

How to Study Your Bible

Alistair Huang

Introduction

- ◆ Foundational Principles
- ◆ Practical Considerations
- ◆ Demonstration
- ◆ Deconstruction & Analysis

Practical Considerations

3 Styles / Approaches
3 Questions

Miller's Rules

- ◆ Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon **the same plan that Father Miller adopted**. In the little book entitled "Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology," Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation: {RH, November 25, 1884 par. 23}
- ◆ [See Miller's Rules of Interpretation Handout]
- ◆ The above is a portion of these rules; and in our study of the Bible **we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth**. {RH, November 25, 1884 par. 25}

3 Major Approaches

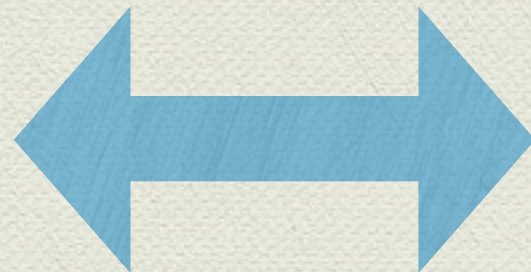
Exegetical

Topical

Allegorical

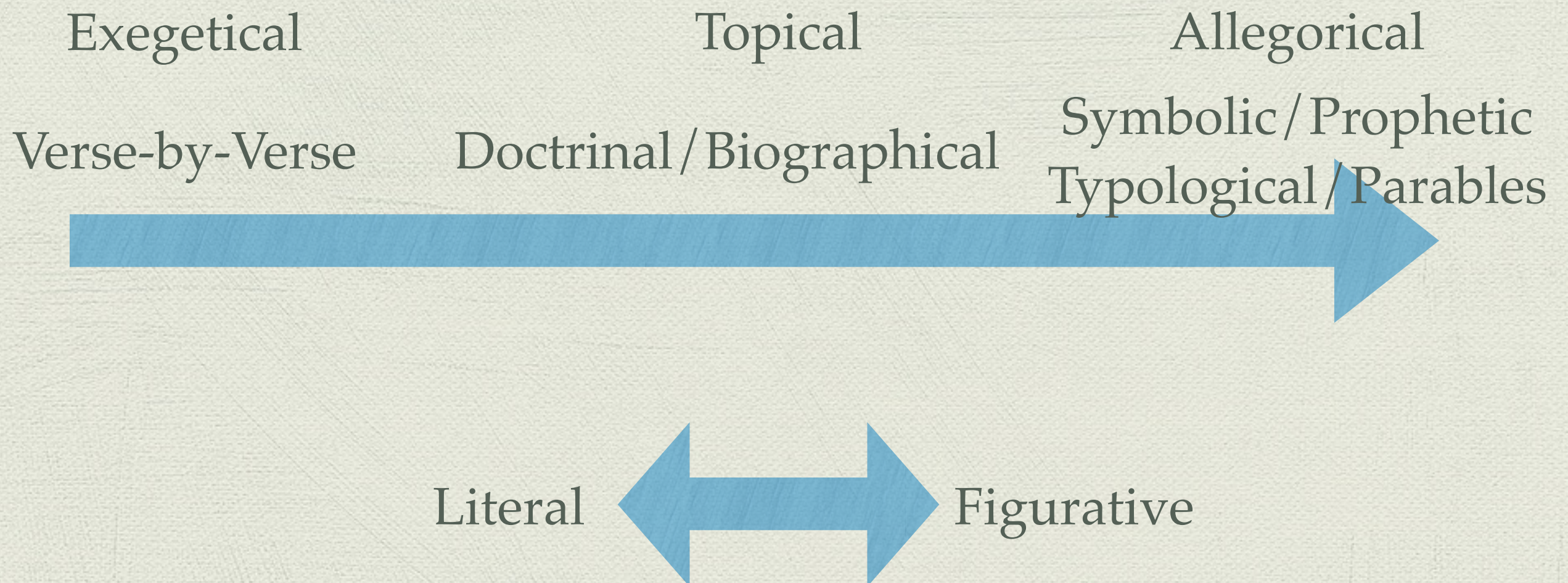


Literal



Figurative

3 Major Approaches



Exegetical / Verse by Verse

- ◆ In daily study the **verse-by-verse method** is often **most helpful**. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on **ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him**, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. **One passage thus studied until its significance is clear** is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained. [Ed 189.4]

Exegetical / Verse by Verse

- ◆ **Example:** Understanding what Paul has to say about righteousness by faith in Romans 1-8.
- ◆ **Pitfall:** Becomes merely dry historical study, like any other ancient manuscript.

