Biblical Hermeneutics
Grammatical Analysis

I. The importance of understanding the grammar of a passage.
   A. If words are the basic units of language, clauses are the basic units of thought.
   B. If you cannot understand the grammar, you cannot understand the meaning. This does not require a technical understanding of grammar, but you have to know how sentences are put together.
   C. The more you know about grammar, the more thorough will be your ability to study the Scriptures.
   D. See Wenham, pp. 1-15 for a summary of English grammar.

II. Some selected points of grammar
   A. Verbs (indicate action or a state of being):
      1. Tense:
         a. Indicates time of action and kind of action
         b. Major English tenses (derived from Wenham, p. 11):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Imperfect</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I was loving”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I used to love”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Past Simple</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I loved”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Pluperfect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I had loved”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuous-complete</td>
<td>Pluperfect Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I had been loving”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Examples:
   1. Col. 3:3--“you have died”--perfect tense indicates an action that is complete in the past and has an ongoing result, shown by “your life is hidden with Christ”
   2. Col 3:1--“keep seeking things above”--present continuous indicates this should be a way of life, not something we do once
   3. Col. 3:9--“you laid aside the old man”--this happened in the past, it is not a command; the commands for our present behavior are based on the fact of what has happened in the past

2. Voice:
   a. Denotes whether the subject does the action or is acted upon.
   b. Active: the subject performs the action (“they loosed the colt”)
   c. Passive: the subject was acted upon (“the colt was loosed by them”)
d. Examples:
   (1) Col. 3:1--“you have been raised up”--passive
   (2) Col. 3:3--“you have died”--active

3. Mood:
   a. Indicates the manner in which the action is regarded
   b. **Indicative**: states a fact or asks a question
      (1) Col 3:3--“you have died and your life is hidden with Christ”
   c. **Imperative**: gives a command
      (1) Col. 3:2--“set you mind of things above”
   d. **Subjunctive**: expresses a wish or states something hypothetical
      (1) “Thy will be done”
      (2) “…in order that I might be saved”
      (3) “If I were you, I would go”

B. Prepositions:
   1. A small word placed before a noun that shows the relationship of the noun to a noun or verb in the sentence. Examples: “to”, “for”, “with”, “under”, “in”, “of”, etc.
   2. They often convey a lot of theological weight. Some of the great debates about the Lord’s supper, the mode of baptism and the Trinity revolved around prepositions.
   3. Examples:
      a. Col. 3:1--“raised up with Christ”; “seated at the right hand of God”
      b. Col. 3:7--“in them you once walked”

C. Some points of syntax
   1. **Syntax**: the way words in the sentence are arranged to convey meaning.
   2. **Subject**: the person or thing that the sentence makes an assertion about: “Jesus is Lord”
   3. **Predicate**: the part of a sentence that says something about the subject. It includes the verb and everything except the subject noun and adjectives modifying the subject noun: “Jesus is Lord”
   4. **Clause**: A group of words with a subject and predicate. It makes a complete statement. It must have a verb, in contrast to a **phrase** which has no verb.
      a. A **sentence** consists of one or more clauses. Col. 3:3 has 2 clauses: “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God”. The 2 clauses in this sentence are of equal weight so they are called **coordinate clauses**.
      b. **Independent clause**: A clause that can stand on its own. Also called the main clause because it makes the main assertion of the sentence. Col. 3:3 has 2 independent clauses of equal weight.
      c. **Dependent clause**: Depends on the rest of the sentence and cannot stand alone. Also called a **subordinate clause** because it is grammatically subordinate or secondary to another clause.
         (1) **Adverbial**: modifies (explains something about) a verb or an adjective.
            (a) Col. 3:9--the main clause: “do not lie to one another”; subordinate clause: “since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices”. This subordinate clause is **causal**--it explains a reason for the action described in main clause.
            (b) Col. 3:4 “when Christ is revealed”. This is a **temporal** clause, which indicates the time of action of the main clause (“You will be revealed with him in glory”).
(2) **Adjectival**: explain something about a noun  
(a) The most common is a **relative clause**: introduced with “who”, “which”, etc. (relative pronouns); Col. 3:4 “who is our life”, modifying “Christ”  
(b) Col. 3:1--“where Christ is”--adjectival clause of location modifying “things above”

