

NT 615 - 5-3-1 – *Kaiser & Silva, ch. 11*

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Questions:

1. What is the significance of reading the NT letters as wholes?
2. What is the significance of reading the NT letters historically?
3. What is the significance of reading the NT letters as literary documents?
4. What is the significance of reading the NT letters theologically?
5. What is the significance of reading the NT letters as authoritative documents?

Answers:

1. Letter must be read in context and straight through several times to become familiar with its content, the concerns, the purposes of the author, and the way of the argument is developed.
2. We have to read between the lines so as to reconstruct the historical context that reinforces and the apparent meaning of a passage.
3. There has been a growing recognition of the need to analyze the letters of the NT in the light of ancient rhetorical practices, which has had some valuable repercussions, not the least of which is a renewed appreciate for the wholeness and coherence of these documents.
4. A balance is needed for commitment to the divine unity of Scripture and to recognize and emphasize the distinctiveness of each letter.
5. Without question, certain commands and principles in Scripture are difficult to apply in our day, but it doesn't mean there is no present application.

Terms:

1. Read “historically”: written by a particular individual (or group of individuals) in a particular time in history and that is was motivated by some particular occasion.
2. Occasional writings: letters to meet specific historical needs.
3. Apologetic letter: a rhetoric form in the ancient world with a (1) Epistolary prescript, (2) Exordium (introduction of the facts), Narratio (Statement of the facts), (3) Propositio (summary of legal content of narration), (4), Probatio (proofs or arguments), (5) Exhortatio (exhortations), and (6) Epistolary postscript.

Summary:

The New Testaments are often understood as personal correspondence or a textbook of theology, which can mislead people to understand that they are historical letters. One may read a section, isolating the text, rather than reading it in the context of the entire letter. The author is writing in the epistles to address specific needs, but the modern audience need to read in between the lines in order to reconstruct the historical context. These epistles are well crafted writings and may have used rhetorical methods used in antiquity. The epistles add both a contribution, distinctively and unifying to the Scriptures, especially the theme of last days have begun with Jesus first advent. Lastly, the epistles are authoritative and we cannot simply dismiss any difficult teaching because it seems culturally irrelevant.