

The Book Background Method

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Week 9
Bible Study Methods
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Introduction

For the last 4 weeks we are going to cover four methods that, while each is independent, when used together, will give you a complete and exhaustive look at a Book of the Bible. This is the first in that series.

It is much easier to understand and appreciate a play if all the props and background scenes are in place. The actors on the stage perform against the backdrop of the props and painted scenery. It is the same with Scripture.

We understand the Word of God more clearly when we see it against the backdrop of the days in which it was written.

Definition

This method allows you to gain a better understanding of the biblical message by researching the background related to the passage, person, event or topic being studied. This involves understanding the geography, historical events, culture, and political environment at the time a particular part of the Bible was written.

Why study backgrounds?

One of the primary rules of Bible interpretation states that the Bible can only be fully understood in the context in which it was originally written. Often a statement, word, custom or event in another culture or time will be understood in a sense totally different from the meaning we attach to it today in our country.

Tools Needed

May have to borrow these from the public library or church

- Bible Dictionary and/or Encyclopedia
- Bible handbook
- Bible atlas

The form

Choose the Subject or Book

List your reference tools

- This will help you remember where you got your information should you need to follow up later on
- May want to refer back to this list when you do your next background study

Insights from Geography

- Need to be familiar with the geography of the Israel and the Near/Middle East.
- Things like knowing:
 - Types of land found there
 - Major mountains and hills
 - Major bodies of water (seas, lakes, rivers)
 - Locations of cities and countries
- What is the effect of the surrounding geography on the subject or book I am studying?

Insights from History

- A working knowledge of the chronology (order of historical events) of the nation of Israel in the OT
- Understand the major events going on in other parts of the world
- What caused this particular event that I am studying?
- How did it affect the people involved?
- How did it affect the passage I am studying?

Insights from Culture

- How do these things affect the message the people about whom I am studying?
 - Types of clothes worn
 - Professions and trades in Biblical Time
 - Music in the Bible
 - Architectural styles in the Near East
 - Manners and customs in scripture
 - Recreation in ancient times
 - Family life in the Middle East
 - Art in the Bible
 - Languages and literature of surrounding nations
 - Religious ceremonies in Israel and among pagan neighbors
 - False religions of the area
 - Weapons and tools used by the people

Insight from the Political Environment

- Who are the rulers (kings, emperors, rulers, other governors)?
- What was the political “hot topic” of the day?

Summarize your research

- How does this background information help me understand better what I am studying?
- What influence did any of these factors have on the book I am studying?