



Understanding and Applying the Bible

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Schedule

- Jan 22nd Understanding God's Law
- Jan 29th Understanding Historical Narrative**
- Feb 5th Understanding the Psalms
- Feb 12th Understanding Wisdom Books
- Feb 19th Understanding the Prophets
- Feb 26th Understanding the Gospels
- Mar 5th Understanding Parables
- Mar 12th Understanding Acts
- Mar 19th Understanding the Epistles
- Mar 26th Understanding Revelation (Apocalyptic)



A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer, resting on an open Bible. The hands are positioned in the upper right quadrant of the frame, with fingers interlaced. The Bible is open, showing text on the pages, and is positioned in the lower half of the frame. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the hands and the Bible. The overall mood is solemn and focused.

Tools (part 2)

Background resources – literary and historical

- Study Bible
- Commentaries
 - Pastoral
 - Exegetical
 - Expositional

Old Testament Historical Narrative



1. The narrative portions of the OT cover roughly 40% and, viewed as a whole, reveal the unfolding of God's plan for his people across history.
2. Narrative has three levels that we need to regard in different ways when we think about what the text means.
 - a) God's plan of salvation across history
 - b) God's plan for the nation of Israel in its historic setting
 - c) God's plan for the specific people in the narrative
3. The OT narrative is intended for us (Romans 15:4)—but secondarily. Therefore, we take steps to interpret it that include starting from the original context and cautiously moving to our culture and our individual lives.

Using the big picture to make sense of individual stories

“All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.” (1 Sam 17:47)

God promises an eternal kingdom in which he will dwell with his people on a new earth free from sin (Dan 2:44; 7:27; Rev 21-22)

God gives Palestine to the descendants of Abraham as part of his covenant promise (Gen 15:18; Joshua 1:1-6)

David defeats Goliath in the Valley of Elah

Things to look for as we read historical narrative

- Parts of the story that directly relate to commands in the law
- Statements by the narrator (or by God himself) that reflect God's point-of-view
- The first point of dialogue in a scene
- Repetition



Things to look for as we read historical narrative

- Parts of the story that directly relate to commands in the law

² One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³ and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and **the wife of Uriah the Hittite.**” ⁴ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and **he slept with her.** (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. (2 Sam 11:2-4)

“You shall not commit adultery.” (Deut 5:18)

Things to look for as we read historical narrative

- Statements by the narrator (or by God himself) that reflect God's point-of-view

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. **The LORD was with Joseph** so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. (Gen 39:1-2)



Things to look for as we read historical narrative

- The first point of dialogue in a scene

¹ Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.

³ Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.” (Gen 45:1-7)

Things to look for as we read historical narrative

- Repetition

²⁶ David asked the men standing near him, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should **defy the armies of the living God?**”

³⁶ “Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because **he has defied the armies of the living God.** ³⁷ The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

⁴⁵ David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but **I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.** ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head.” (1 Sam 17:26, 36-37, 45-46)

Historical Narrative: Interpretation to application, step by step

Old Covenant

View the action through the lens of the law

What do we learn about God? What do we learn about his expectations for his people, Israel?



Narrative

- How does this story fit into the big picture of God's plan in salvation history?
- How does this story fit into God's plan for the nation of Israel in this historical setting?
- What does the story reveal about God's plan for the individuals involved?
- Consider how the law provides a moral backdrop to the story
- Look for clues to God's point-of-view
- Take note of the first point of dialogue in a scene
- Note any repetition in the story
- Specific story

Historical Narrative: Interpretation to application, step by step

Old Covenant
View the action through the lens of the law

What do we learn about God? What do we learn about his expectations for his people, Israel?



Narrative

- God's plan in salvation history hasn't changed but it has reached a new phase. The goal isn't the preservation of a nation but the spread of the gospel (Matt 28:18-20) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).
- How do the principles derived from the narrative fit a people of God drawn from all nations and guided by the Holy Spirit?



New Covenant
View principles through the lens of the cross of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit

What does God want us to know about him?
What does God want us to know about his expectations for the church?



Specific application

Example: 2 Samuel 11

¹ In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

² One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³ and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." ⁴ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. ⁵ The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

Example: 2 Samuel 12

⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! **This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says:** ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹Why did you **despise the word of the LORD** by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with **the sword** and **took his wife to be your own.** **You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.** ¹⁰Now, therefore, **the sword** will never depart from your house, because **you despised me** and **took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.**’”

Historical Narrative: Interpretation to application, step by step

Old Covenant

Harsh condemnation for
adultery
Lev 20:10

Principle: If God's
people break his laws by
sinning against one
another, it is the same
as despising the Lord
who gave them.

Narrative
2 Sam 11-12

New Covenant

No condemnation but
don't grieve the Spirit
Rom 8:1-2; Eph 4:30

Principle: If we love Jesus
we should do what he says
(John 14:15, 21). Love is the
fulfillment of the law (Rom
13:8).

Application: If I love God, I
should honor my spouse
even when he/she really
bugs me.



The power of narrative

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:1-2)