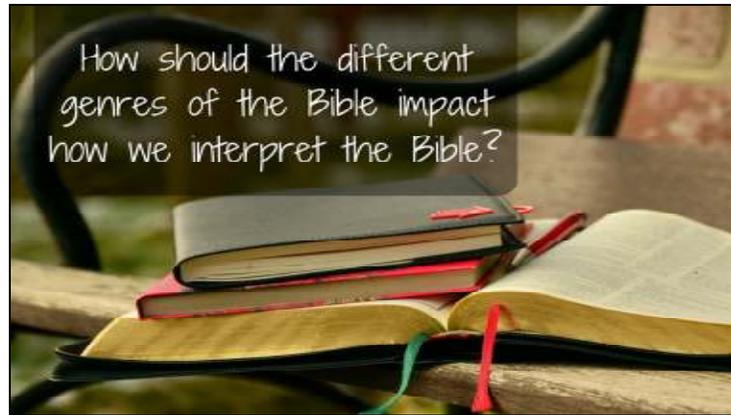


How to Study the Bible

“Biblical Genre”

Lesson 9

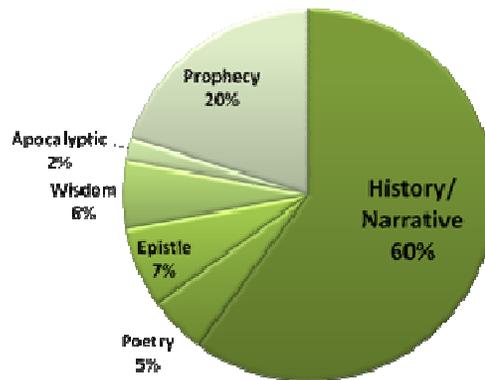


Literal Sense: Latin for *litera* – referring to a form of biblical interpretation that emphasizes the **obvious** meaning of words according to the literary genre of text



- What does the following mean:
 - **“She had a cow.”**
 - She became upset
 - **“He is a sitting duck.”**
 - He has no protection from harm.
 - **“We killed the other team.”**
 - We won easily.
- These sayings have different meanings than what the word suggest.

Genres in the Bible



Biblical Genres	
Genre	Book
Historical/Law Narrative	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah
Wisdom	Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
Poetry	Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
Apocalyptic	Daniel, Revelation of John
Gospel	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts
Epistle	Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude

Genres in the Bible

Different types of literary forms, called genres, can call for different ways of interpretation.

Typical genres found in the Bible include:

- narrative
- poetry
- epistle
- prophecy
- law
- wisdom
- history
- apocalyptic

How to Study the Bible

“Reading Apocalyptic Literature”

Lesson 9



APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE



1. is known by its bold pronouncements that come in picture form
2. contains the presence of strange visions
3. contains ghastly figures
4. forcefully uses dramatized symbolic imagery
5. abounds in the use of metaphor
6. has an abundance of cataclysmic events that signal the end of the world.
7. has action that leads to a final judgment and the ushering in of a new world.

VANTAGE POINT



- First, the most elementary observation is that all writers of apocalypse share a perspective ‘from above.’
- Second, preachers of this genre must also get used to the writers’ use of language that consistently collapses one epoch in time upon another.
- Third, preachers must be prepared to distinguish between the historical vantage point of the biblical writers and those of mythological lore.

RECAPITULATION



- A second constellation in the skies of apocalyptic reveals a recapitulation of themes. Big ideas within a biblical apocalypse often come in a series of waves.
- Knowing this ahead of time will help us in our reading of apocalyptic literature—especially on the important fronts of structure and Sequence.
- For an example of how important this is, we need only to consider that some preachers approach Revelation under the interpretive principle that has everything in Revelation 4 through 22 unfolding, not only in the future, but also in **chronological sequence**.
- Others among us read the text differently—that the author of Revelation has chosen to employ **a recapitulation of themes** in Revelation 4 through 22, and with this literary technique **he desires his readers to return to similar themes**.
-

REDIRECTION



- **The past:** a return to the cross of Christ as the gravitational center for all preaching of apocalypses.
- **The present:** an emphasis on the ‘now-ness’ of apocalyptic literature for Christian life.

CHRIST CENTERED

• Daniel 2, 7-12 w/ Luke 20:17-18

CHURCH CENTERED

• After “getting right” with God [i.e. justification – the vertical / pt. in time], we make continued adjustments in the HORIZONTAL [i.e. progressive]. Thus, we get right with one another in our believing communities.

CONCLUSION



- First, be aware, not only of the reasons why preachers avoid biblical apocalypse, but be determined not to make the same common mistakes.
- Second, equip yourself to recognize this genre when you see it.
- Third, and for inexperienced preachers especially—may the constellations of symbolism, its vantage point on history and its recapitulation of themes inform your reading habits early on.
- Fourth, I hope that every gospel preacher, regardless of age or eschatological viewpoint, might share the conviction on those things that must unite our preaching (the past: the centrality of the cross, and, the present: its applicability to Christian life).



APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE



1. Secret things of God, which are normally hidden from humankind, are given to a certain person in a vision and/or by way of an angel.
2. The author usually writes in a more famous person's name.
3. There is a battle between good and evil.
4. The good are always being oppressed (religiously, socially, politically) and there is concern that God does not care about them.
5. The evil are in power and oppress the good, until God steps in to punish the wicked and vindicate the good.
6. There are bizarre symbols that refer to historical events / persons, but they are not always easy to identify.

READING APOCALYPTIC



- First, and most important, don't ignore the main message of the book, which is that we should worship Jesus!
- Second, don't read the book like it's a newspaper.
- Third, don't necessarily try to visualize everything in the book.
- Fourth, don't study the book alone and in pieces. The focus of the book should be the whole story, not isolated verses and images.
- Fifth, don't overlook how important a part the Old Testament plays in the book.
- Sixth, don't apply the events of the book too quickly to yourself. Rather, think historically and globally.
- Finally, don't forget that Revelation is a very practical / pastoral book.

3 Mistakes Most People Make When Reading Revelation

- Mistake #1: Reading Revelation as if it is all about *us*.
- Mistake #2: Reading Revelation as if it is all about *our future*.
- Mistake #3: Reading Revelation as a mysterious code, one that *we're* in a better position to unlock than anyone else.

PRACTICAL BOOK

- The Christian life involves spiritual warfare.
- There is a good and bad side, and
- We have to decide which side we are on.