Topical/Doctrinal

- ◆ To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have it's proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in an error. [Miller's Rules of Interpretation]
- ◆ The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. [Ed 190.2]

Topical/Doctrinal

- ◆ **Example:** The Doctrine of the Sabbath throughout scripture. Eden (Gen 2:2-3), Jesus (Luke 4:16; 23:52-24:3), Paul (Acts 13:14; 13:42-44; 17:2; 18:4), New Earth (Isa 66:22-23)
- ◆ **Pitfall:** Proof-texting. Misusing verses. Going contrary to original intent of the text.

Allegorical/Typological/Symbolic

- ◆ The language of the Bible should be explained according to its **obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed**. [GC 598.3]
- ◆ How to know when a word is used figuratively. If it makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, then it must be **understood literally; if not, figuratively** (Revelation 12:1, 2; 17:3-7). [Miller's Rules of Interpretation]

Allegorical/Typological/Symbolic

- ◆ To learn the true meaning of figures, **trace your figurative word through the Bible**, and, where you find it explained, put it on your figure, and if it makes good sense, you need look no further; if not, look again. [Miller's Rules of Interpretation]
- ◆ Parables are used as comparisons to illustrate subjects, and **must be explained in the same way as figures**, by the subject and Bible (Mark 4:13). [Miller's Rules of Interpretation]

Allegorical/Typological/Symbolic

- ◆ **Example:** Symbols of Daniel & Revelation, Sanctuary typology, Parables of Jesus
- ◆ **Pitfall:** Spiritualizing truth away or stretching the truth beyond what the text says. Destroying objectiveness of Biblical truth. Returning to the Dark Ages. (i.e. Great Red Dragon?)

Genres

- ◆ **Historical narratives** - Genesis, Exodus, Esther, Nehemiah, Gospels, Acts, etc.
- ◆ **Law** - Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- ◆ **Epistles** - Pauline and general epistles

Genres

- ◆ **Poetry** - Psalms, Song of Solomon
- ◆ **Wisdom** - Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
- ◆ **Prophecy** - Major / minor prophets, Daniel, Revelation.

Example of the 3 Styles

- ◆ **Exegetical:** Gen. 4:4-5. Abel obeyed and brought a lamb while Cain did not.
- ◆ **Topical:** Sacrificial lamb in Genesis, Passover lamb in Exodus, Lambs in the sanctuary services, John calls Jesus the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.
- ◆ **Allegorical:** Rev. 5:6. A lamb as though it had been slain with 7 horns and 7 eyes.

Example of the 3 Styles

- ◆ **Exegetical:** Heb. 11:17-19 as an exposition on Abraham's test within the context of Paul's discourse on faith.
- ◆ **Topical:** Heb. 11:17-19 as a component of a study on topics such as: Faith, obedience, God's Word, life of Abraham/Isaac, the Great Controversy, etc.
- ◆ **Allegorical:** God giving His only begotten son. It also illustrates how Christ took Isaac's place as the ram caught in the thicket. Verified elsewhere in Inspiration.
[PP 155]

3 Basic Questions

◆ Observation

- ◆ “What does this passage say?”

◆ Interpretation

- ◆ “What does this passage mean?”

◆ Application

- ◆ “What does this passage mean to me / us / etc.”

Observation

- ◆ What is the genre?
- ◆ Who is the author writing to? Who's the audience?
- ◆ Read multiple times.
- ◆ Read in different versions/languages.
- ◆ Read widely (helpful to have the big picture in your mind across multiple chapters/books/time periods).
- ◆ Look wide and look narrow – Big concepts and details.

Observation

- ◆ Outline the chapter/book you are studying.
- ◆ Stop at each word/phrase.
- ◆ Notice the tenses, expressions, numbers, pronouns, etc.
- ◆ Ask the basic questions of: Who, what, when, where, why, how?
- ◆ Notice what's stated and what's not stated. Ask yourself, "What does it say?" and "What does it not say?"