(3) **Noun clauses**: substitute for a noun  
(a) James 2:19: “You believe **that God is one**” (it explains the content of the belief--it is the object of the verb believe)

D. Two special parts of speech derived from verbs:  
1. **Participle**  
   a. A verbal adjective: It has tense and voice like a verb, but it can modify a noun like an adjective: “the living God”. It can also modify a verb: “while walking to the store, I saw my friend”.  
   b. **Tenses**:
      (1) Present participle expresses continuous or incomplete action: In English add “-ing”: “living”  
      (2) Past participle expresses completed action: “used”, “sent”, “chosen”. It is most often used as an adjective.  
   c. The NASB tends to preserve more adverbial participles than the NIV.  
   d. Matt 28:19-20--the main verb is the command is “make disciples”, followed by a series of participles (“baptizing”, “teaching”) which explain what is involved in making disciples  
   e. Eph 5:18--The command “be filled with the Spirit” is followed by a series of participles, which explain the results of being filled with the spirit: “speaking”, “singing”, “making music”, “giving thanks”, “submitting”.

2. **Infinitive**:
   a. A verbal noun: derived from a verb, but functions as a noun  
   b. Infinitive in English adds “to” to the basic verbal idea--“to see”  
   c. Can function as a noun:  
      (1) Subject: **to err** is human  
      (2) Object: “they deserve to live”

III. Creating a syntactical layout chart

A. A **syntactical layout chart** shows the relationships of clauses and phrases to one another.  
   1. It shows how subordinate (secondary) clauses expand on or support the ideas in other clauses in a sentence.  
   2. It shows how the ideas of the passage relate to one another. This is the logical subordination of one idea to another.  
   3. Sometimes it is helpful to also include phrases, such as prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases. In this class, we will focus on clause level syntactical layouts.

B. How this can help with interpretation:  
   1. It allows you to visualize how to sentences are put together.  
   2. It makes it easier to unravel some complex passages (e.g. Eph 1:3-14 is one sentence in Greek). Use only for complicated passages.  
   3. It gives many of the advantages of word level sentence diagraming but it is much easier.

C. How to arrange the chart  
   1. Write out the passage, with each clause on a separate line.  
      a. Bible software saves time, because you can copy the text into your word processor.  
      b. Logos Bible software lets you create the chart with the Sentence Diagram command.  
   2. Put each clause on a separate line.  
      a. If you are using a word processor, press the Enter key at the end of each clause.  
      b. With the Logos Sentence Diagram feature, you can drag the clause where you want it to go.
3. Put the main clause of each sentence at the left margin.

4. Indent each subordinate clause to the level of the word that it modifies in another clause. Draw an arrow to the word.
   a. Most common types of subordinate clauses:
      (1) **Adverbial clauses** modify a verb:

         after I read the book  
         I fell asleep  

         *The clause “after I read the book”, explains when I fell asleep, so it modifies the verb “fell”.

      (2) **Adjectival clauses** modify a noun. Most common type is a relative clause: begins with “who”, “whom”, “which”.

         “This is the confidence,  
         which we have before him”  

         -The relative clause “which we have before him” modifies “confidence” (confidence is the antecedent of the relative pronoun, “which”)

   b. A subordinate clause can appear before or after the clause it depends on.

   Gal 2:11:

   ↓ But when Cephas came to Antioch  
   I opposed him to his face  
   because he stood condemned  

   c. Sometimes a subordinate clause will appear in the middle of another clause (an “embedded clause”).
      (1) This is common with relative clauses (clauses that begin with “who” or “which”)
      (2) In this case, remove the embedded clause and use 3 dots as an ellipsis where you removed it.
          Move the clause to the logically subordinate position.
      (3) Example: Mark 9:40:

          He . . . is for us  
          who is not against us  

5. If there are several coordinate clauses joined by “and”, “or”, or commas, indent them to the same level and number them or put brackets around the group.
   a. If there is more than one main clause, they should both be at the left margin.
   b. You can put brackets around a group of coordinate clauses.
   c. John 1:4:

      In him was life  
      and the life was the light of men.
6. Mark the function of subordinate clauses (see *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 209):
   a. Gal 2:11:
      
      ![Diagram](Gal 2:11 diagram)
      
