

Teaching the Cultural Background of the Bible

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Society for Biblical Literature 2015

Slides online at <http://seanboisen.com/talks/2015/lco>

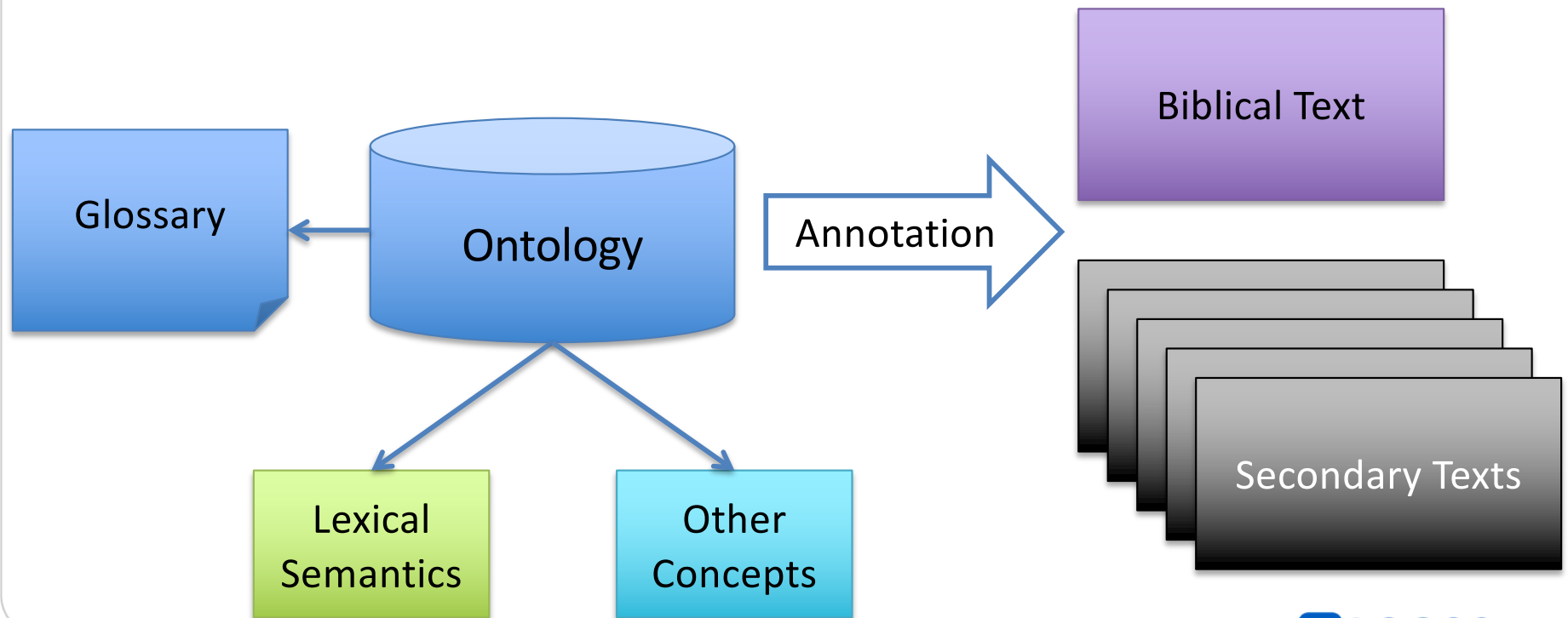
Culture and Biblical Studies



Objectives

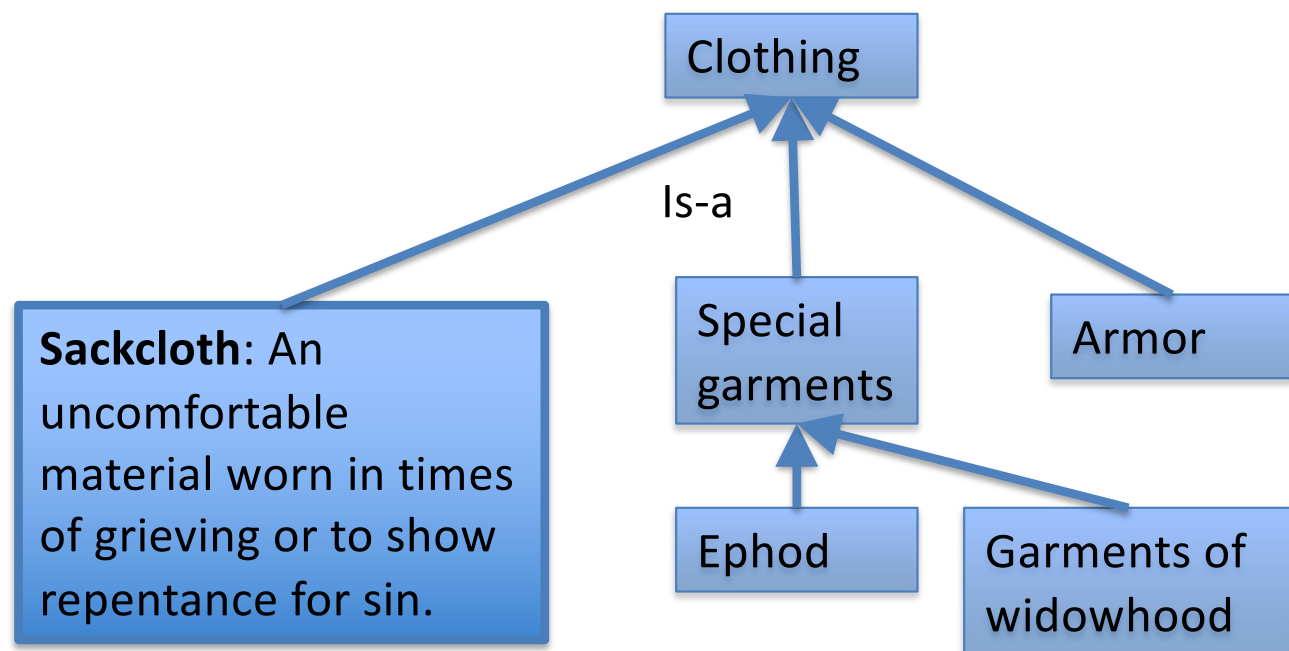
- **Expose** the cultural backgrounds of the Bible
- **Explore** related texts and information
- **Explain** the cultural background

