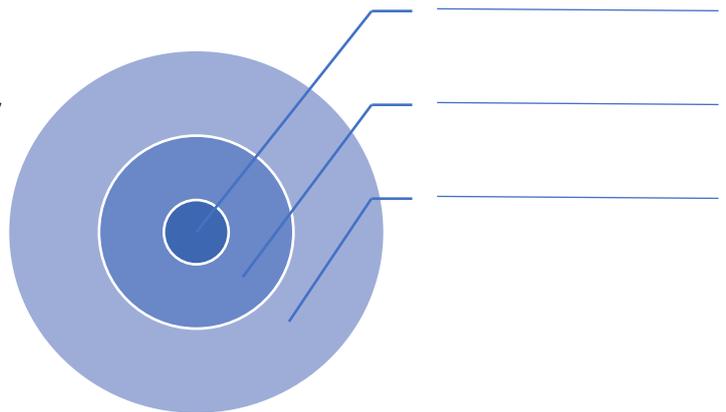# Biblical Theology

Class 2: The three horizons of Biblical Interpretation

Introduction

Three Horizons (or circles) of God's self-revelation

- Question: How can we be confident that we can accurately understand the words of a Hebrew prophet living and writing 3,000 years ago?

- We believe that there is such a thing as a correct meaning of a text, precisely because God, who created this world, our brains, and thus our ability to use language, is Himself a speaking God.

- God's self-revelation culminates in a man, God's Son, who spoke to us in a language that people could understand.

- *Heb 1:1-2, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ...".*

- Because God has spoken, as readers of His word our obligation and privilege is to _____ what the Author wants to communicate to us.

Horizon 1: Textual

To understand the text, we must use the Grammatical-Historical method of interpretation, taking into account its literary form. This is best done through the process of asking questions of the text.

A) Grammatical

- How does the larger text break up into units?
- What's the general flow of argument?
- What is the structure of a sentence?
- How are the sentences connected?

B) Historical

- How does this fit within the larger argument of the book, or section of Scripture you're reading?
    - Is it a travel account (Acts) or narrative relating to other events?
- How does the historical context (author, date, audience), if known, throw light on your understanding of words or arguments?
- Is there a cultural context that you need to be aware of? For example, what are Pharisees; what rights did women have in the Roman world?
- Are there issues of geography, politics or history that throw light on the meaning?

C) Literary Form

- What kind of genre is the book or passage written in?
    - Knowing this will help you understand if the text should be taken literally or figuratively etc.

- The seven literary forms are:
    - Narrative: Take it literally, though not necessarily prescriptively
    - Parable: Look for the main point and try not to over analyse
    - Poetry: Look for repetition and parallelism
    - Wisdom: Know that they are normally general truths for godly living
    - Prophecy: Look toward how the prophecy has or will be fulfilled
    - Epistle: Understand the context and ascertain how to apply it
    - Apocalyptic: Highly symbolic

Horizon 2: Covenantal

- God condescended to reveal Himself to humanity and enter into a relationship with us by structuring those relationships through covenants.

- We must understand the covenant period the text relates to. This will help us understand how God related to the people at the time.

- What is a covenant?

There are two kinds of covenants

- _____ _____ covenants

- _____ _____ covenants

There are seven Biblical Covenants

- Covenant of works/Adamic (Implied in Gen 2:15-17)

- Covenant of Redemption (Implied in Gen 3:15)

- Noahic (Gen 9:8-17)

- Abrahamic (Gen 15:1-21)

- Mosaic (Exodus 20-25)

- Davidic (2 Sam 7:12-17)

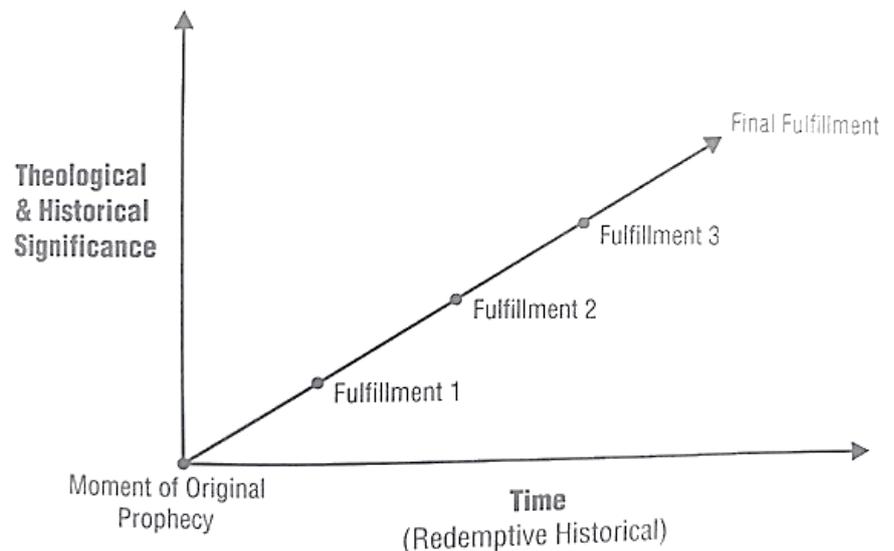- New Covenant in Christ (Matt 26:27-30)

Questions to ask:

- What covenant governs the text?
- What covenantal period are we in?
- What covenantal stipulations govern their actions, God's judgements etc?

Horizon 3: Canonical

- The third expanding circle or horizon is to understand the text in its full and complete context of the entire story of redemptive history.
- This is best understood through seeing how God makes promises and fulfills those as well as through God's use of types.

Promise-fulfilment

- (1) God makes promises, (2) God keeps His promises, and (3) God fulfils his plan according to a pattern
- Example: Gen 2:17 and Gen 3:15
  - How will God fulfill both the promise to judge and the promise to save

Typology

- Meaning of 'Type' – pattern or example
- Typology definition, 'Symbolism with a future reference to fulfillment in a later covenant period of biblical history. It involves a fundamental relation between events, persons, and institutions in one covenant period and their counterparts in later covenant periods.'

- Types are not just arbitrary signposts pointing towards general truths. Rather, a type is an actual historical person or event that God has providentially ordered in order to use that person or event to point beyond himself or herself.