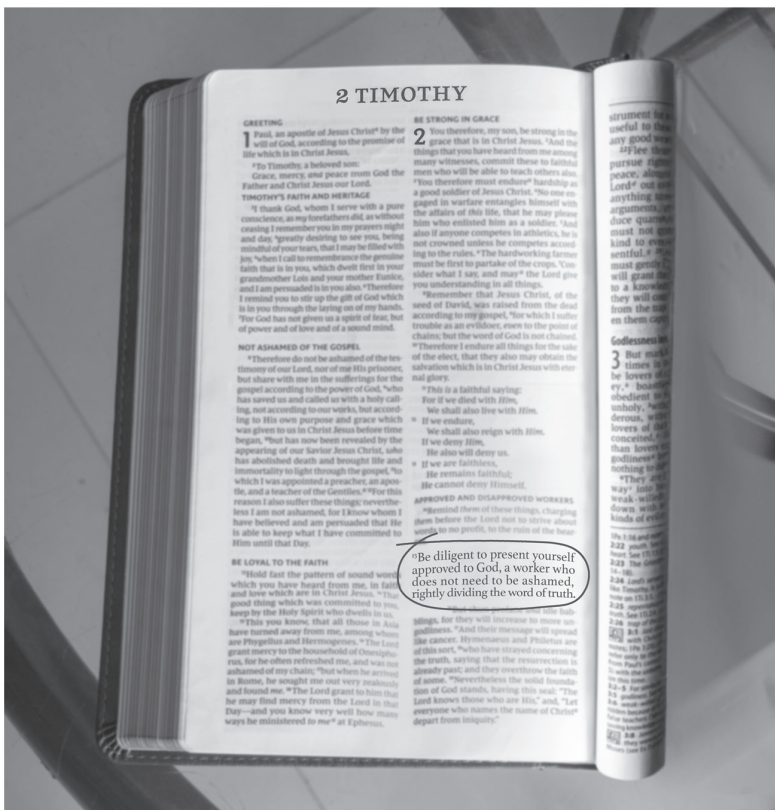


INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

How to study, interpret and communicate the Bible accurately



2 TIMOTHY

GREETING

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.

To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

TIMOTHY'S FAITH AND HERITAGE

"I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of His sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

BE LOYAL TO THE FAITH

"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. "This you know, that all among whom we have turned away from me, among whom are Philetus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains. But when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very anxious and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me" at Ephesus.

BE STRONG IN GRACE

2 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to our gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains, but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.

If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.

If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful: He cannot deny Himself.

APPROVED AND DISAPPROVED WORKERS
"Remember these of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers."

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

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useful to the...
any good wo...
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ASHISH RAICHUR

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INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

How to study, interpret
and communicate the Bible accurately

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INTRODUCTION

God works by His Word and by the power of His Spirit. God's written Word, the Scriptures, the Holy Bible is one of the ways by which God works in our lives.

We are privileged to have the Bible, the 66 books, assembled and made available to us in a variety of ways such as print, audio, digital text, etc. As we read the Scriptures, we encounter the God of the Bible, discover truth, and experience God's work in our lives. We also have a solemn responsibility to apply the teaching of the Bible to our daily lives and live in obedience to what God has instructed. We can also share what we have discovered in the Word of God with others.

Our reading and study of God's Word comes with the responsibility to understand, interpret, apply and teach the Word of God correctly and accurately. If we misunderstand, misinterpret or apply God's Word incorrectly, we could get into trouble. Hence the need to learn how to understand, interpret, apply and teach the Word of God correctly and accurately, which is the objective of this resource.

Some of us may have recognized God's call to minister His Word. We could be preparing or are already engaged in preaching and teaching God's Word to others. We will do well to heed what the apostle Paul instructed Timothy, "*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you*" (1 Timothy 4:16). As ministers of God, we must keep a close watch on ourselves and on our teaching. We must be constantly watchful in this, being continually careful over our own lives

and teaching. If we do this, we will save both ourselves and those who listen to us.

The apostle Paul emphasized the need to rightly divide the Word of God, “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). Our goal in this book is to learn how to handle the Word of God correctly under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We attempt to make the practice of correctly interpreting Scripture simple and easy to understand so that believers and ministers of the Word can apply these principles to their reading, study and ministry of God’s holy Word. Our goal is to keep this simple and practical. We have also included some common questions and difficult topics so that we understand the interpretive process in arriving at a Biblical perspective on these topics.

May this book be a useful resource as you study, understand, interpret, apply and teach the Word of God.

God bless!

Ashish Raichur

1

GOD'S WORD IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

God works in the life of the believer through His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit are equally important. We are born again by the Word (1 Peter 1:23) and by the Spirit (John 3:5; Titus 3:4,5). As believers, we are sanctified and transformed in the way we live by the Word (John 15:3; John 17:17) and by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). Our faith in God is nurtured and it grows as we feed upon His Word (Romans 10:17). We are taught, instructed, trained and equipped by the Word of God for Christian living and ministry (2 Timothy 3:16,17). God's Word lights our path (Psalm 119:130) guiding us in our decisions and choices. As we contend against the wiles of the enemy, we use the Word of God empowered by the Spirit as our sword (Ephesians 6:17). These and numerous other Scriptures teach us about the importance of God's Word in the believer's life.

The parable of the sower

The Lord Jesus taught the Parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15) to communicate to us the importance of the Word of God, how we are to engage with the Word of God, and what the Word can do in our lives. This parable unveils to us how God's Kingdom works and Kingdom principles that we can apply to experience God's Word working in our lives. God's Word is the seed which must be sown in our hearts through hearing the Word. The seed of the Word is perfect. It is full of life and power. It will always produce and never return to God unfulfilled. The heart (the inner man, the spirit) is the ground in which the seed of the Word must

take root, germinate, be cultivated and grow. The condition of the heart determines what happens to the seed. When a person hears the Word but does not understand it, this gives the devil the opportunity to steal the Word that was sown. The Word does not produce on the wayside (a heart that does not understand). When we receive the Word, there will be great joy and there will be hardships and persecutions that challenge us in relation to the Word we have received. This is not the time to give up, but to hold on to the Word. If a person gives up on the Word, the seed of the Word fails to produce (stony ground). If the heart is occupied with the cares of this world, deceived by riches or the desire for other things, these things “choke the Word” and prevent it from producing (ground with thorns). However, for those who hear the Word, nurture the soil of their heart and cultivate the Word, and hold firm to the Word, they bring a harvest (good ground) that could be thirty times, sixty or hundred times as much as what was sown.

The Kingdom principle is this—that God works in us through His Word when it is sown into our hearts and nurtured. God's Word releases its power in us, producing in our lives the things that God desires.

The principle of meditation

The process by which we receive God's Word into our hearts is very important. The Bible teaches us the principle of meditation. Biblical meditation involves contemplation, confession and visualization. **Contemplation** means to ponder, think deeply upon, to roll over in ones' mind. **Confession** means to mutter, to say, and to declare. **Visualization** means to occupy the imagination, to see with the mind's eye, to keep the Word before our eyes. Through the process of meditation, we can get the seed of God's Word sown into our heart, germinate, be watered and nurtured and eventually bear fruit in our lives.

God’s Word—the miracle seed

We refer the reader to the free APC Book, **“God’s Word—The Miracle Seed”** available as a FREE PDF download at apcwo.org/books. All the insights presented are explained in greater detail in this book.

2

CHALLENGES IN INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

Given by the inspiration of God

2 Timothy 3:16,17

¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible is an inspired book. All Scripture, the Old Testament and the New Testament, was given by the inspiration of God. This is God speaking to us in a manner we can understand and relate to.

The Bible is God's Word because it is God-inspired. It is God-breathed. It is God speaking to us.

The Bible is truth because God who has spoken is truth. *"He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He"* (Deuteronomy 32:4).

The Bible is timeless and is very relevant to our time today because God who has spoken is eternal and transcends time. *"...Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God"* (Psalm 90:2). *"Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven"* (Psalm 119:89).

The Bible is relevant to all people across all cultures because God who has spoken is the God of all flesh. *"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for*

Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27)

The Bible is completely reliable because God Himself has guaranteed its fulfillment. *“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”* (Isaiah 55:11).

Men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit 2 Peter 1:16-21

¹⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

The apostle Peter highlights the fact that they were not communicating “cunningly devised fables” or cleverly made-up stories when they preached and taught about Jesus Christ. They spoke and wrote about things they saw and heard personally. They were “eyewitnesses”. They were personally there when they heard the Father declare *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (2 Peter 1:17). They were personally there on the mount of Transfiguration where they saw the transfigured Christ and heard the voice of the Father. Having personally been there, seen and heard these things, Peter states, *“makes us*

even more certain that what the prophets said is true” (2 Peter 1:19, CEV). Therefore, Peter exhorts us to pay close attention to all that the prophets have spoken, all of the Scriptures, *“as you would to a lamp shining in some dark place. You must keep on paying attention until”* Jesus comes again (2 Peter 1:19, CEV).

Peter then explains to us how the “prophecy of Scripture” was given. Men did not think these things up. These are not the result of some people’s flights of fantasy or imagination at work. Peter states that *“the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:21). This is how the Scriptures were given to us. People spoke as they were inspired, guided and led by the Holy Spirit.

We recognize that God worked through people in the inspiration, communication and compilation of the Scriptures. There is the divine side and the human side to the Bible, God’s Word.

The Bible is both a divine book and a human book

The Bible as a divine book

The Bible is an inspired book. God spoke by His Spirit and His Words are an expression of Himself. The Bible reveals God, His nature, His heart, His will, His plans, His purposes and all He seeks to be to us, His creation.

We can make the following assertions about the Bible because it is a divine book.

- **Inerrant:** The Bible is without error. While there may be things that seem disputable or hard to understand, it requires a little bit of studying, researching, praying and seeking God for the understanding and clarity we need. *“The words*

of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times” (Psalm 12:6). “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether” (Psalm 19:7-9).

- **Authoritative:** God’s Word is final concerning any matter. God’s Word is an expression of His will, and as we yield to His Word, we are yielding to His will in our lives. *“For the word of the LORD is right, And all His work is done in truth” (Psalm 33:4). “Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way” (Psalm 119:128).*
- **Consistent:** The Scriptures maintain unity and harmony, are coherent and consistent, and are not self-contradictory. Our study, understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures follow this principle of consistency. Passages that are difficult to understand are interpreted based on passages that are clear and speaking on the same matter. When working through difficult passages, we accept the clear, consistent and sensible (correct) interpretation. Scripture must, therefore, be interpreted in the light of the rest of Scripture. The Bible interprets itself. We must also apply the principle of progressive revelation as we interpret Scripture consistently.
- **Revelatory:** We recognize and acknowledge the progressive revelation of Scripture. This means that God, over time, unveiled what He desired for His people to know. In the process of progressive revelation, we recognize that some instructions were time-bound, given to specific people

during a specific time-period. In the process of progressive revelation, what may have initially seemed unclear and obscure becomes clearly understood at a later point of time. As New Testament believers, we live by the revelation given to us in the Person of Jesus Christ and in the mysteries unveiled to us through the epistles given to us by the apostles and prophets of God. *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds”* (Hebrews 1:1,2). *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone”* (Ephesians 2:20)

- **Supernatural:** The Bible as a divine book records the works of God which are supernatural. His works cannot always be explained by logic or reason. They are beyond the realm of human understanding. The God of the Bible is the God of today. He still works in supernatural, miraculous ways today. Faith in God works the same way today as it did in Bible times. Hence, people who have faith in God today can experience the works of God as people did in Bible times. So we read the Bible with expectation and anticipation. *“The works of the LORD are great, Studied by all who have pleasure in them”* (Psalm 111:2). *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”* (Romans 11:33)

The Bible as a human book

- **Human language:** While God inspired people with His thoughts and revelation, these were written down in the language used by the people at that time (Hebrew, Greek,

Aramaic) using the normal grammatical format, usage and the meaning prevalent during that time.

- **Cultural context:** God communicated His thoughts and revelation in the cultural context of the writer using situations and examples from their everyday lives. When God spoke of things into the future, it was understood and described in the context of the person God was speaking to.
- **Literary form:** As with any language, thoughts and ideas can be communicated in a variety of literary styles and forms contained in that language (**Example:** descriptive, narrative, poetry, prophecy, wisdom literature, letters (epistles), persuasive / logical, parables, End-Times prophetic literature), different grammatical expressions (**Example:** tense, person, gender, mood, etc.) and figures of speech (**Example:** personification, simile, idiom, metaphor, alliteration, hyperbole, oxymoron, euphemism, paradox, etc.). Hence, when interpreting Scripture, these standard rules of language must be applied to understand the correct meaning intended by the writer.
- **Specific audience:** As God moved upon His servants, and they spoke / wrote, they were addressing a specific audience. Sometimes, the audience was the immediate listeners or the community of the speaker / writer. In some cases, God was addressing an entire nation. At other times, He was speaking to people across generations or speaking ahead of time about the Church and beyond into the future. We need to keep in mind that the passage was written by someone to specific hearers or readers in a specific historical, geographical situation for a specific purpose. Hence, in interpreting, understanding and applying Scripture, we need to take these into consideration. **Example:** We recognize the intended audience and purpose of the Book of Leviticus. It was given

as Covenantal Instruction and Law Code specifically for Israel under the Old Covenant. Hence, we do not use it as a manual for modern-day practice under the New Covenant for the believer.

- **Principles of logic and communication:** As the Holy Spirit moved upon people, they expressed these thoughts using standard practices of logic and communication. This was clear to the speakers / writers. In general, this was also understood by the initial readers / listeners. In studying and interpreting Scripture, we need to stay with the original flow of thought, the specific matters being addressed, the arguments presented, the language used, relevance and reasoning as we would in hearing / reading content today.
- **Copied / printed / translated by human means:** We also recognize that the original text written by the individuals was later copied, printed, and translated by human means. We need to recognize the human elements introduced into this process, understand why these were done (for example, translations, etc.) and where required, address these appropriately in our study and interpretation of Scripture.

The challenge in Biblical interpretation

The first five books were written by Moses around 1400 BC (about 3,400 years ago). The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi was written about 400 BC. The New Testament was written between AD 36 to AD 90 (about 1,900 years ago). The 66 books of the Bible were written over a period of 1,500 years by 40 different authors. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew with some portions in Daniel and Ezra written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. The Old Testament was translated into Greek around 200 BC. (The Greek translation of the Old Testament is referred to as the

Septuagint).

When we read the Bible, there are several “gaps” that we need to address. We use the term “gap” in knowledge to refer to our insufficient, incomplete or inadequate knowledge which we need to address by making an effort to fill the gap through proper study, research, learning, and discussion.

- **A spiritual gap:** We are living in a time where we have the complete revelation given to us through both the Old and New Testaments. When portions of Scripture were written, the spiritual understanding of the people was not the same as what we have today. So, in *understanding* the Old Testament, we need to keep in mind the spiritual revelation that was available to them at that time. When *applying* the Old Testament teaching to our lives today, we need to apply it in the context of the New Testament revelation.
- **A time gap:** We are living in a different day and age where humanity has advanced in many ways from where things were in Bible times. While God’s truth is timeless, the nature of situations and circumstances are quite different today from those in Bible times. Hence, we need to “translate” the application of Biblical truth to the situations we face today.
- **A geographical gap:** Most of us live in parts of the world that are very different from the land and regions where the people of the Bible lived in (**Example:** Israel, Mesopotamia, Egypt). In reading and understanding Biblical narratives, it will help to get some understanding of the geography (terrain, climate, agriculture, etc.) involved.
- **A cultural gap:** By “cultural gap,” we are referring to the differences in customs, social norms, practices, beliefs, political, economic and legal environments, etc. between Biblical cultures and the culture in which we live. The Bible

was written over a period spanning about 1,500 years that included several Middle Eastern cultures like the Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Understanding the historical cultural context in which Bible events occurred is crucial for accurate interpretation.

- **A language gap:** As we are aware, the Bible was originally written in three ancient languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The languages we speak differ greatly from these ancient languages, which pose challenges that we need to work through. **Example:** Words in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek often carry multiple meanings depending on their context. Each language has its own grammar, syntax and unique idioms and expressions. For example, “*gird up your loins*” (1 Kings 18:46). While we will not be able to master the ancient languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, we can use tools that are available to us to study and bridge this gap.
- **A literary gap:** The Bible text is written using a wide range of literary styles (genres) that may not always be familiar to us. We have mentioned some of these literary styles used in Scripture—descriptive, narrative, poetry, prophecy, wisdom literature, letters (epistles), persuasive / logical, parables, End-Times prophetic literature, etc. These literary styles use literary techniques such as symbolic meanings, allusions, figurative language (like metaphors, similes, and hyperboles) and more which we are not familiar with. We need to recognize and learn about these literary styles and literary techniques to interpret the meaning of a passage correctly.

Our approach in Biblical interpretation

Our goal in Biblical interpretation is to correctly understand the meaning of the Scriptures so we can receive what God is speaking to us today.

Interpreting Scripture requires dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit and the use of sound judgment and reason.

Prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit: First and foremost, we depend on the Author Himself, the Holy Spirit, to help us as we read and study the Scriptures to come to a clear and correct understanding of truth. We recognize His inspiration, and we invite His illumination as we read the Bible.

Serious study applying principles of Biblical interpretation: We make every effort to study the Scriptures using the tools available to us and apply principles of Biblical interpretation to guide us as we study. We cover many of the essential principles of Biblical interpretation in this book.

Application and sharing: Our goal is to be doers of the Word, correctly applying truth that we have discovered in the Scriptures. We first determine what the text meant in its original context. Then for our own journey of faith, we listen to hear what God is saying to us personally through the text and how we are to apply it in our lives. Having applied God's Word to our own lives, we can then share this with others for their learning and benefit.

Avoiding common hermeneutical errors

We learn to avoid some common errors in Biblical interpretation.

Some of these errors include as follows.

Eisegesis: While exegesis involves extracting the correct meaning of a text, eisegesis involves reading into the text what is not there and thus, resulting in a wrong understanding of Scripture text.

Proof-texting: Using isolated verses to prove a point without considering its context.

Allegorizing: Turning historical events into mere allegory or adding figurative meaning and interpretation not intended by the author.

Subjective interpretation: Reading personal experiences, revelations, ideas, opinions or interests into Scripture.

Terminology

Hermeneutics: The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning of the Biblical text is determined. Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of interpretation. It deals with the underlying principles and rules for interpreting texts. Hermeneutics offers a framework for understanding how to approach a text.

Exegesis: The determination of the meaning of the Biblical text in its historical and literary contexts. Exegesis is the actual practice of interpreting a text. It involves a detailed analysis of the text, word by word and verse by verse. Exegesis aims to uncover the original meaning and intent of the author.

In essence, “hermeneutics” is the “how” of interpretation, while “exegesis” is the “doing” of interpretation. In this book, we cover hermeneutics and present practical examples of exegesis, applying the hermeneutical principles that are presented.

Exposition: The communication of the meaning of the text along with its relevance to the present-day hearers.

Homiletics / Preaching: The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning and relevance of the Biblical text are communicated in preaching.

3

THE NEED FOR INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

Let us consider a few Biblical reasons that highlight the need for careful study and interpretation of Scripture.

1) To help people understand meaning and application

There are people new to the Scriptures and there are those who may have had prior exposure to the Scriptures. We recognize that both kinds of people may need help in understanding the Scriptures and learning how to apply the Word of God to their lives.

Acts 8:26-35

²⁶Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert.

²⁷So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

²⁸was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”

³⁰So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

³²The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer *is* silent,
So He opened not His mouth.

³³In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
And who will declare His generation?

For His life is taken from the earth.”

³⁴So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”

³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

In Acts 8, we read about the Ethiopian eunuch. We do not know much about his religious background. We could say that he must have been an Ethiopian proselyte (convert) to Judaism who had come to Jerusalem to worship. He had a copy of the scroll of the book of Isaiah and was reading through this on his way back to Ethiopia. He was reading Isaiah chapter 53 when Philip met him. This highly educated, highly successful and influential man did not understand what he was reading. Philip explained the Scriptures and presented Jesus to him. This man then understood the Scriptures and came to faith in Jesus Christ.

Nehemiah 8:5-8

⁵And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was *standing* above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

⁶And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God.

Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.

⁷Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people *stood* in their place.

⁸So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

The Babylonian Empire led by Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BC. As prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Jewish people were in exile in Babylon for 70 years. The Persian Empire led by Cyrus

conquered Babylon in 539 BC. Cyrus, as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1), issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4). **Zerubbabel** led the first group of exiles back to Jerusalem around 538 BC and began the rebuilding of the Temple, which was completed in 516 BC (Ezra 3-6). The prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied during this time. **Ezra**, the scribe led a second return (“second wave”) of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem around 458 BC during the reign of Artaxerxes I, king of Persia (who reigned 465-424 BC). Ezra focused on restoring religious and spiritual practices (Ezra 7-10). **Nehemiah** arrived later in 445 BC to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Despite the opposition, the rebuilding of the walls of the city of Jerusalem was completed in just 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15,16). (Please keep in mind that these historical dates are estimated and approximate, not precise).

The Scripture passage referenced from Nehemiah chapter 8 took place shortly after the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. We observe a great spiritual revival as the people gathered to hear the reading of the Law. Ezra, the scribe stood on a wooden platform and read from the Law from morning until midday (Nehemiah 8:2,3). It is possible that the Jewish people had lost touch both with the Scriptures and with the Hebrew language as they had to use Aramaic during their time in exile in Babylon. The Levites helped the people to understand the reading making it clear to them so that they could understand and apply the Law. We see the immediate results with them celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) after many years (Nehemiah 8:13-18).

In Nehemiah 8:8, we see three actions.

- *they read distinctly from the book*, meaning they read clearly and specifically.

- *they gave the sense*, that is, they expounded the meaning, interpreted or translated it.
- *they helped them to understand the reading*, that is, they made it easy to understand and possibly showed them how to apply what they heard.

When the Scriptures are clearly understood, people can then apply them and practice them.

2) To build believers by preaching and teaching sound doctrine

God's people are to be built up spiritually through the Word of God. In his final exhortation to the elders at Ephesus, the apostle Paul encouraged them to be committed to the Word of God.

Acts 20:27-32

²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

³² "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

As ministers of God serving the flock of God, we must commit ourselves to the Word and to the ministry of the Word.

One of our main responsibilities as shepherds appointed by God is to feed God's people with knowledge and understanding of God and His Word. *"And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding"* (Jeremiah 3:15).

When God's people do not receive the knowledge of God and what He has spoken, they are easily taken captive, and the enemy can wreak havoc in their lives. *"Therefore my people have gone into captivity, Because they have no knowledge..."* (Isaiah 5:13). *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (Hosea 4:6).

3) To amplify truth to counter error

In Acts 20:27-32 quoted earlier, the apostle Paul expressed his concern that savage wolves would come after God's sheep. He was referring to people who speak perverse things to draw the Lord's disciples after themselves leading them away from the Lord and His truth. The Greek word for "perverse things" in Acts 20:30 literally means "to distort, corrupt, erroneous, misinterpret, misleading, to turn aside from the right path." These "savage wolves" speak and present error as though it was the truth, misinterpreting God's Word, and lead God's people astray, turning them away from the Lord and to themselves.

The Lord Jesus desires for His people to be firm and established in the truth. This is the reason He has appointed the five-fold ministry functions of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher and evangelist in the Church. One of the objectives these ministry functions serve is to ensure *"that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,"* (Ephesians 4:14). There are people who preach and teach whose doctrine is really formed

out of trickery, cunning craftiness and intended to deceive, delude and take believers away from the truth.

When the Lord Jesus responded to His disciples' question about the signs of the End-Times, first on the list was deception. *“And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many”* (Matthew 24:4,5). The apostle Paul warned through the Holy Spirit about the activity of deceiving spirits and teachings that are demonically inspired as one of the happenings during the End-Times. *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons”* (1 Timothy 4:1).

Hence, a big part of the authentic ministry of the Word is to establish people in the truth so they are not taken away by lies, errors and deceptions that abound all around both from within and outside the church. The way we protect God's people from deception is to have them established in the truth. God's Word is truth (John 17:17). We must clarify God's truth, help believers understand and apply truth to their lives. This will ensure that they are not easily swayed by people who preach and teach erroneous things.

The way we counter error is by amplifying and clarifying truth. We don't focus on the error but focus on the truth. Amplify truth. Clarify truth. Make it easy, simple and clearly understood. Once God's people are established in the truth, they will be able to discern and reject error and stay on guard against deception.

Hermeneutics, which is the practice of interpreting Scripture, is the responsibility of both those who minister the

Word and those who read / listen to the Word being brought to them.

Let's consider further our Biblical responsibility as ministers of the Word and our responsibility as listeners of the Word.

The responsibility of the preacher / teacher of the Word

a) Practice, then teach

Matthew 5:19

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

While the Lord Jesus was ministering on the earth, the Old Covenant was still in force. Only after His resurrection did the New Covenant come into place. Hence, in the context of the Old Covenant and the teaching of the Scriptures they had at that time, the Lord Jesus stated that “whoever does and teaches them” will be called great in God’s kingdom. Under the New Covenant, we teach and preach all that God has revealed to us, but the order of doing and teaching remains. First do, then teach. First practice the Word in your own life, and then share with others.

As ministers of God’s Word, we must hold ourselves to this order. We must first apply and practice God’s Word in our own lives. And then we can teach and impart not only the knowledge of the Word but also the Word with accompanying wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to know how to apply the knowledge of God’s Word to different life situations making it relevant and practical.

b) Rightly divide (interpret) the word

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

As servants of the Lord who seek to be approved by God and want to stand unashamed before Him, one of our responsibilities is to rightly divide the Word of truth.

The words “rightly dividing” come from the Greek word ‘*orthotomounta*’ meaning “to make a straight cut, to hold a straight course, to make straight and smooth, to handle aright.” In the context of handling “the word of truth,” this means to teach the truth directly and correctly, to set forth truthfully, without perversion or distortion.

As we prepare to teach the Word of God, we need to ask ourselves if what we are about to present to God’s people is the rightly divided Word. Is what we are about to preach / teach a truthful, undistorted, uncorrupted, correctly interpreted, accurately applied ministry of the Word of truth? When unsure, it is better to check with other seasoned ministers of God and then minister. Remember, once something is spoken and released, it is not easy to correct or take back. It takes a lot of effort to undo wrong teaching. Hence, it is always better to check and confirm that we are releasing the rightly divided Word of truth before we do so.

c) Teach the whole counsel of God

Acts 20:27

For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

The word “counsel” in Greek refers to “mind, thoughts, will, purpose, plan, counsel, design, determination, and decree.”

The “whole counsel” of God refers to “**all** the revealed will, plan and purpose of God.” For us, today, it is all that God has made available for us in His written Scriptures.

We realize that God has called and anointed us as ministers differently. Some may be called to focus and emphasize certain teaching and aspects of the Christian life. These ministers are “specialists” who focus on ministering on certain themes and areas bringing life, strength, deliverance, and equipping specifically in those areas.

However, for those who are in the pastoral ministry, we should teach and preach “the whole counsel of God.” We need to ensure that God’s people are taught and established in understanding all that has been revealed to us in the Scriptures. This, of course, will take time and diligent effort. And in many instances, we will need the assistance of other ministers to teach and minister on topics and areas that we ourselves may not be apt to teach.

d) Teach with honesty, seriousness, purity and sound speech

Titus 2:7,8

⁷ in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,

⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

The word “doctrine” simply means “teaching, instruction and learning.” Notice how we must handle the teaching of God’s Word. It must be done with integrity (honesty), reverence (seriousness), incorruptibility (purity) and with sound speech that is unblameable and without fault. Sound speech means healthy, wholesome, clean, true and right words.

Integrity: Are we true, honest and sincere in what we are stating? Are we without any wrong motivation, evil intention, deceit, cunning, selfish agenda, etc. as we minister the Word? Are we using the Word for our own selfish gain?

Reverence: Are we ministering the Word with seriousness knowing that we are representing the Lord? Are we speaking as the oracles of God so that the Lord and He alone may be glorified (1 Peter 4:11)?

Incorruptibility: Are we ministering the pure, undiluted, uncorrupted, undistorted Word of God? Have we brought in our own biases, denominational prejudices, and mixed them in with the Word we are about to preach?

Sound speech: The choice of words, the language (no slang, no coarse words), the illustrations that we use, the ideas that we convey, the attitude with which we speak—are they worthy of the Lord whom we represent?

When we are preaching and teaching God’s Word, we must do it with the seriousness it deserves.

e) Teach sound doctrine—what is healthy, wholesome, safe, and true

Titus 2:1

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:

2 Timothy 4:2-4

² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

In his pastoral epistles, Paul instructs both Timothy and Titus to speak, teach and preach “sound doctrine”. In fact, Paul forewarns us that a time will come when people will not want to hear “sound doctrine.” They would instead prefer listening to people who pamper their desires and tickle their ears with the things they’d like to hear, talking about made up stories (fables) instead of presenting them with the “word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Greek word translated “sound” has the idea of being healthy, wholesome, in good health and refers to what is sound, pure, uncorrupted, to be healthful, free from any mixture of error.

Sound doctrine refers to teaching that is healthy, wholesome, safe, pure, true, uncorrupted and free from any mixture or error. Some English versions translate “sound doctrine” as “good teaching”, “the true teaching”, “the healing words of truth”.

The apostle Paul used the term “sound doctrine” several times in his pastoral epistles. We can list the following to further understand what Paul meant by “sound doctrine”.

- Sound doctrine is teaching that produces righteous living and aligned to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God (1 Timothy 1:8-11).
- Sound doctrine refers to “*wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness*” (1 Timothy 6:2,3).
- Sound doctrine refers to the “faithful word” and is what we present to those who oppose, contradict or are confused. “*Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict*” (Titus 1:9).

The ministry of the Word, if it is “sound doctrine”, will produce good spiritual health, wholesome spiritual development, and produce godliness and righteous living in the people who receive it.

The responsibility of the listener

Let’s consider a few of the responsibilities of those who listen to the Word being preached in the context of correctly interpreting, understanding and applying Scripture.

a) Discern, study and receive

Acts 17:10,11

¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

One of the best examples to point to in this aspect are the Jews in Berea who heard what Paul and Silas taught in the synagogue. They then went and searched the Scriptures to determine if what Paul and Silas presented were actually true or not.

As believers, when we hear the word preached, we should be discerning and judge if what is being presented is correct, accurate and sound.

Hebrews 13:9

Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

Sadly, there are “various and strange doctrines” that are taught and preached in the Christian world and if we are not

careful, we could get carried away. These “various and strange doctrines” are like eating bad food which do no good, but instead, harm people who consume it.

Perhaps what confuses people so often is that these ministers who proclaim “various and strange doctrines” have ministries that manifest signs and wonders, perhaps demonstrating the prophetic, claiming visions, dreams, angelic visitations and other supernatural manifestations. They sometimes go by titles such as “apostle so-and-so” or “prophet so-and-so”. The tendency by most believers is to implicitly accept anything these people preach and teach without validating it and scrutinizing the message with the written Scriptures. We must be aware that a minister can have powerful supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit and still be wrong in some areas of their understanding, interpretation, application and teaching of the Scriptures.

We hope that journeying through this book and learning principles of interpreting Scripture will help us all to be like the Jews at Berea. We will examine everything we hear, test to see if it is the rightly divided Word of God, and only receive what aligns to the teaching of the Scriptures.

2 Corinthians 11:4 (see also Galatians 1:8)

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

Even in the days of the Early Church, the apostle Paul warned about those preaching “another Jesus”, and who ministered under “a different spirit”, and proclaimed “a different gospel”. If it happened then, it could happen today. As listeners, we must be discerning of the person ministering, the Holy Spirit (or demonic spirit) under whom the messenger is ministering,

and the message that is presented to us.

1 John 2:20,27

²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

²⁷But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

In addition to us exercising sound judgment using the principles of interpreting Scripture, our dependence is on the anointing within us. This is the Spirit of God who indwells every believer, who Himself teaches us, leads and guides us into all truth. We must listen to Him even as we listen to those who preach and teach the Word to us.

b) Feed on the Word directly

1 Peter 2:2

as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

Hebrews 5:12-14

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

¹³For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

¹⁴But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We are living at a time when there is an abundance of media resources freely available to us through which we can hear, watch and learn the Word of God. While this is a definite blessing, it can also keep us from personally reading, studying and feeding on the Word of God. God's Word is our spiritual food. There is the milk of the Word and the solid food of the

Word, the oracles of God. We need both. Nobody else can drink milk and eat solid food on our behalf. Each of us must feed on the Word ourselves regularly. In addition to food for our natural bodies, we need “*every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4). Like Job, we must say, “*I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*” (Job 23:12).

The apostle Paul instructed believers to “*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ...*” (Colossians 3:16). As believers, we should have a rich personal deposit of the Word alive in our hearts and minds.

c) Do the Word

James 1:21-25

²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The ultimate objective in learning how to interpret Scripture is to apply it correctly in our lives. What we read, study and understand from the Scriptures then becomes a part of our daily life. Our goal is not just to pursue knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself. Our goal is to become doers of the Word. This is what brings blessing. And as the Lord Jesus taught us—as we hear and do His teaching, we build our lives

on a solid foundation that enables us to stand through the winds and storms that may arise.

Application of Scripture

Accurate interpretation is essential for applying the Bible properly to our everyday life in our contemporary context. If we do not interpret the Bible properly, we may end up applying the Bible incorrectly. We could read the truth but misunderstand the truth and then, apply it incorrectly. The outcome could be disastrous.

The Word of truth must be understood accurately if it is to be applied correctly. Misunderstood truth could lead to error. Error put into practice could have disastrous outcomes.

Consider two examples.

Example 1

1 Corinthians 7:23

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

Imagine a believer reading this verse and then, because of an incorrect understanding of this Scripture, arriving at the conclusion that they will never work for anyone else (not be a slave / employee to anyone). So this believer refuses to take up a job in any organization and insists on being their own boss and running their own business. In some cases, if the believer has good business acumen and is successful, things would work out alright. But what if this believer has no business competency and would be better off working for someone else, yet because of a misunderstanding of the Scripture in 1 Corinthians 7:23, he / she refuses to take up employment anywhere. This could prove to be a very bad decision financially and result in a lot of unnecessary trouble and pain.

Example 2

Later in this same chapter, we have the following instruction given.

1 Corinthians 7:29

But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,

Imagine a married man who reads this verse and takes it out of its Biblical context. He announces that the Bible says that “there is not much time left, and from now on married people should live as though they were not married” and completely ignores his wife and family. When questioned about his irresponsibility, he points to this Scripture. This would be a painful experience for his wife and family simply because of misunderstanding and misapplying of the Scripture text.

To correctly interpret, understand and apply these two verses in 1 Corinthians 7:23,29, as we will learn in detail later in this book, we must recognize

- a) the immediate context of the Scripture text,
- b) the context of the entire book / letter and
- c) what the rest of the New Testament teaches on these same matters.

What would also be useful is to know the cultural setting of the people and life at Corinth to whom Paul was addressing. Putting all this together, we then consider the correct application of Biblical instruction to contemporary situations.

Possibility of errors during interpretation

If God, the Holy Spirit is anointing all His ministers, how is there the possibility of errors when preachers and teachers interpret and minister God’s Word?

Let's consider this.

a) Peddling the Word of God

2 Corinthians 2:17

For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

Romans 16:17,18

¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

¹⁸For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

The word “peddling” comes from the Greek word which means “to corrupt, to adulterate.” Peddlers were in the habit of adulterating their commodities for the sake of gain, to make a trade-off. Sadly, even today, we have those who adulterate the Word of God for the sake of monetary or other forms of gain and benefit for themselves. Even anointed ministers can operate in the flesh at times. In Romans 16, the apostle Paul mentions people who are serving “their own belly”, their own selfish desires, and they use “smooth words and flattering speech” to deceive the hearts of people.

What can prevent us from adulterating the word of God and preaching a mixture to impress people or present a message that will give us some benefit? The answer is found in the same verse, 2 Corinthians 2:17, where Paul states that he ministers God's Word from a place of a) sincerity, b) as from God and c) as before or in the sight of God.

Three things to do to keep yourself from peddling the Word of God. Minister from a place of...

- **Sincerity:** Be true, honest, clean, genuine. Don't try to

impress anyone or seek any benefit or gain out of ministering the Word.

- **As from God:** You are representing God, His Word, His Kingdom and His purposes. Hold yourself in a manner worthy of this sacred responsibility.
- **As before God:** The Lord is watching and listening to what you are preaching and teaching. Will He approve of what you say?

b) Handling the Word of God deceitfully

2 Corinthians 4:2

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

There are those who minister the Word of God but do so in a cunning and crafty manner, and trick people to snare or trap them. They are deceitful and present a corrupted, adulterated word to control and manipulate people. They knowingly distort the Word so that they can gain control and influence over their audience. The purpose of control and manipulation could be varied. Sometimes to get people to do what they want done. Sometimes to keep them in their fold and under their sway. Sometimes to prevent them from looking outside, listening to others, etc. Their ministry of the Word is cunningly designed to ensnare, beguile, trap and control people.

