

# GOD'S PLAN FOR US

- We believe that simple reason can lead us to conclude that there must be a “creator”. From sound science we know that things are predictable and do not change spontaneously. There must be a “first cause”. Faith enables us to name it as God!
- God gave us the brains to figure out that He must be, but He gave us personal revelation in regards to His more “personal” nature.
- St. Augustine suggests that task of “Theology” in one sense is *Faith seeking Understanding!*

# DIVINE REVELATION

- The Bible is a collection of writings written by a member of a community of faith for a community of faith.
- The Old Testament are the Jewish Scriptures
- The New Testament are a collection of letters that the early Christians wrote when they came to believe the Jesus' return was not as imminent as they believed.

# THE BIBLE IS GOD'S STORY

## *HIS STORY*

- ◉ God reveals to us more about His nature through Divine Revelation.
- ◉ Philosophy can take us to see the necessity of a “first Cause”, but it will never bring us to “Trinity”, or Incarnation, or the specific insights that God reveals to us.
- ◉ The Bible recounts “Salvation History” an account how God enters the world and reveals His plan for the human family.
- ◉ The books of “the Bible” was originally written in Hebrew, possibly Aramaic, and Greek, generally with no punctuation

# THE BIBLE IS THE CHURCH'S BOOK

- The early Christians had no “Bible” as such, they may have had some copies of letters, or parts of Jewish scrolls, but it would not have been assembled in what we call the bible.
- After the Roman Emperor converted to Christianity in the 300's a council was called and the Emperor wanted an “authoritative list” and the Bishops of Nicea complied.
- Irenaeus, and early Church Father, referenced many NT letters in the late second century and explicitly noted the four Gospels as “canonical” or reliable.

# GETTING AROUND IN THE BIBLE

- Originally the Bible and its letters or books were not divided in to paragraphs and verses. This was a much later development.
- Typically one finds a reference such as:
- MT 19:20 or Jn 6: 51b-58a.
  - The Letters are the abbreviation of the Biblical book.
  - The first number is the Chapter
  - The second number or set of numbers is a reference to a verse or grouping of verses.
    - Note the “a” or “b” would denote the first or second half of the verse.

# HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

- ◉ Just do it! St. Thomas said that the Bible is the soul of our Sacred Theology.
- ◉ St. Jerome, who translated the Bible from the original languages into Latin said: Ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance of Christ!
- ◉ The first two chapters, Genesis and Exodus are a good place to start.
- ◉ I would then read the Gospels, Acts and Pastoral Epistles. (Hold off on Revelation)
- ◉ Then read the prophets

# VATICAN II'S DOCUMENT ON DIVINE REVELATION - *DEI VERBUM*

- God so loved the word that He reveals Himself in Word and in Deed.
- Two Aspects of God's Revelation
  - Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition
    - Little t and Big T
- The Bible has both the New and the Old Testament
  - 46 Books in the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures (Includes Deutero-canonical books ,Tobit, Judith, Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch and additions in Esther and Daniel)
  - 27 Books in the New Testament

# SACRED SCRIPTURE - THE HOLY BIBLE

- The Hebrew Scriptures (The Old Testament)
  - The Pentateuch
  - The Judges
  - Kings (Chronicles)
  - Wisdom Literature
    - Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Wisdom, Sirach
  - The Prophets
- The New Testament
  - The Gospels
  - Pastoral Epistles
  - Revelation

# THE ART OF INTERPRETATION

## HERMENEUTICS

- Did you ever see the movie, *Back to the Future*? Imagine you take the time machine back 150 years with a current sports page with the headline that reads: Cubs maul Pirates! Most would think some bear cubs attacked some pirates on a ship.
- This confusion would be the result of context, and yet we are trying to interpret something written 2 to 3 thousand years ago in a totally different language! Not an easy task.

# PROPHECY - DIVINE GUIDANCE

- Prophecy is understood by many as God directly guiding others by an internal voice telling the prophets what to say, God can certainly do this, but His inspiration is seemingly not limited to this.
- Prophets seem to be those who are people who are attuned to God and the world around them, they trust God and His ways, and can call to task those who seem to reject God's instructions.

# THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

## ○ The Literal Sense

- This relates to the intended literal sense of the words - What do the words mean?

