice of interpretation, especially of the Bible.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 27, Application in the Interpretive Process, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions About Biblical Interpretation and Application

- **What is the central theme of Ephesians 2:11-22, and how does it fit into the broader biblical narrative?**
- Ephesians 2:11-22 focuses on the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles through the death of Jesus Christ, forming them into a new people of God who function as God's temple. This is seen as an inauguration of God's plan to restore all things, addressing the dislocation and fragmentation caused by sin, as described in Genesis. It fits into the broader biblical narrative as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, particularly those in Isaiah, about the inclusion of Gentiles into God's people. This reconciliation is part of God's intention to unite all things under the headship of Jesus Christ. The temple theme is also important, as the people of God themselves become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, a theme which culminates in the new creation of Revelation 21-22.
- **What is the relationship between interpretation and application of scripture?**
- Application, or contextualization, isn't just an add-on to interpretation; it's integral from the outset. While striving to understand the text in its original historical context, we are also simultaneously considering its relevance to our own lives and culture. The goal of interpretation is to transform lives and bring them into conformity with scripture. It is not enough to simply understand the scripture, but to respond in obedience to the call of the text. The process of interpretation remains incomplete until a believer allows the scripture to transform them.
- **Why is understanding the historical and literary context of a biblical passage crucial for application?**
- Neglecting the overall context can lead to misapplication. Verses taken out of context can be easily distorted, leading to applications that are not consistent with the author's intent. For example, Philippians 4:13 ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me") is often used as a general promise for overcoming any difficulty, but in context, it refers to Paul's ability to be content in any circumstance. Similarly, Haggai 1 about building panelled houses is not about moving but about prioritizing the temple of God and the good of his people.

These examples illustrate the importance of looking at the literary and historical context in order to have a better understanding of the text, which then leads to better application.

- **How does the redemptive historical structure of the Bible affect application, particularly with Old Testament texts?**
- The Old Testament serves as a promise which is fulfilled in the New Testament through Christ, meaning some Old Testament texts have a temporary role and are not applicable in the same way for Christians today. For example, food laws and sacrificial laws are no longer applicable literally, but they apply as they are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. We need to consider how Old Testament texts ultimately find their fulfillment in Christ, not just apply them directly without the lens of Jesus' life and ministry.
- **What are some common errors to avoid when applying biblical texts to our modern lives?**
- Common errors in application include: (1) neglecting the overall context of a passage, (2) failing to understand the redemptive-historical structure (promise and fulfillment) of the Bible, (3) not considering different literary genres when interpreting, (4) relying on insufficient analogies between the original and present situation, (5) failing to consider the original purpose and intent of the passage. We need to be aware of the historical, literary, and theological implications to understand the text better which will result in better application.
- **What is the three-step process of application that is often used (principalizing)?**
- The three-step process involves: (1) uncovering the meaning of the text in its original historical context through study and analysis, (2) determining the underlying cross-cultural, timeless principle(s) that the text is meant to convey, and (3) finding appropriate applications of that principle to the modern-day context, situation, and people. This resembles the process of dynamic equivalent translation. It is important to note, however, that this is not a rigid, mechanical process, but one that requires thought, reflection, and creativity.

- **What does a more interactive approach to application look like?**
- An interactive approach recognizes that the process of application is not simply a matter of extracting a principle and then applying it, but a dynamic and continuous interaction with the text. From the beginning, we study the text in its historical and literary context, while simultaneously considering how it might be relevant to our own lives and cultural context. Throughout the study of the text, we remain open to the ways it might challenge our perspectives, and shape our understanding. We are testing the potential applications against the text to make sure they line up with the broader context and intention of the scripture.
- **How does the community of believers and our cultural context influence our interpretation and application of scripture?**
- Biblical interpretation should ultimately be in service to the Church and should take into account that the body of Christ is transcultural and global. Listening to other believers from different cultures, especially those with different lived experiences, can help identify blind spots and provide a more holistic understanding of scripture. Those who come from situations of poverty and oppression may be able to understand and apply the Bible in ways that those in the Western middle class might miss. Additionally, we need to remember that our interpretation of scripture should benefit the community of believers as a whole, and not just focus on the individual.