

The Bible's Use of the Bible

Session 1: The Value of Studying the Bible's Use of the Bible and How to Get Started

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Abstract:

Dr. Matthew S. Harmon introduces a course focused on **intertextuality**, which he defines as how later biblical authors engage with and interpret earlier scriptures. This study, termed "**the Bible's use of the Bible**," encompasses both the New Testament's reliance on the Old Testament and earlier Old Testament writers' influence on later ones. Harmon argues that recognizing these connections is essential for understanding **biblical theology**, as it reveals a coherent storyline and provides a framework for modern Christian living. The session addresses technical challenges such as **original languages**, ancient contexts, and the varying degrees of textual influence, which range from direct citations to faint thematic echoes. By using tools like **cross-references** and specific study bibles, readers can move beyond a superficial reading to see how the authors intentionally woven previous revelations into new contexts. Ultimately, the source serves as a guide for identifying **exegetical allusions** to better grasp the unity and depth of the entire biblical canon.

Briefing Document:

Understanding the Bible's Use of the Bible: A Briefing on Scriptural Intertextuality

Executive Summary

The study of the "Bible's use of the Bible"—often referred to as scriptural exegesis of Scripture—examines how later biblical authors engage with, interpret, and expand upon earlier biblical writings. This phenomenon occurs both within the Old Testament (Old Testament use of the Old Testament) and in the New Testament's engagement with the Old Testament.

The primary objective of this study is to understand the coherent message of Scripture by observing how inspired authors connected new revelations to previous ones. It serves as a vital bridge between exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology. While the field presents significant academic challenges—including original language complexities, textual criticism, and historical contexts—it remains accessible and essential for the ordinary Christian life. By moving beyond isolated verses to see the "spectrum of influence" between texts, readers can better appreciate the unity of the biblical storyline from Genesis to Revelation.

Conceptual Framework

Defining "The Bible's Use of the Bible"

The term "the Bible's use of the Bible" is intentionally broad. It encompasses the reality that later authors were not merely copying earlier texts but were "searching and inquiring carefully" (as noted in 1 Peter 1:10-12) to see how new revelations connected to what God had previously said.

Key Components of Scriptural Interaction:

- **Donor Text:** The original, earlier text being cited or borrowed from.
- **Receptor Text:** The later text that receives and utilizes the wording or ideas of the donor text.
- **Exegetical Outcome:** The specific interpretation or engagement that occurs when the receptor text utilizes the donor text.

The Spectrum of Influence

Intertextuality exists on a gradient of clarity and authorial intent.

Category	Description	Characteristics
Citation	An explicit, word-for-word quotation.	Often uses introductory formulas (e.g., "It is written").
Allusion	A clear but non-verbatim reference.	Shared vocabulary or unique phrasing intended to evoke the donor text.
Echo	A faint overlap in vocabulary or imagery.	Often debatable; relies on subtle linguistic resonances.
Thematic Similarity	Conceptual overlap without shared language.	Treats similar themes or patterns in a way that suggests a connection.

The Value of Studying Scriptural Intertextuality

Studying how the Bible uses itself provides four primary benefits to the reader and the theologian:

1. **Exegesis:** It helps determine the precise meaning of a text. For example, understanding Paul's argument in Romans 10 is difficult without understanding the Deuteronomy 30 passage he is interpreting.

2. **Biblical Theology:** It reveals the "storyline" of the Bible. By tracking how authors reuse themes, promises, and covenants, readers can see the coherent unity of Scripture.
3. **Systematic Theology:** It provides a window into how to categorize and synthesize biblical teaching on specific topics (e.g., God, humanity, creation) by seeing how later authors connected disparate texts.
4. **The Christian Life:** It clarifies the relationship between different parts of the Bible—such as why certain Levitical laws are no longer practiced as sacrifices, yet their moral imperatives (e.g., "be holy") are reaffirmed in 1 Peter.

