

February 9, 2022

The Historical-Cultural Context

What is Historical-Cultural Context/Why is it important?

“This kind of context involves the biblical writer, the biblical audience, and any historical-cultural elements touched on by the passage itself.” – J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays

“Since we live in a very different context, we must recapture God’s original intended meaning as reflected in the text and framed by the ancient historical-cultural context. Once we understand the meaning of the text in its original context, we can apply it to our lives in ways that will be just as relevant.” – J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays

Three Components to the Historical-Cultural Context

1. Chronology

1 Kings 6:1 – “In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord.”

“Correlation of data from external sources with the biblical record places this date at 967 B.C. Utilizing other biblical information, we can determine a rather well-established general chronology for the Old Testament, stretching from the birth of Abram in 2166 B.C. to the end of the Old Testament era in the closing decade of the fifth century B.C.” (Kostenberger and Patterson, *Biblical Interpretation*, 97).

Why would it matter to look at the biblical text along its timeline?

What are some specific passages in Scripture where it would be helpful to understand the earlier historical events?

2. Archaeology

Daniel 5 – King Belshazzar

February 9, 2022

3. Cultural Background

Primary Sources

Primary sources include Scripture and other ancient near eastern literature such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, writings of Josephus, etc.

Secondary Sources

- Bible Handbooks
- Old Testament and New Testament Introductions and Surveys
- Commentaries
- Bible Atlases
- Old Testament and New Testament Histories

Answer Questions such as:

- Who was the author?
- What was his background?
- When did he write?
- What was the nature of his ministry?
- What kind of relationship did he have with the audience?
- Why was he writing?
- Who was the biblical audience?
- What were their circumstances?
- How was their relationship to God?
- What kind of relationship did they have with each other?
- Are there any other historical-cultural factors that might shed light on the book?

Practice: After hearing the historical context of Galatians, what new information can you use when unpacking the meaning of Galatians 3:1?

The Dangers Associated with Studying Background – Taken from J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays

1. Watch out for inaccurate background information.
Example: Matthew 19:23-24; Some have explained that the “camel’s gate” was a small gate in the wall of Jerusalem through which a camel could squeeze if its load was removed and the animal got down on its knees.
2. Elevating the background of the text above the meaning of the text.
3. Do not let yourself slowly evolve into nothing more than a walking database of ancient facts.

February 9, 2022

Reflection For the Week:

Read Revelation 2-3 and list the seven churches that receive a letter. Next, copy a map of Asia Minor from a Bible atlas and locate the seven churches. On your copy trace the route among the seven churches that a messenger probably followed to deliver the letter. Finally, look up Revelation 3:14-22 in a commentary or background commentary and make a list of every historical-cultural fact about Laodicea that you can find.

Preparation For Next Week:

Look over <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/interpreting-bible-literally>

Resources For Going Further:

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *Journey Into God's Word*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

Kostenberger, Andreas J. and Richard D. Patterson. *Invitation To Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011.

Richards, E. Randolph and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture With Western Eyes*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012.

Secondary Resources To Help With Historical-Cultural Context:

Carson, D. A. and Douglas J. Moo. *An Introduction To The New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011.

Lea, Thomas D. and David Alan Black. *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2003.

Longman III, Tremper and Raymond B. Dillard. *An Introduction To The Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

Scott, J. Julius. *Jewish Background of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995.