

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Discovering and Developing Basic Interpretative Skills

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

By
John M. Buttrey II

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE: *Discovering and Developing Basic Bible Study Skills*

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COMMON ABBREVIATIONS:

ASV	American Standard Version
AV	Authorized Version
A.D.	<i>Anno Domini</i> (“year of our Lord”)
B.C.	Before Christ
cf	Compare
ff	Verses following
Gr.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
<i>Ibid.</i>	Footnote reference previously listed
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
mss.	Manuscript, manuscripts
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
N.T.	New Testament
O.T.	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
vs.	Verse
vss.	Verses
Vol.	Volume

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INTRODUCTION:

AS THE TITLE OF THIS MATERIAL STATES, this is a course on “How to Study the Bible.” It is the goal of this material to help you in *Discovering and Developing Basic Interpretative Skills*. These skills are designed to help you better understand and apply the inspired scriptures. The Bible has much to offer us in the way of living right in this life. It contains valuable instruction, correction, encouragement, and warnings (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is doctrine that must be carefully followed (1 Tim. 1:3-4). There are examples that must be properly applied (1 Cor. 10:6ff).

The scriptures contain the recorded words of God (2 Pet. 1:20-21). As such, the Bible is essentially God speaking to us. Bible study skills equip one with the ability to properly listen and apply what God has said. I do not believe any child of God would question the value of being able to effectively and consistently put God's instructions into practice.

As one who loves to study the scriptures, I cannot tell you the joy I experience at making new discoveries in the word. For me, there is great excitement in learning about a single word, or phrase, or how one passage relates to another. There is value in acquiring greater knowledge on how to love and serve God. There are tremendous benefits in the exposing of a personal weakness, or incorrect practice through a study of the word. The rewards are great indeed, for those who acquire the necessary skills and desire to accurately study God's word.

There have been many works written on the subject of how to study the Bible. Often, these are designed for those who make their living in a study of the scriptures. In that regard, such studies can be very detailed and deep. In contrast, this study is only designed to develop some *basic* Bible study skills. The goal is to make effective Bible study accessible, enjoyable, and rewarding for all. Bible study should not be limited to just those who wish to preach or major in theological excursions into the depths of the scriptures.

The scriptures encourage the child of God to be a student of the word. This is illustrated in a number of passages:

Moses instructed Israel to commit the Word of God within their hearts:

“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

To Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

The Hebrew writer rebuked his reading audience for not growing through study and application of the word:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Hebrews 5:12-14

Peter encourages us in the same way with these familiar words:

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...

1 Peter 2:2

Other examples could be offered, but the point should be clear. Bible study should not be limited to just the preacher or Bible class teacher. As children of God, we *all must* become students of His word. This is one of the ways spiritual growth occurs. It is how we learn what to do, and what not to do. It is how we learn to live right before God. It is how we learn to love God, our neighbor, and our self.

It is hoped this study will equip and inspire each of us in the area of personal Bible study. Further, that our efforts in this course will create in you, a greater respect and appreciation for the Bible, as *the* authoritative word of God. May we all be able to say with the Psalmist, “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:11).

John M. Buttrey II

Thy Word

Thy Word is like a garden, Lord,
With flowers bright and fair;
And everyone who seeks may pluck
A lovely cluster there.

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine;
And jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths
For every searcher there.

Thy Word is like a starry host
A thousand rays of light
Are seen to guide the traveler,
And make his pathway bright.
Thy Word is like an armory,
Where soldiers may repair,
And find for life's long battle-day
All needful weapons there.

Oh, may I love Thy precious Word;
May I explore the mine;
May I its fragrant flowers glean;
May light upon me shine.
Oh, may I find my armor there;
Thy Word my trusty sword
I'll learn to fight with every foe
The battle of the Lord

—Edwin Hodder

LESSON ONE:

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

AS CHRISTIANS WE WOULD ALL AGREE that Bible study is important. Through a proper study of the inspired scriptures, we grow in knowledge of God's word (1 Pet. 2:2). With a knowledge of the scriptures we are able to maintain sound doctrine and refute that which is false (1 Tim. 1:3ff; 4:6). This type of knowledge empowers us to live in a way that is acceptable before God (2 Tim. 2:15). A knowledge of the scriptures helps keep our faith strong (Rom. 10:17). What we see in all of this is that the pursuit of knowledge, through Bible study, is critically important (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

However, in order for Bible study to be truly effective and profitable, there are some common obstacles that must first be overcome. These obstacles are of such a nature, that many people struggle with them. They are very real and very dangerous. They are a true threat to getting the most of the word of God. If you want to get more out of your own personal Bible study, you must examine yourself to see if any of the following obstacles are hindering you from an effective learning of the scriptures.

Time

Time is an obstacle in many areas of life. For some reason, we always seem to be short of it, especially when it comes to Bible study. Why is it we never have enough time for such an important and necessary endeavor? Haven't you noticed, that we always find enough time to do the things we want to do?

When, for lack of time, one hurries through Bible study (or ignores it altogether), the wisdom, knowledge and understanding to be gained from the scriptures are going to be very limited. A shortage of time allows only a surface level type of Bible study, many truths that exist at deeper levels are missed.

To get more out of your Bible study set aside more time (or as the case may be just *some* time) to delve into the scriptures. Where will that time be found? How about giving up one sporting event you watch on a weekly or daily basis? One baseball or football game can last three hours or more. How about passing on one of those television sitcoms you watch? That would allow thirty minutes of study time. In some cases, just turning off just one television program would give you a full hour to study. The point is: Find the time to study.

Desire

While a lack of time can be an obstacle to effective Bible study, a lack of desire can be an even greater one. There are those who can think of "a million" other things they would rather be doing than studying the Bible. For some, the thought of digging deeper into God's word is "boring."

If this describes you, may I ask, what would make Bible study more desirable? Would it help if Bible study were more rewarding? More enjoyable? More interesting? More understandable? With some proper training, all of those qualities are possible. If that is what you need to increase your desire for study, get some help on how to study the Bible. That's what this study material is all about. By equipping you with some basic skills, the

enjoyment of Bible study should be discovered. With a greater joy in study, a greater desire for the same will be found. These being present, I would imagine lack of time would no longer be as much of an issue.

If we all had a greater desire to study more, our commitment to Bible study might greatly increase. Commitment is so important when it comes to our approach to the scriptures. Not only possessing a commitment to live by the word, but one which finds investigating the scriptures so we know how we should live.

Pride

Pride can be another obstacle to Bible study. Pride robs one of an open and teachable spirit. The proud feel as if there is nothing more they need to learn. Pride will find one of the opinion, "I am right in my understanding of this position and don't tell me I am wrong!" In pride, one can look at a passage of scripture, which clearly demonstrates their error in a particular matter, but refuse to acknowledge the mistake. How foolish!

In the New Testament, we see the dangers of a prideful attitude in the Pharisees, and their refusal to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. In the same way, pride will close our mind to the truths of scripture. Perhaps this is why the Bible tells us God is opposed to the proud. The proud refuse to humble themselves, so as to admit they need help. Humble yourself and seek to learn from the word of God (James 4:6). Humbly admit, "I don't know it all and I need some help."

Prejudice

Prejudice becomes an obstacle to effective Bible study when we approach the scriptures to prove what we *already believe*. In conjunction with the obstacle of pride, most of us do not like to be proved wrong on some Bible position we hold. Therefore, we set out to study the scriptures in an attempt to prove our position. We twist and torture the text until it conforms to our desires and wishes. When this occurs, we do not read from the scriptures, we read into them! We do not listen to what God has to say, we force His word to say what we want it to say.

It is important we understand, that truth is not determined by the number of people (great or small) who subscribe to a particular view. Truth is not determined by how long a particular doctrine has been believed or by *who* has taught it. Truth is not determined by what we think or feel about a matter. Truth is determined *only* by its conformity and consistency to God's word, for His word is truth (Jn. 17:17). Effective Bible study requires honest exposition and examination of the scriptures. Let the scriptures speak to you, not you to them. Overcome your prejudice and learn, by so doing, you will discover God's truth.

Skills

Not having proper study skills can be an obstacle to one's personal investigation of the inspired scriptures. Effective Bible study requires more than just a casual reading of the text. One must learn some rules or principles for properly interpreting and applying the word of God. Such rules will help in identifying literal language verses symbolic. They will give you clues to look for in determining the context of a passage. They will make it easier to identify direct commands, binding examples, culture practices; and so on.

Study skills such as these can be learned. It just takes some *time*, *desire*, an overcoming of *pride*, and a removal of our *prejudices*. It is hoped this study will assist in giving you the basic skills needed to become more effective in your personal Bible study.

Questions:

1. Why is an ability to properly study the Bible so important? (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12).
2. What possible dangers are faced when one lacks the ability to study the scriptures? (cf. Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Heb. 5:12-14; Jude 3)
3. Why do many Christians seem to have so little time to properly study the Bible?
4. How can we increase our desire to study the scriptures? (cf. Ps. 42:1-2; 119:97-104)
5. How are pride and prejudice obstacles to profitable Bible study?
6. What are hoping to gain from this class?

LESSON TWO: NOTEWORTHY EXAMPLES

HAVING BEEN MADE AWARE of some common obstacles to effective study of the word, some encouraging examples of diligent Bible students will be helpful. In this lesson we will consider two very encouraging and powerful examples, the first being the Bereans.

The Bereans

As Paul and his company left the city of Thessalonica, they traveled to Berea. There, as was Paul's custom, he went into the synagogue of the Jews (cf. Acts 17:2). Of the Jews present in the synagogue who listened to Paul's presentation of the gospel, Luke tells us:

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

Acts 17:11

What a wonderful testimony these Berean Jews obtained! They were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica. This was seen in the way they responded to the message Paul presented. We are told, they examined the scriptures daily. Through their examination of the word (Bible study), Luke tells us:

Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

Acts 17:12

The Bereans provide us a great example as to how we ought to approach the inspired scriptures. There are three points of interest we should consider, based on their recorded example.

Noble-Minded

The Bereans were noble-minded. To be noble-minded expresses the idea of being open-minded—an often rare quality today among many Christians. The minute we hear something different, or something with which we disagree, the defense mechanism in our mind activates, and it closes. Instead, like the Bereans, we need to carefully listen to what is being taught, and then, having heard what has been said, *honestly* evaluate it in view of the scriptures.

In connection with this thought, to be noble-minded means the Bereans had what we might call, *a teachable spirit*. They were *willing* and *able* to learn. They were not of the opinion that *they already knew it all*, “so there is nothing left for us learn.” If we are found lacking a teachable spirit, chances are good we have a problem with the sin of pride. Maybe this is one reason why God is opposed to the proud. The proud refuse to learn because they think they know it all.

When Jesus instructed us to become like children (Matt. 18:3), this may have been part of what He had in mind. Children are eager to learn. They are excited to make new discoveries. Children have a teachable spirit. Let us, as eager students of the word, possess the same type of spirit.

Received the Word with Great Eagerness

The Bereans were clearly eager to learn. Study and application of the scriptures was something they found exciting and stimulating. It is my fear that many of us today have lost this sense of excitement in the study of God's word. I know this is not true for everyone, but how about for you? Are you excited at the thought of attending Bible class? Are you eager to learn deeper truths in the scriptures? Does the thought of study encourage or discourage you? Is your lesson something you rush through (at the last minute) in an attempt to *simply* and *quickly* answer the questions? When was the last time you set aside some *good quality time* to eagerly and patiently do your lesson?

Examined the Scriptures Daily

That word *daily* says a lot. How many today can honestly say they *examine* the scriptures daily? By the way, to examine daily is not simply *reading* the scriptures daily. Reading is good, but to examine means to investigate, scrutinize, and inquire. To examine is to dig deeper into the text.

Upon hearing the words of Paul, the Bereans were eagerly digging deep into the scriptures to confirm the message. They did not assume that Paul was automatically right because he was one who was well-schooled in the Law or because he was an apostle of Jesus Christ. They examined the truths he presented. In the same way, they did not automatically assume he was wrong. Through their effective listening and study, they learned the truth about Jesus Christ.

Good and effective Bible study can produce so many valuable and precious fruits. You will grow in the faith in ways you never thought possible. Seize and seek opportunities to learn. Let us all find and develop the noble-minded eagerness of the Bereans in our attitude towards Bible study. What a wonderful testimony we will obtain by so doing!

Ezra Sets His Heart

Our next encouraging example is found in the Old Testament. It is the example of Ezra. To give you some important background information relating to our example, the book of Ezra records the efforts of the people of Israel, upon their release from captivity, to rebuild the temple and reestablish a functioning priesthood according to the standard set forth in the Law of Moses.

A man by the name of Zerubbabel was instrumental in the rebuilding of the temple. Ezra, who came some time later, was instrumental in getting the priesthood operating again in that rebuilt temple. We might say Zerubbabel concerned himself with construction, Ezra with reformation. Both were involved in the process of restoration. Zerubbabel focused on the physical building, Ezra on the spiritual... on the people.

This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe **skilled in the law of Moses**, which the Lord God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the Lord his God was upon him.

Ezra 7:6

Ezra was “skilled” in the Law of Moses. Being “skilled in the Law” does not happen by accident. It comes through patient study and application of the word. It comes through experience. The Hebrew word “skilled” means experienced, well-versed. It comes from a root, which means to be quick. Ezra was skilled in the word. Does that describe you? “Skilled in the word of God.” “Experienced with the scriptures.” Does that describe your abilities with the inspired word? Are you “skilled”? We as Christians need to be “skilled” in the word (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:12-14). How did Ezra get his “skill”? Look at this description of the man:

For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Ezra 7:10

The first thing I want you to notice here is that Ezra *set his heart* to do some important things. To set one’s heart is to make a commitment. It is to make up one’s mind. Ezra had his heart to:

Study the Law of the Lord

By study, we are talking about becoming a student of the word. The Hebrew word rendered “study” means to seek, to inquire, to investigate. Ezra set his heart to seek the Law of the Lord and to investigate it. Remember that Ezra was a scribe. As a scribe, Ezra knew the Law. I take it he knew the Law better than most (if not all) of his peers. Still, he remained a constant and dedicated student of the scriptures. He never got to the point where he thought he knew it all (He avoided that dangerous obstacle of pride). He continued to study. That speaks volumes about the character of Ezra.