## ○ The Fuller or Spiritual Sense

### ▪ The Anagogical Sense

- This aspect relates to the eternal destiny or realities

### ▪ The Allegorical Sense

- This relates to senses that can be drawn through imagination (e.g Abraham and Isaac's sacrifice a foreshadowing of Christ and the cross)

### ▪ The Tropological or Moral Sense

- They moral implications of a passage

# MANY LEVELS OF MEANING

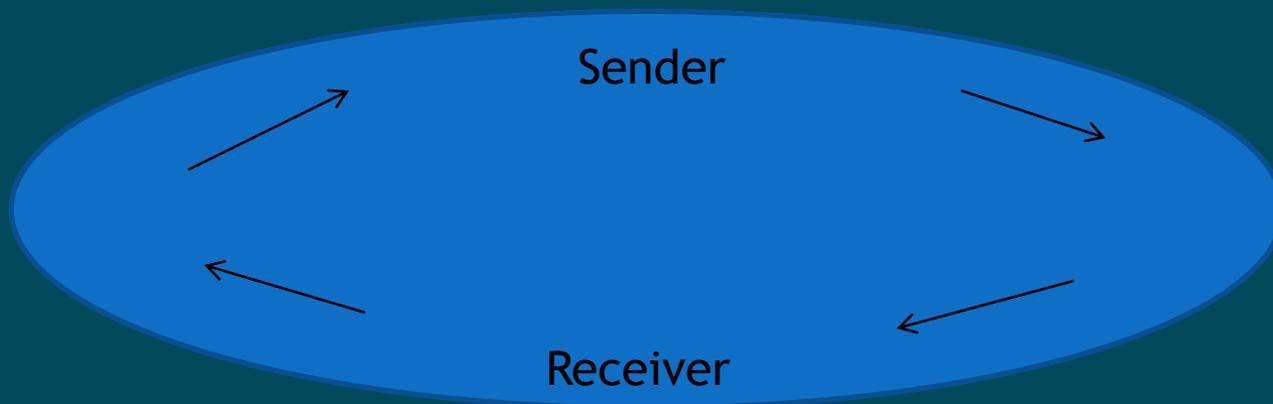
- ◉ Wisdom 2:12-24
- ◉ Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, Reproaches us for transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training. He professes to have knowledge of God and styles himself a child of the LORD. To us he is the censure of our thoughts; merely to see him is a hardship for us, Because his life is not like other men's, and different are his ways. He judges us debased; he holds aloof from our paths as from things impure. He calls blest the destiny of the just and boasts that God is his Father. Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him. For if the just one be the son of God, he will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. With revilement and torture let us put him to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him." These were their thoughts, but they erred; for their wickedness blinded them, And they knew not the hidden counsels of God; neither did they count on a recompense of holiness nor discern the innocent souls' reward. For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it.

# THE LITERAL SENSE

- Modern Biblical “Exegesis” (The Historical Critical Method - HCM) limits itself to the literal sense which includes the analysis of various literary forms.
  - Source “criticism”
    - Who wrote it? In the Old Testament there are various suggestions, The Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly or Deuterist sources, typically E, J, P and D sources in the technical literature
  - Form “criticism”
    - Narrative
    - Prophetic
    - Poetic

# THE ART OF INTERPRETATION HERMENEUTICS

- The Hermeneutical Circle - We need to be aware of who is the intended audience is and how its words would be understood.
- There is the “Sender” and the “Receiver” and there is a certain Give and take.



# FROM OUR EXAMPLE FROM WISDOM

- ◉ When looking at this passage we try and discover the context and timing of the writings.
- ◉ This passage is believed to be written about 100 years before Christ.
- ◉ If we look at it through our “Christian colored glasses” it is an incredible prophecy predicting Christ’s suffering and death that he suffered and the ridicule he experienced at the hands of the authorities of the day.

# FROM THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

- If you understand Israel as the “just one or righteous one”, and the Romans as those oppressing them, the passage takes on a profoundly different meaning that simply recounts the suffering of the Jewish people at the time.
- Rome was big into “law” and their “discipline was unquestionable, and they would have little understanding as to how they could be considered “unclean” or impure?
- God inspired the author by historical events to foreshadow His Master Plan fulfilled in Christ!

# ANOTHER EXAMPLE

- Psalm 22: “My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?”
- Matthew and Mark’s Gospels were directed to a Jewish Audience
- Luke and John’s Gospels were directed to primarily gentile audiences.
- When Jesus is dying one finds these words “My God, my God why have you abandoned me”. In John and Luke we here Jesus say, “It is finished” and “Into your hands I commend my spirit”.

# THE HERMENEUTICAL KEY

- The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm was traditionally prayed when a Jew had successfully negotiated a trial in their life. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm ends as one of praise and trust in God's divine providence.
- A Jewish person would easily understand these words of Jesus as a prayer, because it was customary for Jews to pray the psalms.
- A non-Jewish audience would not have the background to interpret these words, so it would seem plausible that John and Luke would choose not to include this expression.

# SUGGESTED READING

- *The New Catholic Answer Bible pp. 1 -xxxii*
  - *Dei Verbum - The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.*
- *Class Notes pp. 9-12*