

Increasing Your Accuracy in Reading the Bible: Part 1

<p><u>BHC Primary Guideline</u></p> <p><i>My Belief System will be large enough to include all facts, open enough to be examined and questioned, and flexible enough to change if errors or new facts are discovered.</i></p>	<p><u>BHC Linguistic Model</u></p> <p><i>A word is a symbol or group of symbols with an attached bundle of associations, which are a product of the Source's culture, historical time period, geographical location, and personal experiences.</i></p>	<p><u>Context</u></p> <p><i>Words must be examined in the context of the words precedes and follows them; which include any part of a discourse that can throw light on the Source's meanings: sentences, paragraphs, chapters, footnotes, etc.</i></p>
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You should already be familiar with the Guideline and Models above. Now I am going to focus on "the bundles of associations" connected to the words in the Bible. **A key skill in working with words is anchoring them to specific times and places.**

The source of the following information is the book, "*Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*" by John H. Hayes & Carl R. Holladay, pages 14-16. Please take time to pause and think about the following points as you read this email.

(1) None of the Bible was originally addressed to you.

None of us was involved in the original communication events as either senders or receivers. We are, in a sense, third-party intruders and suffer from third-party perspectives.

(2) None of the Bible was originally written in the English language.

The books of the Bible were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The modern languages of Hebrew and Greek are not the same as the ancient languages Hebrew and Greek.

(3) You and the original readers of the ancient texts are separated by an enormous cultural gap.

- The dominant economic system was agricultural, and village based.
- Diets were seasonal.
- Medical arts were primitive.
- Machines were little developed.
- Slavery was widespread.

BHC Exploration #5

- General mortality, and especially infant mortality, rates were high.
- Travel was slow and difficult – and they usually walked.
- Life was rather simple and characterized by stability and similarity rather than change.
- Human life was oriented to the cycles of nature and climate.
- Entertainment was limited.
- Good artificial lighting did not exist.
- Seeing animals slaughtered and dressed was part of life at home and at Temple services.
- Divine beings, both good and bad, were assumed to be participants in the ongoing course of life and history.

(4) A huge historical gap separates you from the Bible.

It ranges from almost twenty centuries to over three millennia.

(5) Much of the Bible takes the form of historical narrative.

However, to call the Bible a history book is a misleading simplification. It does point to the fact that much of the material is concerned with historical matters. But it contains a great deal more, and the definition of history back then was completely different from today. This phenomenon cannot be ignored if one is to understand the Bible.

(6) Much of the thought and theology of the Bible is expressed in terms of past, present, and future.

The ancient Hebrew language was expressed in terms of completed actions or incomplete actions instead of past, present, and future. Try communicating with someone without using past, present, and future tenses and you will see what I mean.

Shalom!
Jim Myers