Do you realize, one way to lose much of the joy of being a Christian, is to stop studying the scriptures. It is exciting to learn! There is incredible joy in making new discoveries in the word. There is gladness in understanding and a confidence in knowing. The word is spiritual food. If you do not eat, you do not grow. If you do not eat you become sickly, weak, frustrated, discouraged. Eat! Acquire a hunger for the word. Seek it! Investigate it! Do not just read it... study it!

Each child of God must set their heart to study the scriptures. To constantly meditate on the word. To search the scriptures for answers to life’s questions. To consult the scriptures on a regular basis for direction and guidance in their life. It must be a continual never-ending process.

The best doctors are those, who even after graduating medical school continue to study medicine. That is how they become (to borrow from Ezra’s description) “skilled.” Would you want to go to a doctor who was not educated in the latest advancements in medicine and surgery? Why not?

The best attorneys are those who even after graduating law school, continue to study law. That is how they become “skilled.” Would you want an attorney working for you who was not educated in the most recent application and interpretation of the laws? Why not?

The best schoolteachers are those who continue to study. That is how they become “skilled.” Can you imagine your child having a history teacher who has not studied recent history? An English teacher who was not aware of recent literary works? A science teacher who was unaware of the latest scientific discoveries?

The best preachers and Bible class teachers are those who continue to study the word. Who don’t rely on what they (or someone else!) have always believed about a particular subject. They continue to research and investigate. They test their positions.

Ezra set his heart to study the scriptures. That is how he became skilled. He also set his heart to:

Practice what the Scriptures Taught

It is one thing to study the scriptures, but it is another to actually practice what they say. You can study and memorize Mark 16:15-16 but it is another all together to actually practice it. To get up and actually go out and teach. To truly be motivated and disciplined to actually practice the instruction of this verse, we must make up our minds... set our hearts.

In the same way, you can study and memorize a passage like Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” While memorizing this scripture is good and necessary, of even greater importance is that we actually practice what is teaching. To do so means, we must honestly and completely forgive those who have wronged us in some way and have sought our forgiveness. Forgiveness is more than words, it is revealed in the heart and in our actions. If we do not practice forgiveness, we miss the essence of Christianity.

There are other examples we could look to in regards to practicing what we study in the word. Simply put, to practice the word, is to put the truth to work. James described what we are talking about here very well, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22). Ezra set his heart to study the word, to practice the word, and lastly:

To Teach it to Others

Do you want to really grow in the word? Do you want to really grow in the faith? Teach it to someone else. Tremendous growth comes through teaching. Do you know who learns the most (who grows the most) in just about any Bible class? The teacher. Often they have more material prepared than the class is able to cover. As a teacher you research areas where those who are students usually will not, and that produces growth. You cannot successfully teach a Bible class by simply answering the questions on the material; such as a student might do. You must anticipate questions from the students. You must formulate your own questions. And in all of this, the teacher always learns more than the students. The one who teaches a class will experience much greater growth than the student of a class. You can experience great growth by teaching the word to someone.

Ezra set his heart to teach the Law of the Lord in Israel. He was blessed through his efforts, and so were those who benefited from his heart’s desire. If we will set out hearts to teach others the word of God, we will be greatly blessed.

Questions:

1. How important is a teachable spirit to effective Bible study? (1 Pet. 1:2)
2. What *positive* learning qualities will be seen in one who is “teachable”? (cf. Matt. 18:3)
3. What *negative* learning qualities will be demonstrated by one who is not “noble-minded”? (cf. Matt. 13:14-15; 22:29; Acts 13:8; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:3)
4. What benefit did the Bereans gain by not *automatically* assuming Paul was wrong in what he was saying? (Acts 17:12)
5. If they automatically assumed he was wrong, do you think they would have eagerly examined the scriptures?
6. What lessons can we learn from the Bereans that will help us as students of the word?
7. How did Ezra become “skilled” in the Law of Moses? (Ezra 7:6)
8. Ezra not only set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, but to practice it. Can study be of any real value if we do not practice what we learn? (cf. James 1:22-25)
9. Ezra had equipped himself to be able to teach the Law of the Lord to others. Should we do the same?
10. Would greater skill in understanding and interpreting the word give you more confidence in teaching others?
11. If we “set out heart” to acquire better interpretative skills, will we succeed?
12. Can we ever know (in this life) all there is to know about the word of God?

LESSON THREE: BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

HAVING THE RIGHT KIND OF TOOLS is essential to the successful completion of just about any type of project. A garden is going to be planted much easier with the right kind of gardening tools. Fixing a leaky faucet is going to be greatly aided by the use of the right tools. Certain repairs on your automobile will require specialized tools. The same principle is true of Bible study. Bible study is much easier, and much more successful, with the right kinds of tools.

We understand the need for tools, but perhaps even more important, is knowing how to use the tools! I could purchase all the tools required for fixing a leaky faucet, but if I do not know how to use them, I am liable to create an even larger problem.

Our goal in this lesson is to acquaint ourselves with some common Bible study tools. Through the course of this study, it is hoped that practice in the use of some of these tools will help in our future study efforts. It should be noted, that all of the tools listed in this lesson are not required in order to complete the lessons, they are simply listed here to demonstrate the many different types of resources that are available.

Bibles

Our first study tool seems obvious enough: a Bible. I have listed it here because there are many different translations of the scriptures available to the student. Be sure to choose a reliable translation of the scriptures for your study. Find one that has proven itself as accurate by others in their study of the scriptures. Translations such as “The King James,” “New King James,” or “New American Standard” are all very good for serious Bible study. Others, such as “The New International Version,” or “The Living Bible” are good for general reading, but should not be used for deeper study. These types of translations are not “word for word” renderings of the scriptures, they are “thought for thought” renditions. They were created for ease of readability. However, in creating the ease of reading, some accuracy of the text may be sacrificed. They may include some *uninspired* editorial commentaries. For example, notice this familiar passage as it appears in *The Amplified Bible*.

Speak out to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, offering praise with voices [and instruments], and making melody with all your heart to the Lord,
Ephesians 5:19

Right away, you will notice an addition with which, we are not familiar. An addition that we know from past study is not accurate. To the translator’s credit, they put the addition in brackets. However, a casual student of the scriptures might recognize this addition as “inspired,” which it certainly is not.

The point should be clear, be careful in choosing the translation you are going to use. Understand that all of them, while based on the inspired word of God, are translations by men. On occasion, an editorial opinion or bias may show through. A trained student of scripture will be able to identify any editorial renderings that are not consistent with the original texts.

Parallel Bible

A parallel Bible is one that contains several different translations side by side for easy comparison of various texts (Example 1).

New American Standard	King James	New International
Romans 8:1-2 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.	Romans 8:1-2 <i>There is</i> therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.	Romans 8:1-2 1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Example 1

In Example 1, you can see how each of the translations shown read a little differently. This gives the student an easy way to compare each one without having to own several different individual translations. Sometimes an alternate translation can help provide some quick understanding into the meaning of a particular word or verse of scripture.

There are parallel Bibles available with a variety of different translations. In most cases, four different translations are included. If this is something you may be interested in, look for one that includes those renderings of the scriptures that you do not have. This gives you some additional resources for your study.

Interlinear Bible

An interlinear Bible is one that includes a Greek or Hebrew text with an English translation (Example 2).

Romans 8:1-2												
<table border="0"><tr><td style="vertical-align: top;">8</td><td>Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. ² ὁ</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Nothing then now condemnation to the ones in Christ Jesus The</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>for law of the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>ἠλευθέρωσεν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>has freed you from the law of the sin and of the death</td></tr></table>	8	Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. ² ὁ		Nothing then now condemnation to the ones in Christ Jesus The		γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ		for law of the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus		ἠλευθέρωσεν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.		has freed you from the law of the sin and of the death
8	Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. ² ὁ											
	Nothing then now condemnation to the ones in Christ Jesus The											
	γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ											
	for law of the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus											
	ἠλευθέρωσεν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.											
	has freed you from the law of the sin and of the death											

Example 2

Based on Example 2, one can hopefully see how an interlinear Bible would be a helpful tool for Bible study. Right over the English words are the Greek words, which can then be looked up in a lexicon for their definition.

Lexicons

A lexicon is a dictionary (Example 3). Depending on the language (Hebrew or Greek), some knowledge of that dialect is required in order to look up any words. This is where the interlinear Bible would prove helpful.

κατάκριμα, ατος, τό prob. not ‘condemnation’, but the punishment following sentence, *punishment, doom* (Dionys. Hal. 6, 61 κατακριμάτων ἀφέσεις; POxy 298, 4 [I AD]; PRainer 1, 15ff, 188, 14f; Wilcken, Chrest. 28, 12; Dssm., NB 92f [BS 264f]) *there is no doom for those who are in Christ Jesus* Ro 8:1.

Example 3

In Example 3, notice that the English appears only as a definition. To find this word you would have to know the Greek alphabet or at least the basic form of the word as it appears in the Greek text. The word shown here is the word translated “condemnation” in Romans 8:1. Look at the interlinear above and see if you can find it.

Vine’s Expository Bible Dictionary

Much easier to use than a lexicon, is a Vine’s Dictionary of New Testament Words (Example 4). It is much easier because the words appear not only in English, but also in a *transliterated* rendering. “Transliterated,” means the Greek words are spelled phonetically with English letters. This is a great assistance in pronouncing the words. Below is the same word for condemnation, as it would appear in Vine’s.

Condemn, Condemnation

2. **ΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΜΑ** (κατάκριμα , (2631), cp. No. 4, above, is the sentence pronounced, the condemnation with a suggestion of the punishment following; it is found in Rom. 5:16, 18; 8:1.

Example 4

You will see that with some practice you can now pronounce the Greek word (without having to know how to speak Greek!). The original Greek form of the word used is also shown as well as other passages where it is found, and its Strong’s concordance number.

Bible Concordance

Another resource for finding word meanings is a concordance such as Young's or Strong's (Example 5). These list every occurrence of a particular word in the scriptures (Note that Strong's is based on the King James Version). The information I have listed below is based on a computer version of Strong's, so some of the information listed here will not be included in the book form. Before we look at this information. Note the word from Vine's above and the number 2631 in parenthesis. This number relates to the Strong's definition of the word.

2631 κατάκριμα [*katakrima* /kat·ak·ree·mah/] n n. From 2632; TDNT 3:951; TDNTA 469; GK 2890; Three occurrences; AV translates as “condemnation” three times. **1** damnatory sentence, condemnation.

Example 5

What are all those different letters about in that definition? Let's take a look.

- n n represents the morphology of the word in this case a “noun” “neuter”
- From 2632 gives us another Strong's number to reference in regards to discovering the root of the word.
- TDNT stands for Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (another resource) the 3:951 means Vol. 3, page 951 of this resource.
- TDNTA stands for Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Abridged. Here the page number is given.
- GK stands for Kittel (another resource)
- AV stands for Authorized Version (King James)
- Three times indicates the number of times the word is used in the New Testament.

Word Study Books

Word study books such as Vincent's (Example 6), Robertson's (Example 7), or Wuest's are also excellent Bible study resources. They read like a Bible in a verse-by-verse format. Rather than looking through a lexicon or dictionary to find the word, by simply following the text you can find word meanings. Not every word will be defined, but usually enough that they will help you discover the meaning of the verse.

1. Therefore now. Connecting with 7:25. Being freed through Jesus Christ, there is *therefore* no condemnation *now*.
Condemnation (κατάκριμα). As ch. 5:16, *sentence* of condemnation.
Who walk not, etc. The best texts omit to the end of the verse.

Example 6

Romans 8:1

Therefore now (ἀρα νυν [*ara nun*]). Two particles. Points back to the triumphant note in 7:25 after the preceding despair. **No condemnation** (οὐδεν κατακριμα [*ouden katakrima*]). As sinners we deserved condemnation in our unregenerate state in spite of the struggle. But God offers pardon “to those in Christ Jesus” (τοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ [*tois en Christo i Ie sou*]). This is Paul’s Gospel. The fire has burned on and around the Cross of Christ. There and there alone is safety. Those in Christ Jesus can lead the consecrated, the crucified, the baptized life.

Example 7

Commentaries

Commentaries are yet another resource available to the diligent Bible student. Commentaries are explanations (commentaries) for each verse of the particular book of the Bible for which they are written. Be aware in using a commentary is any bias the author might have toward a particular doctrine. A commentary written by one who holds Calvinistic views is going to reflect that in his exposition of certain passages. That does not mean the commentary is no good, in fact, on some passages it might be very good. You as the student must always be alert when using *any* commentary. Try to form your own ideas on what the verse is saying based on your study. Use the commentary as a tool for forming your beliefs... not as the source of your beliefs.

Computer Software

Computers have revolutionized so many things in this world, Bible study is certainly one of them. Bible software programs have allowed Bible students access to resources normally out of their reach. Without having much knowledge in Hebrew or Greek, with a few clicks of a mouse you have a word definition from a scholarly lexicon. With the right program, you can have an interlinear Bible, parallel Bible, commentaries, dictionaries, all at the ready for research and study. The search functions available on most Bible study programs speed up word searches. They make it much easier to find parallel passages of scripture. They provide an abundance of valuable information to the student of scripture.

