

Entering the textual world through the implied reader community

A. **Historical Background**

(Reading the Bible as history)

1. **Critical**

(Questions of authorship—author, recipients, origin, date, and occasion; give attention to both internal and external evidence; give thought to the historical-critical consensus; cf. “Critical Method Sheet”)

2. **Descriptive**

(Illustrative, not polemic; place the priority on a floating rather than an absolute chronology; i.e., the “world of the text”)

a. **Political**

(The question of time: political affairs, government institutions, and military events; cf. timeline)

b. **Geographical**

(The question of place: topography, climate, and other environmental questions; cf. maps)

c. **Cultural**

(The question of being: intellectual, religious, social, economic, demographic, technological development, etc.)

B. **Literary Foreground**

(Reading the Bible as literature)

1. **Genre**

(Outer form: the literary type it belongs to, and the characteristics of that type; cf. form criticism)

a. **Primary**

(The overriding genre; cf. comparative literature)

b. **Embedded**

(Sub-genre or forms; cf. poetry, prophecy, speeches, annals, records, genealogies, etc.)

2. **Rhetoric**

(Inner form: the rhetorical structure the author uses to communicate his message, noting its unique stylistic techniques and aesthetic qualities; cf. speech-act theory)

3. **Composition**

(Surface structure; cf. outline)

a. **Narrative Context**

(Book, discourse, section, paragraph; cf. intra-textuality, where it is in the narrative account or argument)

b. **Canonical Context**

(Bible, testament, writer; cf. inter-textuality, how it is used in the rest of Scripture, i.e., the use of the OT in the NT)

C. **Exegesis-Theology** (turn over)

Exegesis-Theology

Historical Background

Literary Foreground



Exegetical Research
(Analysis and Synthesis)

- 1. Diagram the syntactical structure.** Resolve any textual problems and lay out relationships between principle, coordinate, and subordinate clauses. Cf. verbal spine.
- 2. Construct a tentative outline.** Sketch the basic structure of the author's train of thought, with special attention given to genre and other literary conventions.
- 3. Interpret the clauses.** Define the key words, make grammatical observations, and note the rhetorical features. Clauses must be understood in light of sentences, sentences in light of paragraphs, and paragraphs in light of larger wholes.
- 4. Re-engage the historical and literary context.** Correlate the contextual materials. There is no meaning apart from context, only several meanings; we must grasp the whole before we can make sense of the parts.
- 5. Survey the secondary literature.** Note its contribution to a clearer understanding of the text. Cf. reference works, commentaries, journal articles, etc.
- 6. Develop the theological meaning.** Establish the dispensational context, interact with the meaning matrix, and re-contextualize the literary shape for a church theology. (See diagram below.)
- 7. Prepare a message.** Design it around the theological meaning; include an introduction, transitions, and a conclusion. Feel free to interact with your faith tradition. Cf. historical, biblical, and systematic theologies.

