

Grasping God's Word

Taking the Journey

11/17/2019 Sunday AM

Introduction

- Over the past two weeks we have been looking at **Grasping God's Word**. So far, we have discussed **Bible Translations** and **The Basics of the Journey**.
- Since we cannot read the original languages the Bible was written in, we must rely on a translation of the Bible.
- In choosing a translation you should: 1.) Choose a translation that is written in modern English so you can best understand it in the language you currently speak. 2.) Give preference to a translation done by committee rather than one single translator.
- Last week we identified the 5 Steps of the Interpretive Journey which are:
 - Step 1: Grasp the text in their town.** What did the text mean to the original audience?
 - Step 2: Measure the width of the river to cross.** What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
 - Step 3: Cross the principiizing bridge.** What is the theological principle in this text?
 - Step 4: Consult the biblical map.** How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?
 - Step 5: Grasp the text in our town.** How should individual Christians today live out the theological principles?
- This morning, we will be looking at **Grasping God's Word: Taking the Journey** as we apply these steps to the text.

Revelation 3:14-22

¹⁴"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. ¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. ¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²²He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Step 1: Grasp the text in their town. What did the text mean to the original audience?

- The first thing you would want to do is to read the text carefully, observing as much as possible in it. This means looking at the grammar, and all the significant words that it contains.
- In this passage, I notice that this is a letter that is being dictated by 'someone' to 'someone'. If we look at the literary context of this passage and observe the verses before and after it, we will see that this is Jesus dictating to John.
- We know this by reading **Revelation 1**. That would also give us many other details about the historical context.
- **V.14 - Map 1:** We see that Jesus is instructing John to write "To the angel of the church in Laodicea..." Laodicea was one of the churches in Asia Minor somewhere around 95AD.
- **Vv.15-16** – We see that Jesus tells them, "you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!" He goes on to call them "lukewarm" and says, "I am about to spit you out of my mouth."
- What did the original audience understand him to mean? What does cold and hot mean? Lukewarm? What does it mean to spit them out of his mouth?
- **Vv.17-18** - Historically, Laodicea was a wealthy city known for its banking industry, wool manufacturing, and a medical facility that produced eye ointment. However, the wealth of the people made them turn inwardly and think only of themselves. They no longer stood for anything, and had become idle, and of no use to God.
- **Map 2:** The city was situated between Hierapolis and Colossae. Hierapolis was known for its warm healing springs and Colossae was known for its cold refreshing water. The original audience would have understood this 'healing' and 'refreshing' theme when Jesus was telling them they were neither "cold nor hot."
- **V.19** – Jesus is calling on the Christians in Laodicea to repent from their idleness and to be of use.
- **V.20** – It is in the spirit of redemption that Jesus says to them, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."
- The original audience understood this verse to be exhorting them as Christian people, to repent of their sin of idleness.
- **V.21** – "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."
- They would have understood this promise as Christ was reiterating the promise of eternal life and reigning with him for all of those that choose to surrender their lives to him and repent of their sins.
- **V.22** – He ends this letter the same as he has done in the other 6, for the people to take to heart what was written.

Step 2: Measure the width of the river to cross. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

- There are many differences between us and the people that were in Laodicea when this was written.
- Our cultures are different because they were living in Asia Minor under the Roman Empire. Christianity was in its infancy during this time, so much of the popular culture didn't have anything to do with Christianity.
- The Roman religious system would have dominated many of these areas and the Roman way of life as well.
- English was not even spoken in the world at that time so, language certainly separates us. Greek was the language of their time along with their own individual local languages and dialects.
- There is roughly 1924 years that separates us from the original audience.
- Needless to say, the river is wide, but not as wide as it would be if this was an Old Testament passage.

Step 3: Cross the principlizing bridge. What is the theological principle in this text?

- The theological principle that is reflected in this text is that Christ calls believers to be effective for His Kingdom. Believers are not called to be idle or self-centered. They are the “hands and feet” of Christ.
- When believers do not live up to that standard, Christ rebukes them and calls them to repentance, so that He can have the closest possible relationship with them.

Step 4: Consult the biblical map. How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?

- Here we ask, is the principle consistent with the rest of Scripture? Do other portions of Scripture add insight or qualification to the principle?
- Remember the criteria for formulating the theological principle is the following:
 - The principle should be reflected in the text.
 - The principle should be timeless and not tied to a specific situation.
 - The principle should not be culturally bound.
 - The principle should correspond to the teaching of the rest of Scripture.
 - The principle should be relevant to both the biblical and the contemporary audience.
- We can find many examples throughout the Bible where we are called to “live out” our faith and to put it into action. Also, we are consistently exhorted to put off our old sinful nature so that we can be as close to Christ as possible.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17-21** says, “¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Step 5: Grasp the text in our town. How should individual Christians today live out the theological principles?

- Christians today should understand that we are the “hands and feet” of Jesus in our world today.
- Being that we are over 2000 years later in human history, there is literally no time to be idle and to be of no effect for the Kingdom of God. We must be diligent every single day of our lives to fulfill the specific purpose that God has for our lives, and to fulfill the wider purpose that he has for the Church as a whole in the world today.
- We should be spending our time ‘healing’ and ‘refreshing’ people.
- Daily he is standing at the door of our hearts “knocking” and looking to have the closest of relationships with us.
- He cannot do that, if we are not repenting of our sins and we are allowing worldly pleasure to lead us to become useless for His Kingdom.
- We have more distractions and material possessions that the biblical audience could have ever thought of
- That means we have to be that much more diligent and focused to not allow anything to get in the way of our relationship with Christ.

Wednesday Night Bible Study:

Wickedness Before the Flood - Genesis 6:1-8