

Research in Biblical Studies

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The Three Seminary Disciplines

1. Biblical Studies

- Text-based discipline

2. Systematic Theology

- Ideas based discipline

3. Practical Theology (Applied Theology or Church & Society)

- Practice focused discipline

Learning Outcomes

1. Write an overview of the sub-disciplines of Biblical Studies
2. Enumerate the Processes for researching in Biblical Studies
3. Evaluate the Merits of the various Methods of research in Biblical Studies
4. Analyze the Tools employed for Research in Biblical Studies
5. Formulate Research Questions in Biblical Studies

Biblical Studies

The academic discipline which employs various methods for studying the Bible with the aim of establishing the meaning of the text in its original socio-historical, cultural and theological context, and for the purpose of applying that understanding to contemporary Christian doctrine and practice.

Branches of Biblical Studies

- Old Testament Studies
- New Testament Studies
- Studies in Literature of Second Temple Judaism**
- Studies in Receptions of Bible in first two centuries [Patristics]**

Sub-disciplines in Biblical Studies

1. **Biblical Hermeneutics**
 - Study of Philosophical theories of how the meaning and implications of a text is established
2. **Biblical Philology**
 - Study of the relevant ancient languages in their philological, grammatical, conceptual, idiomatic, and socio-linguistic aspects.
 - Hebrew; Aramaic; & Koine Greek [also Ugarit & Hittite language]
3. **Biblical Archaeology**
 - Study of archaeological artefacts (materials, inscriptions and cultural practices) pertinent to the Biblical world and how they illuminate the Biblical text
4. **Social Anthropology**
 - Study of the cultural and social aspects of the peoples and communities who lived in the Biblical world
5. **Textual Criticism**
 - Study the original copies of the manuscripts of the books of the Bible

Sub-disciplines in Biblical Studies

6. **Bible Translation**
 - Study of theories, challenges and practices of translating the Bible from original to modern languages
7. **Biblical Exegesis [Textual Analysis]**
 - Systematic and structured inductive analysis of Biblical text to establish the its original meaning and its theological and pastoral implications
8. **Biblical Theology**
 - Systematically assembly and analyses of theological contours of a topic in the Old or New Testament or in a corpus of the biblical canon
9. **Exegetical Theology**
 - Theological analysis of a text based on its contextual exegesis
10. **Receptions of the Bible**
 - Study of how and why biblical texts are interpreted and applied in different situations

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What would you do if you get an idea to research Exorcism in Mark's Gospel?

Biblical Studies

Options of Sub-disciplines?

- **Social Anthropology**
 - E.g., Beliefs and Practices regarding Demons and Exorcism
- **Biblical Exegesis**
 - E.g., Exegetical Analysis of Mk 5:1-20 and its Pastoral Implications
- **Exegetical Theology**
 - E.g., Mark's theology of Exorcism with specific focus on Mk 5:1-20
- **Receptions of Bible**
 - E.g., How and Why Ghanaian Charismatic Preachers interpret Mk 5:1-20

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Finding Topics to Research in Biblical Studies

- Which branch and sub-discipline interests you most?
- What are your abilities (Biblical languages, Reading skills)?
- What are expertise of chosen institution and teachers?
- Personal Studies
 - Sermon Preparations
 - Own Bible Reading & Study
- Read Research Outputs
 - Journal Articles, Abstracts & Reviews
 - Blogs of Professors & research students
 - Attend Seminars & Conferences
 - Tools: Commentaries, Theological Dictionaries & Scholarly books
- Search Internet
 - Current debates or controversies within the field
 - Common themes or topic within the Bible
 - Theses titles from Seminary & University Websites

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Search Engines & Websites for Ideas

- Local Seminary & University Libraries
- Online Search Engines
 - ebooks, Google Scholar, Google Books, Amazon, scholars' blogs
- Online Databases:
 - ATLA Religion, JSTOR, Ethos, Web of Knowledge, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA), OCLC FirstSearch
- Universities Dissertations Repositories
- Bibliographies
- Abstracts
- Book Reviews
- Footnotes in articles and books
- Artificial Intelligence*

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What would you do if you get an idea to research on Serpents in the Gospels?

Biblical Studies

Options of Sub-disciplines?

