

Next Steps with the Bible

Going Deeper and Growing Stronger

Week 6: Understanding Biblical Narrative

For my thoughts,
are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,
declares the Lord.

For as the heavens are
higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher

than your ways and
my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:8-9

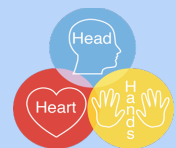




Understanding Biblical Narrative

1. Review of Week 5: Letters

- Letters are direct instruction and exhortation from the apostolic circle for specific church situation
- The body of a letter contains a logical “argument” that needs to be contextually analyzed.
- Outline of Jude?

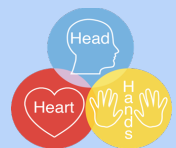




Understanding Biblical Narrative

2. How we got biblical narratives

- God acted in history and his people responded.
- Believers told of God's acts *orally* and *in writing* for the faithful community (Luke 1:1-4).
- Those who told of God's acts interpreted their *significance* for the community.
- Narratives *faithfully* represent *what* actually happened.
- These records *creatively* portray the *so what?* of what happened.



Biblical Historiography

Event → Eyewitness → Scripture

God <i>acted</i> to redeem his people	→	God's people <i>interpreted</i> and transmitted God's redemptive acts for his people.	→	God guided his people in <i>writing</i> about God's acts.
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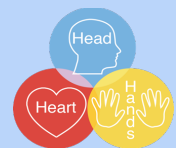
Historical Revelation — ~~Written~~ Revelation



Understanding Biblical Narrative

3. Literary Narrative vs. Historical Chronicle

- *Selective* not comprehensive
- *How* it happened not just *that* it happened
- Readers should be actively engaged *participants* in the event, not a passive *observers* standing apart from the story.
- *Empathy* : Hebrews 12:1 and “so great a cloud of witnesses”



So great a cloud of witnesses?



Does the “great cloud of witnesses” *watch* us run the race?

. . . or . . .

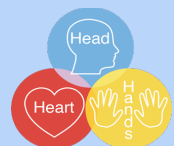
Does the cloud *bear witness* to us by their faithful lives? (Hebrews 11)



Understanding Biblical Narrative

4. Characteristics of Literary Narratives

- ***Point of View***
 - The author tells the story from his/her worldview and purposes.
- ***Characterization***
 - Major characters are portrayed as *protagonist(s)* and *antagonist(s)*.
- ***Plot***
 - Episodes tend to portray rising *suspense*, a key moment, and the *resolution* of the issue.





