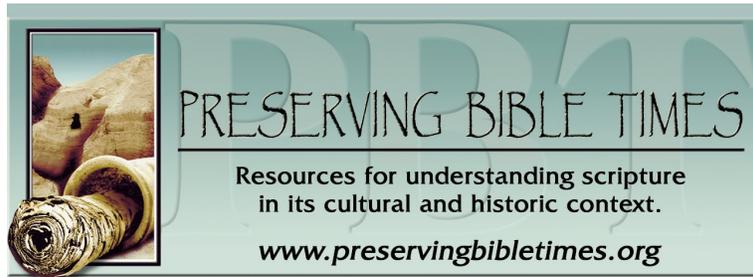


The Case for Context

THE ISSUE... For the words of Scripture to be fully transformational, they need to be heard and understood as the Biblical writers fully intended them to be. Modern approaches, however, have substituted many things for the Biblical writers intention – personal beliefs, allegories projected onto the text, a small group’s collective “what do you think it means” consensus, current theological or psychological fads, etc.

BACK THEN... Words, phrases, idioms, and places in Scripture all have meaning. The Bible writers had very precise meanings in mind for the words and images they used. They readily assumed their audience would know what they were describing, together with its intended meaning. In part, these writers assumed their audiences understood:

- **History** – Significant events and proclamations made at important places, the history of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the revolts and occupations of the inter-testamental period, the occupation by Rome, the migration of the Essenes to Qumran, etc.
- **Literary Form** – Parallelism, parables, allegories, historical allusions, proverbial sayings.
- **Linguistic Technicalities** – “*Remez*” words, idioms and phrases used by Jewish rabbis with concrete, if convoluted, meanings that had developed during the history of the language as well as the Hebrew and Aramaic usage lying behind Greek linguistic structures.
- **Jewish Village Social Customs** – Everyday practices of the Jewish family and community, such as mutual hospitality, issue of honor and shame, social reciprocity and eating procedures and protocols at dinners and social events
- **Religious Culture** – Ceremonial laws, feasts, issues of ritual purification, the Sabbath, the rabbi/disciple dynamic and how disciples were “made,” as well as the corruption of Temple laws, worship, and Temple Leadership
- **Leadership** – Differences in the Northern and Southern Jewish religious leadership based on different history, beliefs, and practice.
- **Political Backdrops in the midst of the History of the Jewish People** – The palm branch and other symbols and practices of Jewish nationalism and identity used in response to Roman occupation.



- **Messianic Prophecy and related Messianic Themes** – The meaning of terms such as “*The Prophet*”, “*Son of David*”, “*Son of Man*”, etc., in the development of Jewish messianic belief.
- **Geography** – The effects of climate, topography and geology on daily life in this small land with its extreme geographical variances producing, for example, the dangers on the road to Jericho.
- **Physical Features of Biblical Sites**, which produce mental pictures of such things as the Herodium when Jesus talked about a faith that could move mountains.
- **Oral Tradition and Rabbinic Wisdom** – Traditional Jewish teachings taught in schools and home by word of mouth, but absent from our written records, so that Jesus would say, “*You have heard it said, but I say unto you.*”
- **Agrarian economy** – The nature of tenant farming and village life, dependent on agricultural production with its specific ways of sowing seeds, running olive presses, working vineyards, threshing grain, etc.
- **Spatial Proximities** – The brief distances in the Holy Land and between sites, e.g., such as the closeness of the village of Nain near Mt. Tabor, where Jesus healed a widow’s son, to the village of Shunem where Elisha likewise healed a woman’s son.

DISCOVERING WHAT HAS BEEN LOST... Preserving Bible Times (PBT) is one organization which has realized what has been happening over time to our contextual understanding of Scripture through the accumulation of progressive layers of Western World View and Modernity thinking. PBT is committed to doing the best we can to capture and preserve as much as possible of the integrated context that shapes our understanding of authorial intent (original meaning) of the Biblical text.

Preserving Bible Times is an organization dedicated (in part) to capturing the visual images of the Bible lands, e.g. archeological sites, geography, village life, etc., and sharing their contextual significance for understanding Scripture. Currently thousands of subjects have been captured in photographic images as well as hundreds of hours of digital motion footage. This includes not only the usual historical and archaeological sites, but as many images of village life and rural pastoral life referenced in the Bible as still exist. The vast majority of reachable existing historical and archeological Bible Times sites have been documented by Preserving Bible Times.

