

Basics of Faithful Bible Teaching

What is the Context?

Recap:

We've seen from Colossians that faithful preaching will be

1. Loving the church by
2. Doing the hard work of
3. Proclaiming Christ – being a minister of the Gospel
4. Making the Word fully known
5. Trusting that God speaks

We mentioned that, in making the Word fully known, **context** is crucial.

Context is a fancy word simply meaning looking at what comes before and what comes after.

We naturally read a whole letter or email and we understand each sentence as part of the whole.

A text without a context is a pretext to say whatever you want.

No context and a text can mean anything, the more context the more clear and fixed becomes its meaning.

Do we believe that the Bible means one thing or different things to different people?

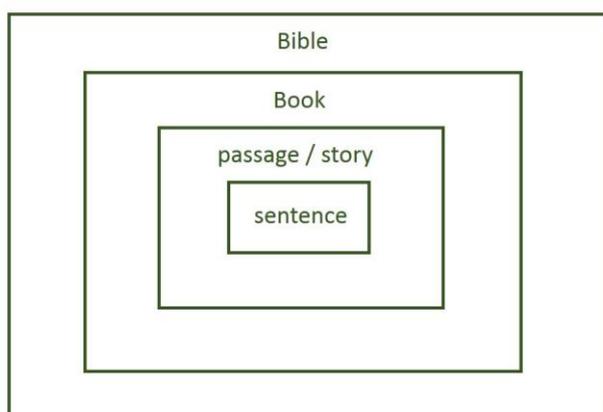
There may be different levels of meaning and different applications but the meaning of the text itself is fixed, it is not subjective or changeable over time.

Often we think it is fluid and subjective because of lack of context. Context fixes the meaning.

- Romans 8:37 – more than conquerors but we may face tribulation, distress, persecution, famine and being killed all the day long
- Heb. 11:1 – in the context of the chapter we see it is not faith in whatever I want – rather faith in *God's promises* of future kingdom and the return of Christ, which we might well die not having seen (v13-16)

95% of false teaching would be stopped by simply looking at the context of the verses used.

When we get to the Bible there are different levels of context:



Bible level

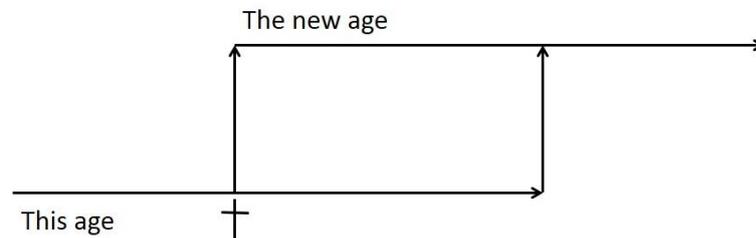
First we need to see the letters as part of a Bible overview – put them in the big story of the whole Bible – the story of salvation, creation → new creation.

If we don't do that we'll forget the big problem the Bible is talking about (and the letters are talking about) and we'll start looking in the letters for tips and principles to apply to what we think is our big problem.

What is the Bible all about? (2 Tim. 3:15)

And that's what the letters are all about – JESUS, JESUS, JESUS, CROSS, CROSS, CROSS

In particular – the NT letters all come in that part of the Bible after Jesus' ascension and before his return. This is the overlap of the ages.



This is such an important thing for us to get our heads around because it underlies all the New Testament letters – it's the basic dynamic that drives them. Christ has come, the great salvation, the great victory has happened at the Cross, the New Age the Prophets spoke of has started in one sense - we have been freed from bondage to hell and the devil and condemnation – we are seated with Christ on high – we've been adopted by the Father – we have every spiritual blessing. But we're still here – we're still in our decaying bodies, we still get sick, we still sin, other people sin, there's persecution, disasters and accidents, and Jesus is not physically here with everything submitting to him, this is not The New Creation is it?!?!

Then one day there will be the consummation of our salvation – when Jesus returns and this age finishes and there is no more pain or crying or suffering and we see Jesus as he is and we are made like him with new glorious bodies to enjoy Him forever.

For Now - The Kingdom of God, The New Age – is Now and Not Yet

In particular, look to see if there is Bible background to the book or letter you are focussed on (don't need to worry about reading lots of history books on ancient Greece – all the background we need is in the Bible itself).

Who likes the book of Acts? Great story!

Spirit coming in fire and wind

Earthquakes and shipwrecks

Thousands believing

Bonfires of magical books

Amazing miracles – people drop dead, people are brought back from the dead

Persecution, beheading, beatings, stoning – time when Paul is dragged out of city, stoned,

left for dead, picks himself up, goes back into the city to carry on preaching

That is the backdrop to the NT letters.

Read Acts 16

- Paul will later write to the Philippians about the “work begun in you” – from Acts 16, what do you think was the work begun in them and who began it?
- What do you see about salvation in Jesus from Acts 16?
- What *partnership in the gospel* do you see going on in Philippi right from the beginning?
- What do you see about suffering and opposition to the gospel here?

Now let's do something really radical... and read through the whole of Philippians in one go. [Make sure you've chosen someone in advance to do this, a good reader who has ideally prepared.]

Keep everything we've just read in Acts 16 in mind

Remember Paul is in prison now

Try to imagine you're hearing this for the first time, as a Philippian

Experience it, see how it makes you feel