As ministers of God, we must know that God's people do not belong to us. They are not our property. They belong to God. They are His purchased possession. God has entrusted us with the responsibility of caring and ministering to them, and we must do this with a pure heart and with no desire to control, manipulate or use people for our agendas.

c) Twisting the Scriptures, making faulty interpretations

2 Peter 3:16

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

Some people twist and distort the Scriptures out of their ignorance, lack of learning, irresponsibility, ambivalence (vacillating, unstable, going from one side to another) or sometimes intentionally ignore hermeneutical principles they are well aware of. They have not made the effort to study things that may be hard to understand along with other parts of the Scriptures. Instead, they speak presumptuously out of ignorance and twist and distort the Scriptures saying one thing now and another thing at another time. This only results in (spiritual, physical, eternal) destruction of themselves and perhaps of those who receive what they say.

When we are irresponsible in how we handle God's Word, we have the possibility of bringing ruin to ourselves as well as to those whom we minister to.

d) Teaching traditions and man-made rules

Matthew 15:3,7-9 (read Matthew 15:1-9)

³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

⁸ "These people draw near to Me with their mouth,

And honor Me with *their* lips,

But their heart is far from Me.

⁹ And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men."

Mark 7:8,9,13 (read Mark 7:1-13)

⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of

men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”

⁹ He said to them, “*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

¹³ making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

The Lord Jesus was speaking to the Scribes and Pharisees who knew the Law and the Scriptures. They knowingly laid aside what God had spoken and instead chose to adhere to and teach their own traditions and commandments. They made “*the word of God of no effect*” (Mark 7:13), which means “to render void, deprive of force and authority, to annul by their traditions.”

This is relevant even in our times. Sometimes, people choose to lay aside the Word of God and teach and preach denominational / institutional traditions, practices and ideas contrary to the Word. They may read from the Scriptures but interpret the Scriptures to support their man-made practices and traditions, thus making the Word of God of no effect.

e) Preachers who have strayed from the truth and overthrow the faith of others

2 Timothy 2:16-18

¹⁶ But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

¹⁷ And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,

¹⁸ who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

There may be some like Hymenaeus who have destroyed their own faith (1 Timothy 1:19,20) and have strayed from the truth. They now engage in teaching things that are false, leading

others astray and destroying their faith.

Our goal in the journey we make in this book is to learn how to handle God's Word with the reverence it deserves. We will learn important principles that will help us rightly divide the Word, that is, interpret, understand and apply it correctly. We can experience the blessings that come through the Word both for ourselves and for those whom we minister to.

4

REFORMATION AND RESTORATION—MANY STREAMS, ONE RIVER

Precept upon precept, line upon line

As we mentioned earlier, the revelation of Scripture was given in a progressive manner by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through people. Starting with the oldest book of the Bible, the book of Job, written approximately around 2000 BC, to the book of Revelation, written about AD 95, the books of the Bible were written over a period of about 2100 years.

As described by Isaiah, God was imparting knowledge and understanding, unveiling truth, precept upon precept, line upon line, adding to what had been previously revealed.

Isaiah 28:9,10

⁹“Whom will he teach knowledge?

And whom will he make to understand the message?

Those *just* weaned from milk?

Those *just* drawn from the breasts?

¹⁰For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept,

Line upon line, line upon line,

Here a little, there a little.”

Here is a list of the 66 books of the Bible in chronological order along with approximate dates of their writing and traditionally understood authors (while there may be some variations with dates and traditionally accepted authorship in some cases) and with a brief of some key teaching and insights presented in these books.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
THE OLD TESTAMENT		
Job (Job or Moses)	2,100-1,800 BC	Reveals demonic involvement in human suffering, faith, and God’s sovereignty, focusing on Job’s trials and God’s redeeming work.
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (Moses)	1,446-1,406 BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis: Details creation, the Fall, the flood, and the lives of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph), emphasizing God’s covenant with Israel. • Exodus: Describes Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, the giving of the Law, and instructions for the Tabernacle, symbolizing God’s presence. • Leviticus: Outlines laws regarding holiness, sacrifices, and priestly duties, focusing on Israel’s relationship with a holy God. • Numbers: Chronicles Israel’s wilderness journey, highlighting faith, obedience, and God’s provision despite Israel’s rebellion. • Deuteronomy: Moses’ final address, reviewing the Law and urging faithfulness as Israel prepares to enter the Promised Land.
Joshua (Joshua)	1,400-1,370 BC	Records Israel’s conquest of Canaan, emphasizing faith, obedience, and God’s faithfulness.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
Judges, Ruth (Samuel)	1,050-1,000 BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judges: Tells of Israel’s repeating cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance, showcasing the need for godly leadership. • Ruth: The story of Ruth’s loyalty, Boaz’s redemption, and God’s providence.
1 & 2 Samuel (Samuel, Nathan, and Gad)	930 BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Samuel: Chronicles the transition from judges to monarchy focusing on Samuel, Saul’s reign, and David’s anointing. • 2 Samuel: Details David’s reign, his successes, failures, and the promise of an everlasting kingship.
Psalms (David, Asaph, sons of Korah, Solomon, Moses, and others)	1000-400 BC	A collection of songs and prayers expressing worship, lament, thanksgiving, and trust in God.
Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (Solomon, with some additions to Proverbs)	970-930 BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proverbs: A compilation of wisdom sayings offering guidance for practical and godly living. • Ecclesiastes: Reflects on the meaning of life highlighting the futility of worldly pursuits and the value of fearing God. • Song of Solomon: A poetic dialogue celebrating human love.
Obadiah (Obadiah)	848-841 BC	Prophecies against Edom for its pride and mistreatment of Israel.
Joel (Joel)	835-796 BC	Prophecies a locust plague and the coming “Day of the Lord,” calling for repentance and offering hope.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
Jonah (Jonah)	785-760 BC	The story of Jonah’s reluctant mission to Nineveh highlighting God’s mercy toward repentant sinners.
Amos (Amos)	760-750 BC	Condemns social injustice and empty religious rituals, warning of coming judgment.
Hosea (Hosea)	755-725 BC	Uses Hosea’s marriage to symbolize God’s love and mercy toward Israel despite its unfaithfulness.
Isaiah (Isaiah)	740-680 BC	Prophecies judgment and hope, including messianic prophecies of salvation through the “Suffering Servant.”
Micah (Micah)	735-700 BC	Prophecies judgment on Israel and Judah but promises restoration and a coming Messiah.
Nahum (Nahum)	650 BC	Foretells Nineveh’s destruction as a symbol of God’s judgment on all oppressors.
Zephaniah (Zephaniah)	640-621 BC	Warns of the coming “Day of the Lord” and calls for repentance offering hope of restoration.
Jeremiah, Lamentations (Jeremiah)	627-580 BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeremiah: Warns of impending judgment on Judah for its sins, while promising a new covenant. • Lamentations: A series of laments over Jerusalem’s destruction, emphasizing grief, repentance, and hope in God’s mercy.
Habakkuk (Habakkuk)	609-598 BC	Habakkuk questions God’s justice but ultimately trusts in God’s plan and sovereignty.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
Ezekiel (Ezekiel)	593-571 BC	Contains visions of judgment on Judah, promises of restoration, and a vision of a new temple.
1 & 2 Kings (Jeremiah or a later editor)	561-538 BC	<p>Records events from 970-586 BC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Kings: Covers Solomon’s reign, the building of the temple, and the division of the kingdom after his death. • 2 Kings: Describes the fall of both Israel and Judah due to idolatry and disobedience to God.
Daniel (Daniel)	536-530 BC	Stories of faith in exile and apocalyptic visions of future kingdoms and the coming of God’s eternal kingdom.
Haggai (Haggai)	520 BC	Urges the returned exiles to prioritize rebuilding the temple and promises future glory.
Zechariah (Zechariah)	520-518 BC	Contains visions encouraging the temple’s rebuilding with prophecies of the Messiah and future peace.
Esther (Mordecai)	470 BC	<p>(events c. 483-473 BC)</p> <p>The story of Esther’s courage in saving the Jewish people from destruction.</p>
Ezra, Nehemiah (Ezra, Nehemiah and others)	450-400 BC	<p>Compiled with contributions from Nehemiah and other sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezra: Tells of the Jews’ return from exile, the rebuilding of the temple, and re-establishment of worship. • Nehemiah: Details the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls and the spiritual reforms led by Nehemiah.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
1 & 2 Chronicles (Ezra)	450-400 BC	<p>Traditionally attributed to Ezra, though it remains uncertain. The Chronicles cover the history of Israel tracing genealogy from Adam through the post-exilic period, largely overlapping with material found in Samuel and Kings, but often from a more priestly perspective, emphasizing temple worship, the Davidic line, and Israel’s covenant relationship with God. Chronicles concludes with the decree of Cyrus the Great of Persia, who allowed the exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (c. 538 BC), connecting directly to the period when Ezra and Nehemiah led the rebuilding efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Chronicles: Focuses on David’s reign and emphasizes the centrality of worship and the temple. • 2 Chronicles: Chronicles Judah’s kings, focusing on temple worship and the people’s need for repentance.
Malachi (Malachi)	430 BC	Calls Israel to faithfulness and condemns lax spiritual condition.
THE NEW TESTAMENT		
James (James, half-brother of Jesus)	AD 45-49	Practical teaching on faith, works, and Christian ethics.
Galatians (Paul)	AD 49	Emphasizes freedom in Christ and salvation by grace through faith, not by law.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
1 & 2 Thessalonians (Paul)	AD 50-51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Thessalonians: Encourages believers in their faith and anticipates Christ’s return. • 2 Thessalonians: Clarifies teachings on Christ’s return and encourages perseverance.
1 & 2 Corinthians (Paul)	AD 53-55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Corinthians: Addresses church issues, such as division, immorality, and spiritual gifts, with a call to unity in Christ. • 2 Corinthians: Paul’s defense of his apostleship and encouragement to the church emphasizing reconciliation.
Romans (Paul)	AD 56-57	Paul’s theological exposition on sin, salvation, grace, faith, and Christian living.
Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon (Paul)	AD 60-62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ephesians: Highlights the position of the Church in Christ and encourages holy living. • Philippians: A letter of joy and encouragement, urging believers to live humbly and united in Christ. • Colossians: Affirms Christ’s supremacy and instructs the church on practical Christian living. • Philemon: A personal letter advocating for forgiveness and reconciliation between Philemon and his servant Onesimus.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
1 Timothy, Titus (Paul)	AD 62-64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Timothy: Paul’s instructions to Timothy on church leadership, doctrine, and pastoral care. • Titus: Paul’s guidance to Titus on church organization, sound doctrine, and good works.
1 Peter (Peter)	AD 60-65	Encourages perseverance through suffering emphasizing hope in Christ.
2 Timothy (Paul)	AD 64-67	Paul’s final letter encouraging Timothy to stand firm in faith amidst persecution.
2 Peter (Peter)	AD 65-68	Warns against false teachers and urges growth in faith.
Hebrews (?, Paul)	AD 65-70	Emphasizes Christ’s superiority over the Old Covenant and encourages faithfulness to Him.
Mark (John Mark)	AD 65-70	Emphasizes Jesus as the Suffering Servant and Son of God focusing on His actions and servanthood.
Matthew (Matthew)	AD 70-85	Presents Jesus as the promised Messiah focusing on His teachings, miracles, and fulfillment of prophecy.
Luke, Acts (Luke)	AD 70-85	Highlights Jesus’ compassion, teachings, and ministry to all. Records the growth of the Early Church and the spread of the Gospel.
Jude (half-brother of Jesus)	AD 68-80	Warns against false teachers and urges believers to contend for the faith.
John (John)	AD 85-90	Focuses on Jesus as the divine Son of God emphasizing His identity, miracles, and relationship with the Father.

Book of the Bible (Author)	Date written	Key teaching and insights
1, 2, and 3 John (John)	AD 85-95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 John: Affirms Christ’s incarnation and emphasizes love and fellowship within the Christian community. • 2 John: A brief letter warning against false teachings and emphasizing love and truth. • 3 John: A personal letter commending hospitality and addressing church matters.
Revelation (John)	AD 95-96	Unfolding of things to come, Christ’s ultimate victory and reign, and the establishment of a new heaven and earth.

Hidden mysteries now revealed by the Spirit

Ephesians 3:1-7

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—

²if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

³how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,

⁴by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

⁵which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

⁶that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

⁷of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

Romans 16:25-27

²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began

²⁶but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known

to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—

²⁷ to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

The apostle Paul writes about the mystery of Christ which in earlier times was not known, but has now been revealed by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:4,5). He mentions this again in Romans 16, referring to the mystery that was kept secret since the world began but has now been revealed.

These texts from Ephesians and Romans affirm to us what has been referred to as progressive revelation in Scripture.

1 Peter 1:10-12

¹⁰ Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you,

¹¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

¹² To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

The prophets, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke of things to come, and they inquired and searched to understand these things. What a privilege that we have the entirety of the Scriptures so that we can look back and understand the things the prophets spoke about along with the mysteries which was revealed to the apostles, Paul and others, as given to us in the New Testament.

The present truth

2 Peter 1:12

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

2 Peter 3:1,2

¹Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder*),

²that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,

Peter is writing to believers scattered around Asia Minor “to those who have obtained like precious faith with us” (2 Peter 1:1). He acknowledges that they know and are firmly established in “the present truth”. He is referring to the New Testament revelation that has been communicated to them which would include the good news of Jesus Christ, what He did, who He is, and all that has been revealed to the Church. Some translations render “the present truth” as “the truth which is present with you” and “the truth that you have”. The Early Church believers were established in “the present truth”, with the understanding of the Old Testament “*which were spoken before by the holy prophets*” (2 Peter 3:2) and all the way to the New Testament revelation taught by the apostles.

Restoration of spiritual understanding in the Church

Starting with the Early Church (AD 30-AD 100) and the succeeding generations till about AD 400, the Church seemed to hold firm the truth that had been delivered to the saints. By the end of AD 400, Christianity had been “institutionalized” and established as the state religion across the Roman Empire.

The next 1000 years (AD 400-AD 1500), sometimes referred to as the “Dark Ages”, saw the light of truth steadily diminish in the Church. The Institutionalized Church became fully developed, and popes exercised civil as well as spiritual power. They collected taxes, raised armies and subjugated kings and rulers and thus, became the dominant force in society,

spreading their influence throughout the Western world. Within the Church, there was a steep decline in its moral and spiritual condition. Form, liturgy, and rituals replaced Scripture and the life and work of the Spirit. The laity did not have access to the Scriptures. Wrong practices such as prayers to the saints, belief in purgatory, trans-substitution, indulgences, and relic-worship were introduced. The Church was considered infallible with supreme powers residing with the pope. Monasticism began to decline, losing much of its spiritual focus, power, and vitality. Since about AD 800, the style of worship in the Church followed the Gregorian Chant which was introduced by Pope Gregory of the Roman Catholic Church, a call and response between the priest and the congregation.

Many of the basic truths of the New Testament had been lost from the preaching and practice of much of the Institutionalized Church. Truth remained hidden in the Scriptures and needed to be rediscovered and restored to the Church. The Church needed to be reformed and restored to what it should truly be.

There were several early reformers during AD 1100 to AD 1500. These included Peter Waldo and the Waldenses (1150-1270), John Wycliffe, the Reformation Morningstar, who translated the full English Bible (1382), John Huss who was faithful unto death (1415), Joan of Arc who saw visions (1429), Girolamo Savonarola, an Italian monk who was burned for his preaching (1452), Huldrych Zwingli, the Swiss priest who first preached against abuses in the Church in 1516, and Desiderius Erasmus, the Dutch scholar, monk turned writer (1516), who laid the groundwork for Martin Luther.

The Protestant Reformation is usually considered to have started on **31 October 1517** with the publication of the Ninety-five Theses, authored by Martin Luther. His primary teaching

was that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ and the Bible is the basis of our faith and authority. His teaching is often summarized as “*sola gratia*”, “*sola fide*” and “*sola scriptura*”—**by grace alone, by faith alone, and by Scripture alone**. This began in a significant way the restoration of these essential truths into the Church.

Around this time (16th Century), the practice of **singing hymns** as part of the congregational worship was restored and reintroduced. These hymns were written to only include the words of the Bible or to reflect as closely as possible to the exact words of Scripture. Martin Luther composed 36 hymns in German.

Since that time, continuing till today, we see spiritual truth and understanding progressively restored to the life of the Church. The Church began to “see and understand” truth that was always there in the written Scriptures. We see the restoration of spiritual practices and disciplines of Bible reading, meditation, prayer, fellowship, church community, witnessing, and missions. We also see the restoration of gifts, calling, ministries, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

While it would be almost impossible to document all of these as many of these were happening as “**parallel movements**” in the Church through many people and from many different parts of the world, a few of these are highlighted below.

From about AD 401, the Institutionalized Church had started practicing infant baptism. The **Anabaptists**, who emerged around the 16th Century, insisted that baptism was for believers only, and therefore, excluded the idea of baptizing infants. They also brought back the understanding of the **local**

church—that the church should be a voluntary gathering of believers who support each other.

John Calvin (1509-1564), a French theologian, did a great work in explaining and bringing together the key beliefs we refer to as part of **systematic theology**—the understanding of sin, salvation, Scripture, grace, justification by faith, predestination and free will. His systematic theology is often referred to as Calvinism.

Jacobus Arminius (1559-1609) was a Dutch Reformed theologian and minister who developed a theological system that became known as Arminianism.

Calvinism and Arminianism: Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God and God’s right to choose people for salvation. In Calvinism, God is the ultimate and deciding factor in the salvation of individuals. Arminianism emphasizes the ability and freedom of man to choose God. In Arminianism, man’s response to God’s grace is the deciding factor. Today, major denominations that generally subscribe to Calvinism include Presbyterian, Reformed churches, Congregationalist, and some Baptist groups (“Reformed Baptists”). Denominations leaning towards Arminianism include Methodist, most General Baptist churches, Wesleyan, Church of the Nazarene, Pentecostal, and Charismatic / Spirit-filled / Third Wave churches. Please keep in mind that individuals could differ from their denominational affiliation in their personal faith-position on Calvinism / Arminianism.

Continuationism and cessationism: Continuationism, the belief that the gifts of the Holy Spirit including miracles and healing continue today, was the prevailing view of the Christian church until the Reformation. Sadly, the concept of cessationism

(the belief that the gifts of the Spirit, supernatural miracles, and healings ceased with the end of the Apostolic Age,) gained prominence during the Protestant Reformation with theologians like John Calvin arguing that the extraordinary gifts were necessary for establishing the Church but were not meant to continue indefinitely.

The Methodist Revival in England led by **John Wesley** (1703-1791), and his brother Charles, founded a group whose participants became known as **Methodists** because of their methodical approach to seeking God. He preached justification through faith in Christ alone and emphasized a second work of grace, a second experience as Christian perfection or entire sanctification. The truth and understanding of **sanctification and holy living** were restored to the Church. This gave birth to the **holiness movement**.

The use of **choruses** (spiritual songs other hymns) in congregational worship was restored to the Church during these revivals / movements such as the Great Awakening (1730-1755) and other 18th century revivals.

Several **revivals** leading to great **missionary movements** began to take place.

- **William Carey** (1761-1834) was a pioneer and leader in the modern missionary movement.
- **Charles Finney** (1792-1875), known as “The Father of Modern Revivalism,” became one of the most successful evangelists of modern times.
- **Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892), known as the “Prince of Preachers” and evangelist.
- **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899)

- and other well know preachers / evangelists.

The calling and ministry of the **missionary** and that of the **evangelist** were beginning to be restored in the Church.

Towards the second half of the 19th century, interest in charismatic expressions of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, miracles and healings began to increase. People began to welcome and desire for the Pentecostal type of outpouring of the Spirit and the supernatural ministry of the Spirit. There were many people who were forerunners in the healing ministry. These include people like John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), Maria Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924), Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947), Lilian B. Yeomans (1861-1942), John G. Lake (1870-1935), Fred Francis Bosworth (1877-1958) and Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944). The Pentecostal movement went global after the Wales Revival in 1904, and the Azusa Street Revival in California in 1906. All Pentecostal denominations point back to these 1900-1915 Revivals as the beginning of the movement. The **baptism in the Holy Spirit** with the expressions of the **gifts of the Spirit** was being restored to the Church.

From around the 1950s and onwards, we see several parallel movements in the Church. These include the restoration of the five-fold ministry functions of evangelists, pastors, teachers, prophets, and apostles. The restoration of the functioning of the local church, the equipping and empowering of believers for ministry in the Church. The restoration of spiritual revelation and understanding of the believer's life in Christ, Christ's completed work on the Cross, redemption, the believer's authority, prayer, intercession, stewardship, worship, witness, fellowship, and so much more.

The initial inspiration of the Scriptures was progressive, and the Holy Spirit unveiled truth, line upon line, precept upon precept. Following the Dark Ages, we can see that the restoration of spiritual truth and understanding, the restoration of spiritual practices and disciplines, the restoration of gifts, calling, ministries, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit have been taking place progressively in the Church, starting with the Reformation. All that was given to the Early Church will be fully restored, and more.

Many streams, one river

One way to picture what has taken place from the Reformation leading to our present time is to think about many streams flowing into one river. A classic example of many streams flowing into one river is the Amazon River where numerous smaller streams from the surrounding rainforest all feed into the main Amazon River. Essentially, the Amazon is made up of many smaller streams joining together to form a single large river. The smaller streams that flow into the Amazon are called tributaries. The source of the smaller stream is known as the headwaters or the head of the stream. The point where a tributary meets the main river is called a confluence.

For the sake of illustration, we can consider the headwaters of each smaller stream as the birth of a movement initiated by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God used one or more people to birth the movement (smaller stream, tributary). They emphasized one or more New Testament truths, communicated and demonstrated these in a manner that the Church could receive. The smaller stream eventually flowed into the main river, the work that the Holy Spirit was doing in the Church worldwide. Hence, many smaller streams were initiated by the Holy Spirit, and they all flowed into the main river.

As believers today, we need to stay with the main river. The main river is where we have “the present truth” being restored to the Church. It is in the main river where “*the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry*” and “*the edifying of the body of Christ*” is happening. It is the main river that is bringing us “*all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*”. It is in the main river that we “*no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ*”. It is in this main river that Jesus is working in the Church to present her “*to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 4:12-15; Ephesians 5:27).

The water of the Spirit is holy, clean, and pure. However, as this pure water flows through imperfect human vessels, it gets mixed in with what is ‘of the flesh’ in its expressions. Therefore, no stream is perfect in its expressions. Most often, there are human ideas, human interests, and institutional agendas that get mixed in with the pure work of the Holy Spirit. We must learn to filter out what is of the flesh and drink only the pure river of the Spirit.

Problems arise when we camp around one stream (identified today as a denomination / institution, or a particular movement) thinking that this is all there is to our Christian faith, or this is all that the Holy Spirit is doing in the Church today. Problems arise when we interpret and understand Scripture based on the truth restored in just one stream, without recognizing that God has and continues to restore full understanding of Scripture through many streams that flow into the one river—this is the

River of the Holy Spirit and what He is doing in the Church.

Consider some of the following examples that teach us that we need to be in step and in time with God as He moves on unfolding His eternal purpose for people.

- **When the past became an idol:** There was a time when God had instructed Moses to make a brass serpent and raise it on a pole so that the people who were bitten by snakes could look at it and be healed and kept safe (Numbers 21:8,9). About 800 years later, we read that this brass serpent had become an object of worship, an idol. We do not know for how long, but possibly for hundreds of years, the people worshipped this brass serpent. Something that was genuinely used by God at a certain time, which was a type or a pointer to the Lord Jesus Himself (John 3:14,15), became an idol taking the place of God in the lives of people until Hezekiah became king of Judah and destroyed this brass serpent and called it for what it was, “*nehushtan*,” meaning a piece of brass (2 Kings 18:4). This is a danger we must avoid—making people, forms, methods, organizations, doctrines, etc. that God genuinely worked through in the past as idols in the present.
- **When God moved on:** John the Baptist was sent by God. John was “*the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways*” (Luke 1:76). He “*was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel*” (Luke 1:80). He began his time of ministry. “*Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins*” (Matthew 3:5,6). John the Baptist may have ministered for about 6 months to 1 year when the Lord Jesus came to him to be baptized in the river Jordan. After John had baptized Jesus and recognized Him to be the

Messiah, the Son of God, John pointed to Jesus. *“Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”* The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus (John 1:35-37). John’s time was up, and Jesus’ time had begun. The two disciples of John left him and followed Jesus. John knew it was time for Jesus to increase and for himself to decrease. He ministered on the sidelines for a few more months, perhaps to a year, and was then beheaded. Just like the two disciples of John, we must learn to move to the present work of God as He continues to unveil truth in the Scriptures and unfold His purposes.

- **Apollos needed catching up:** *“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ”* (Acts 18:24-28). God used a business couple to get a learned scholar updated on spiritual things.

The message for us is that we should not permit our affection to a past work of God to hold us back from embracing the unveiling of truth from the Scriptures and the unfolding of God’s work by His Spirit in and through the Church. Neither must we allow our study and interpretation of Scripture to be

tainted by our affection for our denomination or something else. We must stay in step and in time with God.

Contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints

Jude 1:3

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

In our interpreting and understanding of Scripture, our goal is to contend earnestly for the faith that was delivered to the saints.

What would we believe today if “*the present truth*” that the apostle Peter referred to (2 Peter 1:12) and if things “*which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior*” (2 Peter 3:2) continued unchanged till today?

What would the preaching and teaching of the Church be if “*the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 1:3) and given to us in the written Scriptures continued unchanged till today?

Our spiritual understanding and practice of faith must be aligned with the full revelation of the Old Testament and the New Testament truth as originally given. In daily life, we bring those truths into our situations and with God’s wisdom apply them today.

5

METHODS AND TOOLS FOR BIBLE STUDY

In this chapter, we provide a brief overview of how Bible translation is done from the original languages to English. This will help us understand why there are multiple versions of the English Bible, what purpose do these serve and how can we leverage them in our study. We also consider methods and tools we can use for studying Scripture.

Multiple versions of the English Bible

Here is a brief explanation on why we have multiple versions of the English Bible.

There are more than 66,000 manuscripts and scrolls that support the Bible including Greek, Latin, and other ancient language manuscripts.

- **Hebrew manuscripts:** There are an estimated 60,000 Hebrew manuscripts and 200,000 fragments.
- **Greek manuscripts:** There are approximately 5,800 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, with the earliest dating back to AD 130.
- **Latin manuscripts:** There are approximately 10,000 Latin manuscripts.
- **Other language manuscripts:** There are approximately 9,300 manuscripts in other ancient languages including Syriac, Slavic, Gothic, Ethiopic, Coptic, Nubian, and Armenian.
- **Dead Sea Scrolls:** There are more than 200 Biblical

manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, some of which were written before 70 BC. The Dead Sea Scrolls found between 1947-1950 are kept primarily at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

The New Testament has been preserved in more manuscripts than any other ancient work of literature. The total pages of the New Testament manuscripts are more than 2.6 million.

The Old Testament manuscript families (collections of manuscripts) are the **Masoretic Text** (considered the standard Hebrew text), the **Septuagint** (Greek translation), and various ancient versions like the Samaritan Pentateuch (written in Samaritan Hebrew).

The New Testament manuscript families are categorized as the **Byzantine** and **Alexandrian** text-types.

The **Byzantine text-type** (also called “received text” or the “textus receptus”) represents the majority of the surviving New Testament manuscripts. Hence the name “Majority Text” from the late 3rd and early 4th Century, and primarily circulated throughout the Byzantine Empire (centered in Constantinople). The King James Version (KJV) (and hence, the New King James Version (NKJV)) follows what is called the Byzantine text-type as these were available when the translations were made (in 1611).

The **Alexandrian text-type** (also called “modern critical text”) is generally considered to be closer to the original text due to its early dating (from the early 2nd Century). It is represented by the earliest surviving New Testament manuscripts such as the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, which originated

in Egypt. Mostly, all modern versions of the Bible (New International Version (NIV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), etc.) use the Alexandrian text, which many scholars have accepted as a better text because of the recent findings that were older than the oldest records of the Byzantine texts.

When setting out to work on a translation of the Bible into English, Bible translators decide on which **collection of manuscripts** to work with. As mentioned earlier, the most recent versions of the Bible use the Alexandrian text. Bible translators also decide on the **translation philosophy** that they will follow before they begin the translation work.

Here are some of the main philosophies that are followed.

a) Formal equivalence

Focuses on translating **word-for-word** and strives to be as literal as possible. Bibles that fall under the formal equivalence philosophy would be English Standard Version (ESV), KJV, and NASB.

b) Functional equivalence

Focuses on a **thought-for-thought** (dynamic equivalence) translation. Its goal is to make the text easy to read and easier to understand. Bibles that fall in this camp are New Living Translation (NLT) and NIV.

c) Optimal equivalence

It is a balance of **word-for-word** and **thought-for-thought** wherever needed for the reader to better understand. The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) would be considered an optimal equivalence approach.

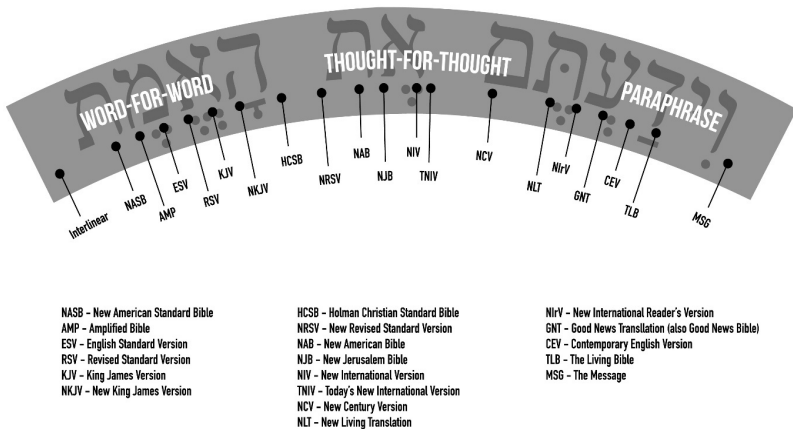
d) *Essential equivalence*

It is **meaning-for-meaning**, or equivalent meaning, while maintaining the essential form and the essential function of the original words. It is a meaning-for-meaning translation, translating the essence of God's original message and heart into modern English. The Passion Translation (TPT) is an essential equivalence translation.

e) *Paraphrase*

Bibles that are paraphrased lack accuracy and sometimes go beyond a thought-for-thought approach. These Bibles are good to better understand the story or text, but for expository preaching, it is best to stick with a word-for-word or thought-for-thought Bible.

Types of Bible Translations



Adapted from: <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/Bible/why-are-there-so-many-different-versions-of-the-Bible.html>

Common English Bible versions

Before the KJV, there was the Wycliffe Bible, completed in 1382, and the Tyndale Bible (full New Testament), published in 1526.

A few of the common Protestant Bibles used today are as follows.

- The King James Bible (KJV) (completed in 1611)
- Revised Standard Version (RSV) (completed in 1952)
- Amplified Bible (AMP) (completed in 1965, new versions done in 1987 and 2015)
- New American Bible (NAB) (completed in 1970)
- The Living Bible (TLB) (completed in 1971)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB) (completed in 1971, new revisions done in 1995 and 2020)
- New International Version (NIV) (completed in 1978)
- New King James Version (NKJV) (completed in 1982)
- New Living Translation (NLT) (completed in 1996)
- English Standard Version (ESV) (completed in 2001)
- The Message (MSG) (completed in 2002)
- Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) (completed in 2004)
- Christian Standard Bible (CSB) (completed in 2017)

The benefit of multiple English versions

We can use multiple English versions of the Bible to our advantage as we study the Scriptures. When studying a verse or passage of Scripture, reading it in different versions gives

us a more comprehensive understanding of the text. We can have a fuller picture of the original meaning and an enhanced understanding of the text. By comparing versions, we can see different aspects of specific words or phrases highlighted in different versions, capturing subtleties in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. We are also able to gain an understanding of figurative and poetic language by observing how this is rendered in different versions.

Chapter and verse organization

The division of the Bible into chapters and verses was a process that developed over centuries and was first applied to Latin, Hebrew, and Greek texts before being adopted in English translations. The English translations followed these existing frameworks. The first Bible to have both chapters and verses in both Testaments was **the Geneva Bible (1560)**, an English translation.

Here's an overview of when and how this process happened.

The Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible already had a form of verse divisions established by Jewish scribes (the Masoretes) between **AD 500-900**. The Masoretes based their verse divisions on oral traditions and the rhythmic reading of Scripture. These divisions were based on natural pauses in the Hebrew text. The Greek Septuagint later adopted similar verse divisions but was less consistent than the Hebrew text.

The division of the Bible into **chapters** was first done by Stephen Langton, an English archbishop of Canterbury, around **AD 1227**. Langton applied this division to the Latin Vulgate Bible, which later influenced chapter divisions in Hebrew, Greek, and English Bibles. Chapters were introduced to make referencing specific portions of the text easier for study and

liturgical use. Langton divided the text into logical sections based on themes, narrative shifts, or natural pauses in the text. Langton's chapter divisions sometimes prioritized practicality for study and citation over the flow of the original text.

The New Testament was divided into **verses** by Robert Estienne (also known as Stephanus), a French printer, in **1551**. He applied this to the Greek text following his earlier work on Latin texts. Some consider the division of the New Testament into verses as sometimes abrupt or misplaced.

The system of chapter and verse became essential for study, memorization, and cross-referencing across translations and languages. This is a very beneficial system of organizing and referencing Scripture text.

However, chapter and verse divisions occasionally disrupt the flow of thought or create artificial breaks, potentially affecting interpretation. Hence, it is important to keep this in mind when studying and interpreting Scripture.

Methods of Bible study

There are many ways to study the Bible. Some of the common approaches are listed and explained here. Please keep in mind that in practice, we usually use a combination of these approaches when we study the Bible. The distinction between these Bible study methods is not "hard and fast", especially when you are studying and engaging with the Scriptures for various reasons including personal devotion, personal meditation, personal study, sermon preparation, book writing, etc. The goal is to learn the different skills required to study the Scriptures and easily use any of these as you engage with the Word of God.

A) Devotional / Passage study approaches

- 1) The devotional method
- 2) Verse-by-verse study method

B) Character / Biographical study approaches

- 3) Character study method
- 4) Biographical study method

C) Thematic / Topical / Word study approaches

- 5) Topical Bible study
- 6) Theme Bible study method (thematic method)
- 7) The word study method

D) Chapter study approaches

- 8) Chapter summary method
- 9) Chapter analysis method

E) Book study approaches

- 10) Book background and survey method
- 11) Book synthesis method of Bible study (verse by verse)

A) Devotional / Passage study approaches

In this, we are doing an “**Inductive Study**”. You read a passage and examine it using...

- **Observation:** What does the text say?
- **Interpretation:** What does the text mean?
- **Application:** How should I apply this?

In Inductive study, you move from the specific to the general. You start with the specific passage and then move to its

general meaning and application to you.

1) The devotional method

Select a short passage of Scripture and meditate on it. Visualize the scene or the narrative. Put yourself into the Biblical situation as an active participant. Imagine yourself being one of the people in the passage. Write out an application that is personal and practical.

Exercise 1: Choose a verse or short passage (for example, Psalm 23:1-3) and spend 15 minutes reflecting on its meaning, focusing on how it applies to your life. Write a one-page personal reflection on how you plan to apply this in your day-to-day actions.

Exercise 2: Select a passage from the Sermon on the Mount (for example, Matthew 5:1-12). Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal insights to you. Write down any thoughts, convictions, or ways you feel called to respond personally, and note down any specific actions to take.

2) Verse-by-verse study method

Select one passage of Scripture and examine it in detail. Study the key words. If possible, look up the word meanings and read from multiple versions. Record any insights. Write down observations, key learnings and a brief personal application. (Additionally, you may find cross-references that are related to verses and give a broader understanding).

Exercise 1: Choose Philippians 4:4-7 and analyze each verse individually. Identify the main message of each verse, key words, and the practical application that each verse suggests. Write a short paragraph summarizing how these verses connect to each other.

Exercise 2: Choose Colossians 3:1-4 and examine each verse individually. For each verse, note any cross-references, explanations, or historical context that might enhance understanding. Write a brief on how each verse builds upon the previous one.

Exercise 3: Choose Romans 12:1-8 and analyze each verse individually. Identify the main idea, key words, and how it connects to the overall theme of the chapter.

B) Character / Biographical study approaches

3) Character study method

Select a Bible character and study their faith, life, characteristics and disciplines during a certain period of their life. Make notes on their attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses, and show how Bible truths are illustrated in their life. Live with that person during your study; walk in their shoes. See how they think, feel, and respond to circumstances. Consider how you can adapt and apply their faith, good attitudes or other disciplines into your own life. (If possible, look into the culture, geography, the religious and political environment of that time so that you can gain additional insights and better understand their words and actions).

Exercise 1: Study the character of David from the time he was a shepherd boy till he was anointed king (1 Samuel 16 to 2 Samuel 5). Identify any three qualities of David and specific incidents where these qualities were evident. Write out a summary of your observations explaining how these qualities influenced David's life and leadership.

Exercise 2: Choose Peter from the Gospels. Identify and document three instances where Peter demonstrated growth or

change (for example, Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-17; Acts 2:14-41). Write a reflection on what personal growth you can imitate from Peter’s example.

Exercise 3: Select a woman in the Bible (for example, Deborah, Esther, Mary, the mother of Jesus, Martha, or Mary Magdalene) and write a character sketch highlighting her unique qualities and how she exemplifies godly virtues.

4) Biographical study method

Biographical study is a method that examines the lives of the people in the Bible from their birth to death (as much as is recorded in Scripture), looking closely at their personal journey of faith. We look for lessons we can learn, good things that we can imitate and mistakes we should avoid. We learn about God and how He works in the lives of people, His faithfulness, His goodness, etc.

