

# V. How to Examine Historical and Cultural Background

What was the  
situation?



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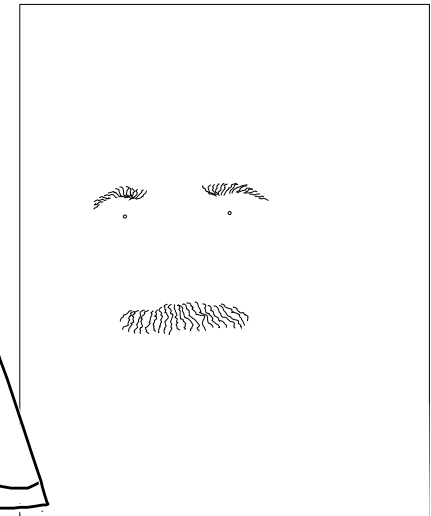
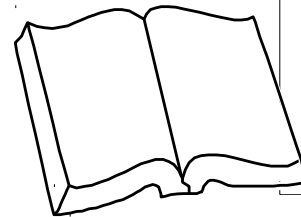
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# The Challenge

Is all the Bible  
directly about me?

God worked  
with people  
long ago in their  
own circumstances.



# Required Reading Assignments

- acquaint yourself with
  - Longman, *Old Testament Commentary Survey*
  - Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*
  - [www.bestcommentaries.com](http://www.bestcommentaries.com)
  - Evans, *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries*
- Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* 113-132.

# Where Are We?

1. Preliminary acquaintance with the text
2. Exegesis in the original setting
  - a. Learn about historical background**
3. Relations with other passages
4. Role in redemptive history
5. Application

◆ Application (IV) is illumined by historical circumstances.

# Where Are We?

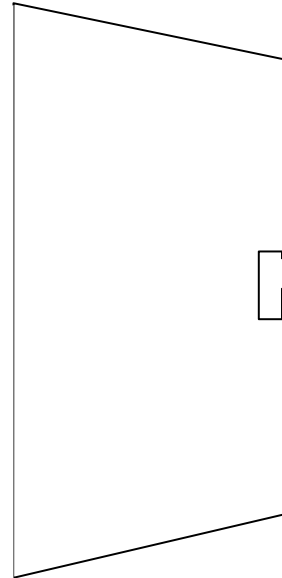
1. Preliminary acquaintance with the text
2. Exegesis in the original setting
  - a. Learn about historical background**
3. Relations with other passages
4. Role in redemptive history
5. Application

◆ Application (IV) is illumined when we see how real people lived within their historical circumstances.

## A. General Principles for Culture

# Meaning Depends on Situation

The door  
is open.



# Situations and Meaning

“The door is open.”

- A fact.
- Someone was careless.
- Please close the door.
- Evidence that someone left in a hurry.
- Get out!



Context is  
necessary.



# Danger in Overhearing

- When you overhear, you may understand the words but not the point.

Behold, your king is  
coming to you; righteous  
and having salvation ...  
(Zech. 9:9)



I will meet my  
future husband.

# Danger in Overhearing

- When you overhear someone else's conversation, you may understand the words but not the point.

Behold, your king is  
coming to you; righteous  
and having salvation ...  
(Zech. 9:9)



I will meet my  
future husband.

## B. What to Look for

# Aspects of Historical Situation

- Speaker: purpose, attitude, social position?
- Audience: attitude, social position? How affected?
- Environment: national situation, region, sites, time of year? Social customs?

# Aspects of Historical Situation

- Speaker: what is the speaker's purpose, attitude, social position?
- Audience: what is the audiences' attitude, social position, religious standing? How might they change by hearing?
- Environment: what is the national situation, what region, sites, time of year? Are these significant? How do social customs differ from ours?

## C. Bibliography

# Old Testament Source Material

See attached bibliography

- a. Ancient Near East
- b. History and social customs
- c. Background of individual OT books

# New Testament Source Material

See attached bibliography

- a. The Jewish world
- b. History and social customs
- c. Background for individual NT books



# Other Sources

- Commentaries.  
In introductory sections.

# Other Sources

- Commentaries on individual books of the Bible.

In their introductory sections exegetical commentaries often provide much information about the setting of a particular book.