

## EXEGETICAL PAPER INSTRUCTIONS

Rel 121H Huntsman

The exegetical paper is a short treatment (usually between 5–7 pages) of a single passage of text, consisting of a close reading and HISTORICAL, LITERARY, and THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

The first step is to select a passage for analysis. A discrete section of text is often referred to as a *pericope* (Greek for “cutting around,” that is, a section extracted from the surrounding text). This can consist of a single episode of narrative, a short vision or discreet section of a vision; a segment of a sermon, etc. Generally a manageable pericope is between 5–25 verses.

A good reference for the process of writing an exegetical paper is Michael Gorman’s *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* (Peabody: Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), selections of which have been reproduced in the accompanying handout.

First read Gorman, 7–11, to review what exegesis is. In sum, the process of exegesis is asking questions of the text:

1. HISTORICAL QUESTIONS: What situation is the context of the pericope—first, what occasioned the event, teaching, vision, or sermon; and second, what caused the writer to record it and include it in his text? Also, what historical and cultural factors influenced the original actors and, separately, which influenced the writer in the way that he portrayed or crafted the pericope? This is largely a *diachronic process*. Refer to class discussions, packet readings, and commentaries for information on such questions.
2. LITERARY QUESTIONS: What kind of writing is the passage (genre or form) and what are its literary aims (that is, what is the author trying to accomplish by including the passage)? Also, how does this passage relate to its immediate context (surrounding passages) and to the overall organization of the book? This is *synchronic exegesis*. The outlines of each book found on the class website (<http://erichuntsman.com/rel121/outlines.htm>) may be particularly useful for this.
3. THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS: What principles or doctrines does this passage illustrate or teach, and, just as importantly, how does it engage and affect the reader? This is the point where you can reflect on what the passage means to you. This is *existential exegesis*, and is, ultimately, the most important kind of analysis.

Next, read Gorman, 28–30, and note the six main steps in the exegetical process. Each of these will form a section of your paper. They are summarized as follows:

- survey/introduction (for this short paper, 1 paragraph)
- contextual analysis (2 paragraphs, one on historical context and one on literary)
- formal analysis (indicates what type of writing [form] the passage is, how it fits into the larger narrative; 1–2 paragraphs)
- detailed analysis (4–5 paragraphs, treating each verse or section of your text)

- synthesis (1 paragraph)
- reflection (1-3 good paragraphs; this is the place for your existential exegesis)

The weight of your paper should be on the *detailed analysis* and the *reflection*.

Review “Practical Guidelines for Writing a Research Exegesis Paper” in Gorman, 205–209, and then read the sample exegetical paper provided in Gorman, 211-216. Note how Ms. Chappell used section headings for each of step of the exegetical process.

Scriptural citations can be noted with parenthetical references. Other citations should be done as footnotes, either according to the *SBL Handbook of Style* (published by the Society of Biblical Literature) or *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

You need not rely excessively on commentaries or secondary sources, but it would be good to refer to a few to see how they treat your passage. A few works that you may find useful include McConkie and Millet’s *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, the new *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Dennis Largey, general editor), and the appendices of Grant Hardy’s *The book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition*.