Exercise 1: Study the life of Joseph (Genesis 37,39 to 50). Document his journey through different stages—his youth, slavery, imprisonment, and leadership. Write a summary on what each stage teaches about resilience and faith in God’s plan. *What do we learn about God through Joseph?*

Exercise 2: Research the life of Ruth. Make a timeline of key events in her life and identify what these events reveal about her character and faith. Conclude with a paragraph on how Ruth’s story of loyalty and faith is relevant to modern life. *What do we learn about God through Ruth’s life?*

Exercise 3: Research the life of the apostle Paul. Create a timeline of his missionary journeys and the key events in his life. Consider the different roles he took on during his ministry. *What qualities can we imitate? What leadership lessons do we*

learn from the apostle Paul?

Exercise 4: Write a short biography on John the Baptist, focusing on his role as a prophet and his relationship with Jesus. *What are the main lessons we learn from John the Baptist?*

C) Thematic / Topical / Word study approaches

In this approach, we use “**Deductive Study**”. We start with a topic, find Scriptures that are relevant to that topic and arrive at specific conclusions. We start with a general, broad picture and arrive at specific truths, insights, and doctrine.

5) Topical Bible study method

Studying a topic (a subject) is a great way to gain a thorough understanding on what the Bible says on that topic / subject. Once you decide on a topic, write down questions you wish to address on that topic. Next, go through all the Scripture verses and passages on that topic from Genesis to Revelation. As you do so, assemble these verses and passages under the questions / headings that you had wanted to address. Additionally, you will discover new insights and questions that emerge, and you can add this to your list. You can organize your learning in a logical flow of thought (or an outline) that can be shared with others. Sometimes, it will be necessary to look up other closely related sub-topics / subjects in order to fully understand the main topic. Please keep in mind that doing a thorough Topical Bible study can take several weeks / months.

Exercise 1: Consider the topic of “Our Identity in Christ”. We can ask initial questions such as—*What does it mean to be in Christ? How did we get in Christ? What is my identity in Christ—who does God say that I am in Christ? How will knowing who I am in Christ help transform my life as a believer? How do I live out of my identity in Christ?* Next, using the tools

which we will talk about later, run a search to find all the verses and passages that speak of “in Christ”, “in Him”, “in whom”, “by Him”, “in me”, etc. Go through each verse / passage and see how they help answer the initial set of questions. Add sub-headings as we explore these scriptures. As we do this study, we will also study several sub-topics in detail. Some of these sub-topics would be righteousness, justification, identification, Spirit-filled life, redemption, etc. See the APC Book, “**Who We Are In Christ**,” that is a result of such a study, available as a FREE download at apcwo.org/books.

Exercise 2: Study the topic of “Faith” in the Bible. Some questions we’d like to ask would be—*What is faith? How do we exercise faith? How do we grow in faith? How do we overcome doubt and unbelief? What did the Lord Jesus teach about faith? What can we learn from some of the people of faith listed in Hebrews 11?* You can add to this list of questions. Find all Scriptures that reference “faith”, “believe”, “trust”, etc. and do a thorough study. As we do this study, the life of Abraham is something we would consider in depth as God points to him as the “father of faith” (Romans 4:11). We would look at Abraham’s life both in the Old Testament and what the New Testament teaches about him.

Exercise 3: Study the topic of “Money, Finances, Wealth, Material Possessions” in the Bible. Scan through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation to see what we can learn. Some questions we can ask—*What did God speak to His people about money and material things? How did people of faith handle their money and honor God with their earthly possessions? Is it right to desire to be successful and to increase income, earnings and wealth? How do we become good stewards with what we have financially? Is it right to invest and make your money grow? What should be my heart and life posture concerning*

money, wealth and earthly possessions? What are the dangers we should avoid and how do we guard ourselves? As we do this study, some of the sub-topics we will have to explore would include the Bible's teaching on generosity / giving, tithing, sacrifice, etc.

6) Theme Bible study method (thematic method)

In the thematic method of Bible study, we select a theme in the Bible and perform a basic study on some of the things that the Bible speaks on that theme. It is shorter than the **Topical method of Bible study** and is much less exhaustive in its scope. In a thematic study, we examine a few passages or verses that apply directly to a single theme and draw lessons and insights from those passages. The goal is to gain some understanding of the theme of interest. It is not comprehensive, neither is it an attempt to answer all questions relating to the theme.

Exercise 1: Study on the theme of the Spirit-filled Life. Consider three passages (Ephesians 5:16-21; Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 8:1-17). *What does it mean to be Spirit-filled? What are the characteristics of being Spirit-filled? What are other insights you gain on the theme of the Spirit-filled life from these passages?*

Exercise 2: Study at least five passages (for example, Romans 3:23,24; Romans 5:1,2; Ephesians 2:8,9; Ephesians 3:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:9) on the theme of the grace of God. Write a summary explaining what grace is according to Scripture and how it affects the believer's relationship with God and daily life.

Exercise 3: Study on the theme of forgiveness by examining these passages—Matthew 6:14,15; Mark 11:24; Luke 23:34; Ephesians 4:32. Write a summary of insights you gained on this theme from these passages.

Exercise 4: Consider the phrase “praying in the Spirit.” Search for this phrase in the New Testament using any software tool. Study all instances where “praying in the Spirit”, “pray in the Spirit”, “praying in the Holy Spirit”, “praying in the Holy Ghost” are used. *Which New Testament writer uses this phrase most often? Would it be right for us to conclude that in the understanding of the writer, and hence in the understanding of the Early Church, the phrase “praying in the Spirit” is synonymous to mean praying in other tongues? Is praying in the Spirit under the control of the will of the believer, that is, the believer can pray in the Spirit, anytime, anywhere, as they choose? What other insights can you draw from the Scriptures on this theme?*

7) *The word study method*

Like the **Topical Bible study** method, doing a word study is another way to get a good grip on what the Scriptures teach on a specific subject. You can do a word study specific to the Old Testament, or the New Testament, or trace it across both the Old and New Testaments. For a particular word, for example, “love”, we follow that word throughout in the Bible using tools we have available to us. Find out how many times a word occurs in Scripture and how it is used. Find out the different Hebrew or Greek words that are translated into the English word that we are studying. Find out the meaning of the original words in Hebrew or Greek. Use the dictionary to see how these words are used in different contexts. Compare English translations to see how translators have understood and presented the meaning of the original words. As you do the word study, you can draw lessons, insights, revelation about God and His ways, and practical applications of Biblical truth. Please keep in mind that doing a thorough study can take several weeks / months.

Exercise 1: Study the word “love” in the New Testament. *What*

are the different Greek words translated “love” in English? What insights do you gain? What makes agape love so special?

Exercise 2: Do a word study on “authority” in the New Testament. *What are the insights you gain about spiritual authority in the New Testament? What are the different kinds of spiritual authority seen in the New Testament? How do we exercise spiritual authority over demonic powers?*

Exercise 3: Do a word study on “life” across the Old and New Testaments. *What insights do you gain? What makes “zoe” life so special? How does “zoe” life affect us in our everyday life? Does “zoe” life affect “bios”, “psuche” and “anastrophe”?*

Exercise 4: Do a word study on “spirit” across the Old and New Testaments. *What are the Hebrew and Greek words translated “spirit”? What are the different meanings of these words? How do we determine when the reference is being made to the human spirit, evil spirit, angelic beings, and the Holy Spirit? When is the human spirit created? What is spiritual death? Does the human spirit live on forever after physical death? Where does the human spirit go once the body dies? What is the difference between the human spirit and the human soul? Does the spirit have a soul component that lives on after a person dies physically? What other insights do you gain from this study?*

D) Chapter study approaches

Chapter study allows us to consider small portions of Scripture and focus on a few main insights, while we apply the interpretive process. We could take a **chapter summary** approach that provides an overview or work in-depth using the **chapter analysis** approach.

8) *Chapter summary study method*

Our goal in the **chapter summary study** method is to capture key insights in the chapter. One way to do this is to divide the chapter into its sections based on themes and give each section a suitable heading that describes the main thought of that section. We then reflect on the application of the key insights we derive from the chapter.

Exercise 1: Do a chapter summary study of John 15. Divide this chapter into sections based on themes that are being shared. Give each section a short, simple heading that captures the focus of that section. Summarize key insights from this chapter and discuss their application.

Exercise 2: Do a chapter summary study of Romans 6. Divide this chapter into sections based on themes that are being shared. Give each section a short, simple heading that captures the focus of that section. Summarize key insights from this chapter and discuss their application.

(You can similarly work with other chapters of your choice).

9) *Chapter analysis study method*

The **chapter analysis study** method is an in-depth look at the chapter. In addition to what we have outlined in the chapter summary study method, in chapter analysis, we examine each paragraph, sentence, and word in detail. We study specific words, phrases, and language (**Example:** illustrations). We consider the spiritual, cultural, social, political, etc. settings in which the book was written and what specific objectives the writer had when writing the book. We consider how each of the key elements in the chapter (words, phrases, language details, etc.) contribute to the overall message of the book.

Exercise 1: Do a chapter analysis study of 1 Corinthians 14. *Why was this chapter written (why is this chapter in this book)? What are the main sections and their headings? What are the key words and phrases? How many times does Paul use “in the Spirit” in this chapter? How many times does Paul use “keep silent” in this chapter? We know there are at least 9 gifts of the Spirit Paul listed in 1 Corinthians 12. In 1 Corinthians 14, tongues and prophecy seem to take up much of the focus. Why is this? What are different real-life scenarios presented in this chapter? How are the believers and non-believers served through the gifts of the Spirit? Document other insights you gain from a detailed, in-depth look into 1 Corinthians 14.*

Exercise 2: Do a chapter analysis study of Romans 6 building further on the chapter summary done in the earlier exercise.

Exercise 3: Do a chapter analysis study of Ephesians 6. *What are the various sections and headings you can assign for this chapter? Study the words “strong”, “power”, “might”. Study the words Paul uses to describe hierarchy in the dominion of darkness such as “principalities”, “powers”, “rulers”, and spirits of wickedness. Study each piece of the believer’s armor in the context of the Roman soldier’s armor used in those times.*

E) Book study approaches

One of the most rewarding approaches to studying God’s Word is to do a complete book study. This helps us dig deep into the times, the people, the message and the heart of God revealed in the book. Keep in mind that doing a book study can take several weeks / months.

10) Book background and survey method

The Book background and survey method of Bible study involves researching the background of the time when the book

was spoken or written. As we will discuss later, this includes becoming familiar with the geography, history, culture, religious, social and political environment prevailing during those times. Having researched this, we then read the book through several times to understand the main theme or themes being addressed in the book. We try to journey with the people (or individuals) being addressed, live in their times, and gain insights into the heart of God, His ways and thoughts, and how He works in the lives of His people. We draw life application lessons based on what we have observed through the book.

Exercise 1: Do a book background survey of the book of Ruth. Document historical setting, audience, main purpose, and key themes of the book. Explain how knowing the background enhances understanding of the message brought out in this book.

Exercise 2: Do a book background and survey of Paul's epistle to the Philippians. Research Paul's relationship with the Philippian church, the cultural context, and the main themes. Document what you discover on the main themes in Philippians.

Similarly, you can do a book background and survey of many books in the Bible.

11) Book synthesis method of Bible study

In the book synthesis method, we combine all aspects of the study methods we have learned and use these to do a thorough and detailed study of a particular book. We research the background, survey the book, analyze chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and dig deep into key words, phrases, aspects of the language, and combine these to learn about God and His ways. While this will require a lot of time, effort and focus, it enables us to gain a clear understanding of that book in the Bible.

Tools and resources for Bible study

We are truly privileged to be living at a time when knowledge has increased and continues to increase exponentially. Technology has given us tools through which we can access knowledge and information very quickly and easily. We encourage you to make use of these tools (and many other available tools) that assist us in our study of the Scriptures.

1) Software and online tools

There are several free (and some inexpensive) software tools that we can use in our study of God's Word.

A few of these software tools are listed here.

- **e-Sword (e-sword.net)** e-Sword comes with **Strong's Concordance** where you can look up Hebrew and Greek words and their meanings. You can also download several free versions of the Bible for comparison study. There are free commentaries and several other resources (see lists below). There are purchased versions of the Vine's Dictionary of the Old and New Testament words, other Bible versions, etc.
 - YouVersion (**Bible.com**)
 - Blue Letter Bible (**blueletterbible.org**)
 - Logos Bible Software (**logos.com**)
 - Bible Study Tools (**Biblegateway.com**)
- (and many others)

2) Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

- Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries
- Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary

- Thayer's Greek Definitions
- New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible
- Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions
- Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary
- Word Studies in the New Testament (M. R. Vincent) by Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.

3) Commentaries and Study Bibles

- Spirit-Filled Life Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers
- David Guzik's Enduring Word Commentary, Copyright by David Guzik and Enduring Word Media
- Dake's Study Notes (Finis Dake), Copyright by Finis Jennings Dake.

(and many others)

4) Free online courses

- **apcbiblecollege.org**

(and many others)

Having understood the different methods and tools we can use to study God's Word, we now embark on an important journey of learning principles to help us understand and interpret the Scriptures accurately.

6

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

When you know an individual, for example, a close family member or friend, you understand much better what they are saying because you not only hear the words spoken but also understand where they are coming from, you know their heart, their personal journey, and other factors that put what they are saying in proper perspective. Similarly, you can recognize something that is not accurate or not aligned to their person and character, and unlike what they would normally say or do.

God will never say or do anything that contradicts His Person and nature.

God is constant and consistent in His Person and nature. He does not change. *“For I am the LORD, I do not change”* (Malachi 3:6). *“There is no variation or shadow of turning”* with our Father of lights (James 1:17). As He spoke to Moses, He revealed Himself as the great *“I AM”*. The God who dwells outside of the realm of time, who never grows old and always remains the same.

Exodus 3:13,14

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

¹⁴ And God said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

When we interpret Scripture, we must always do so staying consistent with the Person, character and nature of God. We are not authorized to declare God to be someone or something He has not declared Himself to be.

God revealed through His covenant names

One of the ways in which we learn and understand the Person and nature of God is through His covenant names or titles given in Scripture. Each covenant name or title describes an immutable (unchangeable) aspect of His Person, His character and nature. These covenant names also reveal His will, thought and action. God will always speak and act consistent with His character and nature as described through His covenant names. Jehovah points to God who is eternal, self-existent, self-sustaining, unchanging, covenant-keeping God. Each of the Jehovah titles unveils a certain aspect of this unchangeable covenant-keeping God.

Here is a list of a few of the common Jehovah titles.

- Jehovah Jireh (The Lord Will Provide, Genesis 22:14)
- Jehovah Rapha (The Lord Who Heals, Exodus 15:26)
- Jehovah Nissi (The Lord Is My Banner, Exodus 17:15)
- Jehovah Shalom (The Lord Is Peace, Judges 6:24)
- Jehovah Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts, 1 Samuel 1:3)
- Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord Our Righteousness, Jeremiah 23:6)
- Jehovah Shammah (The Lord Is There, Ezekiel 48:35)
- Jehovah Raah / Rohi (The Lord Is My Shepherd, Psalm 23:1)

- Jehovah Mekoddishkem / M’Kaddesh (The Lord Who Sanctifies, Leviticus 20:8)
- Jehovah El Elyon (The Lord Most High, Psalm 7:17)

All of these are unchangeable attributes of God. We must ensure that when we interpret Scripture, we stay faithful to who God is.

God revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ

The Bible teaches us plainly that the Lord Jesus Christ is God incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us. “*God was manifested in the flesh*” (1 Timothy 3:16). This Jesus is “*the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person*” (Hebrews 1:3). “*He is the image of the invisible God*” (Colossians 1:15). Jesus is God revealed to us. The fullness of the Godhead was revealed to us bodily (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9). So, if we desire to know what God is really like—the true, accurate and perfect picture of God—we can see it in Jesus Christ.

Everything Jesus said and did are a revelation of the perfect will of God. Describing the earthly life of the incarnate Son of God, the writer of Hebrews states, “*Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God’*” (Hebrews 10:7).

We must understand the nature of God as revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of God. Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of the will of God. Everything Jesus said and did is an expression of the will of God.

We must make sure that our interpretation of Scripture is aligned to what Jesus said and did.

The Eternal Word, the Incarnate Word, the Written Word

John 1:1,14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Lord Jesus is the Eternal Word who became the Incarnate Word. The Incarnate Word is the perfect expression of the Eternal Word.

Jesus the Son of God, the Eternal Word, who became the Incarnate Word lived by, preached, and taught from the written Word, the Scriptures. From an early age, Jesus engaged in the study and learning of the Scriptures (Luke 2:46). He resisted temptations using the written Word (Matthew 4:1-10). The Incarnate Word was anointed by the Spirit and walked in such a way to fulfill the Scriptures (Luke 4:21; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:44). Jesus affirmed the authority, reliability (Matthew 4:4,7,10; Matthew 5:18; Matthew 12:40; Matthew 22:29; Mark 13:19) and truthfulness (John 17:17) of the Old Testament Scriptures. He affirmed the books that belonged in the Old Testament (Matthew 23:35; Luke 24:44). Jesus said that the Scriptures point to Him. *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me”* (John 5:39).

Our interpretation of Scripture must point to the Person of Jesus Christ and must be aligned to the expression of God as seen in the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus Christ. Our interpretation of any portion of Scripture must be in the light revealed through the Person of Jesus Christ and aligned to

what is perfectly and clearly expressed in the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ.

When we encounter passages in Scripture that are difficult to understand, we work with them through the light we see in Jesus. We choose to dwell in what is clearly revealed in the life of Jesus Christ rather than dwell in things we cannot fully understand.

Let us consider a few examples.

Jesus on the will of God concerning healing

When we observe the miracle and healing ministry of Jesus, here are some observations we can make, which must guide our interpretation of Scripture.

- 1) The Lord Jesus never questioned the Father's will to heal and deliver anyone who came to Him in faith. We never find Jesus telling any person who came to Him in faith—"it is God's will for you to be sick" or "it is not God's will for you to be healed". In fact, to the leper who was doubtful about God's will to heal Him, we have this interaction recorded—*"Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed" (Mark 1:40,41).*
- 2) The Lord Jesus never turned anyone away who came to Him in faith for healing and deliverance stating that it was not God's will for them to be healed. In fact, the Bible states repeatedly that "all" who came to Him in faith received healing and deliverance. The Bible records that He healed ALL who came to Him in faith. *"When evening had come,*

they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick” (Matthew 8:16). “But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all” (Matthew 12:15). “And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all” (Luke 6:19).

- 3) The Lord Jesus never prayed or ministered healing and deliverance using the phrase “if it be Thy will”. Never. Not once. Healing and deliverance were a given; it was the perfect will of God for all who came in faith.

Jesus on God’s time for your salvation (forgiveness, healing, deliverance, etc.)—NOW!

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus never turned anyone away stating that it was not God’s time to heal them then.

Here are some observations we make.

- 1) The Lord Jesus forgave sins and healed and delivered people when they came to Him in faith even before the Cross.
- 2) Although He was sent to minister only to the house of Israel during His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus healed Gentiles who came to Him in faith, for example, the Roman Centurion (Matthew 8:5-13), the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21-28). God’s program was to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth starting with the Day of Pentecost, but the Lord Jesus “pulled into the now” what was intended for a later time according to God’s program.

Jesus teaching about faith

The Lord Jesus taught a lot about believing and having faith in God. (Only a few Scripture references are listed below. There

are several in the Gospels that we can point to).

- 1) He taught us not to worry but to have faith in God concerning material things—what we eat, what we wear and all necessary things of life (Matthew 6:25-34).
- 2) He taught that faith brings healing and deliverance (Matthew 9:22,29).
- 3) He taught us to pray in faith and exercise faith in God (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:22-24).
- 4) He taught that faith in God can move mountains and dominate natural elements (Matthew 17:20; Mark 11:22-24).
- 5) He taught that when things go from bad to worse, to fear not, but only believe (Mark 5:36).
- 6) He taught that when we believe, we will see the glory of God (John 11:40).
- 7) He taught that unbelief keeps us from experiencing the power of God (Matthew 17:20; Mark 6:5,6).

Faith in God is the same across time because the God in whom we have faith is the same. Bible faith works the same way today as it did in Bible times. Faith is of the heart, and we do not have a different kind of faith than people in Bible times. We have “*the same spirit of faith*” (2 Corinthians 4:13).

Jesus teaching about the Holy Spirit

The Lord Jesus announced at the start of His earthly ministry that He was ministering by the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:17-19). He also clearly stated that He was casting out demons and delivering people by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28). He taught that His disciples (believers) would also receive the

power of the Holy Spirit and do the miraculous works He did and even greater works and thereby, be His witnesses. He did not indicate that the Holy Spirit would stop empowering His disciples. The Person, work and ministry of the Holy Spirit would continue among His people to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. The Lord Jesus never indicated anything that is taught under “cessationism”—that the miraculous power of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit would cease from the Church when the New Testament was completed or at the death of the last apostle. The Great Commission that Jesus gave with the promise of His presence and the empowering of the Holy Spirit was till the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20) and till the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8) were reached.

Jesus teaching about the End Times

In His teaching about the End Times (Matthew 24-25), the Lord Jesus spoke of things in a literal sense. He referred to the abomination of desolation standing in the Temple in a literal sense. The book of Revelation was written around AD 96, well after AD 70, when the Second Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. In the revelation that the Lord Jesus gave to the apostle John, the Temple is referenced (Revelation 11:1) and the Temple court being trampled underfoot. Our understanding of the End-Times Bible prophecy from Daniel, Paul and other Biblical writers should be based clearly on the teachings of Jesus on the End-Times in the Gospels and in the book of Revelation.

There is so much more that we can focus on and emphasize from the life, ministry and teaching of the Lord Jesus, which is the truth, the plumbline by which we have to interpret the rest of the Scriptures.

Our interpretation of Scripture must remain consistent with Jesus’ teaching on these important subjects and on all the

other things He taught and demonstrated during His earthly life and ministry.

Jesus is the Eternal Word. He remains the same yesterday, today and forever. The Lord Jesus will not teach or do anything different today from what He taught and did during His earthly ministry.

A distressing spirit from God (1 Samuel 16:14-16,23)?

Let's consider an Old Testament passage which is somewhat difficult to understand. And let's interpret it based on what we know from the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus.

Consider the following texts.

1 Samuel 16:14-16,23

¹⁴But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.

¹⁵And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you.

¹⁶Let our master now command your servants, *who are* before you, to seek out a man *who is* a skillful player on the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well."

²³And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play *it* with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.

1 Samuel 18:10-14

¹⁰And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played *music* with his hand, as at other times; but *there was* a spear in Saul's hand.

¹¹And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.

¹²Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.

¹³ Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

¹⁴ And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD *was* with him.

1 Samuel 19:9,10

⁹ Now the distressing spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing *music* with *his* hand.

¹⁰ Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night.

How do we understand these texts?

The Holy Spirit had left Saul, and a distressing spirit came upon Saul. God was with David and David was anointed by the Spirit of God. As David played his harp as a man anointed by God, the distressing spirit left Saul.

Some obvious questions that we should ask are...

- Does God have distressing spirits with Him in heaven?
- Is God the author of peace or does He distress (trouble) His own people?
- Was Saul in a place of obedience or disobedience before God?
- How do we understand the text "*the distressing spirit from the LORD came upon Saul*" (1 Samuel 19:9)?
- If the distressing spirit was sent by God, then why would a man (David) anointed by God undo what God was doing by playing on his harp? Would this not be God fighting against God? Similar to what Jesus said, "*How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*" (Mark 3:23-25)

Jesus cast out evil spirits and never stated that the evil spirits were sent by God. In fact, for a woman whom He found in the Synagogue, Jesus stated that the spirit of infirmity was something satan had put upon her (Luke 13:11,16). From Jesus' ministry, we know that it is the Spirit of God who empowers us to cast out distressing, tormenting and other evil spirits. Jesus taught that our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:11-13) and would not give His children anything that is bad for them. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and that is what He provides for His people—peace, not distress. Hence, we conclude that distressing spirits are not sent from God or sent by God. As Saul stepped out of obedience to God and into disobedience, the Spirit of God left him, and Saul made himself vulnerable to evil spirits that distressed him. Saul moved into deeper depths of jealousy and hatred which opened the door to every kind of evil work (James 3:16). God allowed this to happen by letting Saul make his decisions and choices and face the consequences. However, when a man (David) anointed by the Holy Spirit ministered to Saul, the evil spirits that distressed Saul left him and he experienced relief.

Our goal must be to understand and interpret Scripture through the light and revelation given to us in the Person of Jesus Christ, His life, teachings and ministry.

7

THE ILLUMINATION OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit—the Author and true Expositor

The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Scriptures. He inspired their writing. Hence, as we do our part in studying, understanding and interpreting the Scriptures, our dependence must be on Him. We seek His illumination for the enlightening of our understanding to accurately comprehend and apply truth that He gave by inspiration to the prophets who wrote the Scriptures.

The good news is that the Lord Jesus taught us that after He is exalted, He would send the Holy Spirit to each of His disciples (believers). The Holy Spirit would become their personal Teacher, Instructor, Guide and Revelation Giver.

John 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 15:26

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

John 16:13-15

¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

The Holy Spirit will teach us all things. He will bring His Word to our remembrance. He speaks to us of Jesus, revealing Jesus to us. He guides us into all the truth.

The Lord Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will not speak on His own authority or speak of Himself or from Himself.

We can identify three tests to determine if what we seem to have received is from the Holy Spirit.

- 1) **Does it glorify Jesus Christ?** Jesus said that the Spirit of God would glorify Jesus. In all that the Holy Spirit says and does, in the revelation He imparts, in the teaching He brings, in the illumination He provides, the Lord Jesus is glorified.
- 2) **Is it aligned to the Person of Christ?** The Holy Spirit speaks whatever He hears from Jesus. Whatever the Holy Spirit speaks, the illumination He brings, will be aligned to the Person of Jesus—who Jesus is and what Jesus does.
- 3) **Is it aligned to the written Scriptures?** The Holy Spirit is the original Author of the Scriptures. Hence, what He speaks today through illumination, insight, and the understanding that He brings will be aligned to the truth already presented in the Scriptures.

The Spirit of God abides in each believer in Jesus and becomes their personal Teacher and Guide. The apostle John writing to believers reminds them that there are those who are “not of us” but rather they are of what is antichrist or against the Christ. However, as believers, they have the indwelling anointing (the person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit), whom they have received from the Lord Jesus, and therefore, they “know all things”. In the context that John is addressing,

believers know what is of Christ and what is not of Christ, the Anointed One, because of the indwelling anointing.

1 John 2:18-21,27

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

²⁷ But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

This anointing who dwells within us as believers teaches us about all things. The indwelling Spirit is our complete and sufficient Teacher. He teaches us about all things, about everything. His teaching helps us to abide in Jesus and continue in a place of union with Him and live out our life in Christ.

“You do not need that anyone teach you” (1 John 2:27) must be understood in the completeness and sufficiency of the Teacher who dwells in us to teach us everything. However, our ability to listen, learn, obey and grow is something that needs to be developed. Hence, God has placed in the Church ministry gifts of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, evangelist, and other functions that help teach, nurture and disciple believers. As believers, our main Teacher is the Holy Spirit. And we also learn and receive through one another in the Body of Christ. It is the same Holy Spirit who teaches us both ways—through His indwelling in us and through His work empowering others to teach us.

All of us as believers are dependent on the illumination of the Holy Spirit as we study the Scriptures. This illumination can come through His personal work in us and can also be brought to us through those whom He has empowered to minister to us.

The Word of God is inspired. Today, we need our eyes to be opened, illuminated or enlightened to see the amazing things that God has revealed to us in His Word. Like the Psalmist, we pray often, *“Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law”* (Psalm 119:18).

Let’s explore further on the need for illumination from the Holy Spirit and understand what it really is.

The natural man and the natural mind

The natural man, who is not born again and does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, is not in a place to readily understand the things of God. The Bible teaches us that the devil blinds the minds of people who do not believe. This was our condition before we encountered Jesus Christ. *“Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The apostle Paul emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to help us know and understand the things of God.

1 Corinthians 2:12-16

¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

¹³These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God,

for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

¹⁵But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one.

¹⁶For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

The natural man with the natural mind is unable to accept and welcome the things of the Spirit of God. He considers these foolish, absurd, and silly. Spiritual things must be “spiritually discerned”, that is, understood with the help of the Holy Spirit. The natural man operating with the natural mind does not have the Holy Spirit. The unsaved person or the “soulish” person may understand mentally the grammar and meaning of the text, but the unsaved person does not have the spiritual capacity to receive and act on spiritual truth.

However, as believers, we have received the Spirit of God who helps us “*know the things that have been freely given to us by God*” (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Holy Spirit also enables us to communicate and teach these spiritual things to those who are spiritual. And we communicate these spiritual truths with spiritual words. We can spiritually discern things with the help of the Holy Spirit. And we have the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit imparts to us the mind, the thoughts, and intents of the Lord.

Hence the study, interpreting and understanding of Scripture and spiritual truth is not an exercise purely of the human mind. None can boast that their academic qualifications alone have made them better suited to interpret Scripture and explain spiritual truth. While training the human mind is a good exercise, we rely not on the wisdom of men, but on the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit to understand spiritual things and to communicate spiritual truths.

Being enlightened

Ephesians 1:15-20

¹⁵ Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

We recognize that the inspiration to write the Scriptures was given in time past to the prophets and others whom God used. While inspiration is given only once, illumination (enlightening, revelation) is given repeatedly. By illumination, we mean that God the Holy Spirit breathes (inspires, enlightens) His Word afresh to readers today to help us understand, gain insight, and learn what He placed in His Word. Illumination (enlightening, revelation, insight) occurs when God's Word is alive and full of life to us today as at the time when it was first written. This is a work of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus that the Holy Spirit would grant them wisdom and revelation so that their eyes of understanding would be enlightened. This is what we refer to as illumination or revelation or receiving insight. It is not that we are coming up with something new. Instead, we are now able to see, understand and comprehend truth that was always there in the Word, breathed into the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit when He first inspired them.

Paul mentions four things that believers need to know by revelation.

- 1) **know Him.**
- 2) **know the hope of His calling**—to know the purpose of His calling.
- 3) **know the riches of glory of His inheritance in the saints**—to know the greatness of the inheritance He has given to us and the richness of what He finds in us as His people.
- 4) **know the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.**

It is through the enlightening of the Holy Spirit that we as believers are able to grow and increase in revelation in these four and other areas of our life in Christ.

Receiving revelation

Matthew 16:13-23

¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

¹⁴ So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Peter was an uneducated fisherman. He received revelation from the Father in heaven about who Jesus of Nazareth was. Something inside him was enlightened. He knew that this Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Could he reason it and explain it logically? Most likely not. And yet, Peter knew. Revelation enables us to see spiritual truth.

What is interesting in the passage above is that immediately after Peter made the bold declaration of the revelation that he had received that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, Peter made another statement which the Lord Jesus recognized as not from God, but from Satan! In one moment, Peter uttered revelation received from the Father. In the next moment, Peter mouthed something that was not from God, but from the devil, and not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.

Receiving revelation in one area does not necessarily mean we have perfect revelation in all areas.

Each revelation (insight, understanding) about God that is preached and taught must be evaluated and examined to see if it is right, accurate and aligned to the truth.

Continue in the Word to know the truth

John 8:31,32

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

We keep pressing on to know the truth concerning all matters relevant to our spiritual journey of faith and what God has given to us in Scripture. The prerequisite stated here by the Lord Jesus is to abide in His Word. This means that we continue in His Word and stay with His Word over time making His Word an integral part of our lives.

While God can certainly give revelation of the truth through an unexpected visitation, the norm is for us to continue with the Word of God, and we begin to know and keep on knowing. Revelation concerning the things of the Spirit continues to fill our hearts and minds as we abide in the Word of God.

This also implies that things in the Word of God that may not be so clear to us now will become clearer as we continue in the Word. Things that we think we know will become even more expanded and our understanding will deepen and widen on those same topics as more illumination from the Holy Spirit comes to us.

Obedience opens the door for greater revelation

John 14:21,23

²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

²³ Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

The key to receiving revelation of Jesus Christ (“I will love him and manifest Myself to him”) and a habitation of God’s presence (“We will come to him and make Our home with him”) is to keep His commandments; to keep His Word.

The more we walk and live in the light we have, the more light He will shine on us.

The more we walk in obedience to the revelation He has given to us, the more revelation He entrusts us with.

The two keys to receiving continued illumination (revelation, enlightening, insight) from the Holy Spirit is to continue in His Word and to live in obedience to His Word.

The illumination of the Spirit—guardrails

Here are some important things to keep in mind in the context of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's role in giving us illumination does not mean that one's interpretations are infallible. We must test all things including insights from Scripture that someone may claim to have received by revelation from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, our Teacher, is perfect. However, as people, we have our own biases, our own prejudices, and so at any point in the process of receiving illumination when studying the Scriptures, we can contaminate things with our own ideas and biases. Hence, every teaching / preaching must be examined and tested.

While the Holy Spirit gives us illumination, revelation and insight into the Scriptures helping us understand the intended meaning and the accompanying spiritual truth, it is highly questionable if someone claims to have received some "hidden" meaning specially disclosed to them by the Holy Spirit, which is not consistent with the Scripture text or the rest of Scripture. All "revelations" must be examined in the light of Scripture, applying normal principles that help us rightly divide the Word.

We must also understand that the illumination of the Holy Spirit accompanies our diligent study and meditation in God's Word. Hence, as Paul admonished Timothy, we do our utmost to study the Word and rightly divide the Word, presenting ourselves to God as workers who are not ashamed. As we continue with diligent study, we welcome and depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit in our journey of discovery. This is the norm. There may be instances when we will additionally receive unexpected moments of spontaneous illumination as the Spirit wills.

As stated at the beginning, the teaching, guiding and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is available to all believers. It is now up to each believer to welcome, seek for and position themselves to receive continuing illumination from the Holy Spirit.

Hermeneutics and manifestations of the Spirit

A situation that is observed quite commonly is that a minister of God manifests supernatural ministry, but in their message, there are ideas and thoughts presented that are not a correct interpretation or application of Scripture. It is the tendency of most people to assume that all that was preached is good and accurate because of the demonstrations of supernatural miracles. And this is dangerous.

The question we should answer is "Can a preacher preach a message that is incorrect in terms of interpreting a Scripture text and still manifest supernatural signs, wonders, gifts of the Spirit, healings and miracles through their ministry?" (We are not talking about serious doctrinal errors that deny the Triune Godhead, the inerrancy of Scripture, the incarnation, or the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.) For instance, someone could preach a powerful message using the incident of David

killing Goliath, making David as a type of Christ and Goliath as a type of Satan, stating that the one stone David used to kill Goliath represents the Cross where Jesus defeated the devil. While this message is allegorizing a Biblical incident and is not the right thing to do with the Scripture text, the preacher could subsequently pray for people and see wonderful manifestations of the power of God. So, yes indeed, a preacher can preach a message that is incorrect in terms of interpreting a Scripture text and still manifest supernatural signs, wonders, gifts of the Spirit, healings and miracles through their ministry. We must remember that supernatural manifestations happen because of faith. *“Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”* (Galatians 3:5)

Therefore, it is important for us to examine the preaching and teaching we hear to know if the Word of God is being rightly divided, independent of the signs and wonders that are manifested. On the other hand, an individual’s eloquence, communication skills, storytelling skills, and large following are no indication that what is preached and taught is accurate. Here again, we must evaluate what is presented to see if the Word of God is being handled correctly.

In subsequent chapters, we consider principles that we need to apply as we study and interpret Scripture.

8

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

When interpreting Scripture, the context is key to avoid any misinterpretation and to understand the true meaning of the text. Always interpret a passage in the light of its context and in the light of what the rest of Scripture states.

There are five important areas of context that must be considered for sound Biblical interpretation and avoiding misapplication.

Contextual interpretation includes...

- 1) **Historical context:** Understand the historical and cultural background.
- 2) **Cultural context:** Understand the cultural background.
- 3) **Literary context:** Recognize the literary style and the flow of thought within the passage and the flow of thought within the book.
- 4) **Immediate context:** Interpret verses within the chapter, and how the chapter fits within the book.
- 5) **Broader context:** Interpret verses within the broader canonical context of the Bible as a whole.

Bringing as many, and possibly all these five context areas to bear on a Scripture text will help us arrive at an accurate understanding and interpretation of the text. Context helps us understand the author's intended meaning as presented to the initial audience.

Bible commentaries, encyclopedias and study Bibles can provide valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and literary context of a passage. Bible dictionaries can help us understand the meaning of specific words and phrases.

We will elaborate briefly on each of these five areas, and some of these will be considered in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

1) Historical context

Understand the historical and cultural background. The meaning of a passage can be better understood when we know what was happening historically at the time of writing. Historical context includes understanding the time, events, customs, politics, and societal norms that influenced the author and audience. It considers the intended recipients of the text and their cultural background. We also pay attention to the author's purpose, objectives and intentions in writing the text.

Exercises:

- **Matthew 26:17-19** Understand the Jewish Passover feast, the significance of the Last Supper, and the impending crucifixion of Jesus.
- **Jeremiah 29:10-14** Research the Babylonian exile and interpret this text considering that history.
- **Luke 2:1-7** Examine the historical background of Roman taxation and census during Jesus' birth.

2) Cultural context

Understand the cultural background. Understanding cultural norms can help clarify difficult passages. This involves understanding the cultural practices, customs, values, beliefs and traditions of the people in the text. Sometimes, there could

be figures of speech that have cultural relevance which need to be interpreted in its cultural context.

