

Lesson Four and Five – (lecture three and four of D A Carson) by Julie Cortens

..answering questions

...Begotten of water - could it refer to the physical birth – our first birth?

Nicodemus' question about being born again – not the physical birth. Vs 5 parallel to verse three – begotten of above – is parallel to begotten of water and Spirit. Nicodemus did not understand the scriptures he should have – the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus is pointing to the OT scriptures and not the physical birth.

...Is it desirable or possible to teach Systematic Theology or what is the difference between textual preaching and systematic theology?

The danger of expository teaching is that it is possible to so focus on the text at hand that you lose the perspective of the redemptive story running through the whole of scripture. Expository teaching focuses so narrowly that you don't see the ties with Biblical truth. It is always essential to tie your narrow expository teaching to the larger structures of Christian theology. Then you see how the particular scripture contributes to the larger Biblical truths.

...didn't Jesus use topical teaching rather than expository teaching?

Did He? Was He not expounding on scripture? Expository teaching deals with the hard things and teaches people to deal with these things – it prevents the preacher from taking off in a direction that is mere personal opinion.

...can we know the meaning of the text about the parable of the virgins without the knowledge of the practices of first century marriages?

Matt 25:14. If you do not know the background you may draw conclusions that do not have any bearing on the text.

...what happens to the perspicuity (definitiveness) of scripture?

... how do you encourage young people to read scripture using your principals today.

Answer – set an example! If young people hear excellent teaching they will learn how to interpret scripture. Set a good example. Do your children see you pick up your Bible and read it because you like it? Do you have family devotions daily?

WORDS/ LOGIC /GENRE

Words

1. Beware of the “root” fallacy – the assumption that the true meaning of words is bound up with its root. The structure of each language are different. E.g. – the English word “home” does not appear in any other language. There are words/phrases that come close but nothing is close to what the word home means to those who speak English. Agapeo –I love – people assume that agape comes from this root word and therefore is a special kind of love – the love from the verb Agapeo. You cannot be sure you have got to the real meaning of a word by breaking it up and looking at its roots – eg pineapple and butterfly. ☺ You cannot assume that the meaning of a word is established by its root.

2. Avoid reverse etymology – pursuing roots. This is taking a word which has changed over the centuries and then taking the current meaning and reading it into the Biblical use of the word.

3. Be aware of how words change their meaning over time. Eg “martus” – martyr. In pre-biblical sources it refers to someone who gives witness outside a court...then it refers to someone who gives a solemn witness outside a judicial setting...then to one who witnesses to personal faith even under the threat of death...then one who witnesses to personal faith by the acceptance of death...to be a witness is to be a martyr...one who dies for a cause....today it means someone who feels sorry for himself. Words change their meaning.

4. Avoid verbal parallelomania. A mania that seeks a parallel to everything. 1 Tim 2 – “I do not permit a woman to teach or *have authority over* a man” “*authenteo*” - verb for *have authority over*. This is the only place where this verb is found in the entire New Testament. There are not any parallels to draw from. How strongly can the external parallels control the internal material?

5. Avoid linking language and mentality too tightly. Eg – one might say “The Greek mind does not understand ‘x’ “. There is always a way in any language of making a distinction if one wants to. Language does help shape the way we think, but drawing too tight a connection is dangerous.

6. Avoid narrowing the semantic range of a word prematurely – ie avoid narrowing the *range of meaning* of a word prematurely. Eg Baptism in the Spirit. This expression is in the NT six times only – what does it mean? It has been used in a variety of ways over church history – eg Puritans – “flood us with your Spirit – renewal” Today – Identified with one experience (I presume Carson meant speaking in tongues) Do we have the right to narrow the meaning of a Biblical expression to one particular thing that it has been associated with in our tradition.

7. Recognize that different authors use words differently. Two words that have exactly the same meaning in that context can both be used. If they are not quite parallel a third word might help to give meaning. General synonyms might help to explain or shape the whole meaning by building a larger meaning. In another context this might not be so. Eg John 21: 17 Jesus interacts with Peter after the resurrection “Peter do you *love* me” - first and second time the verb is *agapeo* – the third time the verb used is *phileo*. John is a master of using different verbs. *Agapeo* – has the full range of the use of the word in the English language.

8. Learn to recognize the diversity of metaphors. Jesus says I am the “door”. The “lion of Judah” The Bible must not be taken *literally*. Metaphors change over time. The context is the most important control. Eph 5:21 submit to *one another* out of reverence for Christ. – one another - “*allelon*”

Conclusion

Where you are dealing with great mysteries of the faith draw only those inferences that scripture itself draws.