

Lesson 11 Notes – 02/28/2008

Immediate Literary Context

Back in Lesson 2, we proposed our method of research as being comparable to four concentric circles. From the outside in, we would look at passages based on (1) Background, (2) Context, (3) Grammar and Structure, and (4) Words. We have now covered Background and Context. This lesson briefly begins our discussion of the Grammar and Structure – what we call the Immediate Literary Context.

Document Composition

1. We have already talked about the various genres of literature. Now we need to talk about the construction or arrangement within the document
2. We already think in terms of introduction, body, and closing. However, there is more to most documents: outline, flow of thought, style of writing, etc.
3. One suggested way to read a Bible book:
 - a. Familiarize ourselves beforehand with the genre of the book (prophetic, epistle, narrative, etc.)
 - b. Read (aloud) the entire document, at one sitting if possible
 - c. Answer the questions:
 1. What was the author's main purpose?
 2. How does he go about achieving his goal?
 3. What are the main points and broad outline?
 4. We are trying to see how the author logically got from A to B
Example: Jonah - chapter 1: running away - chapter 2: humility and re-commitment - chapter 3: preaching in Ninevah - chapter 4: the lesson brought home.
 - d. What are the key words, phrases, and concepts emphasized or repeated?
 - e. What are the turning points in the writing?

Figurative Language

1. A broad subject as part of the immediate literary context – includes a number of major categories: figures of speech, symbols, idioms, literary devices, and other figurative words and expressions
2. “Figurative language is a word, expression, or passage used in a way other than its normal, literal sense.”
3. The purpose of figurative language is to illustrate and express truth in a clearer and more forceful way than a literal expression could do.
4. Here are some general types of figurative language:

Words and Expressions

1. Without trying to classify them, consider some of the following
2. They are vivid, expressive, and memorable

3. II Corinthians 3:2 – “you are our letter written on our hearts”
4. II Corinthians 5:1 – “earthly tent”
5. Galatians 5:15 – “biting and devouring one another”
6. Galatians 4:19 – “in the pains of childbirth”

Idioms

1. Expressions of speech so common as to pass into the everyday use of a language
2. Example: “Son of. . . daughter of” – both Old and New Testament usage
 - a. a physical descendent (not just immediate son or daughter)
 1. Matthew 1:8 – “Joram begat Uzziah” – I Chronicles 3:11-12 shows they were literally 4 generations apart
 2. Jesus often called “Son of David” though David was his distant ancestor
 - b. Sharing a certain quality
 1. Barnabas - Acts 4:36 - Son of Encouragement
 2. James and John - Mark 3:17 - Sons of Thunder
 - c. An indication of affection or relationship
 1. Israel is my son - Jeremiah 3:19, Hosea 11:1
 2. Paul called the Thessalonians, “my little children,” and Timothy, “my son in the faith.”
3. Example: Love - Hate Contrast
 - a. Jacob loved, Esau hated – Malachi 1:2-3, Romans 9:13 – literally?
 - b. Hate father and mother – Luke 14:26 – literally?
 - c. Deuteronomy 21:15-17; Proverbs 13:24; Hebrews 12:8
4. Other examples:
 - a. “hearts melted” - Joshua 2:11; 5:1
 - b. Sun, moon and stars stop their shining (indicating great changes or disaster) – Isaiah 13:9-10; Matthew 24:29; Joel 2:31
 - c. “Weeping and gnashing of teeth” (for severe sorrow and distress) – Matthew 8:12; 13:42; Luke 13:28

Literary Devices

1. Using unusual or graphic imagery to capture attention, or say something difficult
2. II Corinthians 4:7-12 – we have this ministry in jars of clay
3. II Corinthians 10:1-2 – Paul speaks of being “bold” and “timid”; 10:12-18 – Paul’s “boasting”; II Corinthians 11 – Paul’s “foolishness”
6. Acts 21:10-11 – the prophet Agabus “acting out” his prophecy