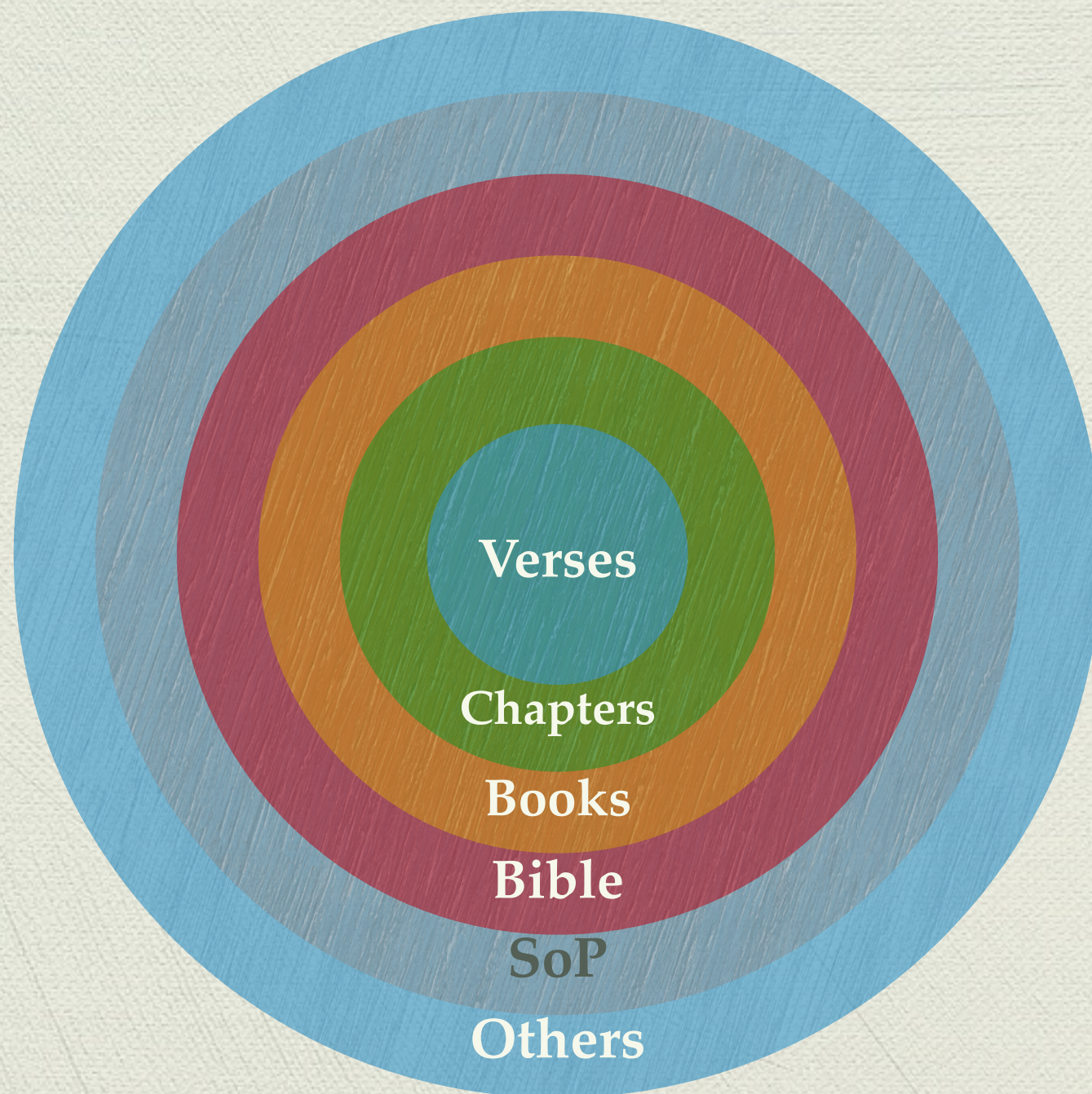
Observation

- ◆ **Imagine yourself in the story as each character.**
- ◆ **Get the historical context of the situation whenever possible.**
- ◆ **Resist the urge to jump to conclusions.**
- ◆ **Paraphrase the passage in your own words.**
- ◆ **Be mindful of context.**

Two Types of Context

1. **Literary Context** - The surrounding words.
2. **Cultural/Historical Context** - The surrounding circumstances.

How to Get the Context



How to Get the Context

1. **Nearby verses** - Ex: Isa 28:9,10
2. **Nearby chapters** - Ex: Dan 8 & 9
3. **Related books** (Based on genre / author / history) - Ex: D&R, Jeremiah / Lamentations, John / Revelation, Pauline epistles / Acts
4. **Other books of the Bible**
5. **Spirit of Prophecy**
6. **Non-inspired resources** (Commentaries, Bible dictionaries, historical books, etc.)

Interpretation

- ◆ What was the author trying to communicate to his/her audience?
- ◆ Synthesize the facts gleaned from observation.
- ◆ Seek to answer questions that arise from observation.
- ◆ Don't roam beyond the facts established in observation.
- ◆ Don't jump to application too quickly.
- ◆ Review William Miller's principles of interpretation if needed.
- ◆ No private interpretation – if in doubt, submit to brethren of experience.

Application

- ◆ Look for universal principles to apply, not some random detail.
- ◆ Finding application for yourself in devotional study will be different than that for others in teaching / preaching.
- ◆ Application can vary depending on your current experience.
- ◆ Remember that the Bible teaches not only the doctrinal information, but also the manner in which we portray and present them.

Summary

- ◆ 3 Styles

- ◆ Exegetical

- ◆ Topical

- ◆ Allegorical

- ◆ 3 Questions

- ◆ “What does it say?”

- ◆ “What does it mean?”

- ◆ “What does it mean to me?”

How to Study Your Bible

Alistair Huang