The Seven Hermeneutical Choices

The study of the Bible's use of the Bible is governed by seven key interpretive choices that determine how one views the relationship between texts:

- **Sequestered vs. Connected:** Rather than studying the Old and New Testaments in isolation, the "connected" approach views them as part of a single phenomenon where New Testament authors follow the hermeneutical footsteps of Old Testament authors.
- **Adjusting Meaning/Context vs. Advancement of Revelation:** This addresses whether later authors change the original meaning or if God, through the later author, reveals a deeper, legitimate layer of the original passage.
- **Art vs. Science (Detecting Allusions):** Identifying allusions requires both rigorous scientific criteria (shared words) and a developed "artistic" sensibility gained from immersing oneself in the text.
- **Horizontal vs. Vertical Context:**
 - *Horizontal:* The surrounding sentences and paragraphs of both the donor and receptor texts.
 - *Vertical:* The accumulation of meaning that happens over time as a text is reused throughout biblical history.
- **Biblical vs. Extra-biblical Relationships:** Determining the influence of ancient Near Eastern or Second Temple Jewish texts on the biblical authors.
- **Backward-looking vs. Forward-looking Typology:** Recognizing patterns in history where earlier events or persons (types) find a greater fulfillment (antitype) in later revelation.
- **Historical vs. Prosopological Exegesis:** Identifying instances where a later author assigns a different "speaker" to an earlier text (e.g., a King's words in a Psalm being attributed to God speaking in Hebrews).

Practical Challenges in Analysis

The depth of this study often requires navigating several complex academic areas:

- **Hermeneutical Assumptions:** Pre-existing presuppositions (e.g., a belief or disbelief in the supernatural) significantly shape how one interprets an author's use of a previous text.
- **Dating and Introduction:** It is often difficult to determine who is borrowing from whom, especially in the Old Testament prophets (e.g., did Joel borrow from Isaiah, or vice-versa?).
- **Original Languages and Textual Criticism:** Authors often quoted from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), which may vary from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Additionally, scribes sometimes "tidied up" quotations to match original sources more closely.
- **Historical Contexts:** Awareness of the interpretive traditions of the Second Temple period is necessary to understand if a New Testament author was engaging with the Old Testament directly or through existing Jewish traditions.

Guidance for the Reader: How to Get Started

For the non-specialist, the study of the Bible's use of the Bible can be approached through three primary habits:

1. **Utilize Cross-References:** English Bible cross-references are essential tools for tracking how phrases and concepts are repeated across different books.
2. **Read Deeply and Widely:**
 - *Deeply:* Slow down to notice specific "turns of phrase," symbols, and images that are intended to catch the reader's attention.
 - *Widely:* Maintain a "big picture" view of the biblical narrative to see large-scale connections and the flow of the whole Bible.
3. **Leverage Specialized Resources:** Tools like the *Connecting Scripture New Testament* (CSB) provide color-coding for allusions and quotations, along with indices that allow readers to see where specific Old Testament verses are referenced in the New Testament.

Study Guide:

Study Guide: The Bible's Use of the Bible

This study guide provides a comprehensive review of the introductory concepts regarding how biblical authors engage with earlier scriptural texts. It is based on the teachings of Dr. Matthew S. Harmon and covers the definitions, significance, challenges, and methodology of studying the internal interpretive work found within the Old and New Testaments.

Part 1: Short-Answer Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in two to three sentences based on the provided source material.

1. How does the text define "the Bible's use of the Bible"?
2. According to 1 Peter 1:10-12, what was the relationship between the prophets and the Spirit of Christ regarding their own writings?
3. Provide an example of an Old Testament author using an earlier Old Testament text.
4. How does the study of the Bible's use of the Bible contribute to "biblical theology"?
5. What is the "sequestered versus connected" hermeneutical choice?
6. Why can the original languages of the Bible present a challenge when studying allusions?
7. Describe the difference between "horizontal context" and "vertical context."
8. What is "prosopological exegesis"?
9. Explain the "spectrum of influence" regarding how a later author might use an earlier text.
10. Define the roles of a "donor text" and a "receptor text."

Part 2: Answer Key

1. **Definition:** The Bible's use of the Bible is defined as later biblical authors making use of earlier biblical writings, a process often called "scriptural exegesis of Scripture." It encompasses both New Testament authors quoting the Old Testament and Old Testament writers utilizing earlier portions of the Old Testament.
2. **Prophetic Inquiry:** 1 Peter 1:10-12 indicates that prophets who predicted the sufferings and glories of Christ "searched and inquired carefully" into the revelations provided by the

Spirit of Christ within them. They reflected on how current revelations connected to what God had previously revealed, serving future generations rather than just themselves.