Exercises:

- **Ruth 3:1-9** Examine the cultural significance of Ruth lying at Boaz's feet.
- **John 13:14** Foot washing was a common act of hospitality in the ancient Near East, typically done by servants.
- **1 Corinthians 11:1-16** Understand the cultural norms regarding head coverings for women and Paul's specific injunction regarding head covering only to the Corinthian church.

3) Literary context

Recognize the literary style and the flow of thought within the passage and the flow of thought within the book. Literary style and structure affect how we interpret the text. Recognize the genre (narrative, poetry, prophecy, epistle) and how the passage fits within the flow of thought in the chapter and book. Follow the author's progression of ideas and arguments. Understand the use of metaphors, similes, and other figurative expressions.

Exercises:

- **Psalms 23:1** This is a poetic passage using metaphorical language to describe God's care.
- **Romans 12:1,2** Recognize the flow of thought in Romans, the transition from theological discussion to practical application, and the importance of spiritual transformation.

What would be some obvious differences between Genesis (narrative), Proverbs (wisdom literature) and Romans (epistolary style)?

4) Immediate context

Interpret verses within the chapter and how the chapter fits within the book. Verses should not be treated in isolation. Their meaning often depends on what comes before and after. Examine the verses immediately surrounding the passage to understand its meaning. Understand the context of the passage within the chapter. Analyze the meaning of specific words and their relationships to the overall theme. Determine the author's purpose for writing the specific passage in the context of the chapter and book.

Exercises:

- **John 3:1-8** How do we interpret “water and the Spirit” in the context of Nicodemus’s visit to Jesus and the conversation about being born again? In the immediate context, “water” would refer to natural birth.
- **Philippians 4:13** The surrounding verses (Philippians 4:11,12) show Paul is speaking about contentment in all circumstances.
- **Ephesians 2:8-10** If we read verse 8 in isolation, one could imagine that we need not do any “works”. But when we read till verse 10, we recognize that we are saved independent of works but we are also saved to do good works.
- **Philippians 4:6,7** If we read verse 7 in isolation, we miss out on the prerequisite action that is required to experience this kind of peace.

John Calvin (1509-1564) emphasized taking the literal sense of Scripture, and that we should seek to understand the original intent of the Biblical authors rather than imposing our own ideas or interpretations onto the text. In his book, “**Commentaries on the Book of Genesis**,” he stated, “*It is*

the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.”

5) Broader context

Interpret verses within the broader canonical context of the Bible as a whole. Interpret verses considering the entire Bible, considering how the themes and teachings connect across Scripture. Scripture interprets Scripture, and our understanding of one passage must remain consistent with other passages on the same theme or topic. Compare, contrast and understand the passage with other relevant passages in the Bible. Incorporate the overall theological framework of the Bible.

Exercises:

- **Genesis 12:1-3** Consider this in the light of the broader theme of God’s covenant with Israel and its fulfillment in Christ (Galatians 3:16).
- Compare Isaiah 53 with the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 27).
- **John 3:1-8** While the immediate context of “water” refers to natural birth, recognize that we are born again by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). Hence, the Word and the Spirit are agents for the new birth.
- **Romans 3:23** The theme of sin and redemption is consistent throughout the Bible, from Genesis (Adam and Eve’s sin) to Revelation.

Baptism for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29)

“Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?” (1 Corinthians 15:29) Paul’s question of “they”

(other people, non-believers) who are baptized on behalf of the dead must be understood both in its immediate context and in the broader context of the New Testament Scripture. In the immediate context, Paul is pointing to “they” (non-believers) who baptize on behalf of the dead to highlight that even they have belief in life after death, and that is why they practice this. Paul is not approving of the practice, but merely referencing this practice as an indicator of their belief in an afterlife. 1 Corinthians 15:29 must also be understood in the broader context of the rest of the New Testament Scripture where Christian baptism was never intended for the dead.

The context is crucial for understanding the original meaning of the text and aids in correctly applying it to our lives today.

Martin Luther (1438-1546) emphasized interpreting the Scriptures in their simplest, grammatical, and literal sense and using Scripture to interpret Scripture. Some of Luther’s fundamental principles on Biblical hermeneutics as seen in his various writings and commentaries could be stated as—*The Scriptures are to be retained in their simplest meaning ever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids. Obscure passages are to be understood in light of clear passages. Scripture is its own interpreter. This is the true method of interpretation which puts Scripture alongside Scripture in a right and proper way.*

Let’s apply this hermeneutical principle of context to two other challenging passages.

Women keep silent in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:34,35)

1 Corinthians 14:34,35

³⁴ Let your women (*gune*) keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says.

³⁵ And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women (*gune*) to speak in church.

women (Greek ‘gune’) = a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow (same word used for the Lamb’s wife in Revelation 19:7; Revelation 21:9).

Doing a word study on “women” indicates that this Greek word could be used for women married or unmarried. Depending on the context, we can arrive if it is specifically referring to “wife”. In Revelation, when used for the Bride of Christ, the Greek ‘gune’ is translated as “wife”.

Consider the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 14:34,35. The flow of thought in the use of “they” and “them” is obviously referring to the same group of people.

they are not permitted to speak

they are to be submissive

they want to learn something, let **them** ask their own husbands at home

First, it is obvious from the immediate context that Paul is addressing women as in wives. He is not addressing all women in general since his instruction to keep silent in church but to talk at home with their own husbands could only apply to women who are married.

Second, it is also obvious that the issue about them being “not permitted to speak” which Paul is addressing is not about

preaching and teaching God's Word, but about them wanting to learn something. If the wives have questions and want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, instead of talking to their husbands in church. The picture that comes to mind is that of an assembly of believers where someone is preaching and ministering the Word. A wife who does not understand something that was preached starts conversing with her husband in the church, asking him questions to clarify things. It is such a situation that Paul is addressing.

Now extend the context to the rest of the chapter. What do we observe? We notice that the phrase "keep silent" is used three times in 1 Corinthians 14.

When someone brings a message in tongues to the church gathering and there is no one to interpret, Paul says, "*But if there is no interpreter, let him **keep silent** in church, and let him speak to himself and to God*" (1 Corinthians 14:28). The objective here is to ensure that people understand the meaning of the message given in tongues.

When someone is prophesying at the church gathering and others stand up to prophesy, Paul says, "*But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first **keep silent***" (1 Corinthians 14:30). The purpose here is to ensure that all get a chance to prophesy, taking turns in order.

To wives who are talking with their husbands during the church gathering, Paul says, "*Let your women **keep silent** in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church*" (1 Corinthians 14:34,35).

In giving these instructions to “keep silent,” does Paul permanently shut down speaking in tongues or prophesying in the church gathering? Not at all. Paul concludes stating clearly, *“Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:39,40).

Hence, Paul’s instruction to “keep silent” is not to permanently silence people, but to establish decency and order in the church gathering. This is the purpose and context of chapters 11 to 14 in 1 Corinthians.

We now extend our consideration to the broader context of Scripture—Genesis to Revelation. Has God used women to do His work? We see in both the Testaments, God having different women participate and serve in His work and in His purposes. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the opportunity to prophecy is for both sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants (Acts 2:17,18). The gifts of grace (Romans 12:4-8), the ministry functions (Ephesians 4:11) and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) are not limited to men alone. These gifts, functions and ministry expressions take place inside and outside the church. Women are partakers of these expressions as well.

Finally, did the Lord Jesus indicate in any of His teachings or ministry that women could not be involved? We see in John 4, a Samaritan woman who after meeting Jesus proclaimed Jesus to her city and many believed (John 4:28-30,39-42). The Lord did not rebuke her or stop her in any way. Joanna, a wealthy woman who supported Jesus and His disciples (Luke 8:3). Mary Magdalene, a woman, was the first person directly commissioned by the Lord Jesus to *“...go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father,*

and to My God and your God'' (John 20:17b). If the Lord was completely against women being proclaimers of His message, He would have given this privilege to one of the men!

Hence, applying hermeneutical principles of context to understand 1 Corinthians 14:34,35, it is right to conclude that we should not use this text to prevent women from preaching and teaching God's Word.

Woman must not teach or have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:10-15)

1 Timothy 2:8-15

⁸ I desire therefore that the men (*aner*) pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

⁹ in like manner also, that the women (*gune*) adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,

¹⁰ but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.

¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

¹⁵ Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

This is a very difficult passage that has been and continues to be debated extensively.

We will apply the hermeneutical principles of "Biblical context" as explained in this chapter and that of "Culture" and "Language—Semantics and Grammar" (to be explained in upcoming chapters) to understand this passage.

Let's check the meanings of the words used for 'men' and 'women' in Greek.

- **men (Greek 'aner')** = a male person of full age and stature, as opposed to a child or female.
- **women (Greek 'gune')** = a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow (same word used for the Lamb's wife in Revelation 19:7 and Revelation 21:9).

This has been explained in the previous section.

The epistles to Titus and 1&2 Timothy are the last 3 epistles written by the apostle Paul around AD 66-68. This is about 36 to 38 years since the Day of Pentecost. The Early Church has grown and is in a place of maturing in its function.

Let's consider the historical and cultural context relevant to 1&2 Timothy. The apostle Paul had ministered at Ephesus for about 3 years during his third missionary journey. The city of Ephesus was given to the worship of the goddess Diana. The Ephesian goddess Diana, often equated with the Greek goddess Artemis, was associated and revered as a goddess of fertility and childbirth. Her association with the moon, which cycles parallel the menstrual cycle, further strengthened this connection. Diana was believed to protect women during childbirth and offer aid in conception. Her statues often depicted her with multiple breasts, symbolizing her role as a nurturing and life-giving deity. The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and a significant pilgrimage site for devotees. The city's economy, particularly the silversmiths who crafted miniature shrines of the goddess, was heavily reliant on the worship of Artemis.

A strong church had been established at Ephesus, and

Paul was writing to Timothy who was overseeing the church at Ephesus.

Now consider the broader context of 1 Timothy. Paul was guiding Timothy on how he should oversee the church and providing instructions to be given to believers guiding different aspects of their lives as believers. The focus is not on how to conduct themselves inside a church gathering (as in 1 Corinthians chapters 11-14) but on how to go about life as a community of believers inside and outside the church gathering.

1 Timothy chapter 2 begins with a clear break in the thought from the matters addressed in chapter 1. Chapter 2 begins with a call to pray for all people, especially for those in civil authority. 1 Timothy 2:8 urges men to pray everywhere—addressing lifestyle everywhere (not just in a church gathering)—lifting holy hands without anger or arguments. Similarly, Paul addresses women and their clothing in 1 Timothy 2:9,10, and the implication of this applies at all times, everywhere. Paul is addressing lifestyle and conduct of men and women at all times, everywhere.

And then come the difficult verses 11 and 12, “*Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence*” (1 Timothy 2:11,12). This seems to be an abrupt change in thought.

Hence, we should ask the following questions.

- 1) Is Paul continuing to address the conduct of men and women everywhere, or is he addressing conduct in a church gathering?
- 2) Is Paul addressing all women in general, or is he addressing married women and their relationship with their husbands?

- 3) What is the flow of thought? What comes before and after these verses?
- 4) What is the broader context of Scripture addressing the same or similar topic in this case, and what did Paul write elsewhere in his epistles on this topic?

We observe that Paul is moving from the general—the conduct of believing men and women at all times in all places—to the specific—the conduct of married women in relation to their husbands. The reason is the very next verse begins with the connecting conjunction “for”. This means the earlier thought (in verses 11,12) is held and understood with what is stated subsequently about Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were husband and wife from the time they first met. The idea of childbearing, which is also addressed, is understood in the context of the husband-wife relationship.

Verses 11 and 12, therefore, should be understood in the context of a marriage relationship between a husband and wife. This is consistent with Paul’s writings in Ephesians 5:22,23, Colossians 3:18 and 1 Corinthians 14:34,35. It is in the context of an Adam-Eve, husband-wife relationship that the woman walks in submission, in quietness, not teaching or dictating to her husband or usurping his authority. And now Paul brings to bear the cultural context. If women (wives) walk in this manner with “faith, love, and holiness, with self-control”, they are assured of the Lord’s work in their lives for conception and childbearing with no need to fear or go to goddess Diana (or Artemis).

Additionally, we look at the broader context of the rest of Scripture, and the life, teachings and ministry of the Person of Jesus Christ about women and their part in the work of God on

the earth. These have been addressed in the earlier section and are not repeated here.

Applying the hermeneutical process to examine 1 Timothy 2:8-15 leads us to the conclusion that it is incorrect to use 1 Timothy 2:11,12 to prevent women from preaching and teaching God's Word.

Errors to avoid

Here are some errors to avoid and to intentionally stay within the context of Scripture as we have explained in this chapter.

Proof-texting

As we stated earlier, proof-texting is using isolated verses to prove a point without considering the context. It is taking Scriptures out of their context. For instance, if someone quotes the statement Jesus made, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:26) and concludes that in order to be a true disciple, we should disconnect from all family and forsake all earthly responsibilities, that would be taking this verse out of context.

Context switching

Context switching is to slightly change the context of who or what is being addressed, but which then leads to meanings, inferences and ideas not intended in the original context.

Example: In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul is drawing a comparison between Christ and the Church and husbands-wives. The husband-wife relationship should mirror the relationship that Christ has with the Church. The context is relationship. Now, what if we switch this to make the context about “salvation” and then arrive at the following statements? “Just as Christ

gave Himself for the Church, the husband must sacrifice for the salvation of his wife and family. The wife and family are saved through the redemptive sacrifice of the husband. Without a husband, a wife cannot be saved just as the Church cannot be saved without Christ.” Such statements would be erroneous and not supported elsewhere in Scripture.

In interpreting Scripture, it is important to recognize and work with relevant historical, cultural, literary, immediate context and the broader context of the text.

Let’s continue now to build up our hermeneutical framework as we discuss the importance of Culture in the next chapter.

9

CULTURE

The Bible reflects the culture of its day. Scripture references many aspects of the culture of the times when the events took place and when it was written. Cultural references in Scripture include practices that were domestic (family life), food, clothing, religion, social (society), geographical, economic, legal, political, sometimes architectural, military, etc. Hence, our understanding of Scripture and our ability to correctly interpret it and apply it requires that we have some understanding of the cultural context of the text.

Additionally, and more importantly, we need to recognize that some Biblical instructions and practices are limited to the cultural setting and therefore, not transferable to our present day. They were given as instructions to a particular individual or community to practice among themselves and for their times. As we will observe, not everything we read in the Scriptures is, therefore, directly applicable for today.

God is the final authority. He has the right to determine what practices He instructs, to whom and why, and has the right to determine if this should be temporary or continuing. The Bible is expression of this sovereign work of God as He through time worked with people and communities.

This leads us to ask the question—what instructions and practices are specific to those people and to that cultural setting to whom it was originally given? How do we determine which teachings, instructions and practices are transferable to our time

and culture and which ones are not? How do we apply them in our time and culture, in different parts of the world?

Further, as we read the instructions given to a particular people at a particular time and in the context of their prevailing culture, we seek to gain insight into the heart, mind, ways and thoughts of God. Beyond just the “what”, we wish to understand “why” that instruction or practice was given. We then seek to determine if the “why”, the principle or reason behind the teaching, instruction or practice is relevant and applicable for us today. In many instances, while **the practice** is not directly transferable, **the principle** could be an expression of the heart of God and hence, something we need to continue to practice in a manner relevant to our times and the cultures we live in today.

We can broadly identify three categories of instructions, practices and situations with regards to their cultural context.

- 1) Temporary practice
- 2) Permanent practice
- 3) Temporary practice, continuing principle

1) **Temporary practice**

Here we recognize that the teaching, instruction or practice was given to specific people at a particular time, as part of their culture. We do not continue this practice today.

Some of these instructions have been explicitly **revoked** in Scripture and are therefore, not transferable to today.

Some instructions have been **replaced** by different instructions and so, we follow the last instruction given on that matter or practice.

Some of these instructions were given under the Law of Moses (Mosaic Law), and since as New Testament believers we are no longer under the Law (Galatians 3:24-26; Galatians 5:1,18), we do not continue these practices.

Here are a few examples.

- a) **Polygamy:** The practice of having multiple wives (Genesis 16:1-4). The New Testament instructs monogamy (1 Corinthians 7:2; Ephesians 5:28,33; 1 Timothy 3:2).
- b) **Sacrifice your son.** Nowhere are Christian fathers commanded to sacrifice their sons as Abraham was asked to, even though Abraham is the father of our faith.
- c) **Levirate marriage:** A custom where a brother marries his deceased brother's wife (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).
- d) **Blood revenge:** The practice of seeking vengeance for the death of a family member (Genesis 4:15).
- e) **Animal sacrifices for atonement:** Sacrificing animals for sin offerings and atonement (Leviticus 1:1-4).
- f) **Year of jubilee:** Every 50 years, debts were forgiven, and land was returned to its original owners (Leviticus 25:10).
- g) **Casting lots to make decisions:** Lots were cast to determine God's will in decisions (Proverbs 16:33; Acts 1:26).
- h) **Gleaning rights for the poor:** Farmers left the edges of their fields unharvested for the poor to glean (Leviticus 19:9,10).
- i) **Kinsman-redeemer role:** A close relative had the right and obligation to redeem a family member's property or marry a widow (Ruth 4:1-10).
- j) **Cities of refuge:** Designated cities where someone who accidentally killed another could seek asylum (Numbers 35:9-15).

- k) **Clean and unclean foods:** Distinctions between clean and unclean animals for consumption (Leviticus 11). It was given for dietary health and hygiene. We follow what is relevant for our parts of the world, sanctifying it with the word and prayer (1 Timothy 4:4,5).
- l) **Transfer of property ownership:** When you buy a house, the former owner should take off his sandals and give it to the buyer (Ruth 4:8). We usually sign a legal sale document.
- m) **The Old Testament clothing rules:** *“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God. You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together. You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself”* (Deuteronomy 22:5,11,12). This was given under the Law which we no longer follow. The New Testament does not place similar restrictions, and only instructs us to dress modestly (1 Timothy 2:9,10; 1 Peter 3:3,4).
- n) **Clothing rules for priests:** Must only wear linen, no woolen clothing, wear linen turbans, linen trousers and must not sweat (Ezekiel 44:15-18). This was given under the Law which we no longer follow. No specific clothing rules for believers as priests are given in the New Testament.
- o) **Temple-centered worship:** Worship centered around the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1). We worship in Spirit and truth wherever we are (John 4:23,24).
- p) **Sabbath observance:** Strict observance of the Sabbath day, including restrictions on work and travel (Exodus 20:8-11). The New Testament allows us to choose how we treat each day (Romans 14:5,6; Colossians 2:16,17).

- q) **Long hair:** A Nazarite was to let his hair grow (Judges 13:5; 1 Samuel 1:11). Paul kept the Nazarite vow, let his hair grow and then had it cut off (Acts 18:18). But to the Corinthians, he wrote stating that long hair for a man is considered dishonorable (1 Corinthians 11:14). In both Jewish and Greek cultures, short hair was common for men. Therefore, it was a dishonor for a man to wear long hair because it was considered feminine. Today, we do not judge men by the length of their hair.
- r) **Go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel:** The Lord's instruction to the 12 disciples (Matthew 10:5,6) later changed to go to the whole world (Mark 16:15).
- s) **Take nothing with you:** The Lord instructed His 12 disciples not to take money or bag, etc. (Matthew 10:9,10). Later, it was changed to take money, bag, sword, knapsack and clothes (Luke 22:35,36). We practice this by taking what is needed as we go to serve the Lord.
- t) **Wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit:** The Lord's instruction to the disciples (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5). Later the promise of the Spirit was to be poured out on all flesh, to whomever the Lord calls, wherever they are called (Acts 2:38,39).

2) Permanent practice

Here we recognize that the teaching, instruction or practice was given to specific people, at a particular time, as part of their culture. We also recognize that this practice remains unchanged, and we continue this practice today in a manner relevant to our times and cultures. These instructions are permanent.

- a) **Capital punishment:** Given in Genesis 9:6 and not revoked elsewhere. Hence, it can be practiced today.
- b) **Meditation in God's Word:** Given by God in the Old

Testament (Joshua 1:8). Not changed in the New Testament and hence, we continue with this practice.

- c) **Worship with singing, dancing, clapping and instruments:** Given in the Old Testament (see Psalms) and not changed in the New Testament. Hence, we continue with this.
- d) **Marriage:** Marriage as a union between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:22-33).
- e) **Water baptism:** Baptism as a public declaration of faith in Christ (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).
- f) **Communion (Lord's Supper):** The practice of breaking bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Jesus' death (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- g) **Prayer:** Regular communion with God through prayer (Matthew 6:5-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- h) **Tithing and giving:** Giving a portion of income as an act of worship and support for God's work (Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
- i) **Church fellowship and worship:** Gathering with other believers for worship, teaching, and fellowship (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42).
- j) **Evangelism and sharing the Gospel:** Spreading the message of salvation through Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8).
- k) **Forgiveness:** Forgiving others as God forgives us (Matthew 6:14,15; Ephesians 4:32).
- l) **Love for neighbors and enemies:** Loving others, including enemies, as a reflection of God's love (Matthew 22:39; Luke 6:27).

- m) **Honoring parents:** Respecting and caring for parents (Ephesians 6:2).
- n) **Giving to the poor:** Sharing with those in need (Matthew 19:21).
- o) **Justice and righteousness:** Pursuing justice and righteousness (Micah 6:8).

3) Temporary practice, continuing principle

Here, we recognize that the teaching, instruction or practice was given to specific people, at a particular time, as part of their culture. We do not continue this practice today. However, the underlying principle for that practice still holds, and we express and practice the same principle today in a manner relevant to our times and cultures. An important point to keep in mind is that the practice of the principle in today's context could vary in different parts of the world, and we, therefore, should not become judges of what is "right and wrong" if the Word of God is not contradicted.

Here are examples of situations, instructions or practices that were relevant to the cultural settings of Bible times and in which the underlying principles are transferable and practiced.

- a) **Remove your shoes:** When Moses stood in God's presence on holy ground, he took off his sandals (Exodus 3:5). While we do not follow the custom of removing our footwear each time we pray, we do follow the principle of always maintaining a heart of reverence in God's presence.
- b) **Nazirite vow:** Individuals took a vow of separation to God abstaining from wine and not cutting their hair (Numbers 6:1-5). While we do not follow this practice, we follow the principle of consecration to God.
- c) **Foot washing:** Washing guests' feet was a sign of hospitality

and servanthood. The Lord Jesus did this for His disciples (John 13:14). While we do not do this every time, we learn to always walk in humility and submission to one another.

- d) **Rest day:** Setting aside a day of rest and worship (Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:27). We follow the principle of rest and worship.
- e) **Greeting one another:** In five places, the New Testament exhorts believers to greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20) since that was the normal form of greeting in those times. While we do not practice the same custom, the underlying principle of greeting one another with brotherly love and kindness continues. How this greeting is expressed will vary in different parts of the world.
- f) **Women cover their heads in church gatherings (1 Corinthians 11:2-16):** This passage talks about a woman having a head-covering over her hair. In the Corinthian culture, a woman's shawl was a symbol of her husband's authority, and she was, thereby, showing that she was placing herself under authority. In Corinth, prostitutes associated with pagan temples did not wear a head-covering. Also noteworthy is that Jewish women did not wear a head-covering until they were married. There was no need to do so since they were not under the authority of a husband. Hence, Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 11 was very specific to the Corinthian church, and not practiced in other churches (1 Corinthians 11:16). We note that women covering their head is not mentioned in any other epistle. Should women today wear shawls on their heads in church? No, because the significance of women wearing head-covering in the Greco-Roman world no longer holds true in our culture. But is there a principle here to be followed and

to be expressed in our modern culture? Yes, the principle of submission of the wife to her husband still holds because the truth is repeated elsewhere in Scripture (Ephesians 5:22,23; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1,2).

Exercise:

Here is a sample listing of some practices we see in the Bible. For each one, indicate if it is a Temporary practice (**TP**), Permanent practice (**PP**) or Temporary practice but continuing principle (**CP**).

		TP / PP/ CP
1.	Greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16)	
2.	Abstain from meat sacrificed to idols (Acts 15:29)	
3.	Be baptized (Acts 2:38)	
4.	Wash one another's feet (John 13:14)	
5.	Extend the right hand of fellowship (Galatians 2:9)	
6.	Ordain by the laying on of hands (Acts 13:3)	
7.	Prohibit women from speaking in a church gathering (1 Corinthians 14:34)*	
8.	Have fixed hours of prayer (Acts 3:1)	
9.	Sing songs, hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16)	
10.	Abstain from eating blood (Acts 15:29)	
11.	Slaves obey their earthly masters (Ephesians 6:5)	

12.	Observe the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:24)	
13.	Do not make any oaths (James 5:12)	
14.	Be circumcised (Acts 15:5)	
15.	Wear sandals but not an extra tunic (Mark 6:9)	
16.	Cast lots for church officers (Acts 1:26)	
17.	Pay taxes to government (Romans 13:1-7)	

Answers

1)CP 2)PP 3)PP 4)CP 5)PP 6)PP 7)TP
 8)TP 9)PP 10)PP 11)CP 12)PP 13)PP 14)TP
 15)TP 16)TP 17)PP

***7) has been explained earlier in the preceding chapter.**

10

LANGUAGE—SEMANTICS AND GRAMMAR

The components of a language include phonetics, phonology, discourse, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Phonetics is the study of the ways speech sounds are made, classified, combined and perceived.

Phonology studies the grammar of sounds (the variation of speech sounds send different messages) in language and in specific languages.

Discourse (also known as discourse analysis) aims to discover the systematic rules governing the formation and organization of a discourse (a series of coherent sentences, utterances, or texts) and how coherence is achieved.

Morphology studies how words can be formed structurally.
Example: happen, happened, happening to indicate three different meanings.

Syntax is the study of sentence structures, the rules that govern the combination of words to form grammatical phrases, clauses and sentences.

Semantics pays close attention to the inherent meaning expressed by words and sentences and studies how the meaning changes when words combine to become phrases, and when words and phrases combine to become sentences.

Pragmatics is the study of meaning in contexts—

meaning that is dependent on contextual factors such as the communicative situation, the identities and intentions of the speakers in question or the use of language techniques such as rhetorical and figurative devices.

What is also important to understanding a language is grammar. **Grammar** focuses on the structural rules governing how words are combined to form sentences. Key aspects of grammar include sentence structure, verb conjugation, noun agreement, tenses (past, present, future), subject-verb agreement, articles (definite and indefinite), prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, question formation, negation, and depending on the language, cases and gender agreement.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and so every word of Scripture is important. Hence, in studying, understanding and interpreting Scripture text, we must consider at least the basics of language components such as original word meanings, tenses, verb and noun usage. We take into consideration the meaning of words, the form, function, relationship of words and sentences and the way they are put together. Our goal is to clearly and correctly understand the original thought that was being conveyed by the Holy Spirit through the writers.

The meaning of words

Sometimes, different Greek words may be translated using the same English word but they can have different aspects to their meaning. Understanding the Greek word and its primary meaning will help us better understand the text.

Power and authority

Example: Greek ‘*dunamis*’ (“power” as in strength, ability, force, supernatural power), Greek ‘*exousia*’ (“power” as in

authority, delegated authority)

Matthew 10:1

And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power (*exousia*) over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

Luke 9:1

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power (*dunamis*) and authority (*exousia*) over all demons, and to cure diseases.

Luke 10:19

Behold, I give you the authority (*exousia*) to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power (*dunamis*) of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power (*dunamis*) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Time—chronos and kairos

Example: Greek ‘*chronos*’ (duration of time), Greek ‘*kairos*’ (right time, opportune time)

Acts 7:17-20

¹⁷ But when the time (*chronos*) of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt

¹⁸ till another king arose who did not know Joseph.

¹⁹ This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.

²⁰ At this time (*kairos*) Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father’s house for three months.

Acts 1:6,7

⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time (*chronos*) restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times (*chronos*) or seasons (*kairos*) which the Father has put in His own authority.

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of the time (*kairos*) had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Life

Greek words:

- *zoe* = life as God has it, the gift of eternal life given to the believer
- *bios* = physical life, biological life
- *psuche* = breath of life, natural life, heart, mind, soul, the seat of personality
- *anastrophe* = manner of life, behavior, conduct

Love

Greek words:

- *agape* = selfless sacrificial love, the God-kind of love, the love we must have towards others
- *phileo* = tender affection, brotherly love, the love between friends or family members (Titus 2:4)

Not used in the New Testament:

- *eros* = romantic love or sexual desire
- *storge* = familial love, love between parents and children

New

Greek words:

- *kainos* = new in nature, something qualitatively different from what existed before (new creation 2 Corinthians 5:17, new man Ephesians 2:15; Ephesians 4:24, new covenant Hebrews 8:8).
- *neos* = new in time, new in age, recent (Matthew 9:17).

Perfect and complete

Greek words:

- *teleioo* = to bring to an end by completing or perfecting, bringing to completeness (Luke 13:32; Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 5:9)
- *katartizo* = to make fit, thoroughly furnish, thoroughly equip, fully trained (Matthew 21:16; Luke 6:40; 2 Corinthians 13:9,11; Ephesians 4:12)
- *artios* = fitted, complete (2 Timothy 3:17)

When the Scriptures state that Christ was perfected, it is that His obedience was demonstrated in completeness, or His obedience was brought to the full and final mark through what He suffered. There was nothing lacking in Him as a Person. It was the demonstration of His obedience being fully expressed.

When the Scriptures speak of the believer being perfected, it is the believer being fully trained, fitted and equipped in areas where the believer is lacking.

Words with a wide range of meanings

Some words have a wide range of meanings more than what is conveyed by the English word with which it is translated. Hence, it is useful to understand all that is covered or addressed by the Hebrew or Greek word.

Peace—shalom

Hebrew '*shalom*' = peace, quiet, tranquility, contentment, rest, completeness, welfare, health, well-being, to be whole, wholeness, be in good health, sound, happy, prosper, prosperity, safety, security, includes deliverance, preservation, salvation. *Shalom* in essence means total well-being. *Shalom* has been provided for us through the Cross (Isaiah 53:5).

Salvation

Greek ‘*sozo*’ (verb) (as with the noun ‘*soteria*’) = used to refer to eternal salvation (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:13), forgiveness of sin (Matthew 1:21), healing from sickness (Matthew 9:21; Mark 5:23; Luke 8:48; James 5:15), deliverance from demonic powers (Luke 8:36), safety and preservation from harm and danger (Matthew 8:25; Acts 27:24). Its core idea is that of **rescue and restoration**.

Parakletos

The Greek word ‘*parakletos*’ encompasses a range of meanings including Helper, Comforter, Advocate, Counselor, Intercessor, Strengthened, Standby. It is used in reference to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,26; John 15:26; John 16:7) and to Jesus (1 John 2:1).

The tenses of words

When studying and interpreting Scripture, we must be mindful of the tense of the words and build our understanding while remaining true to the tense.

- 1) What is past tense is considered already done and hence, a present reality.
 - **Has redeemed** (Galatians 3:13)
 - **Has blessed** (Ephesians 1:3)
 - **Were healed** (1 Peter 2:24)
- 2) There are instances when a work of God is presented in both past tense and present continuous. We must, therefore, present this work from both perspectives.

Example:

Sanctification—the believer has been set apart to God in Christ and is also going through a process of being set apart to God, being perfected in holiness in everyday life.

- Sanctified, were sanctified, been sanctified, was sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10,29)
 - Being sanctified (Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 10:14)
- 3) There are instances when a work of God is presented in both present tense and in the future. We must, therefore, understand and communicate this work from both perspectives.

Example:

Redemption—the believer has been redeemed. There is a present experience of our redemption and there is a future portion of our redemption that we will receive in time to come.

- We have redemption (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14)—a present experience.
 - Until the redemption of the purchased possession, sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 4:30)—a future culmination of our redemption experience.
- 4) There are instances when a work of God is presented as an instantaneous, momentary experience, and as a repetitive experience, as well as a present, continuous experience. We must understand and present this from all three perspectives.

Example:

Being filled with the Spirit—When believers are baptized in the Spirit, they are also filled with the Spirit (instantaneous).

They can experience repeated (daily) infillings of the Spirit. The believer is also to always be filled (present continuous) with the Spirit.

- Filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).
- The disciples had repeating experiences of being filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:8,31; Acts 13:9,52).
- We are to be continuously filled with the Spirit, walking, living and being continuously led by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16,18,25).

Verbs and nouns

Faith and believing

The Greek word ‘*pistis*’, which is translated “faith”, is a noun (translated “belief” in 2 Thessalonians 2:13). As a noun, “faith” points to “a conviction respecting God and His Word and the believer’s relationship to Him” (Vine’s Dictionary).

The Greek word ‘*pisteuo*’, which is translated “believe”, is a verb. “To believe,” the act of having faith, is “to be persuaded of”, “to place confidence in,” “to trust,” and points to living out of a full reliance upon God and His Word.

Mark 11:22-24 bears this out remarkably.

Mark 11:22-24

²² So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith (*pistis*) in God.

²³ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes (*pisteuo*) that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

²⁴ Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe (*pisteuo*) that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.

We can summarize Mark 11:22-24 as have faith and conviction in God and His Word. Now move into action on that faith. Speak to the mountain believing in your heart. Ask in prayer believing in your heart. Hence, in this passage, speaking and praying are ways by which faith can be put into action and becomes believing.

Meaning of word based on context

Angels

The Greek word ‘*angelos*’ simply means “a messenger” and is used for (only a few references given below)...

- a) angels of God (Matthew 1:20)
- b) human messengers (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24,27; Revelation 1:20; Revelation 2:1,8,12,18; Revelation 3:1,7,14)
- c) demons, satan’s messengers (Matthew 25:41; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6)

Hence, depending on the context in which it is used, we determine if “messenger” refers to an angelic being sent from God, a human being or a demonic being.

Hence, Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7) was a messenger of satan, a demonic being, not some sickness or illness. This demonic being continued buffeting (give a blow with the fist, to treat with violence) Paul. “*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure*” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

As a side note, we need to be aware that the Greek word ‘*apostolos*’ meaning “an apostle,” is translated “messengers”

in some instances (**Example:** 2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25).

Baptism

The Greek word *'baptisma'* (noun) translated “baptism” and *'baptizo'* (verb) translated “to baptize” comes from the root word *'bapto'*, meaning “to dip”. It refers to the act of immersion, submersion and emergence. For example, it was used to refer to a garment immersed in dye and taken out during the dyeing process.

The word “baptism” is used in many different contexts in the New Testament (few references for each given).

- Baptism in water (Matthew 3:6; Matthew 28:19).
- Baptism into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- Baptism into Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12).
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16).
- Baptism into suffering (Matthew 20:22,23).
- Israel figuratively baptized in Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1,2).
- Noah’s ark—a type and shadow of believer’s baptism expressing the turning of one’s heart to the Lord (1 Peter 3:20,21).
- Sometimes, the word is also used for ceremonial washing (Mark 7:4,8; Hebrews 9:10).

The idea is the same. When we are baptized, we are immersed “into” something. When we are baptized “into” something or someone, we are fully identified with that thing or someone. When people are baptized “into” the name of

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), they are immersed into, identified with, become one with, are surrendered to and yielded to the God of the Bible, the Triune God.

When we compare baptism into Christ, baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit, we can draw these observations on when each happens, who administers this to the believer, and who / what the believer is baptized into.

- **Baptism into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)** happens at the moment of being born again / salvation; the Holy Spirit administers this or does this; the person is baptized into Christ and becomes part of His Body.
- **Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11)** happens any time after being born again / salvation; the Lord Jesus administers this to the believer; the believer is baptized / immersed / overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit.
- **Baptism in water (Matthew 28:19)** happens any time after being born again / salvation; another believer administers this to the believer; the believer is baptized / immersed in water symbolizing their baptism into Christ and identification with His death, burial and resurrection.

Ephesians 4:5 mentions “one baptism”, while Hebrews 6:2 mentions “the doctrine of baptisms”. How do we understand this? There is one baptism that is most important and that saves. It is the baptism into Christ. The doctrine of baptisms is the teaching concerning the different kinds of baptisms spoken of in the New Testament for the believer.

Charis and charisma

The Greek word ‘*charis*’ translated “grace” has different

meanings depending on its context.

- Grace as in **divine favor**, unmerited goodness that is extended to the recipient (Romans 3:22; Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:8).
- Grace as in **divine empowerment**, God empowering the individual beyond their own ability (2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 3:2,7; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10).
- Grace as in **divine character**, the virtues of God expressed through the individual's life (John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 8:7,9; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6; 2 Peter 3:18).

All the three expressions of “grace” can also be understood in human relationships. A person extending grace to another person. A person receiving grace from another person. A person being very graceful or gracious.

The Greek word ‘*charisma*’ is derived from the root word ‘*charis*’, meaning “grace” or “gift”.

Hence ‘*charisma*’ means “a gift of grace”. It is used as follows.

- a) **of God’s gift of righteousness and eternal life** (Romans 5:15,16; Romans 6:23)
- b) **of His spiritual gifts upon believers** (Romans 11:29; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 12:4,9,28,30,31; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10)
- c) **of the impartation of spiritual gifts through human ministry / instruction** (Romans 1:11).

Spiritual gifts are *charisma*, gifts of grace, or grace gifts. These spiritual gifts are not earned or deserved.

