Scofield Biblical Institute and Theological Seminary

SCOFIELD SEMINARY GUIDELINES FOR BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

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I. Factors for you to consider in preparing an exegesis.

A. Translations: Work with modern translations of the Bible, especially those prepared by committees rather than one person works. Avoid paraphrases such as The Living Bible and The Good News Bible. The NASB is an accurate study Bible. Other recommended versions are KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NRSV.

B. The "literal meaning": Look for the single meaning of a text. Only rarely will a passage indicate that it has more than one meaning. Avoid allegorizing and spiritualizing on your part. Look for the message of the passage, not what you think it should say.

C. The contexts: Consider the specific passage within its larger contexts: the whole Bible, the division of which it is a part, the whole book and the immediate surrounding material. Scripture helps to interpret Scripture. (Be careful not to violate B.)

D. Literary considerations: Since the Bible is a literary work, an exegesis must consider the structure of its language, definition of its terms, and the functions of the various parts of speech. Also, what type of literature is it: prose or poetry, history or allegory, apocalyptic, literal or symbolic, lament or hymn, law or diary?

E. Historical exegesis: As ancient literature, pervaded by a strong sense of history, the Bible must be studied in relation to its historical and geographical situation and the life-setting (Sitz im Leben) of its peoples, as well as its own history of development as oral and written literature.

F. Biblical theology: The Bible was written from the standpoint of faith in the redemptive actions of the God of Israel. What the passage says about God, humanity, and their relationship should be a primary consideration of an exegesis. The content of the passage must also be considered in the light of the broader message of the entire Bible.

G. Devotional thrust: Inasmuch as the Bible is addressed to faith and seeks to engage the student personally (existentially), the devotional study of Scripture should go hand-in-hand with critical study. The study must ask, what does this passage say to our present life situation? What meaning does it have for us today? What is God saying to the Church, the world, and me personally?

II. Procedure for the interpretation of a biblical passage (choose, investigate, and write).

Exegesis is the systemic attempt to discover the author's meaning of a passage of Scripture. It involves the application of specific steps of inquiry into the message of a passage culminating in an application of that message to today's situation. To better understand the process of exegesis you might examine the following:

L. E. Keck and G. M. Tucker "Exegesis," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, S.V. BS 440.I63

Carver, Frank G., Jr. "A Working Model for Teaching Exegesis." Interpreting God's Word Today. Anderson: Warner Press, 1982. BS 476.I64 1982

A. Selection of the biblical passage: Choose a significant passage with an adequate and distinguishable scope, a natural unit of thought. Consider the paragraphing in the **NRSV**.

B. Research of the biblical passage:

1. Step one: consider the context. Read the passage in the context of the book or at least the chapters around it. What type of literature is it: prose, poetry, parable, sermon, or letter? What is the message or purpose of the book? How does the passage relate to the larger theme? When and to whom was the book written? Who actually composed the book? ----------The answers to these questions will compose Part A.

Resources: Introductions, Introductions to Bible books in commentaries, and Bible dictionaries (See below).

2. Step two: now concentrate upon the passage. Analyze the verses of the chosen passage. What does each verse precisely have to say? ---------- The answers to these questions will compose Part B.

a. Investigate word meanings, especially key words.

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