



Bible Study Methods

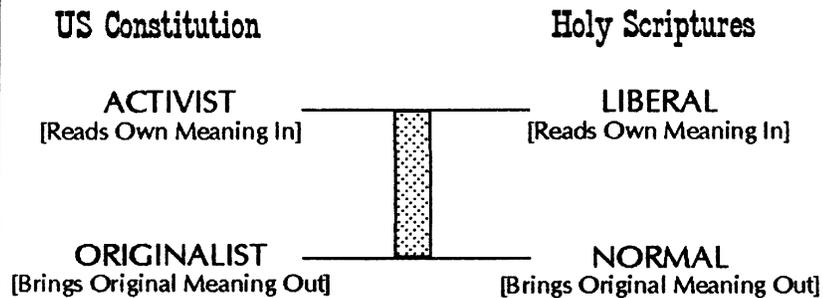
Lesson Four

Introduction: Robert Bork & Biblical Interpretation

“What was once the dominant view of constitutional law--that a judge is to apply the Constitution according to the principles intended by those who ratified the document--is now very much out of favor among the theorists of the field...”

“... a judge, no matter on what court he sits, may never create new constitutional rights or destroy old ones. Any time he does so, he violates not only the limits to his own authority but, and for that reason, also violates the rights of the legislature and the people.”

“The notion of a living Constitution seems to appeal to a great many people because the phrase makes it seem that the alternative is a dead Constitution. Indeed, I have no difficulty with the idea that the Constitution lives, only with the notion that it keeps sprouting new heads in accordance with current intellectual and moral fashion.”



I Interpretation: The Importance of Content and Context

- Buildings are always determined by their *foundation*... good *observation* is the foundation for constructing the meaning of the text.
- We can refer to the step of interpretation as the “*Recreation*” process. We are attempting to stand in the author’s shoes and to recreate his experience.
- Learning how to interpret the Bible does not mean that we understand everything in it.

A. Content

There is a cause effect relationship between content and its meaning.

Observation provides the raw material, the content, for interpretation.

B. Context

Context always refers to that which goes before and which follows. Any time we break into the middle of a passage, we always need to look at its context.

Every major cult is built on a violation of this principle.

II. Interpretation: An Example from James

James 5:¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

QUESTION:

Why does James make this reference to Elijah? How does it advance his message?

Content:

What do we learn about Elijah in these verses? What is omitted?

Context:
In the Book of James

What are the key words in this passage? What is the subject of discussion?

In the Life of Elijah

Bkgd: The Basis of Israel's Blessing or Cursing

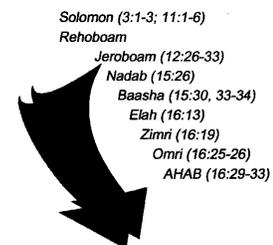
Deut. 11:13 "And it shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. 15 "And He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied.

16 "Beware, lest your hearts be deceived and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them. 17 "Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you. 18 "You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

Israel on the Royal Road to Apostasy

Elijah's Pronouncement: Drought

I Kings 17:1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."



Israel Eliminates Baal Worship and Returns to God

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."40 Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Elijah's Petition: Rain

Point: James uses the chastening and restoration of Israel to picture the analogous process in the life of the wayward believer. Elijah's intervention and intercession illustrates the role of elders / mature saints in the life of the wayward.

Assignment:

#1 What advantages did the original recipients / readers of a biblical passage have over a modern reader of the same passage? Jot them down.

#2 Read the small epistle of **III John** several times. Some Christians have taken verse two and concluded that it is not the will of God for Christians to be sick. Does the context support this? Why did the author of this letter include this verse? Did he intend for this statement to apply to all believers? Summarize your conclusions in a paragraph explaining the purpose of this verse.

WEBSITE: www.drstevej.com/bsm.htm

[17-18]

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Content:

What do we learn about Elijah in these verses [17-18]? What is omitted?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to write their response to the content question.

James 5:13-20 (NASB)

[13-14]

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

[15-16]

and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

[17-18]

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

[19-20]

My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins

Context:

What are the key words in this passage? What is the subject of discussion?