The placement of punctuation

In Biblical hermeneutics, punctuation placement (such as commas) can somewhat impact the interpretation. Punctuation was not part of the original manuscripts in ancient Hebrew and Greek but was introduced during translation to make things understandable in the language being translated into (**Example:** English). This is not a major concern, but it is useful to keep in mind when studying Scripture and learn some practical ways to work through any challenges that one might encounter.

We will consider two examples to illustrate how the placement of punctuation can slightly alter the meaning of the text and how to determine the correct flow of thought.

Colossians 3:16

Colossians 3:16 provides an example of how punctuation affects the interpretation of the intended meaning.

OPTION A

Colossians 3:16 (NKJV)

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

OPTION B

Colossians 3:16 (NASB 2020)

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

The NKJV (and the KJV) places a comma after the word “all wisdom”. The NASB and most other translations place the comma before “all wisdom” as shown above. The meaning and emphasis, therefore, differ slightly. The NKJV rendering would place the word of Christ dwelling richly in the believer and the

believer receiving the word with wisdom and receiving wisdom from the word. The NASB rendering places the emphasis on teaching and sharing the word with one another with all wisdom. In practice, we do both, so the application is not that different.

To determine which phrasing better fits the context of Colossians 3:16, we could apply some of the hermeneutical principles we have learnt so far.

1) Consider the context

Colossians 3:8-17 speaks about character that is fitting for a Christian and deals with dwelling together in love, kindness and peace. Hence, it is safe to consider the emphasis to be on teaching and admonishing with all wisdom.

2) Consider the grammar and syntax

In the Greek, the phrase “in all wisdom” could either modify “dwell in you” or the action of “teaching and admonishing”. Many scholars and translations take the latter approach, since “in all wisdom” is often associated with the act of teaching and admonishing.

3) Compare translations

Most translations position the comma as in the NASB—“*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...*” (Colossians 3:16). The placement here indicates that teaching and admonishing one another must be done with all wisdom.

4) Parallel passages

Ephesians 5:17-21 seems to be a parallel passage that contains the instruction to be wise, knowing the will of God, be full of the Spirit and from this posture, believers are instructed to

“speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19). Hence, here we observe being wise and knowing God’s will influencing the speaking and ministering to one another, consistent with the NASB rendering of Colossians 3:16.

5) Consistency with rest of Scripture

In Paul’s epistles, the teaching of the Word is often accompanied with emphasis on wisdom. Here are a few instances—*“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”* (Colossians 1:28). *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:7). Hence, to place the comma in Colossians 3:16, so that we can teach and admonish one another in all wisdom is consistent with the broader teaching of Scripture.

In this case, the NASB rendering seems to align more closely with the original meaning, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another”* (Colossians 3:16). Thus, careful analysis of syntax, context, and parallel passages, along with a consistency check, can help in determining the most appropriate punctuation placement and interpretive meaning in such cases.

Ephesians 4:12

Consider another example, Ephesians 4:12, where the placement of punctuation could cause the understanding to differ slightly.

Ephesians 4:12 (KJV)

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Ephesians 4:12 (NKJV)

for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

The KJV having a comma after each phrase seems to indicate that each of these are done by the five-fold ministers. The five-fold ministers perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry and edify (build up) the Body of Christ.

However, most translations follow the NKJV rendering where the meaning is that the five-fold ministers equip the saints so that the saints do the work of the ministry, and the five-fold ministers also serve to edify (build up) the Body of Christ.

This is consistent with the teaching of Scripture in other places where all believers have been given grace to serve (Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:4-8) and are empowered by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7,11) with gifts to minister to one another. Hence, the five-fold ministers equip believers for their work in the ministry.

Equivalent Old and New Testament concepts

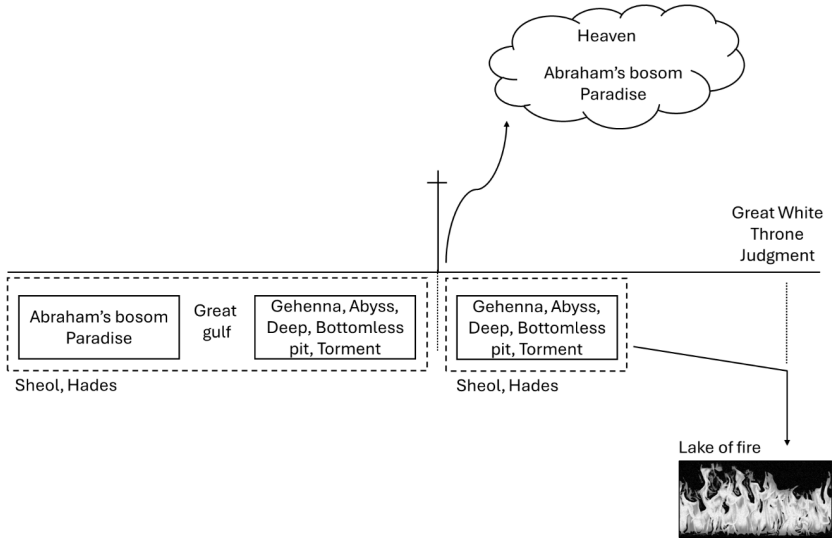
When we explore a concept / topic across the Testaments and compare the equivalent words used, we get a clearer understanding of that topic.

Let us consider the concept / topic of “hell”.

Hell—sheol, hades, gehenna, paradise, abyss

Let’s study the word “hell” in Hebrew and Greek. We discover the Hebrew word ‘*sheol*’ which is translated as both “hell” and “grave” (the burial site). Based on context, we determine when ‘*sheol*’ is referring to “hell” and when it is referring to the “grave”. We discover the Greek word ‘*hades*’ is the equivalent

word for the Hebrew word ‘*sheol*’. However, in Greek, there are two words ‘*hades*’ and ‘*gehenna*’ that are both translated “hell”. What is the difference between ‘*hades*’ and ‘*gehenna*’? ‘*Gehenna*’ is referred to as a place of fire, “the hell of fire” and a place of torment (Matthew 5:22,29,30; Matthew 18:8,9; Mark 9:43-47). Based on the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), we arrive at the conclusion that ‘*sheol*’ and ‘*hades*’ was a place of conscious existence after death, with two compartments, one side, a place of torment (‘*gehenna*’) occupied by the unrighteous dead separated by a great chasm from the other side where the righteous dead were held in Abraham’s bosom (also called “paradise”). This is what the Lord Jesus referred to when speaking to the thief from the cross, He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). When Jesus died, He descended to *hades* (Acts 2:27,31; Revelation 1:18), that is, the paradise section (Abraham’s bosom) of *hades*. From there, He went and preached to the spirits held in prison (1 Peter 3:19,20) which would imply these spirits were held in the ‘*gehenna*’ side. The place where some of these angels have been “cast down to hell” (*tartaroo*) in 2 Peter 2:4 is the place called “Tartarus”, or the “*abyss*” where these angels are held in chains (Jude 1:6), the deepest parts of ‘*gehenna*’, the hell fire side of *hades*. The “*abyss*” is also referred to as the deep or bottomless pit or prison (Revelation 9:1,2,11; Revelation 11:7; Revelation 17:8; Revelation 20:1,3). When the Lord Jesus ascended after His resurrection, He took all the Old Testament saints held in Abraham’s bosom (paradise) with Him to heaven (Ephesians 4:8-10). Hence in the New Testament, after the resurrection, we see paradise situated in heaven (2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7). At the Great White Throne judgment, death and *hades* will be cast into the Lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).



The New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament words

He bore our sicknesses and pains (Isaiah 53:4,5)

Isaiah 53:4,5

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs (*choliy*)

And carried our sorrows (*makob*);

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace (*shalom*) was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed (*rapha*).

Is physical healing, emotional healing, and wholeness to the total person provided for us through Christ's death on the Cross? Is it something Jesus died to provide for us on the Cross?

Traditionally, we would refer to the Hebrew words used in Isaiah 53, and then conclude that indeed, physical healing,

emotional healing, and wholeness to the total person was provided for us through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

- Hebrew ‘*choliy*’ = sickness, disease, illness, affliction, anxiety, calamity
- Hebrew ‘*makob*’ = pain (physical, mental), suffering, affliction, anguish, grief, sorrow
- Hebrew ‘*shalom*’ = total well-being, prosperity, wholeness
- Hebrew ‘*rapha*’ = to heal, make healthful, healer, physician, cure, repair

What is even more interesting is how the Gospel writer Matthew presents Isaiah 53:4 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 8:16,17

¹⁶When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,

¹⁷that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

**“He Himself took our infirmities
And bore *our* sicknesses.”**

Beyond a shadow of doubt, the account here records physical healing and deliverances from demonic spirits as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4. This is conclusive and unquestionable now because this is the Holy Spirit’s commentary on Isaiah 53:4.

We understand that the Lord Jesus forgave sins and healed and delivered people during His earthly ministry as an advance in view of what He would pay for and provide in full measure on the Cross. We can, therefore, teach and preach with absolute certainty that physical healing, emotional healing, and

wholeness to the total person was provided for us through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Hence, when we study Isaiah 53, we can apply to it what has been revealed in the Holy Spirit's commentary in Matthew 8:16,17.

Another observation that is interesting is that when the apostle Peter, by the Holy Spirit, references Isaiah 53:4, he states this in the past tense—as a completed work.

1 Peter 2:24

who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

Physical healing, emotional healing, and wholeness to the total person provided for us through the Cross of Jesus Christ is a completed work! As far as the believer is concerned, it has been done.

Out of the mouth of infants (Psalm 8:2)

Psalm 8:2

Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants

You have ordained strength,

Because of Your enemies,

That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

Strength (Hebrew 'oze') = strength, force, security, majesty, praise

It is interesting that when Jesus quoted this verse of Scripture, He emphasized "praise".

Matthew 21:15,16

¹⁵ But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that

He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant

¹⁶and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?”

And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read,

**‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
You have perfected praise?’”**

Hence, when we now go back to Psalm 8:2, we can replace “strength” with “praise” and understand the rest of Psalm 8:2 in the context of what praising God can bring about—the silencing of the enemy and the avenger.

Biblical images or history carried in word meanings

Sometimes, the Biblical image or history contained within the word helps further understand and clarify the meaning of the word and provides a deeper understanding of what is being communicated.

Redemption

There are three main Greek words that are of interest in understanding “redemption”.

Greek ‘agorazo’, meaning to buy or bought from the ‘*agora*’, the marketplace. Figuratively, Christ is spoken of as having bought His redeemed, making them His property at the price of His blood (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1). While ‘*agorazo*’ literally means “to buy or purchase,” it has been translated as “redeemed” in Revelation 5:9 and Revelation 14:3,4.

Greek ‘exagorazo’, a strengthened form of ‘*agorazo*’ denotes “to buy out,” especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom. It is used metaphorically in Galatians 3:13 and Galatians 4:5 of our deliverance from the Law and its curse.

Greek ‘*lutroo*’, which literally means “to release on receipt of ransom” (similar to *lutron*, “a ransom”), is used to mean “to release by paying a ransom price, to redeem” in Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18. The noun forms of ‘*lutroo*’—‘*lutrosis*’ meaning “a redemption” and ‘*apolutrosis*’ meaning “a releasing on payment of a ransom”—are translated “redemption” in Romans 3:24; Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:4,7; Ephesians 4:30; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:15.

While both ‘*exagorazo*’ and ‘*lutroo*’ are translated “to redeem,” ‘*exagorazo*’ points to the price paid while ‘*lutroo*’ signifies the actual “deliverance,” the setting at liberty.

Studying these Greek words helps us better understand “redemption” and what Jesus did for us through His shed blood. We were sinners and had a huge debt of sin that separated us from God. Our sin and separation from God gave satan control over us and satan held us as slaves. The Lord Jesus placed His blood as the ransom price before God in heaven (Hebrews 9:12,14), clearing our sins and cancelling our debt in heaven. This payment made in heaven destroyed satan’s hold over our lives and the Lord Jesus brought us out of satan’s power, ushered us into His own Kingdom, and made us sons and daughters, kings and priests unto God.

Bondservant

Romans 1:1

Paul, a bondservant (*doulos*) of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

There are several Greek words for “servant”.

- ‘*diakonos*’ views a servant in relation to his work
- ‘*doulos*’ in relation to his master
- ‘*huperetes*’ in relation to his superior

- *'leitourgos'* in relation to public service

Paul used the Greek word *'doulos'* to refer to himself in his service and ministry to the Lord Jesus Christ. *'Doulos'* refers to “a slave, bondman, one fully owned by his master, a man of servile condition, someone who gives himself up to another’s will, devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests.”

Triumph

Colossians 2:15

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

The Greek word translated “triumphing over” is *'thriambeuo'* which means “to lead in triumphant procession.” The picture is of a victorious king going out and displaying his victory in a loud, celebratory procession with his vanquished foes disarmed and powerless, led as prisoners.

In Colossians 2:15, based on the context, the enemies who have been conquered, in this case, satan and his demonic powers are put on public display showing that they have been conquered, vanquished and humiliated.

2 Corinthians 2:14

Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

The same Greek word is translated “triumph” in 2 Corinthians 2:14. In this context, God is always leading us in a triumphant procession displaying us as victors, as more than conquerors in Christ. There is never a day, never a moment, when we are not victors. We are always in this triumphant procession.

Do not transfer back contemporary ideas

We should be careful when attempting to transfer back English meanings (English etymology) to Biblical words or terms. This will not be true in all instances.

For example, the Greek word ‘*dunamis*’ translated “power” does not mean what we understand today by the words “dynamite” (explosive) or “dynamo” (converting mechanical energy to electrical energy) although they sound similar and have similar usage.

Guidelines for word study

- Determine the established usage of the word by the writer and the customary meaning of the word when the writer used it.
- Consider the context in which the word is used based on the chapter and flow of thought.
- Note the usage of the word by the same writer in the same book.
- Note the usage by the same writer in his other books wherever applicable.
- Note the usage of the same word by other writers in the Bible. However, keep in mind that the meaning of the word may not be the same in all its occurrences as it can vary depending on the context.

Here are a few more examples of word studies that can help us understand a few passages better.

The violent take it by force (Matthew 11:12)

Matthew 11:12

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven

suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

Luke 16:16

“The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.

The term “suffers violence” in Matthew 11:12 is a transitive verb. Transitive verbs can be either passive voice or middle voice, and only the context can help you decide which meaning is intended.

The verb “suffers violence” occurs only here and in Luke 16:16 in the New Testament. The verb “suffers violence” plays on the noun “the kingdom of heaven”. This verb can be understood both ways, that is, a) the noun experiences the verb, that is, violence is forced upon the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of heaven is overpowered, the kingdom of heaven is taken by storm. The other way to understand is b) that the noun exerts the verb. In this case, the kingdom of heaven exerts violence, or the kingdom of heaven is forceful, or the kingdom of heaven overpowers everything else.

Passive voice: The focus is on the recipient of the action, in this case, the kingdom of heaven. The passive idea is that the kingdom is forced upon, is stormed into, is taken by men of violence like “men of violence take it by force” or seize it like a conquered city. This is brought out in the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation. The implication here is that people are eager and desperate to experience, encounter and receive the Kingdom and so they force their way into it.

Matthew 11:12 (NASB)

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been treated violently, and violent men take it by force.

Middle voice: The subject of the sentence is the noun or noun

phrase that is doing the action. The focus is on the action from the subject. The middle voice may mean the kingdom of heaven “exerts violence or force” or the kingdom of heaven “forces its way” like a rushing mighty wind. This is brought out in The Passion Translation (TPT) very clearly. The implication here is that the kingdom advances forcefully, overpowering the kingdom of the devil. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of light. It dispels and pushes darkness back wherever it appears.

Matthew 11:12 (TPT)

From the moment John stepped onto the scene until now, the realm of heaven’s kingdom is bursting forth, and passionate people have taken hold of its power.

We can walk and operate in the understanding that both are true. And indeed, they are. The passive voice emphasizes the need for us to press into the things of the kingdom forcefully, pushing past all hinderances of the flesh, the world and the devil. The other, the middle voice, encourages us, knowing that God’s kingdom rules over all other kingdoms and advances forcefully and nothing can stop it. We are part of this kingdom.

On this rock, I will build My church (Matthew 16:15-20)

Matthew 16:15-20

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

²⁰Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

What was the “rock” Jesus was referring to when He said, “*you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church*” (Matthew 16:18)?

The confusion arises because in the Greek, the noun “Peter” and the word “rock” come from the same / similar word.

- “Peter” in Greek is ‘*petros*’ = a rock or a stone
- “rock” in Greek is ‘*petra*’ = a rock or a large stone (as in Matthew 7:24,25; Luke 8:6,13)

There is a play with the word “rock” in this sentence. But what did Jesus mean? Did He mean that the apostle Peter was that rock? Or did He mean the revelation Peter just uttered, the truth about the Person of Jesus Christ, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” is that “rock” upon which the Church is built?

For this, we must look at the broader context of the New Testament Scripture so that our interpretation of Matthew 16:18 remains true to the rest of what the Scripture states. Here is what we observe in the New Testament—the apostle Paul states clearly, “*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus Christ and He alone is the foundation for the believer and the Church. Jesus Christ is called the Rock (*petra*) in 1 Corinthians 10:4. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) upon which the apostles and prophets have laid the foundation, and we are built on further. The apostle Peter himself points to Jesus Christ as the precious cornerstone and the chief cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-7).

We conclude based on the teaching of the rest of the New Testament that the “rock” on which Jesus said He would build His Church, is Christ Himself, the truth that He is Christ, the Son of the living God. There is no other foundation.

Bind on earth, loose on earth (Matthew 16:19)

Matthew 16:19

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The reading of Matthew 16:19 in the NKJV and some other translations leave the impression that the first action is taken by the believer to bind or loose, and then heaven comes into alignment to what the believer does. The action seems to move from earth to heaven. However, the literal rendering of the text indicates that the progression of the action is from heaven to earth. Heaven decides first, and then on earth, the believer binds and releases what heaven has decided, and then it happens on earth.

This is brought out in several translations.

Matthew 16:19 (EMTV)

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on the earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth will have been loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:19 (NASB)

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:19 (TPT)

I will give you the keys of heaven’s kingdom realm to forbid on earth that which is forbidden in heaven, and to release on earth that which is released in heaven.

Did He give gifts only to men? Women in five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11)

Ephesians 4:7,8,11

⁷ **But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.**

⁸ **Therefore He says:**

**“When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men.”**

¹¹ **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

The word “men” in verse 8 is the Greek ‘*anthropos*’ = a human being, not gender specific. While it is used of the male, it is often used of the individual person regardless of gender (Matthew 4:4; Romans 3:28), and also of the inner person (Romans 7:22; Ephesians 3:16; 1 Peter 3:4).

Paul could have used the Greek ‘*aner*’ if the intent was to specify male. The Greek word ‘*aner*’ means “male” and is never used for the female sex. It stands in distinction from a woman.

Consider the immediate context, specifically what is stated in verse 7. To each one, male and female, God has given grace in proportion to Christ's gift. Then verse 8 continues this thought about Christ's gifts which were given to men and women. The recognition is then made that some ‘*anthropos*’ (men and women) have been given gifts such as being apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

When we consider the broader context of Scripture, we see in both Testaments that God has graced both men and women by His Spirit and with gifts and callings to do the work He has assigned to them.

Hence, we conclude that some men and women are graced and gifted by the Lord to serve as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Woman apostle named “Junia” (Romans 16:7)

Romans 16:7

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

We recognize that “Junia” is a female name. Now the question is does the verse mean that Andronicus and Junia are noted by the apostles, in that they are known by the apostles? Or does the verse indicate that Andronicus and Junia are among the apostles, themselves being apostles, and are outstanding (notable) apostles?

The relevant Greek phrase is, ‘*episemoi en tois apostolois*’

- *episemoi* = distinguished, notable, or outstanding
- *en* = can mean “among” or “to”
- *tois apostolois* = the apostles

A literal rendering of the Greek would be, “*Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are notable among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*”

Romans 16:7 (EMTV)

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my fellow captives, who are notable among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Romans 16:7 (TPT)

Make sure that my relatives Andronicus and Junia are honored, for they’re my fellow captives who bear the distinctive mark of being outstanding and well-known apostles, and who were joined into the Anointed One before me.

The Greek construction is naturally read as “notable among the apostles.” If Paul meant “notable to the apostles,” a different preposition or phrasing would likely have been used.

The most straightforward reading is that Andronicus and Junia were regarded as apostles and distinguished among them. The alternative interpretation that they were well-known to the apostles without being apostles themselves is less likely linguistically.

Early Church fathers, such as John Chrysostom, acknowledged Junia as a female apostle, supporting this view. *“To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among the apostles—just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! They were outstanding on the basis of their works and virtuous actions. Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle.”*—John Chrysostom, **“Homilies on Romans, Homily 31 (AD 386-398),”** Presbyterian of the Church of Antioch. Chrysostom’s acknowledgment reflects the broader understanding in the Early Church that Junia was a female and was an esteemed apostle.

The chastening of the Lord (Hebrews 12:5-13), what could it be?

Hebrews 12:5-13

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens,

And scourges every son whom He receives.”

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.

¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,

¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

Reading this passage, one of the questions that arise is how does the Lord chasten His people whom He loves?

First, we recognize that the writer of Hebrews is quoting from Proverbs 3:11,12, *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.”*

We also observe that both the Old and New Testament passages place the chastening of the Lord in the context of a father correcting a son in whom he delights.

The instruction in the New Testament passage is for us to understand that the chastening of the Lord is the expression of a Father’s heart towards His children, encouraging us to receive it, even though it may be difficult, and to understand that the result is for our good.

The word “chastening” in Greek is *‘paideia’* = education, training up, nurture, instruction, the rearing of a child, discipline, and is used in the “nurture” of children in Ephesians 6:4 and for the “instruction” in righteousness from the Word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16.

The New Testament makes it clear that God instructs us through His Word (2 Timothy 3:16), by His Spirit (1 John 2:20,27), and through people whom He has placed around us (Colossians 3:16). This is how the heavenly Father lovingly disciplines, corrects, trains up, nurtures and instructs His children. The correction and discipline that comes to us from our Heavenly Father comes to us through His Word, by His Spirit and through godly people around us. While we face challenges in life, He empowers us to overcome life's challenges, and this adds to our endurance training (Romans 5:3,4).

We must keep in mind the teaching of our Lord Jesus that our heavenly Father is much greater and better than earthly fathers (Matthew 6:31,32; Matthew 7:7-11). Would an earthly father intentionally do something destructive to their children to discipline and train them, for example, making them ill with some terminal illness, leaving them on the street to starve, putting them through a terrible accident, etc.? Earthly fathers, as evil as we are, would not do such terrible things to the children we love and who delight us as part of training or disciplining them. Even earthly fathers know how to lovingly discipline and work with each child in a manner that the child understands “in order” to nurture and train them. It is therefore, absurd and quite contrary to both the teaching of Scripture and simple common sense to teach that God our Heavenly Father would afflict the children He loves with sickness, calamities, accidents, failure, lack, insufficiency, unnatural deaths, etc. to lovingly discipline them or train them in righteousness. Our Heavenly Father is so much better than this.

Creation under bondage of corruption (Romans 8:18-23)

Romans 8:18-23 (see also 2 Corinthians 4:16 to 2 Corinthians 5:5)

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope;

²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

futility (Greek ‘*mataiotes*’) = vanity, emptiness, depravity, what is devoid of truth and appropriateness, perverseness

corruption (Greek ‘*phthora*’) = decay, ruin, corruption, destruction, perishing, depravity, wickedness

The Bible makes it clear that all of creation is in bondage / subjection to corruption. Creation went into subjection to corruption at the time of Adam’s Fall. Ever since that time, all of creation has been in a state of decline, deviating from the original state of perfection, tranquility, and order in which God created it. The systems that were originally set in place in nature at the time of creation are now in bondage to corruption, subject to deviation from their original design. This was not God’s will and God did not allow this willingly but in hope or anticipation that this will also be reversed. He knew the result—that one day, creation will be delivered from this bondage.

This explains why our bodies get old. Our bodies get old not because the devil is making it old but because creation is in bondage to corruption. Our outward man is perishing. This also explains why there are tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. Not all of these are caused by God or by the devil. Unless God has revealed clearly that He is judging some group of people, we must not say that God cause that catastrophic weather condition.

Similarly, unless it is clearly revealed by the Holy Spirit that satan is behind it, we cannot blame the devil. In most cases, these things happen because all of creation is in subjection to corruption steadily moving away from their original state of order and perfection in which they were created.

Creation is yet to be delivered from its subjection to corruption and it will be delivered in the future. There will be a time when, as children of God, we will receive the redemption of our bodies (new glorified bodies) and when creation will be delivered from its present bondage to corruption. There will be new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:5-14; Revelation 21:1-5).

Today, just like Jesus, we step in to bring God's power to affect situations in our lives. Jesus saw a man born blind from birth and He did the works of God, which in this case was to reverse the blindness (John 9:1-7). When storms arose at sea, Jesus calmed them. God, by His power, in certain situations, steps in and reverses the effects of this bondage to corruption. We call this a miracle! This happens by the power of God's Spirit. We are here anointed by God to demonstrate God's power in these situations.

The Holy Spirit helps in our weaknesses (Romans 8:26,27)

Romans 8:26,27

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

“helps” (Greek ‘*sunantilambanomai*’) = a compound word made from two words

- *sun* = in union with, together and
- *antilambanomai* = take hold of

So, the meaning of the Greek word '*sunantilambanomai*' is "to take hold with at the side, to take hold of with someone; to support, help, aid, cooperate, assist, to lay hold along with."

"makes intercession" (Greek word '*huperentugchanoo*') a compound word = intercede in behalf of, make intercession for

"which cannot be uttered" (Greek word '*alaleetos*') = not to be uttered, not expressed in words, inexpressible, too deep for words

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, to take a hold of together with us against our weaknesses.

What weaknesses is Paul referring to? The thought begins in Romans 6, when Paul refers to the weakness of our flesh (Romans 6:19; Romans 8:3) because of sin working in our flesh.

One of the ways in which the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weakness is through prayer. We do not know what to pray for. The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. This intercession is not independent of us, but along with us. We state this for two reasons.

- 1) The Holy Spirit is taking a hold of together with us against our weaknesses. Hence, the prayer that is being made is the Holy Spirit working together with us to overcome our weaknesses.
- 2) The next verse 27 states that God searches the hearts, that is, God looks into our hearts, indicating that the intercession is rising from our hearts with the help of the Holy Spirit. God

understands the mind of the Spirit, that is, He understands what the Holy Spirit is releasing together with us in intercession.

What are the **“with groanings which cannot be uttered”**? We understand it in two ways.

- 1) The deep sighs and groans are a continuing thought from the preceding verses. In Romans 8:22,23, Paul has stated, *“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”* Paul mentions that creation “groans and labors with birth pangs” and we as believers “groan within ourselves”. While the context from Romans 8:18-23 (the bondage of corruption) is different from the context of Romans 8:26,27 (our weaknesses), the idea of groaning refers to deep inner sighs, inner pains, struggles and travails like a woman during childbirth. This may often be expressed in groaning, agonizing prayer, cries, sighs, the expressions of inner spiritual labor pains to God.
- 2) The groans and sighs are too deep for us to express in our own words. We are unable to articulate it. We are aware of our weaknesses and we groan about them, but we do not know what we should pray for and how to express this in words in prayer ourselves. Hence, the Holy Spirit gives us the words to intercede with, making intercessions for us, together with us. This is where praying in tongues, praying with the Holy Spirit comes in. This concurs with what Jude wrote about praying in the Holy Ghost to protect ourselves from sensual people, keep building ourselves up, keeping ourselves in the love of God, save those who are going

astray, keeping ourselves from the things of the flesh. *“These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh”* (Jude 1:19-23).

Labor in birth—spiritual travail (Galatians 4:19)

Galatians 4:19

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,

In Scripture, “travail” or “labor pains” is used as a metaphor in the context of spiritual birthing and spiritual formation through spiritual ministry.

In Galatians 4:19, the apostle Paul mentions laboring in birth again until Christ is formed in them, the believers at Galatia. We understand the scenario. Paul had initially led these people to faith in Christ. To do this, he labored in birth the first time. These new believers turned back to living under the Law. So now, Paul had to labor in birth again to see Christ formed in them, and until they matured in their faith in Jesus Christ. The saving of souls into the Kingdom is often compared / referred to as spiritual birthing (1 Corinthians 4:15; Philemon 1:10). The apostle Paul went through a spiritual birthing process, he experienced spiritual labor pains (travail) to see these souls brought into God’s Kingdom. And now, for a second time, he is going through spiritual labor pains to see Christ fully formed in them.

Paul’s ministry of preaching and teaching God’s Word, serving the people with the help of the Holy Spirit, and engaging in prayer and intercession for the people—all of these aspects of ministry—are compared to “laboring in birth” in order to see Christ formed in people. This is what Christian ministry is. It is laboring in birth to see people brought to maturity, the full measure of the stature of Christ.

Intercession—making a wall, standing in the gap (Ezekiel 22:29,30)

Ezekiel 22:29,30

²⁹ The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger.

³⁰ So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.

Isaiah 59:14-16

**¹⁴ Justice is turned back,
And righteousness stands afar off;
For truth is fallen in the street,
And equity cannot enter.**

**¹⁵ So truth fails,
And he *who* departs from evil makes himself a prey.
Then the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased Him
That *there was* no justice.**

**¹⁶ He saw that *there was* no man,
And wondered that *there was* no intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.**

The image used here is that of ancient cities where the city walls were critical for defense and safety of the people. A breach (gap) in the wall would leave the city vulnerable.

In a spiritual sense, the sin and depravity of the people have left them in a similar place spiritually. God's judgment is impending because of their wickedness. God is looking for one man who would "make a wall" and "stand in the gap" before God on behalf of the land. Looking at parallel passages (Isaiah 59:14-16; Jeremiah 5:1; Ezekiel 13:5), one person could "make a wall" and "stand in the gap" before God through prayer and intercession. Intercession by even one person would bring spiritual protection that would shield the people from God's judgment and fill the breach in the wall to prevent destruction.

11

LITERARY STYLES

We must recognize that there are different literary styles in the Bible—historical / narrative, poetry, prophecy, wisdom literature, epistles (letters), parables, and End-Times prophetic (apocalyptic) literature. Each requires specific interpretative principles. Every book is a unique combination of literary styles. As we read Scripture, we must remain cognizant of different literary styles being used and apply relevant interpretative principles.

We provide a brief of some of the common literary styles used in the Bible and some guidance on how to handle Scripture text in each literary style.

1) **Historical / Narrative**

These passages recount real historical events in story form, often focusing on God’s interaction with people. The Scripture text is a chronological account of events involving real people and places that are historically accurate with theological themes woven into the narrative.

Interpretation guidance:

- Read it as a historical account, paying attention to the cultural and historical context.
- Consider the author’s purpose and the lessons to be learned.
- Look for theological principles rather than assuming direct application.
- Distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive elements.

Examples: Genesis, the Gospel of Luke, the Book of Acts

2) Poetry

Poetry in the Bible is often found in Psalms, Proverbs, and other books. It uses figurative language using imagery, metaphors, similes, symbolism, emotional expression, rhythmic language and parallelism to express emotions, worship, and wisdom. Poetry in the Bible could be in the form of songs (Psalms, Song of Solomon), wisdom (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job), and part of prophetic text (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other Hebrew prophets). All these forms of poetry have different tones and goals.

Interpretation guidance:

- Pay attention to the poetic devices (for example, metaphors, similes, parallelism) and their intended meaning.
- Recognize figurative language and avoid literal interpretations.
- Consider the emotional impact of the poem.
- Look for themes, messages and truth that are being conveyed.

Example: Psalm 23

Poetry in Scripture is different from the rhyme and rhythm we are typically used to.

In Scripture, we see different kinds of poetry some of which include...

(A) Parallelism—the rhythm of thoughts

(B) Acrostic—each line or section starting with the Hebrew alphabet

(C) Inclusio—framing a poem with the same line at the start and end

(A) *Parallelism*

Parallelism is a form of poetry without metric rhyme or rhythm. Parallelism is more concerned with **the rhythm of thoughts** than with the rhyme of sounds or words. Hebraic parallelism is a poetic structure used extensively in the Old Testament, especially in Psalms and Proverbs. While there are various types of parallelism, the most common are...

- synonymous parallelism (repeat),
- antithetical parallelism (contrast),
- synthetic parallelism (amplify) and
- emblematic parallelism (metaphor).

Synonymous parallelism (repeat)

The second line helps explain or add color to the first by restating it in different words.

Examples:**Psalm 100:4**

**Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.**

Proverbs 6:4

**Give no sleep to your eyes,
Nor slumber to your eyelids.**

Joel 1:5

**Awake, you drunkards, and weep;
And wail, all you drinkers of wine,
Because of the new wine,
For it has been cut off from your mouth.**

Antithetical parallelism (contrast)

The second line presents a contrast or an opposite idea to the first line.

Examples:

Proverbs 10:1

A wise son makes a glad father,
But a foolish son is the grief of his mother.

Proverbs 13:4

The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing;
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Ecclesiastes 3:2

A time to be born,
And a time to die;
A time to plant,
And a time to pluck *what is* planted;

Synthetic parallelism (amplify)

The second line expands, advances or completes the idea of the first line.

Examples:

Psalms 23:1

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.

Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting, get understanding.

Proverbs 4:18

But the path of the just is like the shining sun,
That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

Isaiah 24:1

**Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste,
Distorts its surface
And scatters abroad its inhabitants.**

Emblematic parallelism (metaphor)

One line uses a metaphor or an image, and the second line explains its meaning.

Example:**Proverbs 25:25**

**As cold water to a weary soul,
So is good news from a far country.**

When studying poetry, understand that there is a relationship (repetition, contrast, amplification or metaphor) of thoughts between lines of Scripture. Therefore, view the passage as one thought and examine the intended meaning of the passage. The use of parallelism reinforces central truths and spiritual insights. It brings a balance to poetic structure, enhancing rhythm and readability. By presenting related ideas in parallel, it invites meditation and reflection on the connections between them.

(B) Acrostic

A poetic structure where each line or section begins with sequential letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This was used because it helped in memorization and emphasis.

Example:

Psalm 119, where each section begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

(C) *Inclusio*

A literary device where a passage begins and ends with similar words or themes, creating a frame around the text. This is used to emphasize the content within the framed section.

Example:

Psalm 8, which begins and ends with the same refrain.

Psalm 8:1 (and v9)

O LORD, our LORD,

How excellent is Your name in all the earth!

3) Prophecy

Prophetic books declare God's messages to His people, often warning of judgment or promising future restoration. Prophetic messages are received through revelations, visions, dreams and other forms of communication from God (for example, angelic messages, epiphany, etc.). These messages are expressed through spoken word, symbolic actions, and sometimes, poetic language. Prophecies could have immediate or distant fulfillment of prophecies. Some prophecies could have dual fulfillment.

Interpretation guidance:

- Understand the historical context of the prophet and the audience being addressed.
- Identify the main message and purpose of the prophecy.
- Distinguish between predictive and prescriptive prophecy.
- Always interpret prophetic imagery using the rest of Scripture.
- Avoid speculative interpretations.

Example: Isaiah 53

4) Wisdom literature

These are primarily the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. These books provide practical insights and guidance for daily living, rooted in the fear of the Lord. These are proverbs (wise statements) and aphorisms or maxims (a concise expression of truth or principle) that emphasize the importance of discernment, wisdom and understanding. These make use of poetic structure.

Interpretation guidance:

- Identify the key principle being expressed through the poetic language.
- Understand cultural nuances while interpreting and applying timeless wisdom.

Example: Proverbs

5) Epistles (Letters)

These are letters written by apostles to churches or individuals addressing theology, Christian life, and church life. Most letters would follow a logical structure of personal greetings, teaching and exhortation, often addressing specific situations and issues. The letters would use a variety of literary devices such as argumentation and exhortation.

Interpretation guidance:

- Understand the historical and cultural setting of the writer and the recipients.
- Recognize the purpose of the writer.
- Pay attention to the logical flow of thought originally

without chapter and verse demarcations.

- Distinguish between permanent principles and culturally specific instructions.
- Consider the application of teaching to present times.

Example: Romans

6) Parables

Parables are short stories or analogies used to illustrate spiritual truths. These are stories often from everyday situations and common characters. These stories must be interpreted to understand the underlying spiritual truth.

Interpretation guidance:

- Consider the audience and context of the parable.
- Consider the cultural and historical context of the parable.
- Identify the main point without over-allegorizing every detail.
- Consider the application of truths to current times.

Example: The parables of Jesus

7) End-Times prophetic (apocalyptic) literature

End-Times prophetic Scripture texts reveal God's plan for the human race often using imagery and symbolism. They are predictive of future events, especially the End Times.

Interpretation guidance:

- Where relevant, understand the historical and cultural contexts.
- Recognize symbolic language and avoid overly literal

interpretations.

- Compare and stay consistent with other End-Times prophetic passages in the Bible.
- Sometimes, there could be dual fulfillment (current and future events).

Example: The Book of Revelation

Some of these literary styles are considered in greater detail in upcoming chapters.

12

LITERARY TECHNIQUES

In Biblical hermeneutics, understanding the ancient literary techniques used in the Bible is crucial for accurate interpretation. These literary techniques reflect the cultural, theological, and historical context of the time and are key to understanding the intended meaning of a passage. Awareness of these techniques helps us avoid misunderstandings, extract deeper meanings, and appreciate the artistry of the Biblical text. These literary techniques reveal layers of meaning, guide interpretation, and ensure that the original intent of the Biblical authors is respected and understood.