Summary

What has been described in this lesson is just a fraction of the wonderful study materials (tools) available for your research. There are many other types of works to assist Bible students: topical study books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, Bible atlases, and so much more. Many of these tools can be purchased new for a reasonable cost. Some may even be found at a used bookstore or online. Learning to use these resources properly, will greatly enhance your study and knowledge of God’s inspired word. As we proceed in this study, make it a point to equip yourself in understanding how to use these valuable and important tools.

Questions:

1. Using whatever Bible study resources you currently possess, see what you can discover about the word “left” in Matthew 4:20.
2. Does the usage of this word in Matthew 4:20 help us understand any other important instruction in scripture? If so, what and how?
3. How would a parallel Bible be of assistance in Bible study?
4. What cautions should be exercised in using a Bible commentary?
5. See what information you can find about the Bible translation you are currently using (history, purpose, date, criticisms, etc.).
6. Which of the resources discussed in this lesson would you like to add to your home study library? Explain how it (or they) would be helpful to you.

LESSON FOUR:

THE INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURES

AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE TO BE ABLE to accurately handle the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). To accurately handle (or rightly divide) God's word requires an understanding of what this amazing book we call "the Bible" is all about, and how it is put together. Have you ever wondered, how did we get the Bible? Or, how do we know the Bible is the word of God?

It is important we gain a greater understanding and appreciation of how we got the Bible, and thereby, a greater confidence in its make-up of books. We have to *know* without any doubt that the Bible is the inspired word of God. As the inspired word of God, a respect for the authority of the scriptures is essential to one's interpretation and application of the Bible's truths. In this lesson, we will discuss the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the scriptures. At the same time, we will examine some remarkable evidences that speak to its divine authorship.

Inspiration

The Bible is not a work of man, although, men had a part in its formation. The Bible declares itself divinely inspired. Paul's words to Timothy are very clear on the matter.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

God communicated the words we have in the Bible to certain men who recorded His words. This is illustrated in a number of different places in the Bible. For example:

Then **the Lord said to Moses, "Write down these words,** for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. **And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.**

Exodus 34:27-28

God told Moses what to write, and Moses recorded the very words of God. This type of pattern is seen in other passages (cf. Deut. 31:9ff, 24ff). In the New Testament, Peter wrote about the Old Testament scriptures and the prophets:

So **we have the prophetic word** made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but **men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

2 Peter 1:19-21

That verse closes with a very insightful statement: “Men spoke from God.” These words reveal the process of inspiration. God chose certain men to receive his words and write them down. What they wrote became what we know today as the Bible. They wrote as God inspired them. By *inspiration* we are talking about God directing these men in regards to the words they would write. Reflective of the process of inspiration, Jesus told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (Jn. 16:13).

What Scripture Says, God Says	
GOD SAYS . . .	SCRIPTURE SAYS . . .
Gen. 12:3 Ex. 9:16	Gal 3:8 Rom. 9:17
SCRIPTURE SAYS . . .	GOD SAYS . . .
Gen. 2:24 Ps. 2:1 Ps. 2:7 Ps. 16:10 Ps. 95:7 Ps. 97:7 Ps. 104:4 Isa. 55:3	Matt. 19:4-5 Acts 4:24-25 Heb. 1:5 Acts 13:35 Heb. 3:7 Heb. 1:6 Heb. 1:7 Acts 13:34

1

One person defined this act of inspiration very well:

The supernatural act of God whereby He so directed human authors of Scripture that, without destroying their individuality, literary style, or personality, His complete and connected thought toward humanity was received/recorded without error or contradiction—each word being supernaturally written and preserved so as to result in an infallible document in the original writings.²

Describing the process of inspiration in a more detailed manner, one resource offered the following:

From the biblical description of the process of inspiration, the necessary constituents of a theological definition of inspiration may be derived. There are three:

1. *Divine causality*. The prime mover in inspiration is God: “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21). In other words, God *moved*, and the prophet *mouthed* the truths; God *revealed*, and man *recorded* His word. The Bible is God’s word in the sense that it originates with Him and is authorized by Him, even though it is articulated by men. God speaks *in* their written records.

¹Geisler, Norman L., and William E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Includes Indexes. Includes a Short-Title Checklist of English Translations of the Bible (Chronologically Arranged). Rev. and expanded., Page 51. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986.

² Charles Swindoll, *A Look at the Book*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1992), p. 5.

2. *Prophetic agency*. The prophets played an important role in the overall process of inspiration; they were the means by which God spoke. The word of God was written by men of God. God used persons to convey His propositions. In other words, as J.I. Packer perceptively observes, there God exercised “*concurrent operation* in, with and through the free working of man’s own mind.” He amplifies the concept further saying,

We are to think of the Spirit’s inspiring activity, and, for that matter, of all His regular operations in and upon human personality, as (to use an old but valuable technical term) *concurrent*; that is, as exercised in, through and by means of the writers’ own activity, in such a way that their thinking and writing was *both* free and spontaneous on their part *and* divinely elicited and controlled, and what they wrote was not only their own work but also God’s work.

God prepared the prophets by training, experience, gifts of grace, and, if need be, by direct revelation to utter His word. “By it [inspiration], the Spirit of God, flowing confluent with the providentially and graciously determined work of men, spontaneously producing under the Divine directions the writings appointed them, gives the product a Divine quality unattainable by human powers alone.” In inspiration, then, God is the primary cause, and the prophets are the secondary causes. Thus the divine influence did not restrict human activity but rather enabled the human authors to communicate the divine message accurately.

3. *Scriptural authority* is the final product of God’s causality and the prophetic agency. Hence, the Bible is a divinely authoritative book. God moved the prophets in such a way as to breathe out (literally, “*spirate*”) their writings. In other words, God spoke to the prophets and is speaking in their writings. Although some might argue that the prophetic model of inspiration is inadequate, in order to shift the basis of the believer’s authority from Scripture to some other locus, Carl F. H. Henry rightly observes that “the church is neither the locus of divine revelation, nor the source of divine inspiration, nor the seat of infallibility. Rather, the church has the task of transmitting, translating, and expounding the prophetic-apostolic Scriptures.” The cause of inspiration is God, the means is the men of God, and the end result is the word of God in the language of men.

Therefore, this definition of inspiration is suggested: *Inspiration is that mysterious process by which the divine causality worked through the human prophets without destroying their individual personalities and styles to produce divinely authoritative and inerrant writings.*³

Inerrancy

If it be accepted that the Bible is the inspired word of God, the conclusion must then be reached, and accepted, that the original scriptures are wholly infallible, completely true and without any error. This is what is meant by the term “inerrancy.”

“Inerrancy” and “infallibility” are theological terms used by many Christians in defining the uniqueness of the Bible. Christians believe that God has communicated the Good News of salvation both “in person” through Jesus Christ and “in writing” through

³Geisler, Norman L., and William E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Includes Indexes. Includes a Short-Title Checklist of English Translations of the Bible (Chronologically Arranged). Rev. and expanded., Pages 38-39. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986.

the Bible. The Bible, therefore, has always been regarded by Christians as unique and qualitative different from other books.⁴

Jesus Himself declared the word of God to be infallible, “Your Word is truth” (John 17:17). David wrote, “The law of the Lord is perfect” (Ps. 19:7). Consider also these words from the book of Proverbs:

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

Proverbs 30:5-6

Because the scriptures are inspired of God, and because they are inerrant, we can look to the Bible with a confidence in its teachings. We can know without any doubt that its teachings are reliable and trustworthy.

It should be noted here, that the inspiration of the scriptures, and therewith, the inerrancy and infallibility of the same, applies only to the original autographs. Copies of the scriptures, and translations, are not inspired or infallible.

It is conceded, that at times, a copyist’s error will appear. These are usually identified as earlier manuscripts are compared with later-dated copies. Alleged contradictions, through proper interpretation methods are resolved. A particular translation may contain an editor’s bias as to how a Greek or Hebrew word should be translated. However, these too, through some basic Bible study skills can be identified. None of these “problems” destroy the integrity of the scriptures. As we will see, the truth of the Bible being the inspired of God is remarkably demonstrated.

All this understood, we must recognize the serious task given us as students of the word. While the Bible is the inspired of God and completely inerrant, one’s interpretation of the scriptures is not. This means, great care must be exercised in how we go about interpreting the Bible. Full respect must be given to its authority. We must be careful to let God speak to us through the word, and not read into it our own wishes.

A Look at the Book

Of course, it is easy for a book to claim to be the inspired word of God, and to be inerrant in its message; it is another altogether to clearly prove it. However, the Bible proves it in some remarkable ways.

Unity of its Message

There were about forty authors whose inspired writings make up our Bible. These writings took place over a period of approximately 1500 years. In addition, they were written on three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe); in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek).

It was written by men of various occupations: Moses a shepherd, Daniel a politician, Luke, a doctor, Nehemiah a cupbearer; Peter a fisherman. Despite these great areas of diversity, the message of the Bible (from Genesis to Revelation), is found to be in complete harmony.

⁴ Harold O.J. Brown, *The Origin of the Bible*, 37.

Consider how difficult it can sometimes be to get two people to agree on something! Try getting forty different men to agree on something! Yet, we find agreement and unity in the Bible. This indicates that these men had a common source guiding them in their writing.

The Value of the Message

Not only is there unity in the message of the Bible but there is also great value in its message. For example, the Bible presents a standard for moral living which man, on his own, would not have written.

The Bible talks about the sexual relationship being *limited* to a husband and wife. It speaks of marriage consisting of one man and one woman, not two men or two women. It condemns adultery, homosexuality, stealing, lying, drunkenness, and so on. Man continually seeks justification for these practices.

Certainly, if man had written the Bible, apart from any Divine inspiration, he would not have limited himself in such a manner. Man seeks freedom to pursue these practices without any religious or moral condemnation. One way that freedom is sought is by attacking the message of the Bible.

Prophetic Accuracy

Prophecy is another area where the Bible demonstrates Divine inspiration. The prophets spoke of events hundreds of years prior to their occurrence with amazing accuracy. How could these men have known so precisely, what would occur unless they were told by God? Consider these many prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, all spoken hundreds of years prior, yet ALL were fulfilled to the letter.

- Born of the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15), Fulfilled (Matt. 1:20).
- Born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), Fulfilled (Matt. 1:24-25).
- Would be the Son of God (Ps. 2:7), Fulfilled (Matt. 3:17).
- Son of Abraham (Gen. 22:18), Fulfilled (Matt. 1:1).
- Son of David (Jer. 23:5), Fulfilled (Matt. 1:1).
- Born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), Fulfilled (Matt. 2:1).
- Will be a Prophet (Dt. 18:18), Fulfilled (Matt. 21:11).
- Will be a Priest (Ps. 110:4), Fulfilled (Heb. 3:1).
- Will be a King (Ps. 2:6), Fulfilled (Jn. 18:33-37).
- Would enter the city on a donkey (Zech. 9:9), Fulfilled (Matt. 21:4ff).
- Will be betrayed by friend (Ps. 41:9), Fulfilled (Matt. 26:15).
- Sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zec. 11:12), Fulfilled (Matt. 26:15).
- Silent before accusers (Isa. 53:7), Fulfilled (Matt. 27:12).
- Hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16), Fulfilled (Lk. 23:33).
- Would cast lots for His garments (Ps. 22:18), Fulfilled (Jn. 19:24).
- Crucified with criminals (Isa. 53:12), Fulfilled (Matt. 27:38).
- Forsaken (Ps. 22:1), Fulfilled (Matt. 27:46).
- Not a bone would be broken (Ps. 34:20), Fulfilled (Jn. 19:36).
- Side pierced (Zech. 12:10), Fulfilled (Jn. 19:36-37).
- Buried in rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9), Fulfilled (Matt. 27:57-60).
- Will rise from the dead (Ps. 16:10), Fulfilled (Acts 2:31).

Consider the probability of one person fulfilling all of these prophecies! Some might look at these prophecies and say that Jesus intentionally fulfilled them. However, a closer look will reveal this to be impossible. How does one intentionally determine the place of their birth? How does one intentionally determine to be born of a virgin? How does one intentionally determine their lineage?

There are many more prophecies concerning Jesus, Israel, the church, and the nations that could be noted. Taking into account just the small sampling we have listed, the point should be clear: The prophets were accurate in their writings. How did these men get their information? How do we explain their incredible accuracy? The answer, when honestly considered, is obvious: They were told by God!

Historical Accuracy

The Bible contains remarkable accuracy in regards to historical events. Through the years, some have questioned the Bible's mention of various peoples and places. However, as archeologists continue digging in the sand, they keep uncovering proof of the Bible's accuracy in regards to these people and places.

Scientific Foreknowledge

This is an area where there are some remarkable insights contained in the scriptures—perhaps some that have still yet to be discovered. Too many of us have the idea that science is an enemy of our faith. The truth is, science (whether it intends to or not) keeps proving our faith! They make (what they believe are) “new” discoveries. Yet, the Bible speaks of many of these scientific truths long before man discovered them.

The Bible spoke of the paths in the sea prior to their discoveries. In fact, the Bible's description of these ultimately led to their discovery (Ps. 8:8). The Bible described global wind currents long before satellite technology (Ecc. 1:6). In the same way, the Bible declared before man that the world is round (Isa. 40:22), and that it is hung in space on nothing (Job 26:7). The same is true for the hydrologic cycle (Job 36:27-28).

These are just a fraction of the scientific foreknowledge contained in the Bible. This, along with the prophetic accuracy, unity of message, and historical accuracy, clearly demonstrates its Divine authorship. How could the writers of the Bible, living in such ancient times, possibly have gained these insights? This is knowledge that man (at the time of the writing) simply did not possess.

If someone told you he or she could pick the winning lottery number, then did—you might be impressed. The odds of this are, maybe, one in ten million (or 1 in 10^7). Does this “prove” the person has divine knowledge? Maybe and maybe not—though it is very, very impressive. Now suppose the person did it twice in a row (one chance in a hundred thousand billion— 10^{14}). It would suddenly seem obvious this individual had “special” information.