3. **Old Testament Example:** In Isaiah 6, the prophet uses language from Deuteronomy 29 regarding people who hear but do not understand and have eyes but do not perceive. Isaiah intentionally borrows this earlier Mosaic language and applies it to a new situation during his throne room vision and subsequent commission.
4. **Biblical Theology:** This study helps trace the "storyline of the Bible" from Genesis to Revelation by showing how themes, promises, and covenants are interconnected. It provides a starting point for understanding the coherent message of the Bible and how the authors themselves viewed the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.
5. **Sequestered vs. Connected:** The "sequestered" approach separates the study of Old Testament uses of the Old Testament from New Testament uses of the Old Testament into different academic silos. The "connected" approach argues they are the same phenomenon and should be studied together to see the consistent hermeneutical unity of Scripture.
6. **Language Challenges:** The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, while the New Testament was in Greek; however, New Testament authors often used various Greek translations (the Septuagint) of the Old Testament. These translations range from literal, word-for-word versions to more dynamic, meaning-oriented versions, complicating the task of tracking precise linguistic overlaps.
7. **Context Types:** Horizontal context refers to the surrounding sentences, paragraphs, and chapters within both the original and the later text. Vertical context refers to the "accumulation of meaning" that occurs over time as a biblical author interacts with an earlier text and its subsequent interpretations.
8. **Prosopological Exegesis:** This is an interpretive method where a later biblical author takes a statement from an earlier text and attributes it to a different speaker. For example, a psalm originally spoken by a king might be presented in the book of Hebrews as God speaking directly to His people.
9. **Spectrum of Influence:** The spectrum ranges from explicit citations (clear quotations with introductory formulas) and allusions (borrowed words without formal citation) to faint "echoes" and thematic similarities. This range demonstrates that later authors' engagement with earlier scripture varies in intensity and obviousness.
10. **Donor and Receptor:** The "donor text" is the original, earlier scripture that provides the words, ideas, or patterns being used. The "receptor text" is the later scripture that receives, quotes, or interprets that donor text to produce an exegetical outcome.

Part 3: Essay Questions

Instructions: Use the following prompts to develop in-depth arguments or analyses. No answers are provided for this section.

1. **The Role of Presuppositions:** Analyze how a reader's starting assumptions or "hermeneutics" influence their interpretation of biblical texts. Use the example of supernaturalism versus naturalism mentioned in the source context.
2. **Unity through Interpretation:** Discuss the argument that New Testament authors were not doing something "radically new" but were following the footsteps of Old Testament authors. How does this "connected" view support the concept of the unity of Scripture?
3. **The Art and Science of Allusions:** Evaluate the tension between using "scientific" criteria (specific word counts) and "artistic" sensibilities (immersion and intuition) when identifying allusions. Is one approach superior, or is a "both-and" approach necessary?
4. **Practical Application and Continuity:** Using the example of Leviticus and 1 Peter provided in the session, explain how the Bible's use of the Bible helps Christians determine which Old Testament laws remain continuous and which are applied differently today.
5. **Technological and Literary Aids:** Describe the specific benefits of resources like cross-references and the *Connecting Scripture New Testament*. How do these tools bridge the gap for "ordinary" Bible readers who do not know original languages?

Part 4: Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Allusion	A broad category where a later author intends to draw the reader's attention to an earlier text, ranging from direct quotations to faint references.
Biblical Theology	The study of the Bible's overarching storyline, tracing themes, promises, and covenants to see the coherent message of the whole.
Citation	A clear, written quotation of a previous text, often introduced with a formula such as "It is written."
Donor Text	The original, earlier biblical text that is being cited, alluded to, or interpreted by a later author.
Echo	The faintest level of overlap in vocabulary between a later and earlier text, where the reference may be debatable.

Exegetical Outcome	The specific interpretation or engagement with a donor text that occurs within a receptor text.
Hermeneutics	The art and science of interpretation, involving the assumptions and starting points a reader brings to a text.
Prosopological Exegesis	An interpretive move where a later author assigns the "face" or voice of a different speaker to an earlier scriptural passage.
Receptor Text	The later biblical text that quotes, borrows from, or engages with an earlier "donor" text.
Septuagint	The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, which was frequently used by New Testament authors.
Systematic Theology	The study of the Bible that seeks to synthesize everything Scripture says about specific categories or topics (e.g., God, humanity).
Textual Criticism	The process of attempting to reconstruct the original wording of a manuscript by comparing various copies and translations.
Typology	A specific pattern of relationships in Scripture where earlier people, events, or institutions foreshadow later ones (backward or forward-looking).