- **Social Anthropology**
 - E.g., Cultural beliefs regarding Serpents in the First Century Palestine
- **Biblical Exegesis**
 - E.g., Exegetical Analysis of John 3:10-15 in light of interpretations of Num 21
- **Exegetical Theology**
 - E.g., Analytical study of Serpents and Vipers texts in the Canonical Gospels
- **Receptions of Bible**
 - E.g., NT Reception of Gen 3 account on Serpent in Garden of Eden

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Write a Survey of Scholarship on the Topic of Interest

- Gather as many materials on the subject together in one folder
- Refine your Research Question, and / or limit to more recent (10-20yrs) to narrow the focus
- Organize the papers and books into categories if necessary
- Take notes and archive as you read
- Write a summary of your findings reflecting on what is missing or can be done to improve
- Create an outline, framework or matrix of themes for the subject matter
- Identify Gaps in the Knowledge

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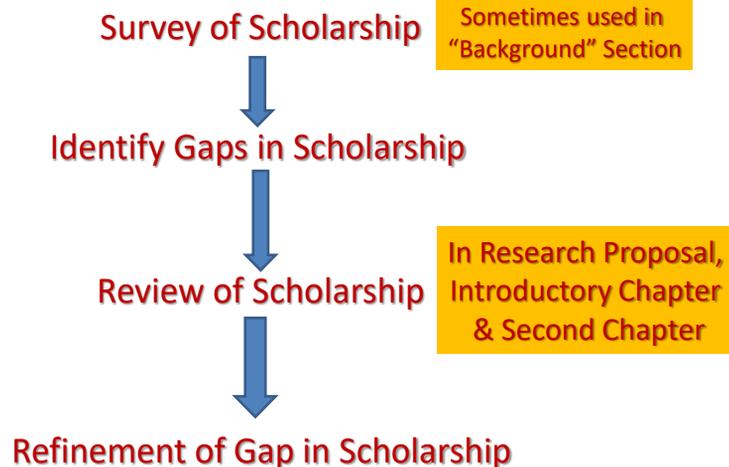
Finding Problems from “Gaps”

Six types of Gaps:

1. **Gap in Knowledge** – what is not known about the subject
2. **Gap in Relationship** – what is not known about links or relationship between various elements of the subject
3. **Gap in Theory** – what is not known about how a theory may function in a different context
4. **Gap in Method** – what is not known about how a particular method could be used for another scenario
5. **Gap in Application** – How an established knowledge may be applied to solve another problem
6. **Gap in Analysis** – investigating a phenomenon using a particular analytic approach

Survey of Scholarship summarizes the different contributions of scholars to a topic with occasional evaluations of the degree of the contribution

Review of Literature is more in-depth and includes critical engagement of the scholar's contribution. Reviews will have an account of the scholar's method, main conclusions, relevance of finding and the student's evaluation of the merits and demerits of the study



General Steps in Simple Exegesis

1. **Context**
 - Of Book - authorship, date and audience (recipients)
 - Socio-historical-cultural
 - Occasion & Purpose
 - Literary Context
 - Pertinent theological themes
2. **Meaning of Passage**
 - Text critical issue if relevant
 - Translation if relevant
 - Literary Analysis: Genre & Structure
 - Grammatical Analysis: Verbal, Syntactical, etc
 - Theological Analysis
3. **Exegetical Synthesis**
 - Summary of key message and themes
4. **Implications, Significance & Application**
 - Historical – Scholarly implication
 - Theological - Doctrine
 - Pastoral – Practice for Church, Society & Personal

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Perform an Exegetical Analysis of Mk 5:1-20 and Enumerate some Pastoral Implications

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Simple Exegetical Analysis of Mk 5:1-20

1. Context

- Of Book - authorship, date and audience (recipients) – **Mark's Gospel**
- Socio-historical-cultural – **Demon Possession & mental Illness in first cent Palestine**
- Occasion & Purpose – **Inauguration of the Kingdom through the Gospel**
- Literary Context – **Mk 4 (Jesus is Lord of nature); Mk 5:21ff Jesus Lord of Death**

2. Meaning of Passage

- Text critical issue if relevant – **Mk 5:1 variant but not important**
- Translation if relevant – **Going with NIV (Translations will be discussed shortly)**
- Literary Analysis: Genre & Structure – **Miracle story, peculiar exorcism divide into 4**
- Grammatical Analysis: Verbal, Syntactical, etc
- Theological Analysis – **Gospel conquers demons; Discipleship follows Deliverance**

3. Exegetical Synthesis

- Summary of key message and themes – **Christ's divine power over evil forces**

4. Implications, Significance & Application

- Historical – Scholarly implication – **Divinity of Jesus revealed in His time**
- Theological – Doctrine – **Deliverance necessary part of Missions**
- Pastoral – **Template for Deliverance Ministry**

