

The Bible's Use of the Bible: The Value of Studying the Bible's Use of the Bible and How to Get Started

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Abstract

In this foundational lecture, Dr. Matthew S. Harmon introduces the study of scriptural exegesis of Scripture, examining how later biblical writers intentionally engage with, interpret, and expand upon earlier sacred texts. He establishes that this intertextual engagement is a unified phenomenon linking both the Old and New Testaments rather than isolated academic disciplines. Harmon presents a framework of seven hermeneutical choices to help students navigate these relationships, and provides practical tools like cross-references and color-coded Bibles for everyday study. Ultimately, he encourages readers to combine deep and wide reading of Scripture to appreciate the Bible's internal commentary and its practical benefits for Christian life.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Bible's Use of the Bible

- A. Definition of the concept: Later biblical authors making use of earlier biblical writings ("scriptural exegesis of Scripture").
- B. Textbook foundation: Based on *How to Study the Bible's Use of the Bible: Seven Hermeneutical Choices* by Matthew S. Harmon and Gary Schnicker.
- C. Grounding Biblical Text: Reflection on 1 Peter 1:10-12 (Prophets searched and inquired carefully, inspired by the Spirit).
- D. Core Examples of the Bible's Use of the Bible:
 - 1. Old Testament use of the Old Testament: Isaiah 6 borrowing and applying language from Deuteronomy 29:2-4.
 - 2. New Testament use of the Old Testament: Romans 10:6-8 borrowing from and interpreting Deuteronomy 30:12-14.

II. The Importance of Studying the Bible's Use of the Bible

- A. Exegesis: Determining the local meaning of the text (e.g., Romans 10 depends on Deuteronomy 30).

B. Biblical Theology: Tracking the unified storyline of Genesis to Revelation (promises, covenants, themes, and coherence).

C. Systematic Theology: Synthesizing biblical teachings into coherent topical summaries (e.g., doctrine of God, humanity).

D. Christian Life: Guiding practical application and understanding continuity/discontinuity (e.g., Leviticus sacrifices vs. holiness in 1 Peter).

III. Academic Challenges in Intertextual Studies

A. Hermeneutical presuppositions and starting assumptions of readers (e.g., supernatural vs. anti-supernatural starting points).

B. Old and New Testament introduction: Establishing chronology and authorship (e.g., the dating of Joel affecting direct dependency claims).

C. Historical and cultural contexts: Factoring in Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature and Second Temple Jewish interpretive traditions.

D. Original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) and the Septuagint translations (varying from word-for-word like NASB to dynamic like NLT).

E. Textual criticism: Reconstructing original wording and dealing with scribal harmonization.

IV. The Seven Hermeneutical Choices

A. Sequestered vs. Connected: Treating OT-OT and NT-OT as a single connected phenomenon rather than isolated academic tracks.

B. Adjusting meaning/context vs. Advancement of revelation: Navigating human authorial intent vs. divine authorial intent in progressive revelation.

C. Detecting allusions as Art vs. Science: Balancing strict word counts (science) with theological sensibility (art).

D. Horizontal vs. Vertical context: Distinguishing surrounding chapters (horizontal) from the cumulative history of interpretation (vertical).

E. Biblical vs. Extra-biblical relationships: Factoring in ANE and Second Temple Jewish parallels.

F. Backward-looking vs. Forward-looking typological patterns in Scripture.

G. Historical exegesis vs. Historical and prosopological exegesis: Later authors assigning a different speaker to a text (e.g., God speaking through the King in Hebrews).

V. Terminology and the Spectrum of Influence

A. Allusion as a broad, author-intended category of connections.

B. Spectrum of influence: Citation/Quotation -> Allusion -> Echo -> Thematic Similarity.

C. Components of Exegetical Allusions:

1. Donor text: The original, source text being cited or referenced (e.g., Deuteronomy 29).

2. Receptor text: The later text quoting or borrowing from the earlier text (e.g., Isaiah 6).

3. Exegetical outcome: The active interpretation or interpretive move made by the receptor text.

VI. Practical Methodology for Everyday Bible Readers

- A. Active observation and alertness while reading.
- B. Using cross-reference systems in standard Bibles.
- C. Utilizing "The Connecting Scripture New Testament" (CSB translation with color-coded allusions in green, quotations in blue, explanatory study notes, and New/Old Testament indexes).
- D. Cultivating double reading habits: Reading deeply (noticing turns of phrase/imagery) and reading widely (perceiving the big-picture storyline).