Lexham Cultural Ontology (LCO)



Cultural Concepts: Sackcloth

- Labels
- Definition
- Hierarchy



Process

- Consult existing reference works
 - [Outline of Cultural Materials](#) (Yale HRAF)
- Construct draft ontology
- Annotate biblical texts
- Annotate secondary texts (~5M words)
- Link to other Logos data

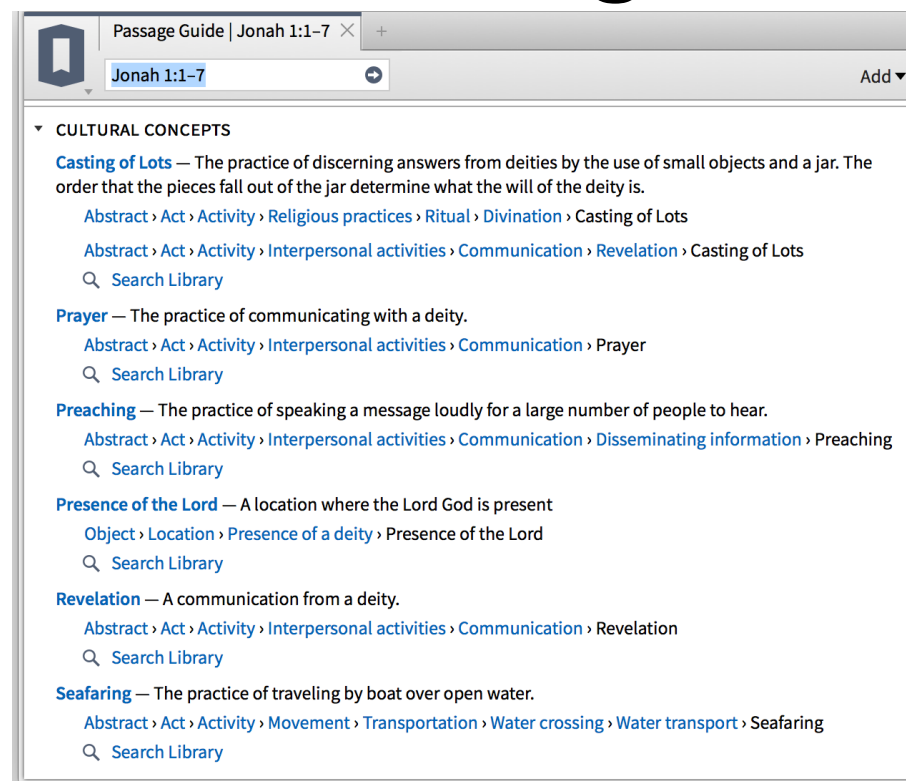
Expose Concepts in a Passage

Jonah 1:1-7

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

...