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Varieties Of Research Methods in Biblical Studies

- **Historical-Critical Methods:** Variety of Methods which relate the text to the historical settings based on assumptions which have now become less utilized. E.g., Source, Redaction, Form & History of Religions
- **Narrative Methods:** Literary analysis of a storied text in its canonical form employing ideas from Narrative criticism such as plot, characterization, rhetoric and setting
- **Rhetorical Methods:** Examination of the strategies and mechanisms through which the text persuades its reader or hearer
- **Social Scientific Methods:** Analysis of the text from the perspective of social sciences and cultural anthropological insights of the world behind it
- **Discourse Analysis:** Linguistic and structural analysis of the text with interest in how the words relate to each other to form communicative units
- **Intertextuality:** Study of how one earlier biblical text is utilized by a later text and its implications for interpretations of both texts. For example Daniel texts in Revelation

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Advantages and Pitfalls of Methods

Method	Advantages	Pitfalls
Historical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes history of salvation seriously • Shed's light on context • Provides textured meaning • Prevents anachronism by bridging cultural gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some methods are based on anti-Christian presuppositions • Not all historical reconstructions are available or possible to construct
Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides fuller appreciation of the story of Scripture • Most of the first readers would have engaged the Bible this way • Very suited to oral cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some methods do not take historical contexts seriously
Rhetorical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unveils the some of the ways in which Scripture persuades • Enriches preaching • Helps explain some of the dialogues in the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some methods are anachronistic • Lack of adequate knowledge of ancient Hebrew rhetoric
Social-Scientific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better appreciation of cultural values and norms of ancient world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presuppositions behind some methods are questionable • Over-generalization leads to misinterpretation
Intertextuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of reception of Scripture • Better interpretations of both texts • Improved preaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for identifying some allusions and echoes questioned

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Relationship between Method & Research Problem

- Problem Statement often dictates which Method
 - Exorcism in Mk 5:1-20 – **Narrative Exegesis**
 - Warning in Hebrews 6:4-12 – **Rhetorical Analysis**
 - Structure of Psalm 23 – **Discourse Analysis**
 - Use of Hab 2:4 in the New Testament - **Intertextuality**
- Sometimes Student may be interested in a particular Method and so choose suitable passage after mastering the Method
 - Social Scientific Method: **Honour & Shame in Proverbs**
 - Discourse Analysis: **Discourse Structure of the Beatitude**
 - Bible Translation: **Critical Analysis of Ewe Translation of Ephesians**

How will you go about researching into idea about Christology in the Letter of James?

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Idea to Research on “Christology in the James”



Quick English Bible Concordance search
on “Jesus”, “Christ” “Lord”** etc



Quick Literature search
On Publications on Christology in James



Google Scholar search

Sloan, Robert B. "The Christology of James." *Criswell Theological Review* 1.1 (1986): 3-29.
Baker, William R. "Christology in the Epistle of James." *Evangelical Quarterly* 74.1 (2002): 47-57.



Is there Scope to study another aspect of the subject?

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Finding Problems from “Gaps” in Publications on Christology in James

Six types of Gaps:

1. **Gap in Knowledge** – what is not known about the subject
2. **Gap in Relationship** – what is not known about links or relationship between various elements of the subject

What About Relationship between Christology & Eschatology in James?

could be used for another scenario

5. **Gap in Application** – How an established knowledge may be applied to solve another problem
6. **Gap in Analysis** – investigating a phenomenon using a particular analytic approach

Tools for Biblical Research

- **Interlinear Bibles**
 - Hebrew/Greek/English
- **Bible Translations**
 - Distinguish “academic” from “devotional” translations
- **Dictionaries**
 - Theological Dictionaries; Specialized Theological Dictionaries (e.g. Paul; Jesus)
- **Encyclopaedias**
 - E.g., Encyclopaedia Judaica; ISBE
- **Commentaries**
 - Exegetical Language focused commentaries. Devotional commentaries
- **Online Resources**
 - Biblical Studies.org.uk
 - Bible Gateway
 - Blue Letter Bible
- **Software**
 - eSword
 - Logos Bible Software
 - Accordance Bible Software
 - Olive Tree Bible Software

Summary

1. Several sub-disciplines in Biblical Studies
2. Research Process in Biblical Studies affected by Problem & Method which are inter-dependent
3. Each method has its Advantages & pitfalls which must be appreciated
4. Several Tools employed for Research many available online
5. Formulate Research Questions in Biblical Studies