From a practical standpoint, scientists have determined that anything whose possibility is less than one chance in 10^{50} is beyond reason—essentially impossible or absurd (like someone correctly picking the lottery seven times in a row)—unless there is “special” knowledge involved. Odds far more staggering than this describe the presence of God's “fingerprints” in the Bible.⁵

⁵ Ibid. 21.

Manuscript Evidence

This is an important area of witness to the Bible's integrity and the canon of scripture. By manuscripts, we are talking about ancient copies of the scriptures. In this case, we are dealing specifically with the New Testament.

When Paul wrote a letter to a church, the actual document he wrote upon is known as an original autograph. We have no original autographs of any New Testament writings. The earliest copy we possess is a fragment from the gospel of John that is dated around A.D. 110 to 125. There is another manuscript which some believe dates even earlier containing all of Paul's letters, except for Timothy and Titus. It is dated by some to the late first century, which would make it only twenty to thirty years after the time of Paul's original writing.

There are other early dated New Testament manuscripts, but again, no originals. This however is not a problem. The original autographs were copied (hand copied), and they were copied often. There are over five thousand manuscripts (See Example 8: Reliability of the New Testament). This large number tells us the writings we know today as the New Testament scriptures were widely distributed. Other ancient writings, such the Gnostic Gospels do not have anywhere near the amount of manuscript evidence the Bible enjoys. This tells us these writings were not widely distributed.

Also impressive is that the many New Testament manuscripts are consistent with one another. Occasionally there will be an alternate rendering. You will sometimes see this indicated in a side note in your Bible stating something to effect, "*The majority reading says this...*" What that means is that one manuscript rendered the verse a little differently or deleted a word, however, the majority of the manuscripts had another word. Usually, these do not amount to much of anything, but they are important to note. When the manuscripts are all put together, and are compared one to the other, we have a very powerful witness to the integrity of the Bible and the canon of scripture.

Reliability of the New Testament (Chart⁶)

Author/ Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap	No. of Copies	Percent Accuracy
Hindu <i>Maha□bha□rata</i>	13 th cent. B.C.				90
Homer, <i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.			643	95
Herodotus <i>History</i>	480-425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs	8	?
Thucydides, <i>History</i>	460-400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	8	?
Plato	400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	7	?
Demosthenes	300 B.C.	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,400 yrs	200	?
Caesar, <i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs	10	?
Livy, <i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 th cent. (partial) mostly 10 th cent.	c. 400 yrs c. 1,000 yrs	1 partial 19 copies	?
Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs	20	?
Pliny Secundus, <i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61- 113	c. 850	c. 750 yrs	7	?
New Testament	A.D. 50- 100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of N.T.) c. 325 (complete N.T.)	±50 yrs 100 yrs 150 yrs 225 yrs	5366	99+

Example 8

⁶Geisler, Norman L., and William E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Includes Indexes. Includes a Short-Title Checklist of English Translations of the Bible (Chronologically Arranged). Rev. and expanded., Page 408. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986.

Questions:

1. Define “inspiration” as it relates to the word of God.
2. Define “inerrancy” as it relates to the word of God.
3. What evidences do we have that the Bible is inspired?
4. Understanding the inspiration and inerrancy of the scriptures, what does this tell us about its authority?
5. In what ways can we show respect to the authority of the scriptures in our interpretations?
6. Do copyist’s errors make the word of God unreliable?

LESSON FIVE:

The Canon of Scripture

HAVING DISCUSSED THE DIVINE INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY of the Bible, we must now consider the canon of the scriptures. The word “canon” means standard or rule. It is mostly used with respect to the accepted 66 books that make-up the Bible as we know it today. These books function as a canon, a standard or rule of authority for the church.

...it is necessary to emphasize that no church through its councils *made* the canon of Scripture. No church—in particular the Roman Catholic Church—by its decrees gave to or pronounced upon the books of the Bible their infallibility. The Bible owes its authority to no individual or group. The church does not control the canon, but the canon controls the church. Although divine authority was attributed to the New Testament books by the later church, this authority was not derived from the church but was inherent in the books themselves. As a child identifies its mother, the later church *identified* the books which it regarded as having unique authority.⁷

The Old Testament

Let's deal with the canon of the Old Testament scriptures first. This was assembled and put together long before the time of Christ. In the late first century, Josephus wrote of the books we know today as the Old Testament:

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine;⁸

Josephus' count of books reflects the Jewish method of reckoning the books. The normal Jewish count would be twenty-four. It is believed he counted Lamentations as a supplement to Jeremiah, and added Ruth to Judges. Twenty-two is the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, so he may have had some comparison in mind. Whichever, the books he references constitute the same thirty-nine books we possess today in our Old Testament. Josephus later adds:

... and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.⁹

⁷ Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 66.

⁸ Josephus, Flavius, and William Whiston. *The Works of Josephus : Complete and Unabridged*. Includes Index., Apion I 8. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987.

⁹ Josephus, Flavius, and William Whiston. *The Works of Josephus : Complete and Unabridged*. Includes Index., Apion I 8. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987.

Josephus states these books have long been recognized as the word of God and no one would dare add or take away from their content. This considered, we have a powerful witness to authenticity of the Old Testament books we have today. The Jews to this day look to these same writings.

It is interesting to note, that as far as early manuscript evidence is concerned, the Old Testament does not have anywhere near the amount of the New Testament. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, the oldest Hebrew manuscript that existed dated back to the ninth century. This would be known as the Massoretic Text.

It would be good here to say a word or two about the Massorettes and their intricate copying procedures. One person noted:

The Massorettes were not concerned only with such things as details of pronunciation. More than this, they sought ways and methods by which they could eliminate scribal slips of addition or omission. They achieved this through intricate procedures of counting. They numbered the verses, words, and letters used in each book. They noted verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them, etc. They calculated the middle verse, the middle word, and the middle letter of each book. With these safeguards, and others, when a scribe finished making a copy of a book he could then check the accuracy of his work before using it.¹⁰

Still, as accurate as they were in the copying of the scriptures, for years we lacked an earlier witness. The Ninth century was far removed from the early Hebrew. Then came the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls.

The Dead Sea scrolls gave us an earlier witness to the actual Hebrew text. Since their original discovery in the 1940's hundreds of scrolls have been found, along with thousands of manuscripts, many dating back to around 100 BC, nearly a thousand years earlier than what had previously existed as far as a Hebrew text is concerned. There was a fragment from Exodus which dates back to about 250 BC.

While many of the findings reflected the beliefs of the sect of Jews which prepared the scrolls, the Essenes, fragments from nearly every Old Testament book have been found. What these scrolls tell us, especially more complete scrolls like what was discovered with the book of Isaiah, is that there had been little change in the Hebrew text. They read almost identically the same. The variants that are found are usually variations in spelling.

All in all, when you combine the Dead Sea scrolls with the later-dated Massoretic Text of the Hebrew scriptures, and compare these to the LXX (The Greek translation of the Hebrew prepared around 200-300 years B.C., and the quotations of Old Testament scriptures found in the New Testament, we can be very confident in the text of the Old Testament. We can know that it is in fact, the inspired word of God. Further, that these books do in fact constitute the word of God is seen in passages such as this:

Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

Exodus 24:4

¹⁰ Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 55-56.

Moses wrote down the words of the Lord. And where were these words kept? Take a look at this Old Testament passage. This is Moses' instruction to the Levites:

“Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you.

Deuteronomy 31:26

The words which Moses wrote down, which were the words of the Lord, were placed in a safe place... in the ark. The same is said of the words of Joshua.

And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

Joshua 24:26

The same is said for the words of Samuel.

Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house.

1 Samuel 10:25

Ezra had a copy of the law of the Lord and he studied it:

For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Ezra 7:10

Daniel had the law and at the least a copy of Jeremiah:

...I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Daniel 9:2

Later, in acknowledging the sin of the people, Daniel says:

Nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. “Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

Daniel 9:10-11

At the start of His earthly ministry, Jesus read from the book of Isaiah:

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the

prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written...

Luke 4:16-17a

These writings (what we know today as the Old Testament) became known as the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, as we see at the time of Christ:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Luke 24:44

The Jews to this day look to these same writings. All of this considered, we can be confident of the canon of the Old Testament scriptures.

The New Testament

We talked about the Old Testament, but what about the New Testament? How was the canon of the New Testament developed? Early in the history of the church, there were writings that were recognized as being authoritative, a canon. Paul told the Thessalonians:

I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.

1 Thessalonians 5:27

He instructed the Colossian brethren to do the same with the letter he wrote to them:

When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

Colossians 4:16

We obviously do not have the letter written to the Laodiceans; although, some believe this was actually the Ephesian letter they had read and were to pass on to Colossae. What we see then, is that early on these apostolic letters were being circulated among the churches. In this way, we have an example of Jude quoting from Peter:

But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts."

Jude 17-18

That is a reference to Second Peter chapter three. The epistle of Jude is remarkably similar to Second Peter chapter two. Peter himself had copies of Paul's writings and made reference to them:

15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:15-16

We see in these texts that already authoritative letters were being circulated. You have heard me say before that we have over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of New Testament writings. These letters were copied and they were copied often. They were widely circulated. In essence, they were an early canon.

In the second and third century, we find those known by men as “the early church fathers” in their various writings quoting from the books we know today as the New Testament. Using their many quotations one can put together practically the entire New Testament. The 27 New Testament books we have today have long been widely distributed and recognized as authoritative.

In time, the 66 books we know today, taken from Old and New Testament manuscripts, were put into one collection of books. These were then translated into various languages and distributed throughout the world as the Bible.

You can read from NIV, KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, Living Bible, from any language you wish, English, Spanish, Korean, German, French... take your pick... the message will be the same. All will give the same instructions for what one must do in order to be saved.

Understanding the Divisions of Books

The Bible is one book composed of 66 individual books. It is in many respects a kind of library of history, law, poetry and prophecy. The student of the word must learn to properly keep track of all these different books. This is not hard to do when one understands that the books of the Bible are arranged in a very logical and chronological manner.

The Pentateuch:

These are the first five books of the Bible (Gen. – Deut.); sometimes called the books of Moses. They take us from the creation of the world to the exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In terms of personalities, they take us from Adam to Moses.

The Books of History:

The books of history pick up where the books of Moses leave off. They begin with Israel taking possession of the promised land of Canaan (Joshua – Judges); to the period of the kings (1 Samuel – 2 Chronicles); to Israel going into Babylonian captivity (2 Kings/2 Chronicles); to Israel returning to the land and rebuilding the temple (Ezra and Nehemiah). The books of history close with the book of Esther, which describes a great victory for Israel.

The Books of Poetry and Wisdom:

The book of Psalms is full of expressions of praise from the heart toward God. However, sometimes the expressions are that of complaint directed at God. The book Proverbs is full of timeless wisdom for life, as is the book of Ecclesiastes. Their message is as relevant today as when they were first written. There is much instruction to be found

here that can help us today as we seek to live acceptably before God. There is encouragement to be found in these books for just about any type of situation.

The Major Prophets:

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are known as the Major Prophets. They are called “major” because their writings are much more involved than that of the other prophets. Their prophecies speak of future events (now history) surrounding Israel and Judah. They speak of the people going into captivity to be punished by God (Jer. 5:14ff). They talk of the people coming out of that captivity (Jer. 25:11-12). Daniel speaks of the time when (after their return to the land) Israel would rebuild the temple that was destroyed (Dan. 9:24-27). Within these writings are many Messianic prophecies; meaning prophecies relating to the time of the Christ (Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 53).

The Minor Prophets:

The books are called “minor” only in the sense that their writing is not as long or as involved as the “major” prophets. The description of being “minor” says nothing as to their importance. These are important books of prophecy. Like the Major Prophets, they contain information relating to Israel and the coming Messiah.

The Gospels:

The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew – John) are called the gospels. These books cover the life of Jesus. They tell us of His birth, miracles, teachings; and finally of His death, burial and resurrection. Each gospel writer presents the life of Jesus from a little different perspective; yet all four perspectives harmonize with each other. Together, they give us a wonderful picture of our Savior.

The Book of Acts:

The title of “Acts” has reference to the “acts” (work, ministry) of the apostles. “Acts” covers the history of the New Testament church. Acts begins where the gospels leave off, taking us from the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1); to the establishment of the church (Acts 2); to the apostle Paul under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28). Through it all we see the spread of Christianity around the (then known) world. Acts contains an important record of New Testament conversions. We see time after time, what was required in order for one to be saved.

The Epistles:

These are letters written to various churches and individuals. In these epistles (letters), we find important doctrine and encouragement that helps us today. We see how the churches were instructed to handle various situations (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6) and how to perform certain acts of worship (1 Cor. 11:20ff; 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19). In these letters, we can also find encouragement for the various struggles of this life (Rom. 8:26-39; Phil. 4:6-7).

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is a very mysterious book to many people. It is one that many are afraid of studying. It is certainly a deep book requiring some patient effort in study.

However, Revelation can be understood. Its basic message is that God is in control. It is full of encouragement to remain faithful. To overcome the difficulties of life so that you may receive the promised prize of eternal life (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

Connecting the Old and New Testaments someone once said, “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, the Old Testament is in the New Testament, revealed.” The more one studies and understands the message of the Bible, the more they see the truth of those words.

Questions:

1. What does the word “canon” mean?
2. What evidences do we have that the collection of Bible books contained in the Bible are an acceptable “canon”?
3. What are the five books of Moses? (What are they about?)
4. Who are the “major prophets”?
5. The Old Testament books of history, cover what history?
6. What are the “epistles”?
7. How is the Old Testament important to what we read in the New?