7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.



Passage Guide | Jonah 1:1-7

Jonah 1:1-7

▼ CULTURAL CONCEPTS

Casting of Lots — The practice of discerning answers from deities by the use of small objects and a jar. The order that the pieces fall out of the jar determine what the will of the deity is.
Abstract › Act › Activity › Religious practices › Ritual › Divination › Casting of Lots
Abstract › Act › Activity › Interpersonal activities › Communication › Revelation › Casting of Lots
Q Search Library

Prayer — The practice of communicating with a deity.
Abstract › Act › Activity › Interpersonal activities › Communication › Prayer
Q Search Library

Preaching — The practice of speaking a message loudly for a large number of people to hear.
Abstract › Act › Activity › Interpersonal activities › Communication › Disseminating information › Preaching
Q Search Library

Presence of the Lord — A location where the Lord God is present
Object › Location › Presence of a deity › Presence of the Lord
Q Search Library

Revelation — A communication from a deity.
Abstract › Act › Activity › Interpersonal activities › Communication › Revelation
Q Search Library

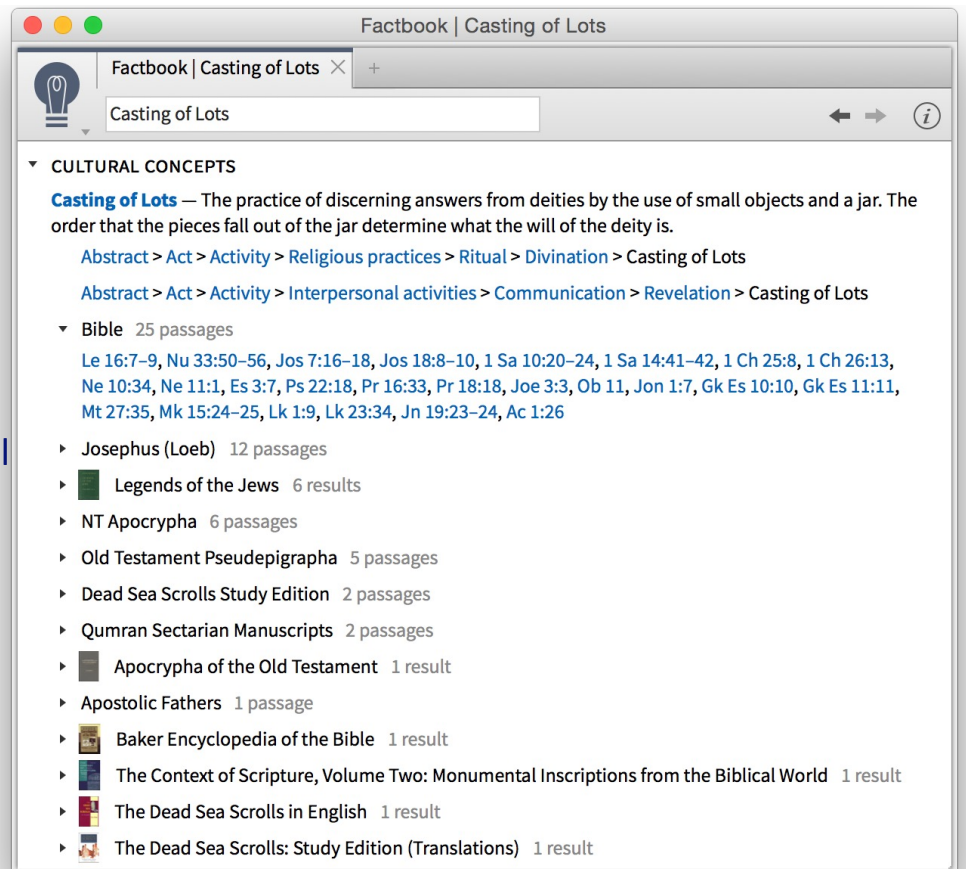
Seafaring — The practice of traveling by boat over open water.
Abstract › Act › Activity › Movement › Transportation › Water crossing › Water transport › Seafaring
Q Search Library

Explore Examples of a Concept (Lots)

⁷ And he shall take the two goats, and he shall present them before Yahweh *at the* tent of assembly's entrance. ⁸ Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for Yahweh and one for Azazel
⁹ And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot for Yahweh fell, and he shall sacrifice it *as* a sin offering. (Lev 16:7–9 LEB)

¹⁶ So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. (Joshua 7:16 ESV)

...



