

Learning How to Read

Contra Costa Gospel Church
Adult Sunday School

Text Before Event 2

If our goal is to arrive at the Author's Intended Meaning (AIM), then we need to make sure we are reading the text as the author intended. In the case of events that are included by the author, we recognize that biblical history is never recorded simply for posterity's sake.

Example: How many children did Adam and Eve have? See Genesis 5:3-4.

How many children can you name? Why is it that only these few are named in the Bible and not the rest?

This reinforces the second major principle of interpretation that we have introduced:

Don't analyze the event in isolation. The event always has its place in the larger narrative.

2) Noah's Ark

Like the story of David and Goliath, this is yet another story we seem to know well. We probably know how many days it rained and poured (??), who/what the inhabitants of the ark were (??), how they got there (??), and how they figured out the Earth was dry (??).

Like the story of David and Goliath, we have analyzed this story to death, and think we know the author's point in telling us this story. What would that be? Why does the author include such a story? What is the point of the story? What is the moral principle, if any?

Like the story of David and Goliath, in order to understand fully the author's intended meaning in including such a story, we have to gather information regarding the larger context of the Book of Genesis and where this place fits in to the story.

Genesis 1-2	The Creation of the world, from the world's perspective (ch. 1) and the individual human's perspective (ch. 2). What is the repeated expression that describes the world at this time?
Genesis 3-4	What was good is now corrupted because of sin being introduced into the world and into the hearts of man. How is this illustrated in Genesis 4?
Genesis 5	The promise/threat fulfilled: "...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, <u>for when you eat of it you will surely die</u> " (Genesis 2:17). This chapter demonstrates that God was telling the truth about their fate. How?

And now we come to our famous story. The world was great, and then it was something completely the opposite of great, with sin running rampant in the world, people killing each other, people dying, and people being utterly corrupted in the process. If we are reading this as a story (and thus, not concerned with the historicity of the events), what is the author trying to show us with the destruction of the world and the beginning of a new race of people through Noah? What is the Lord trying to accomplish? It's interesting to note that when Noah and his family exited the Ark, they were given this instruction, "As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it" (Genesis 9:7).

Read Genesis 9:18-29. Was the intended result of destroying the earth and rebuilding it anew accomplished? Why or why not?

As you can see, we must tread very carefully when are attempting to interpret events in the Bible. These events are put there for a reason, and it's our job as interpreters to figure out the author's reasons for choosing to include the events he does.