



## Week 2: A Jesus-centered Reading of the Bible Pastor Derek Vreeland

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture | Tradition | Reason | Experience

*Isn't the interpretation of Scripture subjective?*

Subjective reality = comes from within; I am the subject

Objective reality = exists outside of myself; it is the object

Using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in community

- Studying *Scripture* in community and in light of the community of biblical scholars
- Opening ourselves to Christian *traditions* that are different from our own
- *Reasoning* together
- Sharing our *experiences* in community

Nobody takes the Bible "the way it is."

The "perspicuity of Scripture" is the idea that what is necessary to experience salvation according to the Bible is clear and easy to understand.

In his book *The Bible Made Impossible*, Christian Smith argues that the perspicuity, or clarity, of Scripture is not true because of what he calls "pervasive interpretive pluralism."

The Bible tells a big sweeping story from creation to new creation, a story in five parts:

1. Creation
2. Corruption
3. Covenant
4. Christ
5. New Creation

In reading the Bible with Jesus at the center, with Jesus as the main character, we allow Jesus to shape how we interpret what we are reading. This is the *Christocentric* reading of Scripture. Jesus becomes the interpretive guide for our reading and understanding of all Scripture.

Brad Jersak in his book *A More Christlike Word* calls this kind of Bible reading, reading Scripture the “Emmaus way.”

*Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* - Luke 24:27 NLT

*Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.* - Luke 24:44-45 NLT

Examples of Jesus reading Scripture in the Emmaus way:

*For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. “The people of Nineveh will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent.* - Matthew 12:40-41 NLT

*Jesus said: “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up so all who believe in him may have eternal life.”* - John 3:14-15 NLT

“The Emmaus Way was never about changing what the Bible meant after the fact. Rather, it’s an unveiling by the Spirit of God, who was already breathing through the words in anticipation of the incarnation.... Christ and his gospel were embedded in the soil of the Old Testament by the Spirit. Now behold its *telos* in Jesus Christ.” - Brad Jersak, *A More Christlike Word*

Paul also read the Old Testament in the Emmaus way, with Jesus at the center.

*I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. - 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 NLT*

In his massive work *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas describes four ways of reading Scripture or four senses of Scripture.

"The author of Holy Writ is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves." - Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas taught that Scripture has four senses (or meanings):

1. Historical (literal)
2. Allegorical (symbolic)
3. Ethical (moral)
4. Mystical (anagogical)

Historical: *What does this text say within its cultural context?*

Allegorical: *How does this text lead us to Jesus?*

Ethical: *What does this text call us to do as followers of Jesus?*

Mystical: *How does this text draw us near to God?*

Examples...

"Greet one another with a holy kiss." - Romans 16:16 ESV

*"And regarding Jezebel, the Lord says, 'Dogs will eat Jezebel's body at the plot of land in Jezreel.' The members of Ahab's family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures." (No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as Ahab did under the influence of his wife Jezebel. His worst outrage was worshipping idols... - 1 Kings 21:23-26 NLT*

Jesus is not only the center of Scripture, but Jesus is the goal of Scripture (*Christotelic*). The goal of Scripture is to lead us to Jesus. The written word leads us to the living Word.