      - temporal - same time
      - causal
      
   b. adverbial:
      - temporal: same, prior or subsequent time (“when”, “after”, “while”, “before”)
      - conditional (“if”)
      - purpose (“so that”, “in order that”)
      - result (“so that”)
      - causal (“because”)
      - local (“where”)
      - concessive (“although”)
      - comparative
      - instrumental
      - manner
      - contrast (“but”)
   c. adjectival
      - relative (“who”, “which”, “that”)
      - pure adjectival
   d. noun clauses
      - subject
      - complement (object of a verb)
      - indirect statement
      - apposition

7. Optional: If there are multiple prepositional phrases, you may put each on a separate line. Label these as “prepositional phrase” or just “prep”.
   Eph 1:5:
   
   ![](Eph 1:5 diagram)

8. Indicate the logical relationship between sentences.
   a. If a new sentence is logically subordinate to another sentence, indent it and draw an arrow to indicate the relationship to a clause in an earlier sentence.
   b. When you get to a new paragraph or a sentence that is not logically subordinate, start at the left margin again.

D. A syntactical layout works best with a literal translation or the original Greek or Hebrew.
   1. Your translation should be close to the sentence structure of the original language.
   2. A paraphrase (New Living Translation) or a dynamic equivalence translation (New International Version), will simplify the sentence structure and loses much of information about the interrelationship between ideas.
   3. Use the New American Standard Bible, English Standard Version or the NET Bible.
E. Examples:
1. Eph. 1:3-6: [in Logos]

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (3)
  ➔ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing relative
  ➔ in the heavenly places in Christ, prep phrase
  ➔ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, comparative (4)
  ➔ that we should be holy and blameless before Him; purpose
  ➔ In love He predestined us to adoption as sons (5)
    ➔ through Jesus Christ to himself, prep phrase
    ➔ according to the kind intention of His will, prep phrase
    ➔ to the praise of the glory of His grace, prep phrase (6)

2. 1 Thess. 2:1-2: [in Logos]

For you yourselves know, brethren, (7)
  ➔ that our coming to you was not in vain. object (complement)
  ➔ after we had already suffered temporal – prior
  ➔ and been mistreated at Philippi, temporal – prior
  ➔ But...we had the boldness in our God ➔ to speak to you the gospel of God amidst much opposition. adjectival

IV. Methods for creating a syntactical layout chart

A. Create a chart with word processor
   1. Copy and paste from Logos into a word processor document.
   2. Set margins to minimum and page to Landscape orientation.
   3. Copy and paste from Logos into document.
   4. Split up sentence into clauses
   5. Indent clauses to level of word that the clause is subordinate to.
   6. [optional] Add arrows with drawing tools
      b. You can draw lines over the text.
   7. Add clause type.

B. Creating a syntactical layout chart within Logos Bible software
   1. The Sentence Diagram feature lets you create a syntactical layout chart.
   2. Option 1: Text Flow Diagram (easiest)
      a. Click on Documents menu (in Logos 4, use File menu), then New Sentence Diagram.
         The Bible text is pasted into the Sentence Diagram window.
      c. You can stretch the width of the Bible text to get more space to work.
      d. Drag a clause to indent it by clicking and dragging the first word of the clause. All other words will follow.
      e. Click on the arrow and drag it to where you want it to go.
      f. After you are done, you can click on “Untitled Sentence Diagram” and name the diagram.
      g. Limitation of Text Flow diagram: If there is a relative clause or other embedded clause, it cannot be separated from the clause it is embedded in. You must use option 2.
         (1) e.g. in Gal 2:3, “was compelled to be circumcised” needs to be moved up to first line, since it is part of the main clause.
   3. Option 2: Line Diagram (more flexible)
      a. Click on Documents menu (in Logos 4, use File menu), then New Sentence Diagram.
      b. Under Insert Passage, enter the Bible text and version. Select Line Diagram. Choose Insert. The Bible text is pasted into the Sentence Diagram window.
c. Join all of the words in the first clause into one unit.
   (1) Option 1: Click before the first word and drag the mouse to the last word to select a group of words. Then click on Join.
   (2) Option 2: Click on each word that is in a clause to select them. Then click on Join.

d. Repeat joining all words in the other clauses.

e. Once clauses are joined, you can move them as a unit as you would a Text Flow diagram.

f. Use the Text object to manually type in the 3 dots to show that the embedded clauses were moved. This can be treated as an object to join to a clause.