Explore Within Concept Text (Oath)

hand WITHIN {Section <Culture Oath>}



▼ BIBLE RESULTS 20 results in 18 verses (1.87 sec)

Grid | **Verses** | Aligned | Analysis

LEB

Gen 14:22	And Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth,
24:2	And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all he had, "Please put your hand under my thigh
9	Then the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and he swore to him concerning this matter.
47:29	When the time of Israel's death drew near, he called to his son, to Joseph. And he said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please put your hand under my thigh, that you might
Exod 22:11	the oath of Yahweh will be between the two of them <i>concerning</i> whether or not he has reached out his hand to his neighbor's possession, and its owner will accept <i>this</i> , and he will not
Num 6:19	The priest will take the shoulder from the ram that is boiled, and one ring-shaped bread cake of unleavened bread from the basket, and one wafer of unleavened bread, and he will put
21:2	Israel made a vow to Yahweh, and they said, "If you will surely give this people into our hand, then we will destroy their cities."
Deut 7:8	but because of the love of Yahweh <i>for</i> you and because of his keeping of the sworn oath that he swore to your ancestors, Yahweh brought you <i>out</i> with a strong hand and redeemed you
Josh 2:19	If anyone goes outside the doors of your house, they will be responsible for their own death, and we <i>will be</i> innocent. Anyone who will be with you in the house, we will be responsible
Judg 11:30	And Jephthah made a vow to Yahweh, and he said, "If indeed you will give the Ammonites into my hand,
32	And Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to make war against them; and Yahweh gave them into his hand.
1 Sam 14:26	When the army came to the forest, look! <i>There was</i> honey flowing, but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the army was afraid of the solemn oath.
27	However, Jonathan had not heard about the oath of his father with the army, so he extended the end of the staff which was in his hand, and he dipped it into the honeycomb. Then he
30:15	So David asked him, "Will you take me down to this band of <i>raiders</i> ?" He said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me and that you will not deliver me into my master's hand! Then I
Neh 10:29	are helping their brothers, their nobles, and entering into a solemn oath to walk in the law of God which was given by the hand of Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all
Jer 38:16	So Zedekiah the king swore to Jeremiah in secret, saying, "As Yahweh lives, who has made for us this life, I will not kill you and I will not give you into the hand of these men who are
44:25	Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, 'You and your wives have promised with your mouths and with your hands you have fulfilled, saying, "We certainly will carry out
Heb 7:20	And by as much as <i>this was</i> not without an oath (for these on the one hand have become priests without an oath,

Bible Software

Explore Related Information (Oath)

Related lexical senses

Cultural domain

▼ SENSES

- ▶  [to swear](#)
- ▶  [oath](#)
- ▶  [vow](#)
- ▶  [to cause to swear](#)
- ▶  [to vow \(religious\)](#)

[Save as Passage List](#)



▼ CULTURAL CONCEPTS

Oath — The practice of promising something, often with the invocation of some negative consequence for failing to fulfill the promise made.

[Abstract](#) > [Act](#) > [Activity](#) > [Interpersonal activities](#) > [Communication](#) > [Contracts](#)
> [Promise](#) > [Oath](#)

▼ DOMAIN

- ▶  **Oath** — The practice of promising something, often with the invocation of some negative consequence for failing to fulfill the promise made.
- ▶  **Regulations about oaths** — Rules and laws about oaths or vows, especially as related to the cost of the items that were vowed and the cost of redeeming those items.
- ▶  **Votive offering** — An offering given in fulfillment of a vow made to a deity. Can include money, statues of the deity, or public inscriptions.

Explain the Cultural Concept

- Links to Bible dictionaries and other reference material

Annotated Secondary Sources

- **Apostolic Fathers** (Brannan)
- **Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament** (Charles)
- **Apocrypha of the Old Testament** (Charles)
- **The Book of Enoch** (Charles)
- **The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha**, volumes 1-2 (Charles)
- **Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.** (Cowley)
- **The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition** (Translations) (Martinez and Tigchelaar)
- **The Apocryphal New Testament** (James)
- **Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.** (Cowley)
- **The Context of Scripture**, vol. 1-3 (Halo and Younger)
- **The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged** (Josephus and Whiston)
- **The Dead Sea Scrolls in English** (Vermes)
- **Religious Texts from Ugarit** (Wyatt)
- **The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged** (Yonge with Philo)
- **Ancient Near Eastern Texts** (Pritchard)
- **The Amarna Letters** (Moran)
- **The Nag Hammadi Library in English** (Robinson)
- **Ancient Egyptian Literature**, Volumes I-3 (Lichtheim)

