

Study Guide: Biblical Criticism

1. What is Biblical Criticism?

- Definition: Academic study of biblical writings that evaluates them like any other ancient text.
- Greek root: krin (to judge, discern).
- Key point: Not an attack on the Bible, but an investigation using evidence-based methods.
- Scholar's rule of thumb: Interpret the Bible as you would any other ancient religious text.

2. Critical vs. Confessional Approaches

- Critical scholarship: Uses academic tools freely, seeks original meaning, probability/analogy.
- Confessional study: Begins with faith assumptions, seeks devotional or spiritual meaning.

3. Exegesis vs. Eisegesis

- Exegesis: Drawing meaning out of the text (historical, cultural, literary).
- Eisegesis: Reading one's own ideas into the text.

4. Major Types of Criticism

- Historical Criticism: Origins, communities, traditions.
- Text Criticism: Manuscripts, original text.
- Literary Criticism: Themes, structure, author's intent.
- Source Criticism: Identify sources.
- Form Criticism: Genre and social setting.
- Redaction Criticism: Editors' role.
- Social-Scientific Criticism: Sociology, anthropology.
- Perspectival Criticism: Feminist, post-colonial.

5. Historical Development

- Medieval Era: Church/state control.
- Enlightenment: Spinoza, Locke, Paine, Copernican revolution.
- Modern Acceptance: 1943 Pope Pius XII endorses historical-critical method, 1964 Catholic confirmation, Protestant debates.

6. Core Principles of Historical-Critical Method

- Critical inquiry & rational analysis.
- Probability through analogy.
- Methodological doubt (limits of history).
- Cultural context.
- Analytical objectivity.
- Correlation of causes and effects.

7. Biblical Criticism & History

- History = rational narrative based on evidence, chronology, and probability.
- Goal: Understand texts in their original context.

Quiz Questions

- 1 What does the Greek word *krinō* mean, and how does it relate to biblical criticism?
- 2 How does critical scholarship differ from confessional study?
- 3 Define exegesis and eisegesis. Give one example of each.
- 4 Which type of criticism focuses on comparing manuscripts to rule out copying errors?
- 5 What is the main goal of form criticism?
- 6 How does redaction criticism differ from source criticism?
- 7 What was the significance of the Enlightenment for biblical criticism?
- 8 Which Pope made the historical-critical method a “duty” for Catholics in 1943?
- 9 List three core principles of the historical-critical method.
- 10 Why is it important to interpret the Bible as an ancient text rather than assuming it speaks directly in modern categories?