

LIVE! IN CONTEXT—SESSION ONE

CONTEXT MATTERS

An Introduction to Dr. Michael Heiser

John 5:39-40 (ESV)

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

There are many different contextual aspects to the Bible—all of which are valuable to its readers. But what does reading in this context look like? It looks like reading the Bible as a complete, cohesive piece that tells a complete, cohesive story. It looks like uncompromised truth, sticking to the original authors' intended meanings. It looks like reading with integrity, by considering the historical and literary implications of any given passage. And it looks like using the Bible, in context, to understand the Bible — **knowing it can never contradict itself.**

Amy Swanson, Christianity.com Contributing Writer.

Viewer Guide

Why is it important to interpret scripture in context?

It is easier to talk about the importance of reading in context than to actually _____ it.

God (*elohim*- singular) has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the **gods** (*elohim*- plural) he holds judgment: Ps 82:1 (ESV)

This passage sounds like a _____.

Are you really willing to read the text the way an ancient person would read it?

What did you learn from your experience?

Do I unconsciously _____ scripture through my own traditions?

Do I try to change _____, unfamiliar, supernatural passages to explain them away?

Preparation for Video Session

- ◆ Pray seeking wisdom and understanding.
- ◆ Read chapters 1-2 of The Unseen Realm
- ◆ Review the viewer guide and Questions for Deeper Understanding.



POINT TO PONDER

To read the Bible out of context is to open ourselves up to a load of trouble. Particularly to misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and misapplication.

How do these things relate to interpreting the Bible in context?

Many examples of filtering- for instance – Christian _____ teaches one-third of the angels rebelled with Satan, so we assume these events happened together. But there is no verse that says this.

Did the Biblical writers world view differ from ours?

Dr. Heiser was taught angels have no creative abilities – but there is no verse that says this.

The death of Jesus, His resurrection and ascension had something to do with _____ and has connections with specific groups of bad guys which connect the dots and fit into an OT world view.

Tradition is not a bad thing, but we need to recognize when it differs with the Biblical _____.

Tradition is not a bad thing, but we need to recognize when it differs with the Biblical text.

How did the experience change you?

"It made me feel _____." 95% of church goers will never have this experience. It became part of my doctoral dissertation in the Hebrew Studies program.

I was _____ my Bible again, for the first time. It gave me the desire to take scholarship and put it into ordinary language to help people understand scripture.

Personal step of _____ to cross this line as a student – might lose future jobs, recommendations.

This is not new. It sounds new to other people, but it is the text. Scripture will survive.

Dr. Heiser was willing trust God and see how his individual contribution would turn out.

How is it okay to have pagan thinking influence the way we read the Bible?

The Biblical writers were _____ by their world. i.e. Gentiles, ANE culture, anything outside of scripture played a role in how scripture was written.

Paul quotes secular pagan Greek poets several times. This doesn't mean he believed what they said. Paul found the quotes useful to make a point.

Understanding the cultural context makes us better _____.

Example Num 5 – Adultery guilt or innocence - Trial by ordeal was a common theme in ANE world. This was a God-directed defense mechanism, to protect the woman from false accusation.

Gives a glimpse for how the physical world interacts with the spiritual world, which is useful later.

Many Christians are "selectively supernatural"

We can all fall into this. We may _____ the trinity, deity of Christ, incarnation, virgin birth, yet struggle with affirming the reality of concepts such as: demon possession; gods of OT nations; gods of Egypt; Paul's

principalities and powers, Daniel's princes of Persia and Greece.

Affirming these were real entities is something a lot of Christians are _____ to do because it's just too strange.

We end up with two different categories of the supernatural out of convenience.

- ◆ Column A: Focus of most apologetics, reasonable, enlightened, defensible – essential to believing doctrine.
- ◆ Column B: Offends modern sensibilities, not rational, - seems dispensable.

Yet both categories are from the same source, so denying anything is a glaring inconsistency. Whether we try to explain away what the ancient writers believed becomes an issue of _____. Neither column conforms to post-modern, rationalistic world view. We need to be honest with the text and with the LORD.

What is meant by the term “mosaic” with regard to understanding and interpreting the Bible?



A mosaic is a picture made up of lots of little _____, like a puzzle.

Do we understand how our biblical data points fit into a bigger picture and are all _____? Bible College, Seminary, and Graduate School with only a few minutes of instruction about angels and demons might lead one to think this material is not important. Yet it often occurs in key places.

This acts like the glue that symbiotically _____ what is going on in heaven with what is happening on earth.

Virgin birth narratives in other ANE cultures differ in fundamental ways.

We need a Messiah who is God to provide atonement because the plan of salvation is married to covenants made with people who fail and only God can keep His own covenant. So Messiah cannot be merely a man.

Why are Christians called “Holy ones” in the NT when that term is normally used for supernatural beings in God’s counsel, God’s service, God’s heavenly host, God’s family. The terminology is deliberate.

There is a connectivity element that is missing. We need a structure to see how these fit in the big picture.

How would you describe yourself theologically?

Not a heretic! Orthodox trinitarian, conservative theologically. Even though topics may be strange, they are in the Bible, and theologically text driven.

Affirm Orthodox creedal statements: believe in deity of Christ, virgin birth, salvation by faith through grace alone. Denominationally agnostic – have attended many different church traditions.

Can you summarize what it means to interpret the Bible in context?

Interpreting in context means reading the bible the way the _____ would have thought about what he was composing and what his original audience would have thought he was hearing.

“When you read the OT, I want the ancient Israelite living in your _____.”

Questions for Deeper Understanding

Reading the Bible in context is critical to understanding the original meaning of scriptural passages for proper interpretation. Church traditions do not take us as far as the actual meaning of the text.

After reading Ps 82, what are some of the roadblocks to the understanding of what this passage is saying?

When we read a passage that is uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or supernatural sounding, how do we handle that uncomfortableness ?

Give an example of filtering, that Christian tradition teaches?

Why is discounting certain supernatural events in scripture an issue of honesty?

Why is thinking of the Bible as a mosaic helpful in our understanding of the Bible?

For Group Discussion:

Is there an element of “guilt” when we question the traditions of the church or even ask questions about what the biblical text says? **Discuss**

Biblical writers were influenced by the world they lived in. How does cultural context make us better readers of the Bible? **Discuss**

Prayer Request

- ◆
- ◆
- ◆
- ◆
- ◆



"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

~ Isaiah 53:4-5

Other Resources to Consider:

- ◆ www.nakedbiblepodcast.com
- ◆ www.drmsb.com
- ◆ www.moreunseenrealm.com
- ◆ The Divine Council Worldview Facebook Group
- ◆ Why Is Reading the Bible in Context Important? (christianity.com)

Lesson guides developed by Missy Chapman, Deborah Elmquist, and Duretta Anderson