

Lecture:  
**What is Exegesis?**

**I. Brainstorming**

**II. Defining Some Key Terms**

**1. Exegesis** – from a Greek word meaning “to lead out”; when applied to texts, it has the basic meaning of bringing out or reading out the meaning of a text, thus the *interpretation* or *explanation* of a text; more narrowly, exegesis is often used “to denote the effort to establish the philological and historical sense of a biblical text (what it meant), in contrast to its applicative sense”<sup>1</sup> (what it means; often called “exposition”).

**2. Syntax** – from the Greek word *syntaxis*, “arrangement, organization”; the study of the rules by which sentences are constructed in a given language; a study of the relationship of phrases to one another and how meaning is communicated through grammatical combinations.

**3. Hermeneutics** – from the Greek word *hermeneuein*, to express, to explain, to translate, to interpret; the art of interpretation, or “the rules and procedures for determining the sense [or meaning] of written texts”<sup>2</sup>

**4. Linguistics** – Most generally, the study of language; more specifically, “the science that attempts to understand language from the point of view of its ‘inner workings’ – what linguists call *internal structure*.”<sup>3</sup>

**5. Semantics** – “the study of the relationship between the meaning and content of words and phrases”;<sup>4</sup> more simply, the study of *meaning*, either of words (lexical) or grammatical function.

**6. Textual Criticism** – Simply, the goal of textual criticism is to reconstruct the original wording of the biblical texts.

**7. Heilsgeschichte** – redemptive history; salvation history; the history of redemption; the history of God’s saving acts (von Rad); “an approach to the theological interpretation of Scripture that emphasizes the ongoing story of God’s redemptive activity in history (*Geschichte*).”<sup>5</sup>

**8. Sachexegese** – the interpretation of the Bible in light of its own central concern, i.e., God, rather than an anthropological concern or purely historical-critical approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 3d ed., 57.

<sup>2</sup> Soulen and Soulen, 73.

<sup>3</sup> D.A. Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Soulen and Soulen, 169.

<sup>5</sup> Soulen and Soulen, 72.

### **III. Exegesis and Contributive Areas of Study**

- + *Grammar and Syntax*
- + *Semantics*
- + *Linguistics*
- + *Textual Criticism*
- + *Translation Theories*
- + *Historical Study*
- + *Assorted Types of Biblical Criticism*
- + *Biblical and Systematic Theology*
- + *History of Interpretation*

### **IV. An Exegetical Method**

#### **(1) Establish and Delimit the Text**

#### **(2) Examine the Text with a Microscope: Studying the Grammar, Syntax, and Semantics of the Passage**

#### **(3) Read the Text with a Wide-Angle Lens**

- (a) Getting the flow of the argument or story
- (b) Reading within ever-widening contexts

#### **(4) Inquire about the Historical Context of the Text**

#### **(5) Read the text canonically and theologically**

### **V. Exegesis – “Necessary but not Sufficient”**

### **VI. Conclusion**