LESSON SIX:

HERMENEUTICS: RULES OF INTERPRETATION

THE TITLE OF THIS LESSON might sound a little intimidating to some. Hermeneutics is certainly not a word we use in everyday conversation. However, the word is not as difficult to understand as one might first believe. “Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word meaning ‘to interpret.’”¹¹ We could call it the science of interpretation. Hermeneutics gives us rules for properly interpreting the scriptures. The Bible is a book that needs to be studied and properly interpreted.

An interpreter implies a misunderstanding, between two parties, or, at least, a liability to such a misunderstanding. And it is at once objected that if the Bible is of God, it should be so plain that no one could misunderstand it; that, if God could give us such a book, and would not, He was certainly to blame. But if He would, but could not, He is not perfect in wisdom or ability to execute. This logic is not good. We might as well say that if God is the Author of Nature, its meaning should be so apparent that all would perfectly understand it, and therefore, understand it alike. And yet we know that our scientists are quite disagreed about many things in nature, and that the great masses of men are in ignorance, almost from first to last, respecting the whole question. God has, therefore, made it necessary to study nature in order to get its lessons. Geology, astronomy, physiology, etc., are known only to those who study them. It is reasonable, therefore, that He should make it necessary to study His word.¹²

Hermeneutics helps us in properly studying and interpreting God’s word. One author described hermeneutics as follows:

First, hermeneutics is a science, since it provides a logical, orderly classification of the laws of interpretation.... Second, hermeneutics is an art, for it is an acquired skill demanding both imagination and an ability to apply the “laws” to selected passages or books.¹³

The challenge in the area of hermeneutics is that the rules are man-made. That is not to say that all the rules are bad. On the contrary, some are very necessary and extremely practical for properly applying the scriptures. However, great care must be taken in the rules we chose to accept and apply in our personal Bible study.

Unfortunately, what the rules of hermeneutics cannot do, is prevent selfish ambition from influencing one’s interpretation. If one is full of pride or prejudice in their approach to the scriptures, they will abandon any rules of hermeneutics, or even any common sense type of interpretation. No hermeneutic can stop these types of evil actions. The rules must be applied to the scriptures honestly. Let the word of God speak to you. Do not force the scriptures to say only what you want them to say.

In this study will we suggest a number of important rules for interpreting the inspired scriptures. Please know, that this is not meant to be an exhaustive set of rules. However,

¹¹ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 5.

¹² D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics: A Text Book*, 1-2.

¹³ Osborne, 5.

these rules considered, will greatly assist you in your study and application of the word of God.

Rule Number One

When it comes to hermeneutics, we must be careful that the “man-made rules” do not lead us to an incorrect interpretation of “God’s rules.” If we will start by following “the Bible’s rule of hermeneutics,” we will have great success in properly interpreting the scriptures. We will call this the number one rule of interpretation. Simply stated the rule would be:

Do Not Add or Take Away from the Word

This number one rule of interpretation is mentioned in several different places in the scriptures:

“You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

Deuteronomy 4:2

God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do.”

Numbers 22:20

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

1 Corinthians 4:6

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

Revelation 22:18-19

The Bible’s hermeneutical rule should be very clear in each of those verses. Once again, the rule is: Do not add or take away from God’s word. This basic rule of interpretation became the motto of the restoration movement. “We speak where the scriptures speak, and we are silent where the scriptures are silent.” This rule of interpretation recognizes that what God has spoken is vitally important. It equally recognizes that what God has not said, should be treated with equal importance. This leads us to a very important aspect of properly interpreting the scriptures, and that is, the authority of biblical silence. This will be discussed in detail in another lesson.

Rule Number Two

Another great rule of sound biblical hermeneutics (for our study we’ll call it, “the number two rule of interpretation”), is to interpret scripture with scripture. In other words, first and foremost, let the Bible answer any questions about a particular passage. The Bible’s interpretation of the text will give us the correct application.

Interpret Scripture with Scripture

In Jesus' familiar parable of the sower He talks of seed being sown on various types of ground (Matt. 13:1-9). We need not speculate what this parable is all about, Jesus gives us the interpretation (Matt. 13:18-23). This is not always the case with the parables of Jesus, but when an interpretation is given in the scriptures, our interpretation cannot (and must not) be anything different.

As Jesus began His earthly ministry, He went to the synagogue in Nazareth and stood up to read from the scroll of Isaiah.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

Luke 4:18-19

As you can see by the verse reference, this account is found in Luke 4:18-19. However, the words Jesus read are taken from Isaiah 61:1-2. When He had finished the reading, Luke tells us Jesus sat down and proclaimed, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk. 4:20-21). This is another example of scripture interpreting scripture. Here we learn *exactly* Whom the prophet Isaiah was describing.

In explanation of the miraculous events taking place on the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter quoted the prophet Joel, “This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel...” Here again, is scripture interpreting scripture. Texts like these give us “an inspired interpretation.”

Not every case of scripture interpreting scripture involves Bible prophecies and their fulfillment. Sometimes finding the Bible's explanation requires some investigating. For example, in Acts chapter eight we have the account of a man named Philip going to Samaria to preach the gospel. However, there are four men named Philip in the New Testament. There were Philip the apostle (Matt. 10:3); Philip the evangelist (Acts 6:5); Philip the tetrarch (Lk. 3:1); and Philip the brother of Herod (Mk. 6:17).¹⁴ So who is the Philip that went to Samaria? We know the two sons of Herod the Great named Philip are not possible. This Philip then, must be either the apostle, or the Philip known as the evangelist. Some resources have concluded it to be the apostle Philip. Yet, such an interpretation is at odds with the hermeneutic of letting scripture interpret scripture. A study of the events in Samaria shows that it was not until the apostles, Peter and John, arrived that spiritual gifts were able to be imparted. If this Philip were the apostle, he could have imparted the gifts to the believers in Samaria. Letting scripture interpret scripture, we learn that this was Philip the evangelist.

There are numerous other examples that could be offered of this hermeneutical rule being applied. The Bible is full of answers, if we will take the time to search them out. And while it would be great if every passage of scripture was clearly explained, at times, we must accept the fact that there are some answers that belong strictly to God (Dt. 29:29).

¹⁴ Note: These last two men named Philip were both sons of Herod the great, but by different wives.

Rule Number Three

When it comes to properly interpreting the inspired scriptures, enough cannot be said about the importance of context. One person has well-noted, “The first stage in serious Bible study is to consider the larger context within which a passage is found. Unless we can grasp the whole before attempting to dissect the parts, interpretation is doomed from the start.”¹⁵ Three keys to any sound interpretation: Context, Context, Context.

Context, Context, Context

Many an interpretation has been flawed because a passage was taken out of its context and forced into an application never intended by the original inspired author. In one’s zeal (or desperation) for proving a point, they select a verse that *seems* to say what they want it to say, and use it as justification.

As an example, those who are in favor of women filling roles of public participation in the worship assembly, such as preaching, or praying, leading singing, will sometime wrench Galatians 3:28 out of its context. In that verse Paul says, “There is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ.” The argument is then made, “If there is neither male or female, and if we are all one, then leadership in the public assembly is no longer exclusively male.” Contextually, that was not the apostle’s point. The oneness Paul is describing in no way changes the order of male leadership in the church or the home. The same apostle is clear about that in other texts (1 Cor. 11:1-3; 14:24; Eph. 5:23; 1 Tim. 2:8-12). The context of the verse will not allow for the application argued by some, neither will the context of Paul’s other letters. We cannot have the inspired apostle contradicting himself!

As you can hopefully see, context is critically important in properly interpreting the scripture. If the context is not properly understood and applied, the interpretation will be flawed.

How does one determine the context of a particular passage? Understand, that context is often bigger than the verse preceding and the verse following. A number of factors go into the determination of context. Let’s consider them as a series of question one might answer:

1. Who is the author of the book being studied?
2. What is the purpose or theme of the book?
3. Who is speaking? (This may not always be the author of the book)
4. To whom are they speaking?
5. What are they speaking about?
6. What is the period of time? (Patriarchal; Old Covenant, New Covenant)
7. What type of cultural aspects might be significant?

As you can see, a number of important factors must be considered in determining the context of a particular passage of scripture. Unless these are properly considered, the interpretation, perhaps, most importantly, the application may be flawed.

¹⁵ Osborne, 19.

Rule Number Four

The Bible is a book that contains a variety of different types of written language. We are not talking here about Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. We are referencing types of speech, or literary writing styles. There is poetry, figurative language, symbolic language, and yes, text that should (and must) be interpreted literally. Each verse must be closely examined in its context to determine what type of language is being used. A lack of consideration regarding the type of speech that is being used can negatively impact one's interpretation.

Know the Language

Generally speaking, historical books contain language that is literal. In Genesis for the example, we can read about six *literal* days of creation¹⁶, a *literal* flood, *literal* promises made to Abraham, and Joseph's brothers *literally* selling him as a slave. There is nothing necessarily symbolic about each of these events, although, they do often prove to be types of later events or persons (usually with respect to Christ and the church).

However, it must be understood, that the Bible does not only contain literal types of speech. One person mistakenly writes, "The Bible I revere is a literal book from cover to cover..."¹⁷ Such a misunderstanding will create some false interpretations. For example, Jesus said, "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off" (Matt. 5:30). A literal interpretation to this verse would demand a painful penalty for committing sins with the *right* hand. Literally speaking, could one do whatever they want with their *left* hand? Of course not. The language here is obviously *figurative* and is not meant to be interpreted literally. Applying figurative or symbolic language *literally* will create some serious doctrinal consequences.

Another type of figurative language used in the Bible would be better described as symbolic language. In symbolic language, one thing is used to represent another. This is seen in the parables of Jesus. In the parable of the sower, the seed was *symbolic* of the word. The various grounds were *symbolic* of conditions of the human heart and its ability to properly receive the word. The Book of Revelation contains a lot of *symbolic* language. Various objects are used *symbolically* to represent something. In the first chapter of Revelation, Jesus is pictured as holding seven stars in His right hand (Rev. 1:16). We are later told that these seven stars *symbolized* the angels of the seven churches addressed (Rev. 1:20).

The challenge for the interpreter of scripture is learning how to recognize each specific form of speech. Here are some things to consider in evaluating the language of a particular text.

Every passage of scripture should be considered literal, unless:

- 1). ...the text specifically mentions that it is meant to be figurative. In such cases no literal interpretation should be applied (cf. John 2:18-22).

¹⁶ Some challenge the idea of six literal days of creation. However, the language in Genesis, a historical record, is of such a nature, that no symbolism seems to be intended. The debate over these "days" will undoubtedly continue.

¹⁷ John Hagee, *Beginning of the End: The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Coming Antichrist*, 112.

- 2). ...a literal interpretation would not make any sense, as in the case of cutting off one's right hand.
- 3). ...a literal interpretation would involve an impossibility. By impossibility, we are not talking about trying to explain the miracles of Jesus or the incredible works of God. The miracles *literally* occurred! No symbolism is intended. By impossibility, we are speaking of examples such as this: We are told that God is a rock (Ps. 18:2). Literally, we know that God is not a rock. The language is clearly meant to be figurative. Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their own dead" (Matt. 8:22). Literally, the dead cannot bury one another, so the language is understood to be figurative.
- 4). ...the context demands a figurative interpretation. Is the author using hyperbole? Is it a word of prophecy? How about the context of the book itself? Books such as Ezekiel and Revelation are highly symbolic in their language.

There is much more that could be said about this subject. In our next lesson, we will further explore symbolism as it is used in scripture. This is something the interpreter of scripture must be able to properly recognize.

A word needs to be said about properly interpreting symbolic language. Remember, that the symbol (i.e. sower, seed, ground, etc) is used to represent something. Make sure your choice of that something it represents, does not violate any other passage of scripture or doctrine. Sometimes the meaning of a particular symbol will be given to you (as in the case of the parable of the sower), other times you will have to search for it.

Rule Number Five

Time texts can be very helpful in determining the context of a particular verse. The Bible does not give us dates, but it often gives us clues as to when something will occur or when it was spoken.

Know the Time

Here are a few examples of time texts that are used in the Bible. When these are involved, some other historical resources may be needed to pinpoint the exact or approximate time.

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Isaiah 1:1

The time of Isaiah's ministry can be determined through some historical research into the dates of the kings that are here mentioned.

Here is a similar type of time text from the New Testament:

One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

Acts 11:28

Much like the passage referenced from Isaiah, the time of this prophecy, and the famine that was going to occur, can be found by doing some historical research. Claudius reigned from A.D. 41-54.

Here is another type of time text that can be used in determining the time of some prophetic events that are described by our Savior:

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
Matthew 24:34

This time text indicates that the events described would occur before that first century generation passed away. Therefore, all of the events prophesied can be interpreted as being fulfilled.

In a similar way, the Bible sometimes uses time terms that must be considered in their first century context. For example:

You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.
James 5:8

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.
1 John 2:18

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,
2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.
3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Revelation 1:1-3

In these passages, we see time terms such as: near, soon, last hour. The interpreter of scripture must determine how to apply such terms. What does “near” mean? Is it used figuratively or literally?

As you can see, there is much that goes into the proper interpretation of inspired scripture. Great care must be given to the original intent of the text and its application for us today.

Rule Number Six

Many students of this material will be familiar with the restoration movement motto, “We speak where the scriptures speak, and we are silent where the scriptures are silent.” Yes, a man (Thomas Campbell) said that, but it is Biblical in thought and application (cf. Deut. 4:2; Num. 22:20; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19). In each of those referenced texts, the principle of that familiar restoration motto is clearly established. We speak where God speaks, and remain silent where He is silent. What God has said is vitally important. However, what He has not said should be treated with equal importance. What God’s

word does not tell us, can be as instructive and authoritative as what it does tell us. This gives us a very important rule of hermeneutics: Respect for Biblical Silence.

