

Lesson Seven: Some Notes on the Historical Background and use thereof in the Study of a Passage

The material of this lesson is rather inferior to and complementary of the date in our text by Stuart. I put it together simply because there seems to be a need for maximizing in our work...making something available to the student in as many forms and as many diverse ways as is possible with the hope that somehow it will rub off! To be a well-appointed exegete includes a lot of things and while we stress the language and a better understanding of the grammar, syntax, etc., all the background materials in archaeology, history, etc., are very important. So in this brief lesson I reemphasize these.

1. Some principles to be observed:

--The Scripture originated in historical settings...

obviously to know those settings is to have a better grasp of the material. The setting may give the cause for the writing, may indicate the intention of the writing...may tell something of the recipients and how they acted on the message. It may also suggest interesting conflicts and appreciation for what is said.

--The setting must be related to the context and vice-versa...

and this, too, would seem to be apparent. By context we mean the near and far biblical locii as well as the theological context and the thrust of the total revelation.

--The concepts of a passage are not limited to the historical setting...

it provides light and help but does not end the thrust of the words or the idea of the passage. I use a system for keeping this in view in which I suggest the student separate...

the eternal versus the temporary  
the personal versus the omnipersonal  
the local versus the universal  
the spiritual versus the physical....

(and I have these in poor columnar form)...and suggest that the parts that are eternal, omnipersonal, universal, and spiritual extend in thrust long past the passage designated.

--The Principles must be distinguished from the Practices...

There should not be a sharp dichotomy but such may occur and those things that are didactic should be distinguished from those things that are simply immediately practical.