

Introduction to XegesIs

I have done four years of online academic Biblical Studies with Dr. Michael S. Heiser from 2008-2012, including summer time. Within those four years, I completed one year of biblical Hebrew and Greek, and three years of theological and other related Biblical Studies. In 2012, I also completed two courses of Religious Studies through one semester at Concordia University (*History of Satan and Mystics, Heretics, and Reformers: History of Christianity II*), and I obtained two A- grades. I was planning to attend McGill University in 2013 with these credits, but I ended up cancelling my approved admission in summer 2013 due to financial and other personal reasons. From 2012-2016, I equally completed about four years of independent scholarly research during which I also contacted and interacted with about 20 scholars and some scientists. The years 2017-2018 have been rather quiet. This year, I wanted to initiate this blog to contribute to the Church's knowledge.

Behavior

Before I begin sharing Biblical Studies, I think it's imperative that I dispense some words on behavior. While growing up, I was always curious; curious to know how things work and how we interpret various matters. I'm 32 years old, and when I was in my teenage years, approximately around 2001-2007, I remember misbehaving or having negative reactions with people I disagreed. Oftentimes, disagreements produce irritation and reactions that create frictions with others we face. This is extremely unhealthy, especially if you, or the people you confront, aren't very forgiving or re-conciliatory. I now recall a few times when some elders of my past churches have shared with us some of their own past confrontations that had

produced divisions within their local churches. They seemed to accuse the disagreements themselves as being the source cause of those divisions. I myself experienced some confrontations in 2012-2013 that made my past local church be reduced to an even smaller number of church members. In my own workplaces, I have interacted with thousands of people of various ranks for almost 12 years now, and I can also give examples from these work environments. From my limited experience thus far, I can confidently say that most fights, divisions, and separations aren't caused by the disagreements themselves but, instead, by the attitude of each involved individual in disagreements. It's the attitude and behavior that can either cause strife, or soften—or even halt—a disagreement into a peaceful and respectful engagement through differences.

Please, be that one person that respectfully disagrees with others. There are scientific and scholarly guidelines to take into consideration. For instance, if you read a blog post or a comment, and you then find yourself asking questions or challenging the individual with whom you disagree in your own mind, do not make the common mistake of “jumping the gun” by uncritically concluding that the other individual is wrong and that you are right. Do not quickly base your judgments on presuppositions or preconceptions. Do not make wild sweeping claims without foundation or revision. If you are unsure, ask questions instead of making accusatory remarks. It's also healthy to simply respectfully question or challenge the person you disagree with by playing the humble and the dumb. Of course, all these recommendations from my part may vary whether you already know the person you may be dealing with or not. If you do not know the individual you are questioning or challenging, it might be best to softly ask good, significant questions that may prompt the individual to reconsider what they have said in their posts, emails or elsewhere.

Viewpoints

As in any field of study on this planet that we call earth, there have always been, there is, and there will always be a variety of slightly different, or even diametrically opposing, viewpoints on any given subject matter. This applies, especially, to fields of study that research things or systems that we have not made, produced or invented. For example, there are hard and soft sciences such as: astronomy, biology, immunology, virology, chemistry, anthropology, history, geology, archaeology, and psychology. This might not apply so much to more empirical fields of study such as mathematics (although, it might not be fully empirical—but, surely $2+2=4$). This might not also apply so much to systems or elements we have fabricated, invented or programmed. For example, consider computers and software, which we have programmed. The manufacturers and vendors know for certain how it all works and it all requires little interpretation of what is going on, especially by the programmers and designers themselves. But this is not the case with Diet and Nutrition Science nor with Biblical Studies. These aforementioned fields of study require interpretation prompting an etiology of various viewpoints.

Interpretations, Exegesis and Hermeneutics

To end this introduction, I would like to clarify some things on “interpretations,” “exegesis,” and “hermeneutics.” First, I have heard some lay people say: “oh, that’s just an interpretation,” or “that’s simply your interpretation.” Although, some of these kinds of remarks might be valid on some rare occasions (depending who is being addressed), these are the types of comments that we must

avoid. Instead of commenting that an interpretation is “just an interpretation,” it would be more appropriate to specifically identify the interpretation by its name (whatever that would be), or to specifically ask for sources, as in: “where do you base that from, or what are your sources?”

Exegesis means “interpretation” or “explanation” in Greek. But, in practice—especially in Biblical Studies—it refers to the critical literary methods interpreting texts in their original contexts. Examples of these methods are: discourse analysis, source criticism, textual criticism, linguistics, grammar and syntax, immediate context, history and archaeological sources, etc. These are exegetical sources and methods we must put into practice to extract the original meaning of texts in their original internal and external contexts (i.e., in the biblical literature and outside the biblical literature).

Hermeneutics means “interpretation” in Greek. But, in practice—especially in Biblical Studies—it refers to the overall framework used to practice exegesis. Exegesis is embedded within a hermeneutical framework. Hermeneutics are the “laws” or the “principles” (Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*) of interpretation. Examples are literary genre and historical contexts. However, hermeneutical principles that should not be followed or imitated are, for example, the way a mystical Jewish interpreter might use Talmudic hermeneutics where word and spiritual meanings are discovered by calculating the numerical values of word letters within a passage. This is called Gematria. A more recent Jewish and American hermeneutical framework (yet just as erroneous as Gematria) would be the “Bible Codes,” which are obtained by counting letters in Hebrew texts by equidistant letter sequences (ELS). These ELS set apart Hebrew letters and might eventually produce Hebrew words that can coincidentally be astonishing (e.g. TORAH, ELOHIM, ADONAI, etc.). Some pseudo-researchers have claimed to have discovered past events or future events by using Bible Codes. But, it’s all wrong.