Understanding Biblical Narrative

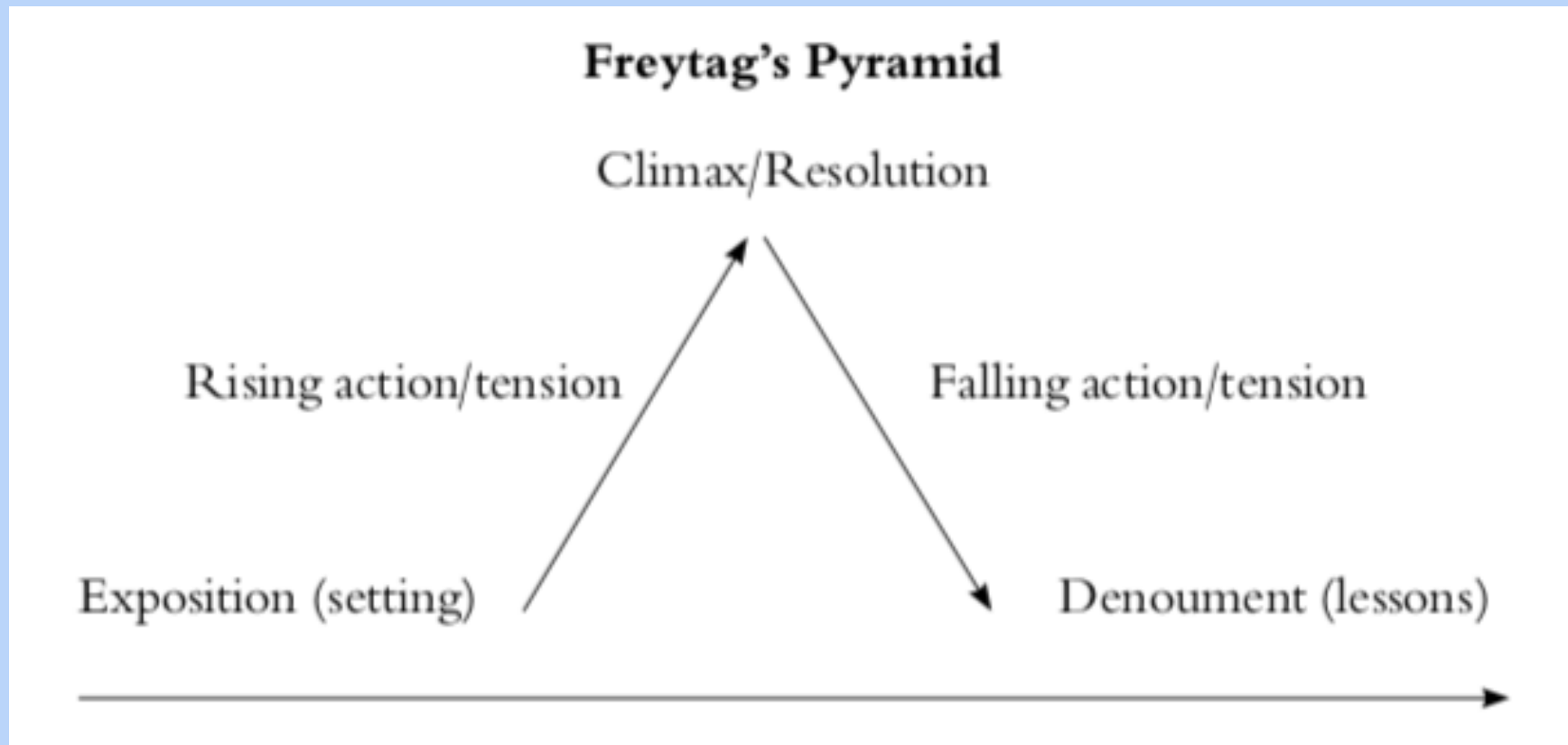
5. “The Plot Thickens”: A Common Pattern

- Story-plots typically build *suspense* until the protagonist comes to a *test*.
 - In a *comedy*, the protagonist passes the test (“and they all lived happily ever after”?)
 - In a *tragedy*, the protagonist fails the test (but there is always another test tomorrow).



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5. “The Plot Thickens”: A Common Pattern





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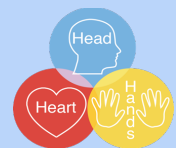


Understanding Biblical Narrative

6. Examples

- The Bible taken as a whole
- Ruth
- Esther
- The calming of the storm (Matt 8/Mark 4/Luke 8)*
- The parable of the Sower/Seed/Soil (Matt 13/Mark 4/Luke 8)

* For details go to <http://mathaytes.blogspot.com/2011/08/bible-study-tips-use-plot-diagrams.html>



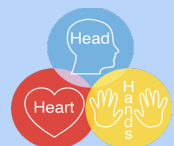


Understanding Biblical Narrative

4. So What? How does all this impact us?



- We are richly blessed to have the Bible in our language, along with the freedom and opportunity to study and teach it.
 - **Are we faithful stewards of this blessing?**
- Jude saw his church's situation in continuity with Israel's history as the ongoing one people of God.
 - **Do we read the OT like Jude did?**
- Jude speaks frankly and clearly about dangerous teaching and its judgment.
 - **Are we following Jude's example?**





Understanding Biblical Narrative

Luke 24

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, **he explained to them** what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. . . . ³² They asked each other, “**Were not our hearts burning within us while he . . . opened the Scriptures to us?**” . . .

⁴⁴ He said to them, “. . . **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me** in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵ **Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.** ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.**



James Tissot (1836-1902)