Respect for Biblical Silence

Being silent where the Bible is silent carries with it two important principles that must be understood. First, is the fact that we are not bound by what men have added to the scriptures in the way of religious doctrines. In other words, we are bound by the scriptures where they speak, but we are not bound where they are silent. As an example, in the first century, the Judaizing teachers were imposing on the Gentile believers aspects of the Old Law, circumcision, feast days, Sabbath rituals. In this regard, Paul told the Galatians, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free, therefore keep standing firm, and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1). Men adding these doctrines had no scriptural authority to do so. The scriptures were silent about the matter. That silence was authoritative in the sense that these practices were not to be a part of the New Covenant. We are bound where the scriptures speak, but where they are silent, we are free.

The second principle, relative to being silent where the Bible is silent, almost seems contradictory to the first, yet, they both actually work together. Where the first set us free from things that men might seek to bind upon us; the second is the idea that we are bound by the silence of the Bible itself. Think of it this way: We speak where the scriptures speak, because it is God’s inspired word. And we are silent where the scriptures are silent, because it is God’s inspired silence.

Not everyone agrees with the principle of Biblical silence we have just discussed. Today, those who are in favor of adding instruments of music to our worship, believe the silence of the scriptures to be permissive, not prohibitive. Their argument is, God did not specifically speak against the use of instruments of music. They were certainly found in the Old Testament, so they are (or must be) acceptable today.

Certainly, there are times when silence can be interpreted as being permissive. But there are many instances where it is clearly prohibitive. It is learning to properly interpret and understand the difference between the two, where we need more instruction: Between that silence that is permissive and that which is prohibitive.

We can notice a number of examples from the scriptures that demonstrate silence is not always permissive, but rather, at times, clearly prohibitive. We will try to distinguish some ways of making a proper distinction between the two. Let’s look at an example from the book of Acts.

“Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls,

Acts 15:24

There was a silence in regards to whether or not the Gentile converts had to be circumcised. No instruction was given. The silence on the matter was not permissive. It was clearly prohibitive. The men who had imposed this teaching were adding to the word. They had no authority for such an addition.

In the first chapter of the book of Hebrews, the writer is seeking to establish the truth, that Jesus is greater than the angels. He does so by using two different points of argumentation. The first being, the silence of the scriptures pertaining to the issue, and then what the scriptures did say about the matter.

For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again, “I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me”?

Hebrews 1:5

The scriptures were silent in this regard. Nowhere did the scriptures speak anything about angels in these areas. The author of Hebrew sees this as a valid argument. But, what did the scriptures say about the Son? Plenty. He writes in verse eight of the first chapter.

But of the Son He says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.

Hebrews 1:8

Later in his letter, as the writer of Hebrews is establishing that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, he again uses the silence of the scriptures as a point of argumentation.

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

Hebrews 7:14

The scriptures were silent about priests being taken from the tribe of Judah. The Hebrew writer’s point, is that the silence was authoritative. The fact that nothing was said about whether or not priests could come from Judah, was not *permissive*. It did not give the people license to make priests from any tribe they wanted. The silence was *prohibitive*. What was written was all that needed to be said on the matter. Priests would only come from the tribe of Levi. Why was the silence in this case prohibitive and not permissive? Because a specific tribe was designated by God. God did not have to say, “No priest can come from Judah, or Benjamin, or Gad, or so on.

In the case of instruments of music in our worship, the scriptures are silent. But then, they are also silent about songbooks and song leaders and projectors showing slides of the songs on the screen. How is it we find approval for songbooks and song leaders, and not instruments of music? Why is one area of silence prohibitive and the other permissive?

The command in the New Testament is to sing. You know the verses, but here they are again for reference.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Ephesians 5:19

What do the scriptures say? “Sing and make melody with the heart.” Nothing is mentioned about using songbooks or instruments of music. There is silence. However, we can use a songbook to sing and make melody with our heart, and the instruction of the verse is not violated in any way. A song leader is a means, along with the book, to help us sing in time and in pitch. These are sometimes called aids. They are aids to fulfilling a command.

These are very different than adding an instrument of music; although, some will contend an instrument is merely an aid. However, an instrument of music is an addition to the command to sing and make melody with the heart. The instruction is plain and simple... sing. It is not sing and play an instrument. It is simply to sing. The instrument identified being the heart. In Greek, the idea is, as we sing, we pluck the strings of the heart.

Here’s another example to consider: We know the Lord’s Supper consists of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. Nothing is said about using disposable plastic cups or the number of men who are to serve it, or the time of day in which it is to be served, only that it be on the first day of week. There is silence in these areas. But, do these (plastic cups and the number of men) interfere with the elements that are designated in the scriptures? No. They are an aid to fulfilling the instruction to eat of the supper on the first day of the week. The silence about them would be permissive. However, do we not recognize that it would be wrong to add another element to the supper, such as (if you will) cheese, or chips? Of course we do. We understand the silence in this area to be prohibitive. Here again, there is an aspect of the silence that is permissive, but another that is prohibitive. We must learn to properly apply the silence in a given area.

If one is to be a sound interpreter of the inspired scriptures, and make proper application of the truth contained therein, they must have a respect for areas of Divine silence.

Rule Number Seven

After all of the above rules have been properly applied to the text and its meaning understood, it then comes time to find a personal application. This is where Bible study really helps us grow as Christians. After all, it is great to know what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth or Thessalonica, but what does it mean to us? How do we apply Jesus’ powerful “Sermon on the Mount”? How does the church today apply what was done in the first century?

Find a Personal Application

Let’s discuss this as it relates to the work of the church today. To assist us in the matter of making proper application for the church, a hermeneutic was created. This hermeneutic employs three simple, yet important principles: “Direct Commands,” “Binding Examples,” and a “Necessary Inference.” One person described this hermeneutic, which has been so well-known in the church for many years, like this:

As much as being a tool of biblical interpretation and application, even more so is our hermeneutic a statement of faith in God’s revelation to man and, therefore, in the importance of the written Word. Of faith in the integrity of the biblical writings themselves, and in the authority of Holy Scripture as the ultimate, infallible guide to our life with God. Of faith in the importance of apostolic pattern for the work and worship

of the church, and in the richness of spiritual Truth for the one who seeks a spiritual God. In fact, it was respect for the Word that led godly men in search of a method by which to understand God's revelation.¹⁸

Here is an example of how this well-known hermeneutic works. Once again, we'll use the example of the Lord's Supper. We have a *direct* command to observe this memorial supper (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-29).

We have *binding* examples of the early Christians partaking of the supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17ff). By a binding example, we mean that it is not merely something cultural. In the New Testament, we find foot washing, greeting one another with a holy kiss. These examples are thought to be more cultural than binding. In regards to the Lord's Supper, we know Jesus instituted it in an upper room. The upper room is not considered a binding part of the Lord's Supper observance.

We find them eating of the Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The *necessary* inference is that they did so each first day of the week (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2). In making proper application of this feast, we today partake of it every first day of the week.

Rule Number Eight

Our eighth and final rule of hermeneutics (at least for this course) has to do with consistency. One's interpretation of a specific passage of scripture, must not contradict any other passage of scripture.

Consistency with the Whole of Scripture

Making sure your interpretation is consistent with all of scripture requires some cross-checking with other related texts. Here are a few suggestions to help with consistency.

- 1). Look for parallel passages. These are very common in the gospels.
- 2). Look to see if the writer had anything else to say about the subject you are studying. Perhaps another writer addressed the same subject. For example, compare Paul and James on the subject of faith and works (Rom. 4:1-5ff; James 2:21-24). For many years, some thought these two inspired authors contradicted each other. This led some to conclude that James should not be included in the canon of scripture. However, proper application of the context of each particular text, shows these men to be in complete harmony.
- 3). Consider how your interpretation impacts or contradicts other beliefs of faith. If one happens to accept the doctrine of premillennialism (which speaks of Jesus returning to earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords), how do they explain passages that speak of Christ reigning now? If one accepts the false notion that Jesus was not God, how do they explain the many passages that clearly indicate He was?
- 4). Always interpret the unclear, in light of the clear. In other words, if the passage you're investigating seems difficult to understand, look for a text dealing with the same subject, that is easier to understand. It may be that you can find other texts with similar language. A study of their particular contexts may shed some light on the text with which you are struggling. As an example, in Matthew 24:29-30 Jesus talks about the sun being darkened, the moon not giving its light, and the stars

¹⁸ LaGard Smith, *The Cultural Church*, 35.

falling from the heavens. Is He talking about the end of the world? A study of similar language shows this type of speech was very common in the Old Testament. As one investigates the various contexts where such language is used, they discover it spoke of the ending of a specific nation. Therefore, the language was not meant to be taken literally. Also, a consideration of the time text found in Matthew 24:34 will reveal this was to occur in the first century. When the various rules of hermeneutics are applied, an interpretation that is consistent with the whole of scripture can be discovered.

Questions:

1. Define “hermeneutics.”
2. What is “the Bible’s rule of hermeneutics”? (See Rule Number 1)
3. What advantage is there to interpreting scripture with scripture?
4. What is the difference between silence that is prohibitive and silence that is permissive? Give an example.
5. What are some ways to determine if a passage is using literal or figurative language?
6. What are some things to consider in determining context?

LESSON SEVEN:

INTERPRETING SYMBOLS AND TYPES

THE BIBLE CONTAINS A NUMBER of symbols and types that are used to communicate certain truths. For example, the Book of Revelation is full of symbolism. Gleaning a proper interpretation of the book requires some familiarity with the symbols being used. In the Old Testament we find a number of types. Types are different than symbols, but in like manner, need to be better understood and applied. This can greatly help with the interpretation of a particular text. In this lesson we will examine some symbols and types used in the Bible. Our efforts here will hopefully help you better recognize them in your personal study of the scriptures.

The Use of Symbols

The use of symbols in scripture is quite different than that of types. Types are used prophetically to prefigure something of much greater substance. Symbols are used representatively; one thing standing for another. The object used as a symbol is used because it shares some characteristics common to the thing it is representing. Symbols can take the form of places, names of people, objects, animals, actions, colors—any number of different things might be used representatively. The proper interpretation of the verse where a symbol is used rests upon properly understanding the symbol used and what it represents. For example, notice the following passages of scripture containing symbols in various forms.

Symbolic Places

There are a number of different places that are used symbolically in the scriptures. One such place is Eden (cf. Gen. 2:8; Isa. 51:3; Eze. 28:13; 36:35; Joel 2:3). To understand what is meant by the symbol of Eden, one must look at Eden as it was originally described in the Bible. Sodom is another city that is used symbolically. Once again, to understand the symbol, one must consider the original city (Gen. 18:20-21; Isa. 1:9-10; Jer. 16:14; 23:14; Lam. 4:6; Rev. 11:8).

Symbolic Names of People

The names of people in the Bible often have some symbolic value. God changed Abram and Sari's names. As well, He changed the name of Jacob to Israel. Understanding the meaning of a name can give some added meaning to a context or the interpretation of a passage (cf. Gen. 4:25; 1 Chron. 4:9).

Symbolic Objects

Various objects are used symbolically in the scriptures. These must not be interpreted literally. Rather, their symbolic value must be considered in order to glean the meaning of the text. In the book of Hebrews we read, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (Heb. 6:19). The word "anchor" is used symbolically to illustrate the security of our hope. The Psalmist wrote that the word was a lamp to his feet (Ps. 119:105). Once again, he did not mean the word was *literally* a lamp. He was using the symbol of a lamp to describe how the word

provided direction in a dark world. The use of such symbols is found throughout the inspired scriptures. To exhaustively list them all is not necessary. What is necessary is the ability to better recognize them when they appear.

Symbolic Animals

Animals or insects are used symbolically in the scriptures. As with other types of symbols, one must consider the nature of the animal being referenced in order to understand the passage. For example:

Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, Which, having no chief,
Officer or ruler, Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the
harvest.

Proverbs 6:6-8

Here we have the symbol of the ant. What are we to understand by this? The ant's diligence and work ethic.

The apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29). Paul did not mean that the church in Ephesus was going to be *literally* attacked by wolves. He was making use of their savage nature to illustrate how some men would treat the flock of God.

There are any number of different types of symbols employed in the language of the Bible. There are symbolic colors (cf. Isa. 1:18; Rev. 6:2-8); symbolic actions (cf. Ps. 1:1; Isa. 59:2; Eph. 5:14); and symbolic numbers (We will discuss the use of number in our next lesson). The wise interpreter of scripture will spot these symbols and determine their value in order to best apply the teaching of the verse.

The Use of Types

A familiarity with the Bible's use of types and antitypes can greatly increase one's knowledge and application of the scriptures. In many instances, types and antitypes reveal a deeper beauty to the text. They help us in connecting the Old and New Testaments. Concerning the study of Old Testament types one person writes:

"The consideration of the Old Testament types is one of the most interesting and helpful subjects for Bible study, and at the same time is absolutely necessary if we are to rightly understand the word of God."¹⁹

I believe for many Christians the part of the Bible with which they are the most unfamiliar and uncomfortable, is the Old Testament. We are much more familiar with apostles, baptism and the church, than we are with patriarchs, circumcision and Israel. Sadly, many are content with that! Certainly the New Testament is important for us to know... but is the Old of no value?

Paul writes, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The scriptures to which Paul makes

¹⁹ Ada R. Habershon, *Study of the Types*, Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1997, p 9.

reference in that passage are the Old Testament scriptures. Believe it or not they are very *profitable*. We must learn to develop a respect for the *whole* of scripture. If you are one who has majored in the New Testament, the study of Old Testament ‘types’ will greatly increase your level of understanding and appreciation for the same.

What is a Type?

Types are different in nature than the symbols which we have already discussed. Symbols are used representatively; one thing standing for another. The object used as a symbol is used because it shares some characteristics common to the thing it is representing. In contrast to symbols, types are used prophetically. A ‘typical’ object or event prefigures (points to) another—what we would call, the substance. The types themselves while important, are not as significant as the substance. A shadow only exists because there is something greater causing it to be, so it is with the Old Testament types. The apostle Paul described it well in his letter to the Colossians, pointing out that in Christ they should concern themselves with the substance, not the shadows.