Here is a summary of some key literary techniques used in Scripture that we must be aware of for proper interpretation. We will be covering some of the more important ones in detail in the chapters that follow.

1) Chiasmus (Chiastic structure)

Chiastic structures, or inverted parallelisms, are literary devices that create symmetry by arranging ideas in a pattern, for example, A-B-C-B'-A' or A-B-C-C'-B'-A'. This pattern is named after the Greek letter chi (X), which looks like an X, representing the crossing over or inversion of ideas. This inverted structure helps highlight the central theme or focal point by drawing the reader's attention to the middle element of the chiasm. Chiastic structures are often used to emphasize key concepts, create symmetry, and highlight parallels between different ideas or actions in a text.

It also draws attention to the central theme of a passage guiding the reader toward a key idea and creates balance. It helps draw contrasts and comparisons between ideas. The patterned structure makes it easier to remember and recite passages important in an oral culture.

Examples of a chiastic structure.

Genesis 9:6

**“Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.**

Structure:

A: Shedding of man’s blood
B: By man, bloodshed will occur
C: The image of God
B’: Man created by God
A’: Bloodshed consequence (the main thought)

Human life is sacred because it reflects God’s image.

Isaiah 6:10

**A: Make the heart of this people dull,
B: And their ears heavy,
C: And shut their eyes;
C’: Lest they see with their eyes,
B’: And hear with their ears,
A’: And understand with their heart,
And return and be healed.**

Spiritual blindness and deafness lead to not understanding and missing out on God’s provision of healing.

Matthew 6:24

A: “No one can serve two masters;

B: for either he will hate the one and love the other,

B’: or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

A’: You cannot serve God and mammon.

Here, the A and A’ elements focus on serving two masters (God and money), while the B and B’ elements describe the attitude toward each master. The parallel structure helps the reader see the stark contrast between the choices.

Mark 2:27

And He said to them,

A: “The Sabbath

B: was made for man,

B’: and not man

A’: for the Sabbath.

The Sabbath serves people, not the other way around.

2) Figures of speech: Simile and metaphor

Figures of speech where one thing is compared to another using “like” or “as” (simile) or one thing is described as another (metaphor). This is used to vividly describe spiritual truths or concepts by drawing on familiar, tangible images.

Examples:

Simile (a comparison using “like” or “as”)

Psalm 1:3

He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season.

Isaiah 1:8

**So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard,
As a hut in a garden of cucumbers,**

Describes Jerusalem's vulnerability.

Isaiah 40:31

But those who wait on the LORD
 Shall renew *their* strength;
 They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
 They shall run and not be weary,
 They shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray;
 We have turned, every one, to his own way;
 And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Matthew 10:16

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Metaphor (a direct comparison without using “like” or “as”)

Psalms 23:1

The LORD is my shepherd;
 I shall not want.

Matthew 5:13,14

¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 11:30

For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.

John 10:11a

I am the good shepherd.

John 15:5a

I am the vine, you *are* the branches.

3) Figure of speech: Hyperbole (exaggeration for effect)

A **hyperbole** is an exaggeration used for emphasis or effect in order to stress the importance or seriousness of a message.

Examples:

- Exaggeration about the height of city walls.

Deuteronomy 1:28

...the cities *are* great and fortified up to heaven;...

- The following hyperbole emphasizes the need to avoid sin, not a literal act.

Matthew 5:29,30

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you;

³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; ...

- Hyperbole highlighting the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

Matthew 23:24

Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Luke 18:25

For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

- Exaggeration about the number of books needed to record Jesus’ deeds.

John 21:25

And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

- Exaggeration about them plucking out their eyes to give to Paul, essentially expressing their love towards Paul.

Galatians 4:15

What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

4) Figure of speech: Personification (attributing human qualities to non-human things)

- Wisdom is personified as calling out.

Proverbs 8:1-3

¹Does not wisdom cry out,

And understanding lift up her voice?

²She takes her stand on the top of the high hill,

Beside the way, where the paths meet.

³She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city,

At the entrance of the doors:

- Nature is given human actions of singing and clapping.

Isaiah 55:12

...The mountains and the hills

Shall break forth into singing before you,

And all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

- Creation is depicted as groaning in anticipation.

Romans 8:22

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

5) Typology (types and shadows)

A method where certain events, persons or institutions in the Old Testament are prefigures, types or foreshadows of New Testament realities. These are not man-made. These are explicitly identified by the Holy Spirit in Scripture to show continuity and fulfillment of God's plan.

Example:

The Passover Lamb (Exodus 12) as a type of Christ, the true Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

6) Symbolism and prophetic imagery

Objects, colors, numbers, or actions that represent deeper meanings. Often used when God spoke to the prophets in visions and dreams, particularly in books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation. Also used to communicate messages to God’s people so that spiritual truths or prophetic messages would resonate and have impact.

Examples:

- **Jeremiah 18** the potter’s wheel.
- The four beasts in **Daniel 7** symbolize various empires.
- The candlesticks representing the seven churches in **Revelation**.
- The Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb in Revelation symbolizes Christ.

7) Irony and sarcasm

Saying the opposite of what is meant, often for emphasis. A technique where the intended meaning is opposite to the literal meaning, often to highlight human folly, or used to correct in a powerful way.

- God rebukes Israel sarcastically for turning to idols.

Judges 10:14

Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.

- Michal sarcastically criticizes David’s worship.

2 Samuel 6:20

...“How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself in the eyes of the maids of his servants...

- Elijah mocks the prophets of Baal.

1 Kings 18:27

...“Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.”

- Job sarcastically responds to his friends’ advice.

Job 12:2

“No doubt you *are* the people,
And wisdom will die with you!

- Amos sarcastically invites Israel to worship falsely.

Amos 4:4

Come to Bethel and transgress,
At Gilgal multiply transgression;

- Paul sarcastically confronts the Corinthians’ arrogance.

1 Corinthians 4:8

You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us...

8) Rhetorical questions

Questions asked not for information but to make a point or stimulate reflection. The purpose of this style is to engage the audience and emphasize truth.

Paul uses this style as a persuasive device extensively in writing the epistle to the Romans and other epistles. Paul’s rhetorical questions often serve to emphasize doctrinal truths, challenge misconceptions, and engage his readers in reflection.

Examples:

Romans 6:1,2

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Romans 8:31

What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?

1 Corinthians 1:13

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1 Corinthians 6:19

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

1 Corinthians 15:55

“O Death, where *is* your sting?

O Hades, where *is* your victory?”

Galatians 3:1,2

¹O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

²This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

A few of these literary techniques are considered in greater detail in upcoming chapters.

13

FIGURES OF SPEECH

A **figure of speech** is a word or phrase that is used to communicate something other than its literal natural meaning. For example, in English, we may use “as bright as the sun”, “it is raining cats and dogs”, “busy as a bee”, etc. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony, and sarcasm may all be used as different figures of speech.

How do we determine if an expression is figurative or literal?

- 1) Always take a passage in its literal sense unless there is a good reason for considering the text to be figurative and not literal.
- 2) The figurative sense is intended if the literal would involve an impossibility.
 - The Lamb of God refers figuratively to Jesus Christ, not an animal (John 1:29).
 - Jeremiah being made an iron pillar and a bronze wall is figuratively representing strength (Jeremiah 1:18).
- 3) The figurative is intended if the literal meaning is an absurdity.
 - The trees clapping hands (Isaiah 55:12).
- 4) Take the figurative sense if the literal requires action that cannot be literally carried out.
 - Jesus said we had to eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:53-58).

- Take up your cross daily and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23).
- 5) Sometimes, the figurative expression is followed by an explanatory literal statement.
- Those who fall asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15) are those who have died (v.16).

How should we interpret figures of speech?

1) Determine if a figure of speech is involved.

Matthew 7:6

“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

2 Timothy 2:3-6

³You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

⁴No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

⁵And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

⁶The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.

2) Discover the image and the literal in the figure of speech.

- **Matthew 7:6** Do not entrust holy things to unholy people
- **2 Timothy 2:3-6** The believer is compared to a soldier, athlete, farmer

John 2:19

Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

“Temple” here refers to Christ’ physical body.

3) Understand the points of comparison.

Psalm 1:3

**He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.**

Secure, prosperous, fruitful

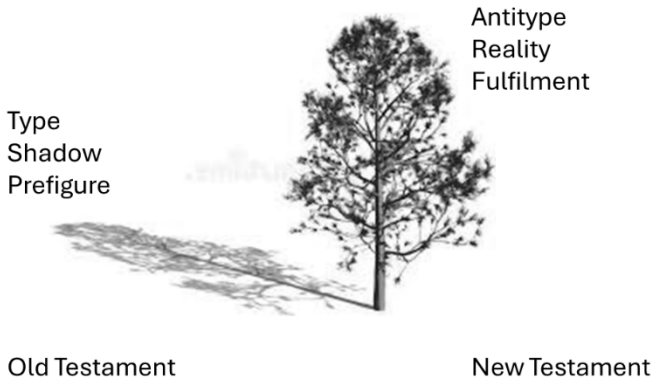
- 4) Keep in mind that the same figure could mean different things. Interpret the figure considering the context of its usage.
 - **Lion:** Satan roams about like a roaring lion stealthily. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah bold and kingly.
 - **Thief:** The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus' return will be like a thief in the night, unexpected and unannounced.
- 5) Draw out the meaning and key insights.
 - **Matthew 7:6** Do not entrust holy things to unholy people.
 - **2 Timothy 2:3-6** The believer is compared to a soldier, athlete, farmer and should live in such a manner.
 - **John 2:19** Crucify Christ and He will be raised up.
 - **Psalm 1:3** Such a man will be thriving, fruitful and prosperous.
- 6) Place legitimate limits or controls on the figures applying common sense, rules of logic and communication when extracting the meaning and key insights.
 - In 1 Thessalonians 5:2, when Paul writes, "*the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night*" means the Lord would

come unexpectedly, not that He would come to steal from us. It also does not mean He will come at 12:00 midnight.

- “*He shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars tremble*” (Job 9:6). Here the pillars of the earth trembling refers to the mountains of the earth and does not mean that the earth is resting on pillars.

14

TYPES & SHADOWS



The New Testament indicates to us that certain people, characters or events in the Old Testament were prefigures, types and shadows of what is more real (the antitype, the reality or fulfillment).

Romans 5:14

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Adam is referred to as “a type” of Christ, who is the true, the antitype, the reality or fulfillment. We see this further compared in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, “*And so it is written, “the first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from*

heaven.” (1 Corinthians 15:45-47)

Colossians 2:16,17

¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Paul also points back to the practices and observances of the Old Testament referring to them as a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Galatians 4:21-26

²¹ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.

²³ But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—

²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—

²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Here, in Galatians, Paul points to Hagar and Sarah, and the sons Ishmael and Isaac, symbolizing the two covenants.

Hebrews 8:5

who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

Hebrews 10:1

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

The writer of Hebrews points to the Old Testament

tabernacle and the sacrifices as a copy and shadow of heavenly things and good things to come.

Hence, it becomes evident to us that some of these Old Testament people, practices and events were a type and shadow of the reality presented to us in the New Testament.

What purpose do these “types and shadows” serve?

Imagine, we see the shadow of a tree. We can with confidence identify it as a tree. It lets us know that there is a real tree, although we are only seeing the shadow of the tree. We may be able to get some ideas about the tree, perhaps identify what kind of tree, how many branches, if it has leaves on it, if it has fruits on it. However, there are many details about the tree that cannot be determined from the shadow. But once we see the tree, we see the reality. We see much more, we see colors and a whole lot more.

The types and shadows in the Old Testament are prefigures that point us to the truth or reality presented in the New Testament. We can learn a lot from the types and shadows that better help us understand the reality we encounter in the New Testament.

A Biblical type or shadow has the following characteristics.

- 1) **Similarity:** The first characteristic of a type is that there are similarities between the type and its antitype (fulfillment, reality).
- 2) **Historical reality:** Persons, events, or things in the Old Testament that are types of things in the New Testament had historical reality.
- 3) **Prefiguring:** A type tells us that the reality is ahead of

us. The type in essence has a predictive or foreshadowing element to it. It points to the antitype. A type is a shadow that points ahead to the reality.

- 4) **Heightening:** In typology, the antitype (the fulfillment, the reality) is greater than and superior to the type.
- 5) **Divine design:** Types are not mere analogies or illustrations that we make up. Instead, they are resemblances planned by God. The type was designed in such a way that it carried a likeness to the antitype (the fulfillment).
- 6) **Designated by God:** Types and shadows are not made up by us, the readers of Scripture. Instead, the types and shadows are explicitly pointed out to us in Scripture. Scripture must in some way indicate that something or someone is a type.

Short list of types and shadows and their antitypes (fulfillment)

As we mentioned, types and shadows are God-designed, God-designated and stated in Scripture.

(This is not a complete listing.)

- Adam is a type of Christ, the last Adam (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49)
- Melchizedek (priest and king) with a priesthood that predates and surpasses the Levitical priesthood, is a type of Christ, the eternal High Priest (Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-17).
- Circumcision, which was a physical sign of the covenant is a type of the spiritual circumcision of the heart (Genesis 17:10; Romans 2:29).
- Passover, Israel's deliverance through the blood of the lamb

is a type of Christ's atoning death and Christ our Passover (Exodus 12; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

- The Red Sea is a type of water baptism (Exodus 14:21-31; 1 Corinthians 10:1,2)
- Manna from heaven is a type of Christ, the Bread of Life (Exodus 16:4-35; John 6:32-35)
- The bronze serpent, which was raised for the healing of Israel, is a type of Christ, lifted on the cross for salvation (Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14,15).
- The Rock that followed Israel is a type of Christ, the source of living water (1 Corinthians 10:4)
- The Tabernacle, which was God's dwelling among His people, is a type of Christ as the ultimate presence of God and the Church as His Body (Exodus 25-40; Hebrews 9:11,12).
- The Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, which represent God's presence, covenant and place of meeting, were a type of Christ, fulfilling the covenant and embodying God's presence, Christ Himself becoming our Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:10-22; Romans 3:25).
- The Sacrificial System is a type of Christ's sacrifice (Leviticus 1-7; Hebrews 9:13,14; Hebrews 10:1-10).
- The High Priest, who was a mediator offering sacrifices for sin, is a type of Christ, the perfect High Priest (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 5:4,5).
- The Feast of First fruits, the offering of the first harvest is a type of Christ's resurrection as the firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a type of the believer's

life of holiness (Exodus 12; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

- The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) which was the annual day of atonement for sin is a type of Christ's once-for-all atonement (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:24-26).
- The Promised Land (Canaan), a place of rest and inheritance, is a type of rest in Christ from works and our inheritance in Christ (Joshua 1:1-9; Hebrews 4:8-10).
- The Old Testament Temple, which was a physical dwelling of God, is a type of the spiritual temple, the Church (1 Kings 6; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21,22).
- Mount Zion, which is God's holy mountain, is a type of the heavenly Jerusalem (Psalm 2:6; Hebrews 12:22-24).
- Jonah the prophet, who was three days in the belly of the fish, is a type of Christ's burial and resurrection (Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:39-41).
- Marriage, the union of man and woman, is a type of Christ's union with the Church (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31,32).

Illustrations distinguished from Biblical types and shadows

Romans 15:4

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

1 Corinthians 10:6,11

⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The Bible also teaches us that things written in the Old Testament were written for our learning and for our example.

Hence, we can make use of the Old Testament (and New Testament) narratives to learn lessons, draw insights, and grow in our journey of faith.

For example, we can use the incident of David fighting Goliath as an example or illustration of bold faith in God and God's faithfulness to His covenant.

The main difference between using Biblical narratives as illustrations and types and shadows is that types and shadows have an actual New Testament fulfillment and have been designated as such in Scripture. The connection between the type and shadow in the Old Testament and the fulfillment in the New Testament is indicated in Scripture. However, when we use narratives in Scripture as illustrations, we, through our study and with the help of the Holy Spirit, identify insights and truth, and then see how we can apply them in our daily lives.

When handling types and shadows and when using Biblical illustrations, we must be careful not to read into the text beyond what is stated. We must also confine ourselves to be in alignment with what is stated and taught in the rest of Scripture.

We must **avoid allegorizing** when handling types and shadows and when using Biblical events as illustrations.

We will address this important principle in a separate chapter.

15

PARABLES

A parable is a form of figurative language. It is an extended analogy in story form. Parables are stories from our world that illustrate or illuminate spiritual truth. A parable could use a story that actually happened or it could use a fictional story or a normal day-to-day occurrence that illustrates spiritual truth.

“Parable” in Greek is ‘*parabole*’ = a placing beside; a placing of one thing beside another. Thus, it is a story that is thrown alongside the truth to illustrate the truth. The Greek ‘*parabole*’ could also refer to short statements and to proverbs.

Why did Jesus speak in parables?

Matthew 13:10-17

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

¹¹ He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

¹⁴ And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,
And seeing you will see and not perceive;

¹⁵ For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

*Their ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,*

Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,

Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.’

¹⁶ But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;

¹⁷ for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.

Matthew 13:34,35

³⁴ All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,

³⁵ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

“I will open My mouth in parables;

I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.”

In describing the spiritual condition of the people during that time, the Lord Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6:9,10. In judgment, God allowed people to be in a spiritual state where they could not see, hear or understand. If they did, they would turn to the Lord and be healed. The same spiritual conditions prevailed over the people during Jesus’ earthly ministry. However, His disciples who followed Him were privileged by God to see, hear and understand. “*In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it”* (Luke 10:21-24).

Did Jesus speak in parables to intentionally conceal the truth from His audience? This would be contrary to who He

was and is. Jesus was “*the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world*” (John 1:9). Jesus was the One of whom it was said, “*The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned*” (Matthew 4:16). Being the Light of the world, His intent would not be to keep people in darkness, but to enable them to see the light, to see spiritual truth.

The Lord Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy (Psalm 78:2). The purpose of the parables according to this Psalm was to unveil things that were kept secret from the foundation of the world.

The purpose of the parables is to unveil mysteries, not to hide mysteries. The purpose of the parables is to make secrets of the Kingdom accessible to the listener.

Why did Jesus speak in parables?

The Lord Jesus states here that His disciples were blessed by God with eyes that could see, ears that could hear, a heart that could understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven. So, when He presented His parables, the disciples could see, hear and understand the truth of the Kingdom because it was given to them to do so. They could remember the stories, and understand spiritual truth, secrets and principles of the Kingdom.

The crowds of people who came to Jesus could not see, hear or understand spiritual truth or the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven. This was their current spiritual condition. What was the purpose then in presenting them with parables which contained truth hidden inside the story? Their eyes, ears and hearts were already dull, and truth was further concealed within the story.

The purpose of presenting them with parables was so that they could, through the story, encounter the truth contained in the story and thus, open their dull hearts, eyes and ears.

Parables contain truth hidden in the story, thus making the story a vehicle to access truth, understand truth and retain truth.

Parables were an effective form of communication because as stories, they dealt with common, everyday elements and immediately captured the attention of the hearers. The stories were easy to relate to, remember, and encouraged people to think.

Here are some of the common things Jesus spoke about in His parables.

- The two houses (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49)
- The new cloth and new wineskins (Matthew 9:16,17; Mark 2:21,22; Luke 5:36-38)
- The Sower (Matthew 13:3-9,18-23; Mark 4:3-9,13-20; Luke 8:5-8,11-15)
- The Weeds / tares (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43)
- The mustard seed (Matthew 13:31,32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18,19)
- The yeast / leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20,21)
- The hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44)
- The pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45,46)
- The fishing net (Matthew 13:47-50)
- The unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35)
- The workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

- The two sons (Matthew 21:28-32)
- The wicked vine growers (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)
- The wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-14)
- The two servants / faithful and evil servants (Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-48)
- The ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
- The talents (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27)
- The seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26-29)
- The doorkeeper (Mark 13:33-37)
- The rude children (Matthew 11:16-19; Luke 7:31-35)
- The two debtors (Luke 7:40-43)
- The good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)
- The friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-8)
- The rich fool (Luke 12:16-21)
- The barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9)
- The great banquet (Luke 14:15-24)
- The unfinished tower and the king's rash war (Luke 14:28-33)
- The lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7)
- The lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)
- The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)
- The shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-13)
- The servants' reward (Luke 17:7-10)
- The unjust judge and the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8)

- The pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)
- The pounds / minas (Luke 19:11-27)

Guidelines for interpreting parables

- 1) Read the parable / illustration across the Gospels if found in multiple Gospels. Include what is stated in all the Gospel accounts and understand the immediate meaning of the parable.
- 2) Recognize the purpose of the parable and the analogies used.

What do selected elements in the parable represent?

Example in the parable of the sower:

seed = word of God; **ground** = heart; **birds of the air** = satan;

stony ground = hardships, afflictions;

thorns = cares of this world, desire for other things; etc.

Do not turn parables into allegories by trying to read meaning into every detail. Use only those analogies that were explicitly pointed out.

- 1) Determine the main truths that are being communicated through the parable.
- 2) Validate if the truths and insights gleaned are consistent with the teaching of the rest of Scripture.
- 3) Consider how the truths and insights given through the parable can be applied in everyday life.

16

AVOID ALLEGORIZING

Thou shalt not allegorize Scripture text when teaching and preaching!

Allegorizing

We state that someone is allegorizing a Scripture text when the literal meaning of the text is ignored and a forced or hidden meaning is assigned to the text, which was not intended by the author and is not a natural extension of the text. **Allegory** is conjuring up ideas unrelated and foreign to the text, and not directly indicated or illustrated by the text. When allegorizing, the preacher is adding figurative meaning and interpretation that are not intended by the author.

While it is possible to allegorize Scripture text and still remain theologically correct, it is not a proper handling of the Scriptures.

Often, allegorizing Scripture text results in wrong interpretations and erroneous ideas. Allegorizing often leads to **eisegesis** (reading into the text what is not there, and thus, resulting in a wrong understanding of Scripture text) and, **subjective interpretation** (reading personal experiences, revelations, ideas, opinions or interests into Scripture).

Wrong hermeneutics, correct theology

Often, in preaching, although the preacher is handling the text incorrectly by allegorizing, the ideas brought out may still be theologically correct. In such situations, while not the correct

way to handle Scripture text, we are still somewhat “safe”. However, when allegorizing leads to untruth and theological digressions, people can get into error and be led astray. Our goal should be to handle Scripture text the way God would have us handle it—using good hermeneutics to present correct theology so that God can be glorified and people edified in their journey of faith.

Examples of allegorizing—what we must not do with Scripture

The following are a few examples of allegorizing. These are given as examples of what we must **NOT** do. Like these examples, any passage of Scripture text could be handled incorrectly when allegorizing, and we must avoid doing so.

Allegorizing Abraham, Eliezer, Rebekah, Isaac (Genesis 24)

Abraham commissioned his servant, most likely Eliezer (Genesis 15:2) to go back to his homeland and find a bride for Isaac. Eliezer found Rebekah and brought her to be Isaac’s wife. We can definitely use this story to illustrate and draw insights on how God could guide us in life, orchestrate circumstances and lead us into His purposes as we step out in faith. The words of Abraham’s servant are indeed a great encouragement to simply trust and obey, “*As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me...*” (Genesis 24:27). However, to allegorize and to turn this incident into something figurative, making Abraham a type of Christ, Eliezer a type of the Holy Spirit preparing Rebekah a type of the Church, for Isaac a type of Christ, is incorrect handling of Scripture text. While the essence is theologically correct, that is, the Holy Spirit is indeed preparing the Church and making her a Bride ready for the Groom who is Christ, none of that is intended in the Genesis 24 narrative, neither

is it stated elsewhere in Scripture. The connections are purely the work of good imagination and yet, an improper handling of Scripture.

Allegorizing David's five smooth stones when going against Goliath

“Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:40).

David going out to fight Goliath can be used as an **illustration** of boldness, faith in God, dependance on God and so on. Using this narrative as an illustration and to encourage people is proper handling of the text. For us to point out that David took his staff, five smooth stones, and his sling to go fight Goliath and to encourage people to use whatever God has given them to overcome their Goliath is perfectly correct. In this approach, we are using a historical narrative to highlight spiritual lessons that we can follow.

However, if a preacher stated that the Holy Spirit had given him a special revelation that each of David's five smooth stones represents the following: the first stone is the Word of God, the second stone is the name of Jesus, the third stone is the blood of Jesus, the fourth stone is the Holy Spirit, and the fifth stone is faith; and every believer must take these five stones to fight their Goliath, then **this is an example of allegorizing**. In this case, the substance of what was stated is correct, that is, these indeed are spiritual weapons God has given to all believers. However, it is not the proper handling of the text, because a) that was **not the original intent** of 1 Samuel 17:40 and b) we do not have any other place in Scripture where this kind of comparison is stated, and c) someone else can designate something different

to each of the five stones (for example, each stone represents praise, worship, prayer, giving, and fasting) and claim that to be the revelation they received from God, and someone else can claim divine revelation and do some other designation (for example, each stone represents one of the five-fold ministries of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, and evangelist). There is no way to determine which of these “private revelations” are correct. In fact, none of them are correct because they have not been stated so anywhere in Scripture.

Allegorizing David and his mighty men

David killed Goliath. One of his mighty men, Elhanan killed Goliath’s brother (2 Samuel 21:19; 1 Chronicles 20:5). David represents Jesus who defeated satan. Elhanan and David’s mighty men represent the Church that must defeat Goliath’s brother (demons). This is allegorizing and an improper handling of Scripture text as an imaginary meaning is assigned to the characters that were not intended by the author, nor is it substantiated elsewhere in Scripture.

Allegorizing the widow, her jar of oil and the miracle (2 Kings 4:1-7)

God working a miracle through the prophet Elisha to clear a widow’s debt, provide for her and her two sons is a wonderful record for us to believe God can do similar financial miracles in our day and time. Our God is still the God who works miracles of debt cancellation and provision. The narrative must be presented as it is, for what it states, and inspiration and encouragement can be drawn from it that inspires faith in the hearts of God’s people today to believe for similar miracles. However, to assign figurative meaning to each of the characters, for example, the widow represents the Church, jar of oil represents the Holy Spirit, house represents our prayer

closet, and vessels represent other people into whom we pour out the oil of the Spirit, etc. is an example of allegorizing and an improper handling of this text.

Allegorizing the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

The parable of the good Samaritan was given to illustrate how we must care for people regardless of our social, cultural, ethnic and other differences. However, let's say we assign figurative meanings to individual characters in this parable, allegorizing it as follows:

- as the man who was beaten and robbed represents sinners,
- the thieves represent satan,
- the good Samaritan represents the believer,
- the bandage is a type of God's Word,
- the oil and wine a type of the Holy Spirit and Lord's Table,
- the donkey a type of Christian ministry,
- the inn is a type of the local church,
- the money that was offered are the tithes and
- offerings represent believers given to the local church.

While this may make for a good sermon, and a lot of applause, and in some circles, can pass off as deep "revelation", this is absurd! This kind of allegorizing is a mishandling of Scripture text that was not intended by the Speaker (the Lord Jesus).

Using Scripture narratives as illustrations

When using Biblical narratives as illustrations without allegorizing them, here are a few guidelines that help us respect the integrity of the Scripture text while bringing insights that

minister to people in today's context.

1) Be mindful of the original historical account.

Remember that Biblical narratives recount real events that reveal God's character and His dealings with people. Understand the people, their times and culture to better understand what happened.

2) Focus on spiritual learning, insights, and principles.

Each narrative can teach us about God, who He is, His ways, about ourselves as people, and how we can walk with God. Focus on drawing out these insights that transcend time, culture and people, and apply them to modern day context.

3) Break down long narratives into smaller segments.

Sometimes, looking at a long narrative in smaller portions and bringing out key insights helps understand the overarching ways and workings of God. It also helps make these principles relevant and presents them in simple and easy ways that can be remembered.

4) Avoid allegorical interpretations.

We must avoid interpreting characters or events as symbols for modern concepts unless explicitly stated in Scripture. Do not introduce connections, figurative meanings, etc. that are not intended in the original text or stated elsewhere in Scripture.

5) Focus on learning more about God.

Our goal in our study of Scripture is to learn more about God and how He would want us to follow Him. Focus on drawing these insights and practical principles.

Understand when something is symbolic and when something is not

We know “oil” is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. But this does not mean that every time the word “oil” is used in the Bible, it represents the Holy Spirit. “Oil” is used literally for cooking, offering, lighting, anointing, and figuratively as a picture of strength, kindness, joy, etc.

“Fire” is used literally to cook, to offer sacrifices, to burn chaff, etc., or as symbolic of many different things, such as Holy Spirit, God’s purifying work, God’s judgment, God’s acceptance of sacrifice, presence of God, our sacrifice to God, etc.

Apply hermeneutical principles that we have learnt to determine if something is symbolic or literal.

Here are some guidelines to help us determine when something is symbolic and when something is literal.

1) Contextual analysis.

Understand the context. Historical narratives are to be taken literally and can be used as illustrations without allegorizing.

2) Recognize the literary language style.

Different literary styles within the Bible (poetry, narrative, prophecy, epistles) utilize language differently. For example, the poetic language of Psalms often employs metaphors and similes (for example, Psalm 23:1 “*The Lord is my shepherd*”), indicating a symbolic interpretation. In contrast, historical narratives like the accounts of Jesus’ miracles are taken literally.

3) Recognize language techniques.

Recognize the language technique being used. For example,

when reading the parables of Jesus, we understand that these are illustrations with truth in them, and we follow the guidelines to interpret parables correctly.

4) Stay consistent and in agreement with the rest of Scripture.

Scripture should interpret Scripture. Stay with the meaning and interpretations that can be supported with other portions of Scripture. Often, symbolic or figurative elements are interpreted in other places in Scripture. For example, Revelation 1:20 explains that the seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches, providing clarity on a symbolic reference earlier in the text.

5) Recognize dual meaning.

There are times when a Scripture text uses symbolic / figurative language but has a literal fulfillment. An example would be in Ezekiel 37:1-14 (the Valley of Dry Bones); while it describes a vision that contains symbolic elements (dry bones representing Israel's hopelessness), it also conveys a literal promise of restoration for Israel.

Example of illustration, allegorizing and type and shadows

In the preceding chapters, we have explained the difference between types and shadows, illustrations and allegorizing.

Let's consider one more set of examples to help us understand the distinction.

Genesis 3:7

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Genesis 3:21

Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

Numbers 21:8,9

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”

⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

John 3:14,15

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they made themselves a covering of fig leaves. Later, God brought them tunics of skin and clothed them indicating that animals had to be killed and blood had to be shed in order to provide a covering for sin. The New Testament does not refer back to these specific incidents.

Not a type and shadow: Hence, the incidents of Genesis 3:7,21 do not meet the requirement of being a “type and shadow” as the New Testament does not explicitly point back to them.

Illustration: The incidents of Genesis 3:7,21 can be used as an illustration in preaching and teaching of how we attempt to cover our sin through our human efforts but only what God provides through the shedding of blood can be a covering for sin. This is in keeping with the original context and is aligned to the teaching of the rest of the Bible.

Allegorizing: However, if someone stated the fig leaves represent the nation of Israel and therefore, the Old Covenant,

and the tunics of skin represented the Church and the New Covenant, this would be allegorizing and assigning to the incident meanings that are not in keeping with the original context, and not supported elsewhere in Scripture.

Type and shadow: The incident of Moses raising up a bronze serpent is a type and shadow. The New Testament, in this case, the Lord Jesus Himself explicitly refers back to it with a meaning that is in keeping with the original context of healing and deliverance, and with further light pointing that incident to His work on the Cross.

17

AVOID CONNECTING UNRELATED PHRASES

Interpret text in its context. Do not take words or phrases out of their context and connect them or cross-reference unconnected texts to arrive at theological conclusions and statements. Most often, these lead to wrong interpretation and erroneous teaching.

Here are examples of what we **MUST NOT DO**.

The power of God

Deuteronomy 8:18 God gives us power to make wealth.

Romans 1:16 The Gospel is the power of God.

Wrong statement: God has given us the Gospel to make wealth.

Passed over

Exodus 12:13,24 God passed over the door of His people's homes in Egypt when the blood was applied to protect them.

Romans 3:25 In His forbearance, God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

Wrong statement: In Egypt, God was actually passing over the people's sins so they could be protected from the destroyer.

Born of water

John 3:5 You must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God.

Mark 16:16 You must believe and be baptized in water.

Wrong statement: You must be water baptized to be born again and to be saved.

Faith is a servant

Luke 17:5,6 Jesus spoke about faith and how to use it.

Luke 17:7-10 Jesus spoke about the servant who does the work assigned to him.

Wrong statement: Faith is our servant that goes out and does what we want it to do.

Seven Spirits of God

Revelation 1:4; Revelation 3:1; Revelation 4:5; Revelation 5:6 mention the seven Spirits of God

Isaiah 11:2 mentions the seven Spirits which are (1) Spirit of the LORD, (2) Spirit of wisdom, (3) Spirit of understanding, (4) Spirit of counsel, (5) Spirit of might, (6) Spirit of knowledge and (7) Spirit of the fear of the LORD.

Wrong statements: The Holy Spirit is made up of seven different Spirits. There are seven Spirits which together make up the Holy Spirit.

The rod of God

Exodus 4:20; Exodus 17:9 Moses' rod was called the rod of God.

Isaiah 11:1,4; Revelation 12:5; Revelation 19:15 Jesus is the Rod from the stem of Jesse who will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth. Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Wrong statement: Moses' rod was a type of Christ.

Guidelines when cross-referencing and connecting words and phrases

When connecting words and phrases and cross-referencing Scripture texts, it is essential to follow hermeneutical principles that ensure accurate interpretation and application of Biblical texts.

Here are some key guidelines when cross-referencing and connecting words and phrases.

1) Understand the context.

When cross-referencing, understanding the context of both the passages is important. The same word or phrase could be applied differently based on the context of its usage. For example, if we are studying about the cross, remember it is used in different contexts when referring to the redeeming work of Jesus on the cross and the cross a disciple is called to carry to follow Jesus daily.

Consider this statement that Jesus made. It is the same statement but made under two different contexts.

- Context having to do with revelation

Matthew 13:12

For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

- Context having to do with stewardship and fruitfulness

Matthew 25:29

For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

Hence, we have to interpret the statement within the given context. We also understand that the principle of the Kingdom remains the same. God rewards those who are faithful and fruitful with what they have with even more, whether in terms of revelation of the Kingdom or with being entrusted with “talents” (resources, gifts, responsibility, etc.) of the Kingdom.

2) Understand themes.

Cross-referencing related passages can provide deeper insights on the theme that is being studied. For example, the Psalmist states, “The Lord is my Shepherd”. In the New Testament, Jesus said “I am the good Shepherd”. Here, the themes are the same—that of God being our Shepherd.

3) Recognize progressive revelation.

Recognize that God’s revelation unfolds over time. The same word or phrase used in later texts and in the light of later revelations can enhance comprehension. The Mercy Seat is used in the Old Testament in the Tabernacle. Christ is referred to as our Mercy Seat in Romans 4. In Romans, there is an increased understanding of atonement and redemption through Jesus Christ.

4) Literal use of texts.

The plain meaning of the texts should be taken unless there are clear indicators that a figurative or symbolic interpretation is intended. Using the word or phrase in one text literally and using it figuratively in the other portion could lead to error.

5) When working with figurative language, stay consistent with interpretation.

For example, if we cross-reference the word “light” as used in reference to God and consider a few Scriptures such as, Psalm 27:1, “*The Lord is my light and my salvation,*” John 8:12, where Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world*” and James 1:17, “*... the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning*”, it is fine as long as we interpret the metaphor “light” consistently to represent “truth, revelation, guidance, the absence of darkness, and the dispelling of darkness.” If we add to this, Revelation 22:5 which states “*There shall be no*

night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light”, we must note here that “light” is used in a literal sense, not figuratively. If we then arrive at a statement that *‘I do not need a lamp or sunlight because the Lord gives me light’*, and walk about in the dark, it would be an absurd statement even though we have cross-referenced Scriptures that speak of God being our light.

6) Stay consistent with the rest of Scripture.

When cross-referencing and connecting words and phrases across Scripture texts, stay consistent with the rest of Scripture in the understanding and meanings you elicit.

7) Avoid forcing cross-reference connections.

Do not force connections between verses or Scripture texts that are not related contextually or thematically.

18

UNDERSTAND THE USE OF TERMINOLOGY AND PHRASES

In Scripture, we find certain words, terms or phrases that are sometimes used in a repeated manner by the writer. Understanding the word or phrase and the different ways it is used, will help us stay consistent in our understanding and interpretation of the Scripture text, especially if the same writer is involved. This is especially important in reading the prophets or the epistles.

Let's look at a few examples.

“Inquire of the Lord, inquired of the Lord”

This is a phrase used several times in the Old Testament teaching us that people looked to God for answers, direction and counsel in difficult times and situations. Rebekah went to inquire of the Lord about the children in her womb and God revealed to her His plans unfolding through the twins that would be born (Genesis 25:22,23). Later, the leaders and sometimes, the people enquired through the priests using the Urim and Thummim (Numbers 27:21; Judges 20:18,27). And then, people and kings started inquiring of the Lord through the prophets (1 Samuel 9:6,9; 1 Kings 22:5-8). King David can be seen as a man who inquired of the Lord often in decisions he had to make (1 Samuel 10:22; 1 Samuel 22:10; 1 Samuel 23:2,4; 1 Samuel 28:6; 1 Samuel 30:8; 2 Samuel 2:1; 2 Samuel 5:19,23; 2 Samuel 21:1; 1 Chronicles 14:10). His seeking and inquiring of God seemed to be his passion (Psalm 27:4). We can learn a

lot from these examples in the Old Testament about inquiring of God, waiting to hear from Him and following His directives. When we move into the New Testament, we have the wonderful privilege where every believer can be led by the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

“Bless the Lord”

Used several times in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, directing us to offer praise, glory, honor and to magnify and exalt the Lord.

