

# Listening Well

(or, "How To Read Your Bible")

## Overarching Aim

- Locating reading in the creator/creature relationship
- God communicates to us *who he is*, *his deeds* (past, present, future), and *what his will for us is*.
- We offer returns to him that are fitting to his communication (repentance, confession, proclamation, thanksgiving, praise, obedience, service, trust, compassion etc.)
- Many of our returns will be directed towards other people, but they are still responses to God.
- There is both an individual and a corporate element to this.
- Parts and the whole - divine authors (via human) purpose with the words

## Benefits of reading well

- God takes the wheel - the God who is
- God takes the wheel - proportionality
- God takes the wheel - proper burdens
- God takes the wheel - correction
- Trusting in promises God has actually made
- Guards us against false teaching
- Gives us anchors for the storms
- Means we seek growth the way God has ordained growth: power

## The God Author

- God is authoritative - obey
- God is all knowing - submit and defer
- God is good - trust and rejoice
- God is truth- unified and coherent
- God is speaking - we listen carefully
- God is powerful and reliable - trust
- God is willing - be expectant and ready
- God is living - expect a personal message
- God knows how to communicate - take courage
- God is sovereign - pray
- God is spiritual - pray
- God is incomprehensible - don't lose heart

## The Human Author

- Historical context
- Conceptual Milieu
- Personality

## The Human Reader

- Heart - Prov. 1:7 “fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” Is. 66:2 But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word”
- Finitude - limited knowledge
- Dependence - pray
- Weaknesses - undistracted space
- Culturally situated - bias
- Culturally situated - historical theology to help
- The inward curve - pray + history + honesty
- Needy - hunger (pray)
- Space and Time - treasure takes time

## A Book of Words

- Words are always spoken to achieve a purpose, They do something. Not just information, but effect: praise, prayer, thanksgiving, repentance, wonder, hope, trust, action etc.
- Words means genre
- Words means grammar
- Words means context
- Words means semantics
- Words means translations
- Hard Work

## Biblical Theology

- Covenant markers
- Development of themes
- Place in redemptive history
- Eschatology: OT movement
- Eschatology: NT already/not yet substructure
- Eschatology: creation to new creation

## Systematics

- How does the whole fit together? E.g. how does sin affect soteriology.
- Proportionality

## Apostles

- What is their method of reading the OT
- How do they understand the gospel message

## The Gospel (or 'Christo-centric')

- Incarnation, Life, Teaching, Miracles, Death,, Resurrection, Ascension, Return.
- Forgiveness of sins
- Kingdom of God
- The glory of God
- Repentance
- Faith
- Obedience

## Method

- Anything better than nothing
- WSM method
- Read a book fairly quickly at least a few times (three types of reading (lounge, study, sink).
- Zooming in, zooming out (forest and trees)
- Time - observation
- Start and finish
- Occasion (problem?, encouragement?) - plausibility + explanatory power.
- Audience (good, bad, ugly)
- How does the author achieve purpose?
- Unique features (e.g. Galatians + Colossians)
- Burden of the author - prayers/greetings = clue
- Themes (why these? how do they relate?)
- Parallels for comparison (Gospels, Ephesians/Colossians, Samuels/Chronicles) - prominence.
- Imagery
- Repetitions (verbal and conceptual)
- Tone
- Structure (inclusio, thematic unity, conjunctions, big and small, turning points)
- Clear the ground, find the backbone.
- Why these words here?
- How would the book lack without them?

## Things to know about words

- Context is king: words - sentences - paragraphs - cycles - books - bible e.g. “all” in Ex. 8:17
- Unnecessary words (adjectives, adverbs, relatives)
- Particles (therefore, so that, because)
- Grammar (subjects, objects, verbs, phrases [prepositional, adverbial, adjectival, nominal, participial, verbal], imperatives, participial, genitives,, demonstratives)
- Literary devices - (Chiasm, Acrostic, Alliteration, Allusion, Anthropomorphism, Apostrophe, Assonance, Hyperbole, Idiom, Merism, Metaphor, Metonymy, Parallelism, Personification, Simile, Symbolism, Wordplay, Lists)
- Vocabulary (make sure you know the words)
- Vocabulary (authorial use)
- Vocabulary (OT background for imagery, e.g. redemption)
- Vocabulary (kind used)
- Imprecision of words

## Genre - different ways of achieving scriptures goal

- Apocalyptic (symbolism, imagery, allusion)
- Narrative (tension, characters, surprises, clues, who am I in the story?, descriptive vs prescriptive e.g. Balaam, Elijah, Gideon, Moses, Joshua)
- Poetry (parallelism, merism, elipsis, imagery, immersive)
- Prophecy (angles, voices, telescoping, Mosaic, new)
- Letters (prayers/greetings, imperatives, book-ends)

## General Factors

- Studying the bible takes time.
- Imagination
- Wrong interpretations are possible
- Not always successful, but always useful.
- Stating the purpose of a book (complex, imperfect, useful)
- Getting stuck and moving on.
- Role of reason
- Authorial intent
- Good and necessary consequence
- Use of OT (OT+NT, allusion, quotation, remix, broader context, synecdoche)
- What does the author assume?

## Application

- Underlying *aim* (think words *doing* things)
- Correspondence with authors purpose
- Accuracy
- Patience
- Distance
- Humanity
- Extracting the principle (which often underlies the point anyway)
- Not always clear
- Concrete
- Quick