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—**things which are a mere shadow of what is to come**; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Colossians 2:16-17

Just as one might trace a shadow made by the light upon an object (the substance), so one can trace through the types (or shadows) of the Old Testament to their substance. And that is what makes the study of types so fascinating... discovering the true substance.

In comparing “types” to “symbols” one person has put together the following that will hopefully help illustrate the differences.

The **Rock** in Ps. 18:2 is a symbol, not a type.
The **Candlesticks** in rev. 1:20 are symbols, not types.
The **Lamb** in Jn. 1:29 is a symbol, not a type.
The **Rainbow** in Gen. 9:13-16 is a symbol, not a type.
The **Olive trees** in Zec. 4:3 are symbols, not types.
The color **white** in Rev. 19:8 is a symbol, not a type.
The number **666** in rev. 13:18 is a symbol, not a type.

Adam in Rom. 5:14 is a type, not a symbol.
The offices of **prophet, priest, and king** in 1 Kings. 1:34 are types, not symbols.
Jonah’s experience in the fish in Matt. 12:39-41 is a type, not a symbol.

The whole animal system of sacrifice in Lev. 1-5 is typical of Christ’s sacrifice, yet the animals themselves are symbolic.

The Tabernacle of Moses in Ex. 25-40 is a type, not a symbol. However, within the type are numerous symbols.

It must be recognized, through this, that types involve symbols, but symbols of themselves are never types.²⁰

The word ‘type’ comes from the Greek word *tupos* which speaks of a visible impression made by a strike or a blow. It is to mark, trace, or to set a pattern. *Tupos* is variously rendered with these concepts in the New Testament. For example:

So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the **imprint** (*tupos*) of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”
John 20:25

“You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the **images** (*tupos*) which you made to worship. I also will remove you beyond Babylon.”
Acts 7:43

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a **type** (*tupos*) of Him who was to come.
Romans 5:14

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that **form** (*tupos*) of teaching to which you were committed,
Romans 6:17

Now these things happened as **examples** (*tupos*) for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.
1 Corinthians 10:6

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the **pattern** (*tupos*) you have in us.
Philippians 3:17

Who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the **pattern** (*tupos*) which was shown you on the mountain.”
Hebrews 8:5

Types, like symbols, can take the form of people, objects, or events. We see all typified in the Old Testament—leaving us shadows to trace to the New Testament in order to discover the greater substance or meaning.

Examples

That God designed all these shadows is evident by the fact that they are recorded in His word. The Hebrew writer spoke of how the Holy Spirit ‘signified’ or ‘typified’ certain things (Heb. 9:6-8). He gives the examples of the tabernacle, the priestly

²⁰ Kevin J. Conner, *The Symbols and Types*, City Bible Publishing, Portland, 1992, p. 85.

operations, and the various sacrifices. When studied and recognized as types, they lead us to our Great High Priest and His sacrifice on the cross (cf. Heb. 9:11-10:1).

Below is a chart demonstrating how Moses was a type of Christ. Notice the similarities in language and events. The thoughtful interpreter of scripture will find the Old Testament types very revealing. When properly understood they become a powerful witness to the divine inspiration of the scriptures.

Moses as a Type of Christ

Moses	Jesus
“His servant” Ps. 105:26	“My Servant” Matt. 12:18
“His chosen” Ps. 106:23	“My Chosen” Isa. 42:1
“Priest” Ps. 99:6	“Priest” Heb. 7:24
“Judge” Ex. 18:13	“Judge” John 5:27
“Shepherd” Ex. 3:1	“Shepherd” John 10:11, 14
“Intercessor” Num. 21:7	“Intercessor” Rom. 8:34
“Deliverer” Acts 7:35	“Deliverer” Rom. 11:26
Events surrounding His birth Ex. 1:22; Act 7:19	Events surrounding His birth Matt. 2:13-16
Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter (refusing a kingdom) Heb. 11:24	The devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world Matt. 4:8-10
“Forsook Egypt” Heb. 11:27	“Called out of Egypt” Matt. 2:15
“Supposed his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand Acts 7:25	“He came to His own and they did not receive Him.” John 1:10, 11
“Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?” Acts 7:27	“Who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” Lk. 12:14
“All the men seeking your life are dead...” Ex. 4:19	“Those who sought the child’s life are dead.” Matt. 2:20
“Let me people go” Ex. 9:13	“...proclaim liberty to the captives” Isa. 61:1
“How long will this man be a snare to us?” Ex. 10:7	“A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” 1 Pet. 2:8

Compare also (Ex. 3:12 & John 8:29) (Ex. 12:29-30 & Zec. 12:10) (Acts 7:22 & Matt. 13:54) (Ex. 14:21 & Matt. 8:27) (Ex. 17:3 & John 7:34)

Questions:

1. Explain the difference between a symbol and a type.

2. Examine the symbolism in the following verses and interpret its application to us.

Ecc. 12:1-7

Matt. 5:13-14

Matt. 26:26-28

John 10:7

1 Peter 5:8

3. How is Adam a type of Christ? (Rom. 5:14)

4. How was Melchizedek a type of Christ? (Heb. 5:6; 7:1-3)

5. What “types” do you find in the events recorded in Genesis 22:1-14? (cf. Heb. 11:17-19).

LESSON EIGHT: NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

When discussing the use of numbers in scripture, it should immediately be noted, that we are not talking about *numerology*. Those involved in numerology incorrectly turn the use of numbers in scripture, into a means of trying to interpret supposed *secret* information about life. Despite the mystical (and futile) efforts of some in this regard, we should understand that numbers are *significantly* used throughout the Bible; sometimes symbolically, at other times literally. The careful interpreter of scripture must determine how the specific number is being used. At times, even the literal use of a number may have some symbolic value. This is true with numbers such as twelve and forty. This will be clearer as our lesson continues.

In certain portions of scripture, there appears to be a numeric design to the inspired text. For example, notice the first verse of the Bible from the Hebrew text:



Genesis 1:1

- Number of Hebrew words: 7
- Numbers of letters: 28 = 4 x 7
- First three words: 14 letters, 2 x 7
- Last four words: 14 letters, 2 x 7
- Fourth and fifth words: 7 letters
- Sixth and seventh words: 7 letters
- Three key words (God, heaven, earth) 14 letters, 2 x 7
- Four remaining words: 14 letters, 2 x 7

Notice the repeated use of the number seven in the above example. The number seven, and multiples thereof, are found throughout the Bible. This is not by accident!

Concerning the genealogy of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew's gospel, and its use of the number seven, one person put together the following:

Consider the following assignment. Try designing a genealogy, even from fiction, which meets the following criteria:

1. The number of **words** in it must be divisible by seven *evenly*.
2. The number of **letters** must also be divisible by seven.
3. The number of **vowels** and the number of **consonants** must also each be divisible by seven.
4. The number of words that **begin with a vowel** must be divisible by seven.
5. The number of words that **begin with a consonant** must be divisible by seven.
6. The number of words that **occur more than once** must be divisible by seven.
7. The number of words that **occur in more than one form** shall be divisible by seven.
8. The number of words that **occur in only one form** shall be divisible by seven.

9. The number of **nouns** shall be divisible by seven.
10. Only seven words shall not be nouns.
11. The number of **names** in the genealogy shall be divisible by seven.
12. Only seven **other kinds of nouns** are permitted.
13. The number of **male names** shall be divisible by seven.
14. The number of **generations** shall be 21, also divisible by seven.²¹

All of the above (seemingly impossible) criteria, are fully met in the first eleven verses of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus in the Greek text! As we will see in this lesson, the number seven is a very significant number in scripture; but, it is by no means the only number of significance.

The Symbolic Significance of Numbers

Reading through the Bible one cannot help but notice the repeated use of certain numbers:

Twelve sons of Israel (Gen. 35:23-26)
 Twelve apostles (Matt. 10:2ff)
 Twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53)
 Twelve gates to new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12)
 Twelve angels (Rev. 21:12)
 Twelve foundation stones (Rev. 21:14)
 Twelve years old when we first hear Jesus speaking (Lk. 2:42)

Forty days and nights of the flood (Gen. 7:4)
 Forty days and nights Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1, 2)
 Forty years for Israel in the wilderness (Num. 14:34)
 Forty years under Saul (Acts 13:21)
 Forty years under David (2 Sam. 5:4)
 Forty years under Solomon (1 Kings 11:42)
 The life of Moses can be divided into three forty year segments (Acts 7:30, 42)

Over and over in scripture we find the repetition of certain numbers. Is this merely the result of chance? Of course not! Remember, the Bible is God's inspired word, it is not the work of men. Everything contained in His word is there for a reason, although, we not always know the reason (cf. Deut. 29:29).

Based on studies designed to look at the use of numbers in scripture, scholars have put together some *possible* symbolic meanings to various numbers. These will be considered in this lesson.

The Number "One"

"There can be no doubt as to the significance of this primary number. In all languages it is the symbol of unity."²² When there is unity among any number, there is symbolically only one (cf. Gen. 2:24; Eph. 4:4-6). "One" also speaks of no other, singleness, or uniqueness. "One" can represent first, whether in order or in importance. Consider these thoughts in view of the following passages:

²¹ Chuck Missler, *Cosmic Codes*, Kononia House, Coeur d'Alene, Id. 1999, pp. 92-93

²² E.W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, Kregel, Grand Rapids, Mi. 1967, p. 50

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!
Deuteronomy 6:4

How interesting that the first (or number *one*) commandment states:

“You shall have no other gods before Me.
Exodus 20:3

God alone is God. He is the *one and only* true God (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:8, 17; 22:13; 2:8). Thus, He should be of *first* (or number one) significance in our lives. Hence, Jesus tells us to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).

As “One”, there exists *unity* in God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as demonstrated by these words of Jesus:

That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

John 17:21-23

As God is “one”, we as believers should be “one.” Jesus prayed for it, Paul wrote about it:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13

The Number “Three”

The number three speaks of completeness, not only in scripture, but also in many areas of life.

- There are three great divisions completing time—past, present, and future.
- Thought, word, and deed, complete the sum of human capability.
- Three kingdoms embrace our idea of matter—mineral, vegetable, and animal.²³

In scripture, three speaks of divine completeness or perfection. Three is the first of

²³ Bullinger, p. 107

four “perfect” numbers.

- Three denotes *divine* perfection;
- Seven denotes *spiritual* perfection;
- Ten denotes *ordinal* perfection;
- Twelve denotes *governmental* perfection.²⁴

Some examples of divine completeness or perfection of the number three in scripture:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit**,

Matthew 28:19

And one called out to another and said, “**Holy, Holy, Holy**, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

Isaiah 6:3

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was **buried**, and that He was **raised** on the **third day** according to the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For just as Jonah was **three days and three nights** in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth.

Matthew 12:40

The Aaronic blessing as given in the Old Testament, for blessing God’s people has a threefold design:

The Lord bless you, and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.’

Numbers 6:24-26

Christ’s seeking fruit from Israel has a threefold (completeness of time) significance:

“And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for **three years** I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’

Luke 13:7

Consider also the significance of certain names which are associated in threes:

- Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.
- Peter, James, and John.

²⁴ Bullinger, p. 107

The Number “Six”

“Six” is thought to be the number of man. Perhaps so designated as being 7 – 1 e.g., man’s short coming of spiritual perfection (7). It was on the *sixth* day that man was created (Gen. 1:26-31). God had determined that Israel was to labor *six* days (Ex. 20:9). The *sixth* command had to do with the taking of a man’s life (Ex. 20:13). Six, in contrast to seven, seems to represent *spiritual imperfection*.

Examples of six in the Bible:

- Cain’s descendants given only to sixth generation.
- The burnt offering in Gen. 22 is mentioned six times (vs. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 13). This being Abraham’s son Isaac; the seventh (perfect) would be that which God would provide (vs. 8).
- Six main names for man in the Bible, four in the O.T. two in the N.T.

Hebrew:

Adam (cf. Gen. 1:26; 2:7; 3:24)

Ish (cf. Zec. 6:12; Ps. 22:6)

Enosh (cf. Ps. 8:4; 103:15)

Geber (cf. Ex. 10:11; Zec. 13:7)

Greek:

Anthropos (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1)

Aner (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8)

It is significant to point out that each of the four Hebrew words for man, carry a blessing. Notice the following uses:

How **blessed is the man** (*Adam*) to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

Psalm 32:2

How **blessed is the man** (*Ish*) who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

Psalm 1:1

Behold, how **happy (blessed) is the man** (*Enosh*) whom God reproves, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

Job 5:17

Blessed is the man (*Geber*) whom You chasten, O Lord, And whom You teach out of Your law;

Psalm 94:12

The Number “Seven”

As mentioned earlier the number seven represents *spiritual perfection*. As noted earlier, sevens are found throughout scripture. In writing of the significance of the Hebrew word *seba* (seven), the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament notes the following:

Scripture does use \aleph often as a mystic sign-word, and the fair-minded lexicographer can hardly fail to note this.

Thus we see Abraham sealing an oath (\aleph , q.v.) by Abimelech that a well of water is his, Abraham's, by forcing upon Abimelech seven lambs (Gen 21:28, 30). So too in Gen 29:18 it is precisely seven years that Jacob must serve Laban for Rachel and for Leah. These instances seem to be examples of an ancient traditional respect for the number seven, the original basis of which is a matter of conjecture and debate.