“The Holy One of Israel”

Found about 31 times in the Old Testament, 25 of which are in the book of Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah seemed to have a personal revelation and awe of the holiness of God beginning with his own call and commission in Isaiah 6. He uses this frequently to show that the One who is speaking is holy and is to be held in such awe and reverence.

“Daughter of Zion, daughters of Zion”

The phrase “Daughter of Zion” (or “Daughters of Zion”) appears frequently in the Old Testament and has both a literal and a metaphorical meaning depending on the context.

In its literal sense, the term “Zion” refers to the city of Jerusalem or, more broadly, the nation of Israel. “Daughter of Zion” is a poetic or personified way of referring to the inhabitants of Jerusalem or the people of Israel as a whole. It reflects the covenant relationship between God and His chosen people, often portraying them as a daughter under His care.

In a metaphorical sense, the phrase is rich in symbolism and conveys various ideas depending on the context—God’s tender relationship with His people where as a father protects

and disciplines his daughter, God expresses His care for Jerusalem and His people (Zechariah 2:10). Sometimes, He rebukes and warns of judgment calling out their unfaithfulness and sins (Isaiah 1:21). This is always done with hope and the promise of restoration (Zechariah 9:9).

When used in the plural, “Daughters of Zion” refers to the collective women of Jerusalem or Israel and sometimes, carries a tone of warning or mourning (Isaiah 3:16,17; Lamentations 2:19).

“The hand of the Lord”

This phrase is found about 35 times in the Old Testament, about **six times** in Isaiah, **seven times** in Ezekiel, and **three times** in the New Testament. The phrase “the hand of the Lord” is used to denote God’s action in various situations and is used to reference God’s power and might, God’s presence, God’s judgment, God’s blessing and God’s guidance.

- God’s power and authority (Joshua 4:24; Psalm 118:15,16; Isaiah 19:16; Isaiah 25:10; Isaiah 41:20; Isaiah 62:3; Isaiah 66:14).
- God’s presence, empowering and anointing (1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 3:15; Ezekiel 1:3; Ezekiel 3:14,22; Ezekiel 8:1; Ezekiel 33:22; Ezekiel 37:1; Ezekiel 40:1; Luke 1:66; Acts 11:21; Acts 13:11).
- God’s judgment and discipline (Exodus 9:3; Exodus 16:3; Deuteronomy 2:15; Joshua 22:31; Judges 2:15; Ruth 1:13; 1 Samuel 5:6,9; 1 Samuel 7:13; 1 Samuel 12:15; 2 Samuel 24:14; 1 Chronicles 21:13; Job 12:9; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17).
- God’s blessing and favor (Ezra 7:6,28; Nehemiah 2:18).

- God’s guidance (Proverbs 21:1).

“In Christ, in Him, in Whom, by Him”

In the epistles of the apostle Paul, there are certain phrases that stand out for some of the key revelations that are presented to us. We mention a few of these here. The term “in Christ” and the related terms are used by the apostle Paul to communicate one of the main revelations in the New Testament. Scriptures that contain this element unveil to us our identity and life in Christ.

“Grace and peace”

A common opening salutation of the apostle Paul in his epistles proclaims God’s favor and God’s peace for his audience.

“Mystery / mysteries”

Out of 27 occurrences of the words, “mystery” and “mysteries”, 20 times these occur in the writings of the apostle Paul. The terms “mystery” and “mysteries” (from the Greek word *‘mysterion’*) refer to spiritual truths that were previously hidden but have now been revealed by God.

Here are a few aspects of what Paul references through the terms, “mystery” or “mysteries” in his epistles.

- Unveiling of previously hidden truths now made known through the apostles and their teaching (Ephesians 3:3-5; Romans 16:25,26)
- The mystery about Christ and God’s glorious plan of salvation through Him (Colossians 1:26,27)
- The plan and purpose of God for the human race (Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:1-11).
- The Church is a mystery now unveiled through whom even

angels are learning (Ephesians 3:1-11).

- The mystery of Lawlessness, the coming of the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:7).
- The speaking of mysteries when praying in tongues enabled by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2).

“Firstfruits”

Used by Paul, James and John, the term “*firstfruits*” is used **seven times** in the New Testament. It is used to refer to the first group of people who believed (Romans 8:23; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15; James 1:18). It is also used to refer to Christ the first to be raised from the dead never to die again (1 Corinthians 15:20,23) and to the 144,000 Jews as the first to be resurrected from the tribulation (Revelation 14:4).

“Praying in the Spirit”

Considering the usage of the phrase “*pray with the spirit*” in 1 Corinthians 14. It is clear that Paul is referring to speaking in tongues or praying in tongues when he uses the phrase “praying in the Spirit” later on in Ephesians. This is also true of the phrase “*praying in the Holy Spirit*” in the epistle written by Jude.

1 Corinthians 14:2,13-18

²For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

¹³Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

¹⁵What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

¹⁶Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the

place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

¹⁷ For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

¹⁸ I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;

Ephesians 6:18

praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

Jude 1:20,21

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

There are many other phrases that can be examined and studied. The key is to understand how these phrases, terms or words are used either by an individual writer or its different contexts and then interpret that word or phrase keeping the context in mind.

Exercises:

- 1) Study the theme of the Spirit-filled life as given by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:15-21, Galatians 5:16-26 and Romans 8:1-17,26,27. What are the words and phrases that seem to be repeated?
- 2) Study the use of the words, “love”, “abide”, “light” and “world” by the apostle John in the Gospel of John and in 1,2, and 3 John. What are truths the apostle John brings out through his repeated use of these words?
- 3) Study the phrase “fullness of God” and the “inner man” / “inward man” in the New Testament. What passages would you cross-reference and what insights would you be able to arrive at?

- 4) Study the phrase “inner man”, “inward man” in the New Testament. What passages would you cross-reference and what insights would you be able to arrive at?

19

INTERPRETING BIBLE PROPHECY

Interpreting Bible prophecy is not always easy, especially prophecy on the End Times. We share here some key principles to consider when working with Bible prophecy and then address a few passages that may be of interest to us.

Key principles in understanding and interpreting Bible prophecy

1) Sequence of events

Bible prophecy is not delivered with calendar dates. Hence in interpreting Bible prophecy and in determining when they are likely to be fulfilled, we must look at all of Scripture, considering everything else that surrounds that prophetic word.

Consider what God announced in the Garden of Eden right after Adam and Eve sinned—*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel”* (Genesis 3:15). The right time for the fulfillment of this was about 4000 years later. *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law”* (Galatians 4:4).

In a single statement, there could be variation in time for fulfillment of different parts of the prophetic word. In one sentence or paragraph, different timelines could be referenced. As an example, consider Isaiah 9:6,7.

Isaiah 9:6,7

**6For unto us a Child is born,
 Unto us a Son is given;
 And the government will be upon His shoulder.
 And His name will be called
 Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 7Of the increase of *His* government and peace
There will be no end,
 Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
 To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
 From that time forward, even forever.
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**

About 700 years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah spoke these words. One part of that prophetic statement was fulfilled 700 years later with the birth of Jesus Christ. There are parts of that same prophetic statement that are yet to be fulfilled about 2700 years later. This has to do with the Messiah's reign with the government being on His shoulder and the Messiah sitting upon the throne of David and over his kingdom. We see this prophetic word repeated in Revelation 20:1-6.

Consider another example. In Isaiah 65:17-25, verses 17-19 speak of "new heavens and a new earth" and verses 20-25 speak of the Millenium, Christ's 1000-year reign on the earth. New heavens and new earth are also mentioned in 2 Peter 3:7-13 and Revelation 21:1. The Millennial reign is also mentioned in Isaiah 2:1-5, Isaiah 11:1-16 and Revelation 20:1-6. We know from the sequence in the book of Revelation that the new heavens and new earth come after the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ. Hence, although in Isaiah 65:17-25, verses 17-19 mentioning "new heavens and a new earth" are mentioned at the start, the fulfillment of it will come after the Millennium (after verses 20-

25). (It is presented at the beginning to point to the end of the progression of things). This is another example where timeline (or sequence of events) is established by comparing with other Scripture portions that clearly indicate sequence.

2) Prophetic imagery

Very often in Bible prophecy, prophetic imagery is used. There is figurative or symbolic language. The question we face is how to correctly interpret these symbols or figures.

Very often the prophetic images (figures or symbols) are explained in the same chapter, in the same book or somewhere else in the Bible. Always use the Bible to understand prophetic imagery used in Scripture.

Let's consider a few examples.

End Times—coming kingdoms in Daniel

Through prophetic imagery, which sometimes seems very difficult to understand, God unveiled to Daniel the coming kingdoms. As we compare what has been revealed in Daniel and Revelation, we begin to see things very clearly. Specific kingdoms were identified or mentioned by name. Prophetic imagery becomes clear as we put together what is revealed in the prophetic Scriptures.

Daniel 2 (Nebuchadnezzar's dream)	Daniel 7 (the beasts)	Daniel 8,9,11 (the animals)	Empires (Revelation 13, Revelation 17)
<p>Daniel 2:36-38 Head of gold Babylonian Empire</p>	<p>Daniel 7:4 lion with eagle's wings, man with a heart and two feet representing Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 4:27-37</p>		<p>Babylonian Empire</p>
<p>Daniel 2:39 Breast and arms of silver</p>	<p>Daniel 7:5 Bear with three ribs in its mouth</p>	<p>Daniel 8:3,20; Daniel 11:2 Ram with two horns, one longer than the other. Kings of Media and Persia.</p>	<p>Medo-Persian Empire</p>
<p>Daniel 2:39 Belly and thighs of brass</p>	<p>Daniel 7:6 Leopard with four wings and four heads</p>	<p>Daniel 8:5,8,21,22; Daniel 11:3,4 male goat from the West, a notable horn, the large horn broken and four notable ones came up. Kingdom of Greece. Large horn – its first king. Fulfilled – Alexander the great, and his 4 generals.</p>	<p>Grecian Empire</p>
<p>Daniel 2:40 Legs of iron</p>	<p>Daniel 7:7,19,23 Terrible beast, iron teeth, from which come the 10 horns, nails of bronze</p>		<p>Roman Empire Revelation 17:9,10 The kingdom that is, currently during John's time, clearly identified as the Roman Empire.</p>

Daniel 2 (Nebuchadnezzar's dream)	Daniel 7 (the beasts)	Daniel 8,9,11 (the animals)	Empires (Revelation 13, Revelation 17)
<p>Daniel 2:41,43 Feet of iron and clay</p>			<p>Reorganized region, loosely held nations in the region of the former Roman empire</p>
<p>Daniel 2:42 Ten toes</p>	<p>Daniel 7:7,20,24 10 horns</p>		<p>Revelation 13:1; Revelation 17:12-14 10 leaders arising out of the region of iron mixed with clay</p>
	<p>Daniel 7:8,11,20,21,24-26 little horn, man's eyes, speaking pompous words, will be destroyed at Christ's coming</p>	<p>Daniel 8:9-14,23; Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:36-45; Daniel 12:11,12 out of one of the 4 came the little horn that exerted its influence toward the Glorious land. To be fulfilled "in the latter time". Shall rise against the Prince of princes. Shall be broken without human means. Shall make a covenant for 7 years but will break it in the middle.</p>	<p>The antichrist The beast like a leopard, bear and lion. Revelation 13 Revelation 17:11 Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10</p>

<p>Daniel 2 (Nebuchadnezzar's dream)</p>	<p>Daniel 7 (the beasts)</p>	<p>Daniel 8,9,11 (the animals)</p>	<p>Empires (Revelation 13, Revelation 17)</p>
<p>Daniel 2:44,45 Mountain out of stone from heaven not hewn by human hands</p>	<p>Daniel 7:13,14,18,22,27 Christ's millennial reign with His saints</p>		<p>Kingdom of the Messiah Revelation 20:1-6; Isaiah 2:1-5; Isaiah 11:1-16</p>
	<p>Daniel 7:9,10 Great White Throne judgment</p>		

*End Times—woman, male Child, and the dragon
(Revelation 12:1-6)*

Revelation 12:1-6

¹Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

²Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

⁴His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

⁵She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

⁶Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

There has been much speculation about the three characters in this passage, the woman, the male Child and the fiery red dragon. We follow the principle, which is, we stay within the Bible to interpret prophetic images.

In the same chapter in verse 9, we have the following stated—“*So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him*” (Revelation 12:9). Hence, it is clear that the fiery red dragon is the devil, satan.

The male Child will rule all nations with a rod of iron. There is only one with this description, and that is Jesus Christ the Son of God. This phrase is used directly in reference to Jesus. “*He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father*” (Revelation 2:27). “*Now out of His mouth goes a*

sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15).

The male Child is clearly Jesus Christ. And it also concurs with what we read in this passage—“*...And her Child was caught up to God and His throne”* (Revelation 12:5).

Who is the woman? Often, many tend to think of the woman being the Church. But there are two important indicators in this passage on who the woman is. The first indicator is in Revelation 12:1, where the woman is clothed with the sun and the moon, and has a garland of 12 stars. This is the same imagery of Joseph’s dream in Genesis 37:9-11. The second indicator is that the woman gave birth to the male Child. Jesus was born of the nation of Israel, not the Church. The Lord Jesus established the Church later after His resurrection. The third indicator is in Revelation 12:6 where the woman is protected by God in the wilderness for 1260 days (3 ½ years). Other indicators are seen later in the chapter, in Revelation 12:13,14 where the dragon when cast down to the earth persecutes the woman for a time (1 year), times (2 years) and half a time (1/2 year, which totals 3 ½ years). So, the woman is clearly the nation of Israel, which is consistent with other portions of Scripture (**Example:** Daniel’s 70th week in Daniel 9:24-27).

The images in Revelation 12:1-6 are clearly understood using the meanings given to us in Scripture itself.

Let’s consider another example.

***End Times—great harlot sitting on many waters
(Revelation 17:1,15)***

Revelation 17:1,15

¹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

¹⁵Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

Here is another example to illustrate that often prophetic imagery is explained within Scripture text. Revelation 17:1 talks about the great harlot sitting on “many waters”. What would “many waters” mean? Later in the same chapter, in verse 15, we have the meaning that the waters are people of all nations and languages.

Let’s look at another portion from that same chapter.

***End Times—mountains, kings, horns, beast, harlot
(Revelation 17:9-13)***

Revelation 17:9-13

⁹“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

¹⁰There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

¹¹The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

¹²“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

¹³These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

Without getting into an extended study on Eschatology (which is the subject of another book), we would like to point out how to interpret prophetic imagery in this passage. Some

of these are taken literally and some are prophetic imagery. Mountains represent kingdoms as seen in Daniel 2:35,44. **Here we cross-reference back to the Old Testament to get what the image of mountains mean.** The seven heads are seven mountains which are seven kingdoms.

The seven kings are the main kings of these seven kingdoms. Five of these kings and kingdoms have fallen (had existed and passed away), the sixth one is the Roman kingdom (which existed at the time John received the revelation), and the other, the seventh has not yet come (the loosely held region of the former Roman Empire), and he will have a short time, three and a half years.

In order to understand the symbolic language, we must be well versed with Daniel and Revelation and a little bit of Biblical history. Without going into too many details, based on what Daniel had revealed, the five kingdoms can be counted as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes-Persians, and Greeks. The sixth was the Roman Empire, which prevailed during John's time. The seventh is the iron mixed with clay of Daniel 2:41-43, representing the loosely held region of countries in the same region as the previous kingdoms. The eighth leader, the beast, is the antichrist, who as Daniel prophesied will come from this same region. The ten horns, the ten kings, parallel the ten toes in Daniel 2, who will support and work with the antichrist. The great harlot, mystery Babylon who existed through time over these seven kingdoms represents false religion, which now has taken form of worshipping the antichrist himself according to Revelation 13.

Hence, in order to understand a passage like this, we bring together both Old and New Testament texts on End Times Bible prophecy because these are closely connected, and interpret the

prophetic images staying true to both Old and New Testament texts.

3) Timing

In Bible prophecy, sometimes, time is given literally, and sometimes, time is given figuratively. When time is given figuratively, we need to find the meaning as given within Scripture.

In the dream God gave to Pharaoh, the seven fat cows and the seven lean cows represented a set of seven years each (Genesis 41:25-30). Here, the time of seven years was given through the symbols being used.

End Times—a time, times, and half a time

It is interesting how End Times Bible prophecy explains its own symbolic language. We have the phrase “a time, times and half a time” used in End Times Bible prophecy. We have given the Scripture references. What would these mean? We notice that in relation to this phrase, often in the same book or the same chapter, we have 42 months also used, as well as 1260 days. 42 months is 3 ½ years. 1260 days is also 3 ½ years. Hence, it then leads us to conclude that the phrase time (1 year), times (2 years), half a time (1/2 a year) adds up to 3 ½ years, staying in agreement with 42 months and 1260 days. In the Scripture references given below, notice that they are in Daniel and Revelation. Hence, they are in the same context of End-Times prophetic time.

- Time, times, and half a time

Daniel 7:25

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law.

Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.

Daniel 12:7

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.

Revelation 12:14

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

- 42 months

Revelation 11:2

But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot *for* forty-two months.

Revelation 13:5

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

- 1260 days

Revelation 11:3

And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

Revelation 12:6

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

***End Times—70 weeks and the last 7 years
(Daniel 9:24-27)***

A passage from the book of Daniel that has “time” associated with it is Daniel 9:24-27.

Let’s determine how to interpret timing given in this passage of Bible prophecy.

Daniel 9:24-27

**²⁴“Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.**

**²⁵“Know therefore and understand,
That from the going forth of the command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;
The street shall be built again, and the wall,
Even in troublesome times.**

**²⁶“And after the sixty-two weeks
Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it *shall be* with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.**

**²⁷Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is determined,**

Is poured out on the desolate.”

The angel Gabriel brought an amazing word declaring the future to Daniel. Gabriel mentioned 70 weeks and states that these 70 weeks are concerning the Jewish people, the city of Jerusalem.

This period of 70 weeks will eventually result in the following:

- To finish (put an end to) the transgression
- To make an end of sins—bring an end to sin and rebellion
- To make reconciliation for iniquity—make atonement for all sin
- To bring in everlasting righteousness—establish righteousness in Israel and Jerusalem
- To seal up vision and prophecy—or confirm the prophetic word
- To anoint the Most Holy—to anoint the Most Holy One and to anoint the Most Holy place, that is, to cleanse the Temple of all uncleanness, sacrilege, anoint and establish the Temple (the Millennial temple).

But what does 70 weeks mean?

The term “weeks” (Hebrew ‘*shabua*’) is used to represent a period of seven days or years. For example, in Genesis 29:27,28 it is used to mean seven years. *“Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years. Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also”* (Genesis 29:27,28). Hence based on this usage, we work out Daniel’s 70 weeks to represent 70 x 7 years, a time period of 490 years.

In Daniel 9:25, Gabriel states that from the time the decree to return and rebuild Jerusalem till Messiah the Prince will be $7 + 62 = 69$ weeks. Gabriel announced that there will be 69 weeks, or 69×7 years, that is 483 years from the time the announcement is made for the Jews to go back to rebuild Jerusalem till the Messiah the Prince comes. The Persian Empire, led by Cyrus, conquered Babylon in about 539 BC. This is not a precise date, but an estimated date that is assigned by historians. Cyrus, as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1) issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4) in about 538 BC. Compare this with what Gabriel told Daniel—483 years. Close! I'd like to believe that Gabriel was exact and what has been estimated is approximate.

In Daniel 9:26, Gabriel stated that after the $7 + 62$, that is, a total of 69 weeks, 483 years, the Messiah will be cut off, but not for Himself, and that the city and sanctuary (Temple) will be destroyed. Jesus Christ was indeed crucified for the sins of the whole world. The Roman emperor Nero and his general Titus destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in AD 70.

So, out of the 490 years that Gabriel intended to speak about, a 483-year period has been addressed. 7 more years remain.

In Daniel 9:27, Gabriel continued with a “then”. We realize the “then” is after the Messiah had been cut off, and the city and Temple had been destroyed. But when is “then”? Where should we place the “then” for the start of the remaining 7 years? Let's answer this after we look at the remainder of what is stated in verse 27.

In Daniel 9:27, Gabriel announced that “he”—referring to the antichrist (the little horn who speaks blasphemous things

against God as had been revealed to Daniel in chapters 7-8)—would “confirm a covenant with many for one week”. To put this in simple terms, the antichrist would make a covenant (a peace treaty) for 7 years with Israel. We are staying with the subject mentioned in Daniel 9:24 “*your people and for your holy city*”, and hence, this covenant is between the antichrist and Israel. We also keep the “one week” as representing 7 years, which is the remaining number of years of the 70 weeks. These last 7 years is often referred to as **Daniel’s 70th week**. Gabriel continued that “in the middle of the week”, that is, after 3 ½ years, with 3 ½ years remaining, the antichrist will stop sacrifice and offerings. He will stop the worship in the Temple, implying that the Temple would be in place for this to happen. The antichrist will move very quickly, carrying out his abominations that brings desolation, until the final judgment is poured out on him. These are the details given to us about the last 7 years, and specifically about the last 3 ½ years. What is so interesting is that the 3 ½ years has been spoken of in other places in Scripture as shown in earlier references as **time, times and half a time**, or **42 months** or **1260 days**.

So, when is the “then” that Gabriel mentioned in Daniel 9:27? The Lord Jesus referenced Daniel 9:27 and spoke about the abomination of desolation in Matthew 24:15 standing in the holy place. The apostle Paul also wrote about him in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9. The Temple was destroyed in AD 70. However, this was not considered the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27 because in about AD 96, as John was receiving the book of Revelation, the temple and the trampling of the city are mentioned looking into the future (Revelation 11:1,2). Keep in mind that there was no temple in AD 96. The coming of the lawless one, the antichrist is detailed in Revelation 13. So, we conclude that the “then” was not fulfilled by the close of the first century AD. The apostle Paul’s writing in 2 Thessalonians

2:7,8 tells us that the lawless one, the antichrist will be revealed after He who restrains is taken out of the way. This could not refer to Christ because He had already ascended by the time the apostle Paul wrote the text. This could not refer to the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit would be still at work during the last 7 years of Daniel as we see in the book of Revelation and in Zechariah 12:10 and Ezekiel 39:29. And hence, we conclude that the antichrist will be revealed after the Church is taken out of the way.

While there is a lot more serious eschatological treatment of the subjects involved, we leave that for a separate book on the End Times. However, the main idea we wish to bring is how to interpret prophetic timing when given figuratively using a wholistic approach, that is, considering all prophetic Scripture to arrive at conclusions and interpretation.

Some guidelines to interpreting Bible prophecy on End Times

- 1) Follow the normal principles of hermeneutics, paying attention to history, culture, and context when studying and arriving at an interpretation.
- 2) Take words of prophecy in their normal, grammatical sense.
- 3) Consider the literary element and recognize the use of figurative or symbolic language.

Much of prophecy contains revelation concerning future events. There is a lot of symbolic content in prophecy which makes it difficult to interpret. Wherever possible, we take things in a literal sense. If the statement when taken in its literal sense would be impossible or illogical, then it uses figurative language and hence, must be interpreted in this manner.

4) Recognize prophetic sequence.

Prophets who prophesied about the first and second coming of Christ often did not understand how it would all unfold (1 Peter 1:10-12). The prophet may have seen only events A, B and Z, and had no revelation of all that was to happen in between B and Z. Also, the prophet may have seen Z first, then B and then A, while the sequence of their fulfillment would be A, B and later Z. So, we must keep this in mind as we interpret prophecy.

5) Look for God's revealed interpretations.

In many instances, the prophetic message filled with symbolic elements is interpreted and the meaning is given in passages that follow immediately or within the same book. Look for these first and stay with what has been given as the meaning. Do not deviate from the meaning already given.

6) Compare parallel passages.

Prophetic Scriptures must be placed side by side and examined as one whole. As we look at passages that speak about the same prophetic event, details are presented and a more complete understanding emerges.

Examples:

Revelation 13 needs to be studied along with Daniel 9:24-27.

Joel 2:18-32 needs to be studied with Revelation 19.

7) The world, Israel and Church.

Be mindful on whom God is speaking to, whether the details in the prophecy are for the human race in general or specifically to Israel or specifically to the Church. Also keep in mind that some prophecies have a spiritual fulfillment in the Church, and later a literal fulfillment in Israel.

Examples:

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28,29).

- Fulfilled spiritually and continues to be fulfilled in the Church (Acts 2:16-18).
- Will be fulfilled literally for Israel (Zechariah 12:10; Ezekiel 39:29).

Rebuilding the Tabernacle of David so that Gentiles will seek the Lord (Amos 9:11-13).

- Fulfilled spiritually and continues to be fulfilled in the Church (Acts 15:15-18).
- Will be fulfilled literally in Israel with the Third Temple and the Millennial Temple and reign of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 2:1-5; Zechariah 14:16,17).

Signs before the great and awesome day of the Lord (Joel 2:30-32).

- Will be fulfilled for the world during the Tribulation (Revelation 6:12; Revelation 8:12).
- 8) Look for prophecies that are fulfilled and prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled. As we saw in some examples, parts of a prophetic statement have already been fulfilled, and other parts of the same statement yet to be fulfilled.

Example: Isaiah 9:6,7

End Times—Revelation taken in sequence

In studying the book of Revelation, we note how the book is presented and introduced to us. The book begins with statements such as “*things which must shortly take place*” and “*the time is near*” (Revelation 1:1,3). Time must be understood from God’s perspective. God dwells outside of time. For “*with the Lord*

one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). He said, “*Behold, I am coming quickly!*” (Revelation 22:7), and it has been about 2000 years since then.

As the Lord prepares to reveal coming events to John, He informs John...

Revelation 1:19

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

The things which John has seen is the risen and glorified Jesus Christ and is recorded in Revelation chapter 1. “The things which are,” that is, the present then, have to do with the seven churches that were in existence at that time whom the Lord addressed in Revelation chapters 2 & 3. The things which are in the future starts from Revelation chapter 4 till the end.

Revelation 4:1

After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

Revelation 4:1 begins with the clear statement that what John would be shown hereon have to do with future events.

So, sometime in the future, Revelation chapters 4 and 5 will actually play out. In Revelation chapter 5, we observe that at a time appointed by the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ will open the seals and the scroll, indicating that from that point on, all that has been written will begin to be fulfilled.

The book of Revelation is then an unveiling of events that are to unfold, given to us in sequence. So, the best way to read

and interpret the book of Revelation is in the sequence it has been given to us.

We also recognize that in Revelation there are...

- certain parenthetical passages, for example, Revelation 10, where John is made to eat the scroll,
- certain texts that are reflective pointing back to a historical event, for example, in Revelation 12, the fall of Lucifer and a third of the angels (vv.3,4), the birth of Jesus Christ, His being caught up to heaven (v.5),
- certain texts cover in brief the entire 3 ½ years, for example, Revelation 11 describes the two witnesses and their 3 ½ years of ministry, Revelation 13 describes what the antichrist and the false prophet will do during the second 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

End Times—kingdom now, kingdom to come

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

John 18:36

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

Revelation 20:4-6

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He announced the ushering in of God's Kingdom into the earth. This, however, is a spiritual rule and reign of God in the hearts and lives of people on the earth. The Kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17:20,21) and we are in the Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). This is a spiritual expression of His eternal Kingdom here on the earth today. As sons and daughters of His Kingdom (Matthew 13:38), today, we are called to be salt and light, bringing Kingdom-influence wherever we go. There will come a time in the future, as stated in Revelation 20:4-6, when we will rule and reign with Jesus during His Millennial reign on the earth. This is the kingdom to come.

Problems arise when we do not correctly understand God's clearly stated timeline and sequence and mix things up. This is the error with "Kingdom Now / Dominion Theology" which emphasizes the idea that Christians are to take dominion over the earth in a literal sense, establishing God's kingdom on earth before the return of Jesus Christ. This kind of theology erroneously teaches that we should bring about God's literal rule over every sphere of life—political, economic, social, educational and cultural, now, before Jesus comes—by having God's people in leadership in all these areas. As believers, we do bring God's Kingdom wherever we go. We are to be salt and light wherever we go. We are to permeate and penetrate the world around us. However, this does not require that we "take charge" and become "rulers" now to be salt and light. God calls us to be salt and light at all levels, and we can do that just where we are. The influence we bring is to further the spiritual advancement of God's Kingdom in the hearts and lives

of people. Of course, when people change, their lifestyles will also change, and consequently, communities and societies will change. But these come because of the spiritual advancement of God's Kingdom in the hearts and lives of people. Our goal is not to bring about political, economic, social, educational and cultural transformation by "taking charge" and becoming "kings". Our goal is to see people encounter Jesus Christ through the Gospel. The transformation of the world around will happen consequently.

The Scriptures are very clear that we will rule and reign with Jesus after the antichrist has been taken out of the way, and when Christ sets up His kingdom. In addition to Revelation 20:4-6, Daniel 7:25-27 makes it very clear that after the antichrist has been judged and removed, "***Then** the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him*" (Daniel 7:27). It is at that time when saints will judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2).

Some may argue that we taste "*the powers of the age to come*" (Hebrews 6:5) and therefore, we have dominion now and must take charge now. "To taste" is to have a small glimpse and a preview. It is not living in the fullness of what has been appointed in the age to come.

It is important for us to stay with what the Lord Jesus has commissioned us and authorized us to do in preaching the Gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit, with the demonstrations of power, healings and miracles to bring in the lost. Our goal is to mature into Christlikeness so that we can be a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. What God has ordained for the age to come, we must leave it there and not confuse as part of this time

period.

End Times—preterism versus dispensational millennialism

Preterism holds that many or all the prophecies in the New Testament, particularly those in the Book of Revelation, as well as prophetic passages from the Old Testament, were fulfilled in the past. Preterists believe that many of the Biblical prophecies, including the Great Tribulation, the antichrist, and the coming of Christ in judgment, were fulfilled in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. They support their position primarily by claiming that...

- a) the book of Revelation was written by the apostle John by AD 68.
- b) They would also argue that many of the prophecies in the Bible, particularly in Revelation, have already been fulfilled and others are symbolic rather than literal predictions of future events.

Preterists would claim that the events described in Revelation are symbolic of spiritual battles and God's judgment on the ancient world.

Dispensational millennialism teaches a rapture where believers are taken to heaven before the tribulation, a future, literal, seven-year tribulation and a literal millennial reign of Christ on earth.

We know that the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, while the book of Revelation was given to the apostle John around AD 96. The AD 96 date is strongly substantiated by the fact that...

- a) the apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9) from Ephesus, during a period of persecution under the Roman Emperor Domitian, around AD 94-96. Emperor Domitian ruled from AD 81 to 96.
- b) The Early Church father Irenaeus (AD 130-202) and Church historians such as Eusebius (AD 265-339) attest to Revelation being written towards the end of the Domitian reign.

While we will not attempt a complete study on End Times to counter Preterism, let us consider a few points from a simple basic hermeneutical standpoint.

- In speaking to the apostle John, the words of Jesus were, “...things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:3) “...the things which will take place after this” (Revelation 1:19) and “I will show you things which must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1). These words are plain and clear that what was revealed to John were events that were yet to happen in the future. To state that Jesus did not mean what He said (He lied?!), and He was only narrating history is simply absurd.
- Many of the things stated in Revelation simply could not have happened during the first Century (Revelation 13,17, 18).
- Many End Times events have not taken place and to simply dismiss them as symbolic is not hermeneutically justified and is unacceptable. It is inconsistent with hermeneutical principles and if we have to accept this, then anything and everything else in Scripture could be handled as symbolic and figurative.

End Times—will there be a third Temple?

Will there be a literal, physical Third Temple in Jerusalem?

This is a question that is often asked, and some have proposed that the Temple spoken of in connection with the antichrist is not a literal Temple, but a spiritual Temple, and some even suggest that it could be the Church. Reading through Daniel 8 and 9, and the words of Jesus (Matthew 24:15), the apostle Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:4) and that of the apostle John (Revelation 11:1,2) indicate the presence of a physical Temple where the daily sacrifices are stopped (Daniel 8:11,13; Daniel 9:27), and the antichrist sets himself up as god. To fulfill what has been clearly stated, there must be a literal physical Temple and this definitely cannot point figuratively to the Church, as no daily sacrifices are offered and there is no single physical place that identifies as the Church.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are about 250 to 300 quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament. In almost all instances, we know the Old Testament reference. Some references are not in the exact wordings and hence, in some cases, we are not sure if it was a quotation. (**Example:** John 7:38, no exact reference can be pointed to. Possible reference is Isaiah 55:1).

As we have mentioned earlier, the Lord Jesus Himself quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures. He read and studied them, referenced them and used it in His life to overcome satan and temptation. The Lord Jesus said, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill*” (Matthew 5:17).

The Early Church, in the first few decades, based their faith on the teaching from the Old Testament Scriptures along with the apostles teaching on what the Lord Jesus had taught them during His earthly ministry. Subsequently, as the books of the New Testament were written by different authors, references were made to the Old Testament Scriptures pointing to their fulfillment, or explaining what was stated in the Old Testament, or in some instances, explaining the New Testament truth based on Old Testament Scriptures.

There is a saying, *The New is in the Old concealed. The Old is in the New revealed.* This statement captures very succinctly

and effectively the interconnectedness, the interdependence and the importance of both the Testaments.

What changed and did not change across the Testament

While the Testaments have changed, the God of the Bible has not changed. God said, *“For I am the LORD, I do not change”* (Malachi 3:6). Who God is, His nature, His character, His power, His works have not changed. He is still the same God.

The covenants have changed. A covenant describes relationships and how the two parties in the covenant will relate to one another. The Old Covenant was based on the Law, while the New Covenant is based on grace. *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17). Within this Covenant, how God would relate to and work with His people has changed. The Lord Jesus Himself is *“the Mediator of the new covenant”* (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 12:24). This New Covenant is a better covenant established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 7:22). The Lord Jesus Himself stands as the Guarantor of the New Covenant (Hebrews 7:22). *“In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete”* (Hebrews 8:13).

Our goal must be to understand the New Covenant and learn how to live as people under this covenant. Also, when we read the Old Testament, we need to continue to learn about God and His ways and learn how to apply truth as the New Covenant people. We should not get muddled or mixed up by attempting to follow the Old Covenant practices if they were not intended for the New Covenant people. It would be incorrect to subject the New Testament believers to the Old Testament practices that were not intended to be continued. *“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by*

faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Galatians 3:24,25).

Simple guidelines on studying the Old Testament as a New Testament believer

In our earlier chapter on Culture, we addressed some of these principles focusing on a cultural perspective. Here are some additional guidelines to consider when reading through the Old Testament as a New Testament believer.

Transferring the Old Testament practices to the New Testament believers requires careful discernment and adherence to Biblical hermeneutics. While the Old Testament is foundational for understanding the New Testament, not all practices are directly applicable to believers under the New Covenant.

Here are some important guidelines.

1) Understand the nature and character of God

As we study the Old Testament, seek to understand the nature and character of God. Desire to know Him, His heart, and His ways through the Old Testament.

2) Interpret the Old Testament through the lens of New Testament revelation

Use the New Testament revelation as the interpretive guide to understanding the Old Testament and to know which Old Testament practices apply to us today. Maintain the centrality of the Person and Cross of Jesus Christ through which we read, study and interpret the Old Testament. Remember the focus of the Old Testament is essentially the Person of Christ. *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal*

life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). For example, we read about circumcision required under the Old Covenant (Genesis 17:10-14). In the New Covenant, we learn about spiritual circumcision of the heart when we are in Christ (Romans 2:28,29; Colossians 2:11).

3) Focus on the New Covenant commands

As New Testament believers, we are called to walk in holiness and purity, compassion, truth, justice just as people under the Old Covenant. However, this call is given to us in the context of love and grace. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another”* (John 13:34). *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:2). *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law”* (Romans 13:8,10).

4) Distinguish between instructions on spiritual, moral, sacrificial, ceremonial, and civil life

As we read through the Old Testament, we must distinguish between instructions that apply to different spheres of daily life, whether spiritual, moral, sacrificial, ceremonial, and civil. Insights, teaching, instructions that are spiritual and moral will be relevant to us today, unless explicitly changed in Scripture.

- Spiritual principles of faith, obedience, meditation, praise, worship, etc. continue today as we apply these relevant to our times. Practices like observing the Sabbath are fulfilled in Christ’s rest (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:9,10). However, principles of rest and worship remain beneficial which we still practice.
- Moral laws (for example, the Ten Commandments) reflect

God’s unchanging character and are still relevant to us, the New Testament believers, which we follow as we walk in love and grace (Romans 13:8-10). **Example:** “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Leviticus 19:18) is quoted in the New Testament “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:39) emphasizing the continuity of this moral instruction from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

- Sacrificial laws (**Example:** Levitical sacrifices in Leviticus 1-7) were fulfilled in Jesus (Hebrews 10:10-12) and hence, we do not follow these.
- Ceremonial laws (**Example:** dietary restrictions, purification rites) were specific to Israel’s worship and are not binding under the New Covenant. Dietary laws in Leviticus 11 are no longer binding (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:15). “*So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ*” (Colossians 2:16,17).
- Civil laws governed the nation of Israel and do not directly apply but provide principles of justice and fairness.