The Cultural Ontology Team

Ontology & Curation

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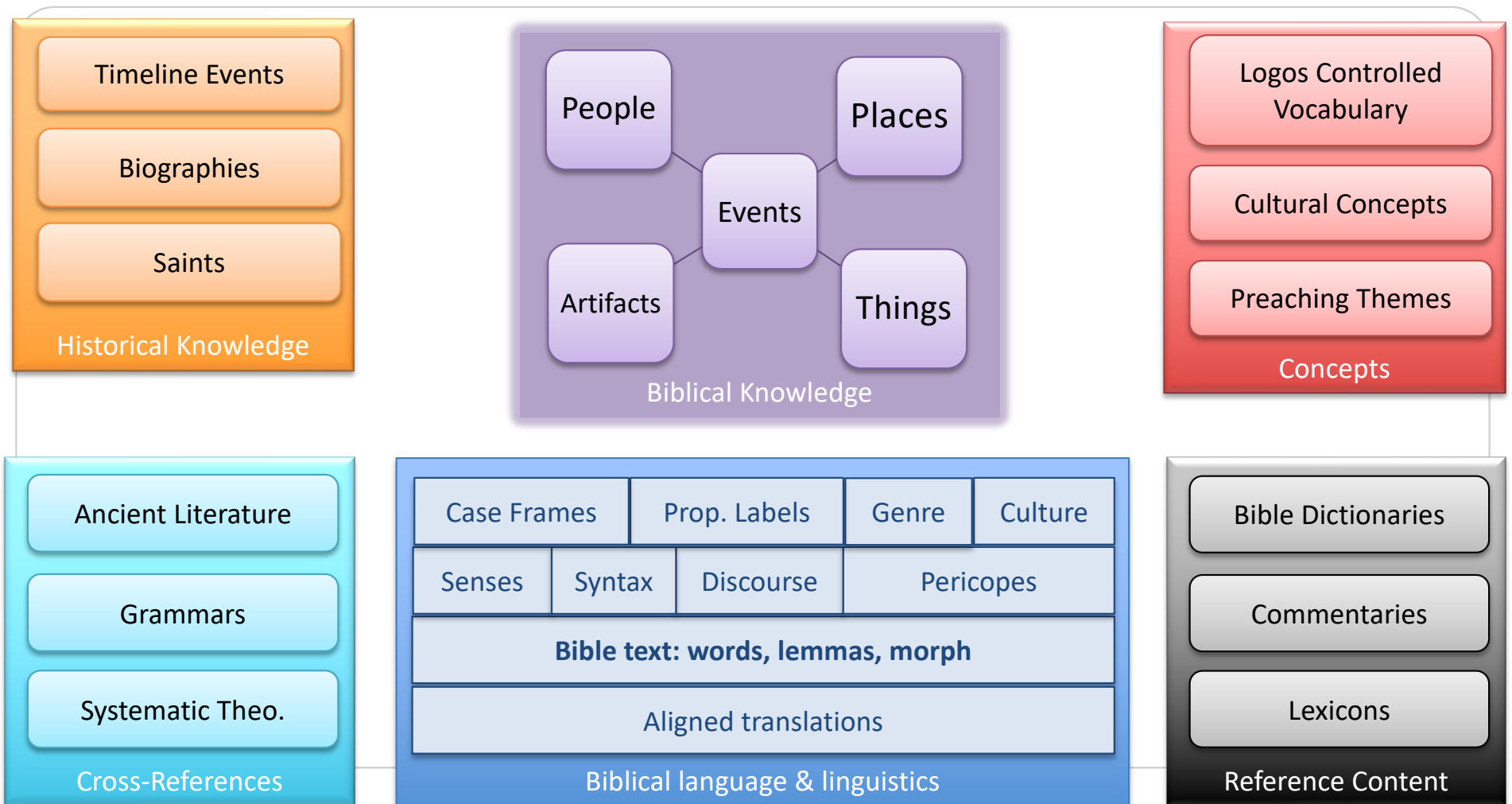
Direction & Data

- Sean Boisen
- Jeff Jackson

Continuing the Conversation

- **Slides:** <http://seanboisen.com/talks/2015/lco/>
- Project email: data.lco@logos.com
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Backup



Philosophy: Analysis & Annotation

- Analysis must be useful and consistent
- Make judgments concrete and explicit
- Analyze comprehensively: required for search
- Embed analysis and annotation in a software platform so it's functional