*Session 10*

*Cultural Exegesis: Behind the Text*

Understanding culture helps us understand better words.

Learn to ask questions about culture.

* Worldview: general values or outlook of those in text or in society at large
* Societal structures: marriage-family patterns, roles of men and women
* Physical features: climate, weather, means of transportation
* Economic structures: means of making a living, wealth vs. poverty, slavery, economic mobility
* Political climate: governing structures, loyalties among groups and leaders, behavior patterns, customs, dress
* Religious structures: practices, power centers, beliefs, rituals, affiliations.

1. **World View Questions**

* the sources of matter and energy
* spirits and spiritual power
* cause and effect
* animism versus modern and scientific worldviews

1. **Value and Meaning Questions**

Meaning from power versus meaning from status

Honor and shame established status

Purity, order, and appropriateness

Important values in the ancient world

* + - * Village life and having small circles of known people.
      * High value was placed on family.
      * The goal of increasing one’s status through honor
      * Shame was avoided
      * Patron and client, sponsorship, power and position determined relationships.
      * Limited goods
      * Certain “taboos” were avoided

1. **Sociological and Psychological Questions**

The nature of humans

* + - * 1. Group: “Dyadic culture” as primary unit of society
        2. Individual: Platonistic dualism, trichotomist, psychosomatic unity

What does the Bible mean by a person?

**4. Political Questions**

Political assumptions

Idea ruler

Ideal versus reality

OT “ideal” = King who fear God

NT “reality” = control of Roman Empire

**5. Economic Questions**

“ideal” and the “actual” economic

“money-exchange” or “barter” culture

food, housing, and possessions

World of poverty: affected food, housing

Only a few rich, often condemned in Scripture

Heavy Roman tax burden & many slaves

**6. Educational Questions**

Few could read and write but memorized

How did people learn?

Knowledge of Scripture?

Synagogue school

Few copies of Scripture

Oral learning

**7. Religious Questions**

View of deity

Religious culture

Rituals

polytheism versus monotheism

People’s knowledge of God

Spiritual formation methods

**8. Customs of Life Questions**

marriage, birthing, death, burial, clothing, work, leisure, family life, rites of passage, betrothal and marriage