In creating a ceremonial for Israel the Lord himself establishes and confirms the symbolic and sacred significance of seven. Hence in Ex 29:30 the garments of a new high priest were ordered by Moses speaking for the Lord to be consecrated for seven days. This was a ceremonial action and it could just as well have been accomplished in more or less days, yet the Lord prescribed exactly seven! In Ex 23:15 the unleavened bread was to be eaten seven days, and in Ex 25:37 the Menorah, or sacred lamp stand of the tabernacle, was to have one main stem with six lateral stems, making seven.

Such examples of the sacred utilization of seven are legion and need not be multiplied here. The prime example, however, must lie in the special hallowing of the seventh (\aleph) day as the sabbath day and hence the chief day of normal worship activities (Ex 20:10; Deut 5:14). It was on this day, the seventh, that God rested from his days of creating, and hence for the benefit of man God set apart this seventh day for rest and worship (Ex 20:11; Gen 2:2). Hence from here an original symbolic significance is given to the number seven (1) as having a special sacredness; (2) as marking a totality of a cycle or an accomplished task; and (3) as marking a time for rest.

That there is such a significance in the number is confirmed further by such passages as Zech. 4:2, 10. Here the seven flames of the Menorah are said to represent "the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth" (verse 10).

The Christian sees final confirmation of the sacred-completeness significances of this number in the NT, and especially in the book of symbols, Rev. In Rev 1:20 we see enumerated seven (\aleph) stars, seven lampstands, seven angels, and seven churches. In like manner, the seven seal judgments, the seven trumpet judgments, and the seven bowls of wrath, not to mention the seven thunders, each denote a complete and entire judgment cycle (Rev 6, 8, 9, 15, 16; 10:3). So too in the OT see Dan 9:24 ff. for its Apocalyptic seventy seven's!

Not every biblical seven, of course, should be thought to have a symbolical intention. Thus in Ex 2:16 the fact that the priest of Midian had seven daughters may only indicate the actual number of his daughters and beyond this there may be no symbolism intended. Each case must be decided in light of its own context and in light of the totality of similar scriptural usages.²⁵

²⁵ Harris, R. Laird, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Chicago: Moody Press 1999, c1980.

Notice this interesting combination of “three” and “seven” relating to Israel and what God would do for them.

3 { 4 And **I have** also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.
5 And **I have** also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and **I have** remembered my covenant.

7 { 6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, *I am the LORD*, and **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will rid you out of their bondage**, and **I will redeem you** with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:
7 And **I will take you to me** for a people, and **I will be to you a God**: and ye shall know that *I am the LORD* your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
8 And **I will bring you in unto the land**, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and **I will give it you** for an heritage: *I am the LORD*. (KJV)
Exodus 6:4-8

It is also interesting that the phrase *I am the Lord* is used three times in those promises.

In the New testament, Jesus spoke of seven things which come out of the heart and defile a man:

“For out of the heart come **evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.**

Matthew 15:19

In a way similar way we read in the book of Proverbs:

There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, **seven** which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

Proverbs 6:16-19

Sevens are seen in the Ten Commandments:

- The words ‘Lord’ and ‘God’ together appear fourteen times.
- The fourth commandment states a rest on the *seventh* day to *seven* persons and things (Ex. 20:8-11).
- The tenth commandment prohibits the coveting of *seven* persons and things.
- The relationships of father, mother, son, daughter, children, wife, together are used *seven* times.

Other sevens in scripture:

- Seven days of creation in Genesis Gen. 1
- Seven days Noah waited in the ark for the rain to begin Gen. 7:4, 10
- Seven days between the doves Gen. 8:10, 12
- Seven years Jacob serves Laban for Leah and Rachel Gen. 28:18-20; 29:27-30
- Seven ewe lambs at the well of Beersheba Gen. 21:28-30

• Seven days Laban pursues Jacob	Gen. 31:23
• Seven times Jacob bows in meeting Esau	Gen. 33:3
• Seven good years and seven bad years in Pharaoh's dream	Gen. 41
• Seven days the water turned to blood	Ex. 7:25
• Seven lamp of the Menorah	Ex. 25:37
• Seven feasts of Israel	
• Seven days of Feast of unleavened bread	Ex. 12:15, 19; 13:6, 7
• Seven weeks to feast of weeks	Lev. 23:16
• Seven years of sabbatical year	Lev. 25:4
• Seven times seven to the Jubilee year	Lev. 25:8
• Sevens in regards to priestly instructions	Ex. 29:35ff
• Seven priests, seven trumpets, circling Jericho seven times	Josh. 6
• Seven nations of Canaan	Josh. 3:10; 24:11
• Solomon seven years building Temple	1 Kings 6:38
• Naaman dips seven times in Jordan	2 Kings 5:10, 14
• Seven loaves	Matt. 15:32-39
• Seven men chosen in Acts 6	Acts 6
• Seven churches in Revelation	Rev. 2-3
• Seven lampstands	Rev. 1:12, 13, 20
• Seven spirits before the throne	Rev. 1:4; 3:1
• Seven seals	Rev. 6
• Seven trumpets	Rev. 8, 9
• Seven angels with seven bowls of wrath	Rev. 15:7
• Seven peals of thunder	Rev. 10:3, 4

This is not an exhaustive list of sevens, but is intended to show us the significance of this number in God's workings. Again, this repeated use of seven is not by accident, but clearly by design.

The Number "Ten"

As already pointed out "ten" is one of the "perfect" numbers. It speaks of the divine perfection of order; completeness of order. It implies want of nothing... the cycle is complete. Thus *ten* plagues, *ten* commandments, *ten* generations from Adam to Noah, *ten* virgins, etc. (cf. Lev. 27:30; Num. 14:22; Deut. 23:1-3).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither **fornicators** (1), nor **idolaters** (2), nor **adulterers** (3), nor **effeminate** (4), nor **homosexuals** (5), nor **thieves** (6), nor the **covetous** (7), nor **drunkards** (8), nor **revilers** (9), nor **swindlers** (10), will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9,10

For I am convinced that neither death (1), nor **life** (2), nor **angels** (3), nor **principalities** (4), nor things **present** (5), nor **things to come** (6), nor **powers** (7), nor **height** (8), nor **depth** (9), nor any **other created thing** (10), will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38,39

The Number “Forty”

“Forty has long been universally recognized as an important number, both on account of the frequency of its occurrence, and the uniformity of its association with a period of probation, trial, and chastisement—not judgment, like the number 9, but the chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people). It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of grace (5), leading to and ending in revival and renewal (8). This is certainly the case where forty relates to a period of evident probation. But where it relates to enlarged dominion, or to renewed or extended rule, then it does so in virtue of its factors 4 and 10²⁶, and in harmony with their signification.”²⁷

Gematria

In our study of the symbolic significance of numbers, we should make mention of the practice or science of *gematria*. Gematria is the practice of assigning numeric values to letters in order to derive some meaning or significance. Both the Hebrew and Greek alphabets have numeric values assigned to each letter. The letters of a particular word when added up, form a “*gematric value*.” While we certainly do not condone or endorse this practice there are some remarkable and interesting word values.

The Hebrew word for year is *shaneh*, which has a gematrical value of 355. The Hebrew calendar has 355 days. The Hebrew word for pregnancy is *haryon*, which has a gematrical value of 271. There are 271 days in a normal pregnancy.

The most famous example of gematria in the Bible would be found in the book of Revelation.

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

Revelation 13:18

John tells his readers that the number of the beast is the number of a man, and that *they* were to calculate the number. In other words, this would be a person *they* could identify through the practice of gematria.

Of this ancient practice, one author wrote:

However, gematria became a popular method exploited by the medieval Kabbalists to derive mystical insights into sacred writings or to develop new interpretations of the texts. It is the pursuit of hidden meanings—particularly when in disregard of the plaintext—that leads to subjective conjectures beyond the moorings of the directly revealed scripture.²⁸

Gematria is not something we need to use in order to understand or interpret God’s word. One can plainly read in the inspired text what they must do in order to be saved.

²⁶ (4) = God’s creative works, (10) = Ordinal perfection i.e., Ten Commandments, Ten plagues, etc.

²⁷ Bullinger, p. 266.

²⁸ Missler, pp. 294—295.

Questions:

1. Based on this use of the number three, do you find any significance in the following passages of scriptures? Gen. 22:1-5; Ex. 5:1-3; 8:27; 10:22-23; Matt. 27:45; Lk. 2:46; 24:44; Acts 10:9-16; 1 Jn. 2:16.

2. Examine the following passages of scripture and determine if the numbers used are literal or symbolic. Explain how you reached your conclusion.

Matt. 18:21-22

John 21:11

Acts 2:41

Acts 6:3

Rev. 13:18 (How might the numbers '3' and '7' relate to this number?)

Rev. 14:1

Rev. 20:4

3. Do some study on the number of dead listed in 1 Samuel 6:19.

LESSON NINE: PUTTING IT TO WORK

THIS FINAL LESSON OF OUR STUDY is actually, many lessons all put into one. We want to take all we have discussed and put it to work. We will be applying the tools and rules of hermeneutics to a number of different texts. By repeated practice, it is hoped that you can take *any* passage of scripture and know how to properly interpret it. This does not mean it is always going to be easy. There are some very difficult texts in the Bible. There are some secret things that belong to God (Deut. 29:29). However, there are some wonderful truths to be discovered that can help us all in being better servants of God.

God's word is like a vast universe, every word a planet, every letter a star, every book a galaxy to be explored. It is a universe that is deeply rich in wonderful and amazing sights. Bible study will often find you in awe at what you can learn, about God, about others, about yourself, and about life—so let's get to it!

Below I have listed a number of different texts. For each I have listed some interpretative points to consider. These are aspects of the particular text that need to be considered. Applying the rules we have discussed determine the context, the language, timing, etc. Most importantly, see if you can discover the personal application for us today. Each of the texts will be discussed in class so we can see how others interpreted the same passage. Obviously, all of these verses will not be discussed in one lesson. We will go through each over the remainder of our class session.

Study Text: Luke 14:26

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Is Jesus advocating hatred of family members?
- Language: Figurative? Literal?
- Parallel texts?
- Context?
- Meaning of passage?
- Personal application?

Notes:

Study Text: Matt. 13:44-45

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Language: Figurative? Literal? Symbolic?
- Context? (Consideration of other parables)
- Meaning of passage? (What do the pearl and the treasure represent? Who is the merchant?)
- Personal application?

Notes:

Study Text: Psalm 23

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Language: Figurative? Literal? Symbolic?
- Symbolism that is used and its relevance? (Shepherd, rod, staff)
- How might a study of the work of shepherds help with the interpretation?
- Meaning of passage?
- Personal application?

Notes:

Study Text: John 14:2

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Key words to define?
- Compare passage in other translations (NASB, KJV, NIV, NKJV)
- Language: Figurative? Literal?
- Parallel texts?
- Context?
- Time text?
- Meaning of passage? (What is the Father's house? What are the many dwelling places?)
- Personal application?

Notes:

Study Text: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Key words to define?
- Compare passage in other translations (NASB, KJV, NIV, NKJV)
- Language: Figurative? Literal?
- Parallel texts?
- Context?
- Meaning of passage? (Who are the spirits in prison?)
- Personal application?

Notes:

Study Text: 2 Peter 3

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Key words to define? (elements vs. 3)
- Language: Figurative? Literal?
- Parallel texts?
- Context?
- Time indicators?
- Meaning of passage?
- Personal application?

Notes:

Study Text: Ephesians 6:10-17

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Key words to define? (rulers, powers, schemes)
- Language: Figurative? Literal?
- Context?
- Meaning of passage?
- Personal application?

Notes:

Study Text: Matthew 24:27-34

Interpretative Points to Consider:

- Language: Figurative? Literal?
- Context?
- Time text?
- Parallel texts?
- Meaning of passage?
- Personal application?

Notes:

THE HEBREW ALPHABET

Aleph	א	ʾ
Beth	ב or בּ	<i>b</i>
Gimel	ג or גּ	<i>g</i>
Daleth	ד or דּ	<i>d</i>
He (pronounced <i>hay</i>)	ה or הּ (final consonantal ה)	<i>h</i>
Waw	ו	<i>w</i>
Zayin	ז	<i>z</i>
Heth (or <i>Het</i>)	ח	<i>h</i>
Teth	ט	<i>t</i>
Yodh (or Yod)	י	<i>y</i>
Kaph	כ כּ or ךּ	<i>k</i>
Lamedh	ל	<i>l</i>
Mem	מ or מּ	<i>m</i>
Nun (pronounced <i>noon</i>)	נ or נּ	<i>n</i>
Samekh	ס	<i>s</i>
Ayin	ע	ʿ
Pe (pronounced <i>pay</i>)	פ פּ or פּ	<i>p</i>
Tsadhe	צ or ץ	<i>s</i>
Qoph (English q, but not qu)	ק	<i>q</i>
Resh	ר	<i>r</i>
Sin (pronounced <i>seen</i>)	שׁ	<i>ś</i>
Shin (pronounced <i>sheen</i>)	שׂ	<i>sh</i>
Taw	ת or תּ	<i>t</i>

Source: ²⁹

²⁹Harris, R. Laird, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980.

THE GREEK ALPHABET

Capitals	Small	Name	Equivalent
Α	α	alpha	a
Β	β	beta	b
Γ	γ	gamma	g
Δ	δ	delta	d
Ε	ε	epsilon	e (short)
Ζ	ζ	zeta	z (dz)
Η	η	eta	e (long)
Θ	θ	theta	th
Ι	ι	iota	i
Κ	κ	kappa	k
Λ	λ	lambda	l
Μ	μ	mu	m
Ν	ν	nu	n
Ξ	ξ	xi	x
Ο	ο	omicron	o (short)
Π	π	pi	p
Ρ	ρ	rho	r
Σ	σ (ς)	sigma	s
Τ	τ	tau	t
Υ	υ	upsilon	u
Φ	φ	phi	ph
Χ	χ	chi	ch (hard)
Ψ	ψ	psi	ps
Ω	ω	omega	o (long)