5) Understand the context, principles and purpose of the Old Testament practices

As we emphasized in the earlier chapter on Culture, even when specific practices do not apply, we consider the principles behind them to see if the principles are relevant. **Example:** The law about leaving gleanings for the poor teaches generosity and care for the poor (Leviticus 19:9,10). While the practices cannot be directly applied to us, we can learn lessons about holiness, justice, compassion, discipline, etc. from the underlying principles.

6) Emphasize grace, not Law

Sometimes, if we are not careful, we impose the Old Testament practices as requirements for salvation or standards for righteousness or daily living. We must understand that grace has set us free from the yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1) and we are justified not by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16). In the New Testament, God has given each of us the freedom and responsibility to make our choices (Romans 14:5,6) and to be led by the Spirit instead of living by the Law (Galatians 5:18).

Simple guidelines on interpreting the Old Testament references in the New Testament

Here are some guidelines along with examples when working with the Old Testament Scripture texts quoted in the New Testament.

1) Understand the Old Testament passage

Apply hermeneutical principles to clearly understand the Old Testament passage being referenced in its original context.

Do not read back into the Old Testament what the original author(s) did not know, and which has only been revealed in the New Testament.

2) Determine how the New Testament passage is using the Old Testament reference

To do this correctly, understand the New Testament context where the Old Testament reference is found.

Determine the purpose with which the New Testament writer is referencing the Old Testament Scripture.

- To show fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy

Examples: John 19:24 pointing to Psalm 22:18; Matthew 8:16 referencing Isaiah 53:4

- To point to a divinely ordained typology (types and shadows)

Example: 1 Corinthians 5:7 referencing Exodus 12:21-23

- To amplify the New Testament truth using the Old Testament principle

Example: 1 Corinthians 9:9 referencing Deuteronomy 25:4

- To show continuation of the Old Testament truth / practice in the New Testament practice

Example: Matthew 22:39 referencing Leviticus 19:18

- To show continuation of the plan and purpose of God

Example: Galatians 3 referencing Genesis 12

Then draw insights from the Old Testament passage relevant to its New Testament usage.

3) Recognize if the Old Testament text is used literally or symbolically or both

Deuteronomy 25:4 “*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain*” is quoted in 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:17,18 to communicate a literal practical truth except that in one instance, it has to do with animals and in the other instance, it has to do with fair treatment of church ministers.

Psalm 118:22, “*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone*” is quoted in Matthew 21:42 and 1 Peter 2:7,8 in a symbolic way pointing to Christ’s rejection and exaltation as fulfillment of the Old Testament Scripture.

4) Amplify the New Testament truth

Often the New Testament points to the fulfillment and a greater work of God, for example, a better covenant, better promises, etc. Present the New Testament truth and highlight the greater work God has done for us in Christ.

Let's consider some examples and how we apply these principles.

Curse of the Law—are we redeemed from it (Galatians 3:13,14)?

Galatians 3:13,14

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”),
¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Our goal here is to understand what the apostle Paul meant when he referenced the Old Testament Scripture and announced to the New Testament believer that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. The context is quite clear. Galatians is most likely Paul's first epistle, which was written right after the Jerusalem Council in AD 49. He wrote specifically to the churches in Galatia where Jewish believers in Jesus Christ had been confused by Jewish brethren who insisted that they had to keep the Law, follow all the customs and practices. He wrote Galatians to specifically let them know that they are free from the Law. Paul made it very clear and in some strong terms that they did not need to keep the Law in order to be saved and to be made righteous. *“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?”* (Galatians 4:9) *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled*

again with a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

While doing this, Paul also references the curse of the law being dealt with on the Cross of Jesus Christ so that the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit is now available to Gentiles.

The “us” in Galatians 3:13 has an immediate reference to the Jewish believers whom Paul is addressing. The curse of the law is in reference to the penalty for breaking the Law, which Paul had mentioned in verse 10, *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10).* Simply put, if we are trying to do the Law, we are under “the curse”. What curse would this be? The curse that Paul referenced in verse 10 is the same “curse of the law” that he referenced in verse 13.

So, let’s look up the Old Testament context that Paul is using here in Galatians 3:10,13.

Deuteronomy 21:22,23

²² **“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,**

²³ **his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.**

Deuteronomy 27:26

‘Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’”

The man hanged on a tree is suffering the penalty for

breaking the Law. And later in Deuteronomy 27, we note that for not keeping the Law, the curse is announced. In the very next chapter, in Deuteronomy 28, we have the blessings of keeping the Law and the curses for failing to keep the Law listed out.

- Deuteronomy 28:1-14 lists the blessings

Deuteronomy 28:2

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you,....

- Deuteronomy 28:15-68 lists all the curses

Deuteronomy 28:15

But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

It is clear from the context of the Old Testament Scriptures being referenced by Paul that “the curse” of Galatians 3:10 and “the curse of the law” of Galatians 3:13 is the curse pronounced in Deuteronomy 27:26 with the list of curses in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law— all of these curses listed in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

The blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit is available to all who are in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:14). And, because the redemptive work of Christ is for all people, we can confidently state that we (all who are in Christ, Jews and Gentiles) have been redeemed from the curse of the law, all the curses listed in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

Tithing—do New Testament believers practice it?

We realize that this has been a topic that has been debated very much. Our goal is to apply the principles of hermeneutics and see what logical conclusion we can arrive at when we consider

the question “Should a New Testament believer tithe, that is, give 10% of their income to the local church and the work of God’s Kingdom?”

The reason this is debated is because the New Testament does not explicitly instruct believers to tithe. As we do our study, let us also keep in mind that the New Testament does not explicitly permit or disallow the use of musical instruments in worship. So, we consider the Old Testament and notice that musical instruments were used in worship, and we continue doing the same. The New Testament does not explicitly teach believers to meditate in God’s Word. So, we consider the Old Testament and notice how meditation in God’s Word is a practice that is repeated in several places, and we do the same. The New Testament does not explicitly teach stewardship of creation and creation care. However, we learn this from the Old Testament Scriptures, and we continue to be good stewards of God’s creation.

Let’s consider tithing first from the Old Testament and then from the New Testament. For the sake of brevity, we provide this as a summary outline that can be used for further study.

We observe the following in the Old Testament in relation to tithing

- Tithing was practiced before the Law by Abraham, who is the father of faith, whose steps we, the New Testament believers, are to follow (Romans 4:12). Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:20. Jacob promised to give a tenth to the Lord (Genesis 28:22).
- Tithing was instituted as a practice for God’s people. The purpose of the tithe was a) for people to honor God, b) to support the work of God and the people who rendered

service for God and c) to help the poor and needy. The tithe was holy and belonged to God. God promised to open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings on His people in response to their obedience to give Him their tithe. Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:28; Deuteronomy 14:23; Deuteronomy 26:12,13; Nehemiah 10:37,38; Malachi 3:10,11.

What do we observe in the New Testament about tithing?

- While the Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for neglecting the more important matters of justice, mercy and faith taught by the Law, the Lord Jesus said tithing was also to be done as taught by the Law.
- Tithing has not been explicitly done away with either in the Old Testament or the New Testament. While the Law has been done away with, we have seen that tithing was practiced before the Law by the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob (and possibly by Isaac and others). Consider the following—Abraham practiced tithing and circumcision before the Law. Tithing and circumcision continued to be practiced as part of the Law. In the New Testament, circumcision has been explicitly done away with (Acts 15:23-29; Romans 2:29; Galatians 5:6,11; Galatians 6:15; Colossians 2:11). However, tithing has not been done away with in the New Testament.
- Hebrews 7:1-10 is a key passage, which strongly supports the understanding that tithing is still to be continued by the New Testament believers. As the writer of Hebrews draws a comparison of the two priesthoods, the Old Testament Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus Christ, he mentions tithing as an integral part of priesthood ministry. Notice how many times tithing is mentioned in this passage.

Hebrews 7:1-10

¹ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,”

³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

⁴ Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.

⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham;

⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,

¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Hebrews 7:8 is a key verse that points out that Melchizedek received tithes, and he lives on, that is, the Melchizedek priesthood, the priesthood that is eternal, with no beginning and no ending, continues. Jesus Christ is such an eternal Priest, and it is only a logical conclusion that the Lord Jesus, a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek receives tithes today. This is very important. The Lord Jesus, our High Priest receives our tithes today!

- In the context of the New Testament believers giving financially to the work of the ministry, the apostle Paul quoted from the Old Testament to teach believers about giving to

the work of the Lord. We can, therefore, safely include the aspects of tithes and offerings, though not explicitly stated, is a part of the practice of giving for the New Testament believers (1 Corinthians 9:7-11; Deuteronomy 25:4; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9, Psalm 112:9; 1 Timothy 5:17,18).

- Finally, we must consider the underlying principle for tithing and giving to the Lord. These principles still hold even though the context has changed. The purpose of the tithe was a) for people to honor God and b) to support the work of God and the people who rendered service for God c) to help the poor and needy.

The tithe was the Lord's, something being given to God to honor God, to support the work of God and to care for people. We still honor God with our finances today. Tithing is the least we can do! We should be giving more than the tithe!

Women wearing jewelry and fine clothing (1 Peter 3:1-6)

1 Peter 3:1-6

¹Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

² when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.

³ Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel—

⁴ rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

1 Timothy 2:9,10

⁹ in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold

or pearls or costly clothing,

¹⁰but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

The Scriptures teach that women must be clothed with modesty, discretion, simplicity, what is sensible and appropriate, and which demonstrates godliness. The primary call is for women to focus on godliness and the beauty of the heart, which is very precious before God, and not on their external attire.

However, can we use the above passages to do away with the use of gold, pearls, ornaments, and fine clothing?

Here again, we consider the reference made to Sarah in the Old Testament (and we can examine other holy women of God from the Old Testament as well). Did Sarah completely refrain from wearing gold and ornaments? The answer is obviously “No”. At the very beginning of their record, the Scripture states that “*Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold*” (Genesis 13:2). We can only imagine that most of this silver and gold was in the form of ornaments that Abraham and Sarah wore on themselves.

When Abraham’s servant went out to find a bride for Isaac and met Rebekah and her family, he brought lavish gifts of silver and gold, ornaments, nose ring, bracelets, etc. He would not have done this if Sarah had no ornaments of gold and silver. We can state with confidence that Sarah and Rebekah and other women of old, did make use of jewelry.

Genesis 24:22,35,47,53

²²So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold,

³⁵The LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys.

⁴⁷ Then I asked her, and said, ‘Whose daughter *are* you?’ And she said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists.

⁵³ Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.

Hence, going back to 1 Peter 3:1-6, we can conclude that the instruction is not to completely do away with wearing jewelry, but to focus on godliness and the purity of the heart.

21

PRINCIPLES OF LOGIC

In this chapter, we briefly state principles of logic observed in Scripture which we apply as part of our hermeneutical framework in studying, interpreting and drawing application of Scripture.

Some of these principles of logic are derived from, or are similar to, the rabbinic principles or Jewish methods of interpretation of Scripture. These logical principles help us handle Scripture text with sound judgment and thought. A few of these principles have been addressed in earlier chapters as well but are repeated here for completeness. These principles are not mutually exclusive and hence, various principles are applied together to a text to understand, interpret and apply it correctly.

1) Lesser to greater

If something is true in a lesser situation, it must also be true in a greater one.

Matthew 7:11

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

If flawed human parents give good gifts, how much more will the perfect Heavenly Father provide for His children.

2) Greater to lesser

If something is true in a greater situation, it must also be true

in a lesser one.

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

If God gave His Son (the greatest gift), it follows logically that He will also provide for lesser needs.

3) Principle of consistency

If a principle applies in one situation, it should apply consistently in similar situations unless explicitly stated otherwise.

In **1 Corinthians 9:9,10**, Paul applies the principle of Deuteronomy 25:4 (“*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain*”) to argue for the right of ministers to receive support for their labor.

The consistent principle is that laborers, whether animals or people, deserve provision.

4) Argument from analogy

Drawing a comparison between two similar situations to explain or illustrate truth.

John 3:14,15

¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

¹⁵that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus uses the analogy of the bronze serpent that became a means for healing from serpent bites in Numbers 21:9 to explain His crucifixion as a means of salvation.

5) Proof by contradiction

Demonstrating the truth of a statement by showing that denying

it leads to an absurd or contradictory conclusion.

1 Corinthians 15:13,14

¹³ **But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.**

¹⁴ **And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.**

Paul argues that denying the resurrection leads to a contradictory conclusion that undermines the entire Christian faith.

6) General to specific

Moving from a broad principle to specific applications.

Exodus 20:13-16 (The Ten Commandments) offers general principles (**Example:** “*You shall not murder*” (Exodus 20:13), which are later expanded with specific applications in Leviticus 24:17-21.

The broader principle (respect for life) is applied specifically to situations like murder, accidental killing, or personal injury.

7) Specific to general

Drawing a general principle from specific examples.

In **Matthew 22:37-40**, Jesus summarizes the Law and the Prophets with the general principle of loving God and loving others, drawn from specific commandments like Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

Specific commands are distilled into overarching principles.

8) Principle of comparative inclusion (cross-referencing)

Combining similar cases or passages to reveal a broader or unified principle.

In **Romans 3:10-18**, Paul combines several related Old Testament passages (**Examples:** Psalms 14:1-3; Isaiah 59:7,8) to show the sinfulness of all people.

By grouping these related texts, Paul demonstrates a consistent Biblical theme.

9) Principle of progressive revelation

Later passages clarify, expand, or fulfill earlier ones.

Hebrews 10:1

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament points to Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

10) Principle of typology (types and shadows)

Identifying persons, events, or institutions in the Old Testament as "types" foreshadowing future realities in the New Testament.

Romans 5:14

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Adam is identified as a type of Christ, representing humanity, with Christ bringing redemption where Adam brought sin.

11) Principle of contextual flow (context)

Deriving meaning by understanding the immediate and broader context of a passage.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

In context, this refers to contentment in all circumstances as shown in Philippians 4:11,12. We can move from the specific to the general (all things in all situations), extending this principle of divine empowerment, keeping the original context in mind.

12) Principle of cause and effect

Recognize cause-and-effect relationships stated in Scripture to understand implications.

Galatians 6:7

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

This highlights the cause-and-effect relationship between actions and their consequences in spiritual life.

13) Principle of two or more

Every matter, principle or truth must be established on at least two or more Scriptures.

2 Corinthians 13:1

This will be the third time I am coming to you. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”

Genesis 41:32

And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Whether a matter of sin to be judged (Deuteronomy 19:15; 1 Timothy 5:19,20), a dispute to be resolved (Matthew 18:16), a dream / prophetic word to be confirmed, a teaching to be received, a truth or doctrine to be established, there must be two or more witnesses / Scriptures.

14) Principle of proportionality

Emphasis must be in proportion to relevance and importance to the Person, work and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Mark 7:9,13

⁹ He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

¹³making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

Matthew 23:24

Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

The interpretation and emphasis of a truth or principle should be proportional to its relevance and importance to the primary focus of Scripture which is the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Cross and redemption of people. A single verse or an obscure idea should not be emphasized in a manner that it overrides focus on what is of primary importance.

15) Argument from silence

Drawing conclusions based on what is not explicitly stated in Scripture.

Hebrews 7:3

Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

The silence about Melchizedek’s genealogy is used to draw parallels to Christ’s eternal priesthood.

Exercise:

For each of the 15 principles of logic given in this chapter, can you think of at least two examples from Scripture.

22

WHEN THE BIBLE IS SILENT

There are many topics, some that are simple and some that are quite complex that we need Biblical answers for. However, these topics are not mentioned specifically in Scripture. How do we determine the mind of God when the Bible is silent about a particular topic?

In this chapter, we provide a simple framework to guide our thinking, where we can bring what has been revealed in Scripture to bear on matters that are not specifically stated in Scripture.

1) Start with the Person and nature of God

When considering such topics, we must first start with the Person and nature of God as revealed in the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, under which we live and by which we are to conduct ourselves.

Further, in matters that have to do with other people, their choices and their voices, consider how God deals with us as sinners.

- God does not override human will. He did not control Adam and Eve and prevent them from sinning.
- God expresses what is right and wrong and invites us to choose right (Deuteronomy 30:19).
- God is willing to reason together (Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 43:26).
- God treats everyone with love and fairness (Matthew 5:43-45).

- God does not compromise Himself. He is truth, holy, just, and love. In His love, He does not compromise His holiness. In His grace, He does not compromise His truth.

2) Consider related Scriptures

While there may not be Scriptures speaking specifically on a topic, we can see if there are Scriptures that speak to similar or related topics, or any general instruction or revelation in Scripture that would be relevant.

3) Use best judgment

We combine our understanding of the Person and nature of God and any related Scriptures and then apply our best judgment on the matter. We use principles of logic mentioned in the earlier chapter. When other people are involved, we must walk in the love of God, do what is just, fair and good, respecting them as individuals and their choices, without compromising truth or our stand for righteousness.

Here are some examples.

Smoking cigarettes

The Bible specifically does not address smoking cigarettes. From a medical standpoint, we understand that smoking is injurious to our bodies. We are aware of related Scriptures that teach us that our bodies are the temple of God. We are not to destroy our own bodies. We are to keep our bodies as holy vessels in honor (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Timothy 2:19-21). Based on this reasoning, we conclude that as believers, we must refrain from smoking cigarettes.

Tattoos

What does the Bible have to say about tattoos? Is it ok for a believer to have tattoos?

There are quite a few references in the Old Testament where God speaks of not cutting, making marks or tattoos. Leviticus 19:24-37; Deuteronomy 14:1; Jeremiah 16:6; Jeremiah 41:5.

Leviticus 19:28

You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I *am* the LORD.

God prohibited the unnatural disfigurement of the body—cutting, marking, tattooing. Some of these were done by neighboring tribes as a sign of mourning for the dead or in worship of their gods. The underlying reason for refraining from doing such deeds was that God did not want His people to engage in similar kinds of expression of mourning for the dead or worship of false gods. However, keep in mind that people did wear earrings and nose rings, which likely had their bodies pierced to hold these in place. Also, the practice of circumcision involved the cutting away of skin (marking their body) but was done in reverence toward God.

In our contemporary world, there are a variety of reasons an individual may choose to tattoo their skin such as self-expression, commemoration of an event or individual, expression of beliefs, identity, belonging to a group, fashion, status symbol, sometimes to hide a scar on their skin, and other reasons. Most of these have nothing to do with worship of gods.

Let's apply principles we have learnt and arrive at a logical conclusion.

The New Testament does not state anything specifically about tattoos. In the New Testament, we have the instruction to glorify God in our bodies, which have been bought by God and now have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). It is up to the individual believer on

how best to glorify God in their body, living righteously, with or without tattoos. We personally do not judge or condemn believers who have tattoos.

If we declare all forms of tattooing as sin based on the Old Testament Law, then we must also enforce all other requirements of the Old Testament Law which would include dietary restrictions, ceremonial practices and cultural practices such as...

- *“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.”* (Deuteronomy 22:5)
- The priests *“They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat.”* (Ezekiel 44:18)
- The priests *“They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.”* (Leviticus 21:5)
- A priest cannot marry *“A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot—these he shall not marry”* (Leviticus 21:14)

We have already established that as New Testament believers, we do not continue the ceremonial practices given under the Law.

Hence, we can conclude that the heart and mind of God for us in the New Testament would be...

We do not judge anyone who has a tattoo as being disliked by God. There are times an individual as an unbeliever may

tattoo their skin. Later, they become believers in Jesus Christ. It is practically not possible for them to remove the tattoos they had before becoming a believer. They pray and consecrate their entire being—spirit, soul, body—to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. While the tattoos may remain, they wholly and completely belong to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:20). We should not look down on them simply because of their tattooed appearance.

This is a matter of personal choice and conviction for each believer. We do not judge a believer who gets a tattoo done, for example of a cross, or a Bible or something they feel strongly about. Neither do we feel superior to other believers just because we do not have a tattoo.

Genetic research and other advancements

The Bible does not speak specifically about this topic because, obviously, in Bible times, this knowledge was not present. There is a record in Genesis 30:25-43 about Jacob doing something when breeding livestock to ensure that he got stronger animals. There does not seem anything scientific in what Jacob did and we could consider this as a blessing of God that stronger animals were born in his section of the goats and lambs he was breeding. So, what should our response be when it comes to modern-day science, research and work being done in genetics and gene editing and their applications in medicine, agriculture and biotechnology? This area of research has its applications in the treatment of genetic disorders, cancer treatment, fighting infectious diseases, regenerative medicine, pharmacogenomics, prevention of genetic diseases, gene therapies, producing disease resistant crops, livestock improvement, and so on. However, there are still serious concerns in ethical, safety, accessibility and regulation matters.

While this is an area that must be debated and discussed,

our general framework in thinking about this would be to...

- recognize that our ability to research and understand these biological details is a gift from God (Isaiah 28:23-29; Proverbs 8:12),
- recognize that we are stewards of the resources and knowledge to make use of them for the benefit and good of all (Psalm 115:16; Matthew 5:43-45),
- place constraints that will regulate and restrain these technologies from being used in harmful ways (Proverbs 6:16-19), and
- honor God as Creator and Owner of all things (Isaiah 40:13-15,25-27; Jeremiah 9:23,24).

A similar framework for thought and reasoning from a Biblical perspective can be applied to other areas of scientific and technological advancements including space travel, climate change, creation care / care of the environment, etc.

23

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

God invites us not to be just hearers of the Word, but practitioners—doers of the Word. We are to live by the Word of God, and this is to be the norm. We observe this call to apply God's Word to our lives in both the Old and New Testaments.

Deuteronomy 4:5-9

⁵“Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to *them* in the land which you go to possess.

⁶Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.’

⁷“For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him?

⁸ And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

⁹Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one!

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

⁶“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

James 1:22-25

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The application (doing) of God's Word must follow the interpretation (understanding) of God's Word.

Biblical truth misinterpreted, misunderstood, or misapplied could result in dire consequences.

Guidelines for application

1) Build application on correct interpretation

First, interpret correctly, then apply the Word. Follow the hermeneutical principles discovered in this book to help you correctly interpret the Word.

2) Apply present truth

For any given matter, consider what the most recent revelation / instruction / teaching has been on the matter as given in the Scriptures. We live by that. **Example:** keeping the sabbath

3) Stay with what is well understood

Do not let obscure and difficult passages override the clear, obvious, and definite revelation in Scripture. **Example:** Job's hedge of protection versus the New Testament truth about satan's defeat and the believer's authority. Even if we do not have a clear understanding about God's hedge of protection

around Job and why it was lifted, we live by the truth that we as New Testament believers are living in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. To us, satan is a vanquished foe. We have been given weapons of warfare and the armor of God to live victoriously.

4) Stay aligned to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ the Eternal Word who became the Incarnate Word is the revelation we live by. He is Truth. Start with Him and keep Him as the center of all Biblical revelation and interpretation. If something does not agree with what Jesus said and did, then stay with what Jesus said and did.

5) Determine God's ways of working for today

Base application on things present-day readers share with the original audience of the text. Recognize how God's working varies in different ages. Example, for ministry, we use contemporary methods, tools, and technologies as we proclaim God's timeless, unchanging and eternal Word. We will not find these contemporary methods, tools and technologies mentioned in the Bible, but we understand how God works in different generations and ages.

6) Rely on the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher and He will give us wisdom and guidance to show us how to apply God's Word to our specific situations in everyday life.

What God has instructed us to do with His Word

- 1) Study the Word
- 2) Meditate on the Word
- 3) Believe the Word

- 4) Speak the Word
- 5) Practice (Live by) the Word
- 6) Teach the Word

24

DIFFICULT TOPICS

We now apply the hermeneutical framework developed in this book to a few common and sometimes difficult questions. Concise answers in outline / brief are provided to serve as a guide for further study and examination. Also, please refer to our church website: apcwo.org/answers for an ongoing list of Bible answers to common questions.

Is Jesus God?

Jesus said He is God. This was clearly understood by His audience and was one of the primary reasons for them to have Him crucified (John 8:58; John 10:30-33; John 17:5; Revelation 1:8).

The title “the First and the Last” used by God in the Old Testament was used by Jesus in the New Testament (Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12; Revelation 1:17; Revelation 2:8; Revelation 22:13).

The Old Testament states He is God (Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2).

The New Testament states He is God (John 1:1-4; John 1:30; Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6; 1 Timothy 3:16).

The Trinity

The Bible presents God as One God in three Persons—God the Father, God the Eternal Word, God the Spirit. They are distinct Persons. They are co-equal. Each Person of the Godhead fully represents the Godhead. Worshipping any Person of the

Godhead is worshipping the Godhead.

The Father is God. Jesus is God. The Holy Spirit is God. The Father is not one-third God. Jesus is not one-third God. The Holy Spirit is not one-third God. Each Person of the Godhead fully represents the Godhead. The Father is God and fully represents the Godhead. Jesus, the Eternal Word is fully God and fully represents the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is fully God and fully represents the Godhead.

Romans 1:20 The Greek word *'theiotes'* used only here is translated “Godhead, Divinity, Divine nature.”

Daniel 7:13,14 The Holy Spirit working in Daniel giving him visions in which he saw God the Father (Ancient of Days), and the Son of Man (God the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ).

Acts 7:55,56 Stephen full of the Holy Spirit saw the glory of God the Father on the throne and the Son of Man (Jesus the Eternal Word) at the right hand of the Father.

Revelation 1:4,5 God the Father (Him who was, and is and is to come), God the Holy Spirit (the seven spirits who are before His throne), and God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Revelation 4:2-5; Revelation 5:5,6 God the Father (One sat on the throne), God the Holy Spirit (seven lamps of fire which are the seven spirits of God), God the Son (the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb).

Son of God, Beginning of creation, Firstborn, Only Begotten

How do we understand the different titles for Jesus Christ—The Son of God, Only Begotten, First Born, First Begotten (Only Born, First Born), etc.?

The Son of God

How do we understand the title “Son of God”? The Eternal Word was (and is) God, co-equal with the Father and the Spirit. In the Incarnation, the Eternal Word laid aside His powers of deity, of omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence and took on humanity—a flesh and blood body. He walked as a Man, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and lived in submission to God the Father as a Son. He did not cease being deity or being part of the Godhead. He was / is deity but in His earthly life, confined Himself to humanity. This Incarnate One was / is called the Son of God referencing His walk as Son before the Father. *“I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”* (Hebrews 1:5, see Gospel of John). After His resurrection, His body became a resurrected body, that of a different, immortal, incorruptible ‘flesh and bone’ body of heavenly spiritual material. He took on His powers as deity and is seated at the Father’s right hand. In this glorified body, dwells the fullness of the Godhead, bodily (Colossians 2:9). All His titles given to Him during His earthly life still apply. He is still the Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God, the Son of Man, the Son of God, etc.

Beginning of creation

“These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of “God:” (Revelation 3:14b)

“Beginning” Greek ‘*arche*’

The term “Beginning of the creation of God” should be understood in two ways.

- 1) beginning, origin, that by which anything begins to be, the origin, the active cause. This is Jesus, the One who began creating all things in the very beginning, by whom, for whom and through whom all things came into existence (John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:2).

- 2) the first place, principality, rule, magistracy, the highest authority. Jesus is at the highest place and is the highest authority of all creation.

It could not mean that Jesus was the first to be created by God, for Jesus is an uncreated, eternal, self-existent being and is God (John 1:1,2; John 5:26).

The Firstborn, Only Begotten

How do we understand the terms or titles “firstborn” and “only begotten” given to Jesus?

Here are some ways these titles are used for Jesus.

- Firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15)
- Firstborn into the world (Hebrews 1:6)
- Firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29)
- Firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5)
- Head of the Church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23)

These facts must be understood in connection with the following:

- The only begotten of the Father (John 1:14)
- The only begotten Son (John 1:18)
- His only begotten Son (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9)
- The only begotten Son of God (John 3:18)
- Today I have begotten You (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5)

“Firstborn” (Greek *prototokos*) means “the first one born in the family.”

To understand the terms “firstborn” and “only begotten”, we must recognize the following about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only One who was part of the eternal Godhead to come forth from the Godhead, from the Father and the Spirit, to become part of creation (*firstborn over all creation, firstborn into the world*), to become part of the family of God (*firstborn among many brethren*), to be clothed with humanity and walk as a Son (*only begotten Son*), to be the first One and only One from the Godhead to “die” in His humanity and be resurrected (*firstborn from the dead, today I have begotten You*), and He is the Head of the Church He established, also identified in Him (*church of the Firstborn*).

With these facts, it is clear in what sense Jesus is the firstborn and the only begotten. All creation came into existence by creative acts, not by being an eternal part of the Godhead and coming forth from the Godhead, a begetting as in the case of Jesus. Even the “many brethren” are not begotten in the same sense as Jesus. The “many brethren” were born as created people into the human family, and then on being born of the Spirit, are brought (adopted) into God’s family (Romans 8:14-16; Galatians 4:5,6; Ephesians 1:5). Jesus is different because He was always an eternal part of the Godhead and came forth from the Godhead to be the first in the family among many brethren, of created people who were given the life and nature of God. Jesus, having died in His humanity, also became the first-begotten of or from the dead, and the firstfruit of the resurrection of all men (1 Corinthians 15:23-33; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).

Contradictory Gospel accounts?

How do we explain what seem to be contradictions in the Gospels.

Here are a few examples to consider.

The demoniac of Gadara

Matthew 8:28-34 (two demon possessed men); Mark 5:1-20 (a man); Luke 8:26-39 (a man).

The **law of non-contradiction** in logical thinking states that a thing cannot be both A and Non-A at the same time. *A difference is not a contradiction unless it satisfies this law.* For example, let's assume John and Jim met with me in my office at 9 a.m. today. Later in the day, when in a conversation with someone, I tell them that I met John at 9 a.m. Then when I meet someone else, I tell them, I met John and Jim at 9 a.m. Both these statements differ, but both are right. They are not a contradiction. Hence, we understand the account of the demoniac of Gadara in this manner. Matthew points out two people which must have been the case, while Mark and Luke focus on the interactions with one of the two men primarily, although both men were delivered and set free.

The centurion and the noble man

Matthew 8:5-13 and John 4:46-54

While both these incidents appear to be similar, there are clear differences and hence, these are two different incidents.

- **Matthew 8:5-13** Took place in Capernaum, a Roman centurion, a paralyzed servant, Jesus offered to go to his home.
- **John 4:46-54** Took place at Cana of Galilee, a nobleman from Capernaum, his sick son, Jesus told him to go home announcing his son well.

Three recorded anointings of Jesus

1) An unnamed woman anoints Jesus' feet at the house of Simon the Pharisee.

This possibly took place in Galilee, perhaps at the city of Nain (Luke 7:36-50). This woman wept at Jesus' feet, wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with perfume from an alabaster jar.

2) Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus' feet

Six days before the Passover in the house of Lazarus (John 12:1-9). Jesus slept there Friday night and spent the last sabbath in rest and at sunset, when the sabbath ended, the supper was served. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume and wiped them with her hair.

3) An Unnamed woman anoints Jesus, head at Bethany

Two days before the Passover in the house of Simon the leper, also in Bethany (Mark 14:1-9; Matthew 26:6-13). In this account, an unnamed woman pours expensive perfume on Jesus' head while He is reclining at the table. Jesus said that *"wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."* (Matthew 26:13)

What was written on the Cross?

A good example of how to compare texts that complement rather than contradict each other is found in the words that Pilate, the Roman governor, wrote and placed on the stake of Jesus' crucifixion.

Matthew 27:37 reads, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Mark 15:26 says, “THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Luke 23:38 reads, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

John 19:19 states, “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

At first glance, it might appear none of the authors copied the words on the sign properly. But, when we read each account, we find everyone adds a bit more information to the rest. From John, we find that Pilate did the writing. From Luke, we have additional information as to why these words are different—the inscription was originally written in three languages, Greek, Latin and Hebrew (Luke 23:38). So, the variations of the wording logically would have to do with the three languages used as well as the different point of view of each biographer, stressing slightly different aspects of Christ’s life and ministry.

Adding up the wording of the different accounts, we see that the complete message recorded by the signs was “**This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.**”

None of the Gospel accounts contradicts the others; they complement each other to provide increased understanding.

Did Jesus drink sour wine when on the Cross?

Matthew 27:34

they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.

John 19:30

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

We see from the sequence of the narratives in the Gospels that these are two distinct events. One, at the start of His

crucifixion, Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh, which was meant to numb the person so they do not feel the pain. Jesus refused to take this. He bore the pain. Later on, toward the end of His time on the Cross (almost 6 hours), He said that He was thirsty. He must have only desired water to quench His thirst and prepare to make His final shout of victory, “It is finished”. At this point, He was offered some sour wine (vinegar), which He received just to quench His thirst and make His final statements on the Cross.

The greater sin—Pilate, Judas

John 19:8-12

⁸ Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, ⁹ and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.

¹⁰ Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

¹² From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.”

Jesus recognized that Pilate had been put in his place and had the authority he had because God had given that to him. He was also aware of the pressure that Pilate was facing, and that Pilate would eventually give into the pressure of having an innocent man (Jesus) falsely condemned and crucified. This would of course be a sin on Pilate’s part of not exercising his authority correctly. However, the betrayal of Judas which caused Jesus to be delivered / brought before Pilate in the first place was the greater sin. Judas had been entrusted by God with a place among one of the 12 apostles. To abandon that privilege and instead turn against Jesus was the greater sin.

“Greater” means “larger”. All sin is a falling short of God’s glory. All sin leads to the same judgment—death (Romans 6:23). However, there are sins that are greater and larger in their significance, impact and consequence to the person(s) involved here on earth.

Predestination and free moral agency of man

How do we understand predestination and the free moral agency of man? Does God decide, determine and dictate all of man’s choices, especially in the matter of eternal salvation? Or is it the individual’s personal choice and exercise of their free will and moral agency that determines whether or not they receive God’s gift of eternal life? This, of course, has been and continues to be a matter of intense debate.

Some of the key Scriptures to study on this subject include Romans 8:28-30; Romans 9, Romans 11 and Ephesians 1:5,11.

To think this through, we must have a brief of two theological streams that undergird the two differing positions on this matter.

Calvinism and Arminianism

Calvinism and Arminianism are two main theological perspectives that deal with salvation. Calvinism is named after the teachings of the theologian John Calvin (1509-1564). Arminianism is named after the teachings of the theologian Jacobus Arminius (1559-1609). The Calvinist perspective has been summarized in TULIP: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance of the saints. No corresponding acronym is widely used for the Arminian perspective.

Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God and God’s

right to choose people for salvation (Acts 13:48; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). Arminianism emphasizes the ability and freedom of man to choose God (Joshua 24:15).

In Calvinism, God is the ultimate and deciding factor in the salvation of individuals. In Arminianism, man's response to God's grace is the deciding factor.

Calvinists affirm God's sovereignty over His creation (Romans 9:22,23), sinful man's inability to freely choose God (1 Corinthians 2:14), in God's electing and predestining people to salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13) which is by God's choice, not man's (John 1:13; Romans 9:16), and that the saved are eternally secure because their salvation rests in Christ's work, not man's faithfulness (John 10:27,28).

Arminianism on the other hand holds a different perspective and affirms the sovereignty of man's will and ability to choose God, that God's predestining of people is based on His foreseen knowledge of their choices, that Jesus died for all people who ever lived, and that it is possible to lose one's salvation.

Predestination is not predetermination, but proclamation based on foreknowledge.

Looking at the entirety of Scripture, we recognize clearly that God has given free will and free moral agency. People are free to make their choice. God knows ahead of time the choice we will make (foreknowledge). He has a predetermined plan for the human race, for all those who will make the choice to follow Him. His predetermined plan is to have us become part of His family and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. However, the choice is still made by each individual.

Is everything that happens the will of God?

We recognize that God is King, Sovereign, Lord and Ruler of all. And God has determined, in His sovereignty, that He would entrust people with free will and free moral agency. He also delegated authority on the earth to the people He created, starting with Adam and Eve.

Genesis 2:15

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Psalms 115:3,16

³ But our God *is* in heaven;

He does whatever He pleases.

¹⁶ The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S;

But the earth He has given to the children of men.

Luke 4:5,6

⁵ Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

With this in mind, we recognize that God is not dictating the actions of people, and hence, not everything that is said or done on the earth reflects His will and purpose. In addition to this, we know that the devil has gained access to the earth because of the Fall of man and is also carrying out his evil work. This again is not the will or purpose of God.

Hence, in discerning the actions of people and situations we face, we must recognize what is from God, what is due to the actions of other people, what is of the devil, and what is because of the process of decay or corruption that prevails over creation because of the Fall. See the topic, **Creation under**

bondage of corruption (Romans 8:18-23).

Forgiving people's sins (John 20:23)

John 20:23

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."

We know that only God can forgive sins (Psalm 130:4). Jesus did not refute the scribes when they remarked that only God could forgive sins. Jesus wanted them to know that He had power on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:7,10; Luke 5:21,24). Jesus could do so because He was going to pay for the sins of the whole world. In a similar manner, the reason He healed was because He was going to bear our sicknesses and diseases (Matthew 8:16,17).

John 20:23 has to be interpreted in a manner consistent with the rest of Scripture. Only God can forgive sins, but we as human agents, bring the message and provide access to people to receive God's forgiveness. There are a few scenarios where a disciple / follower of Jesus can help people receive forgiveness for their sins from God or have their sins retained.

- 1) By the proclamation of the Gospel—in and through the sharing of the Gospel, we can announce to people that if they believe, their sins will be forgiven, if they do not believe, their sins will remain. This is what we see happen through the book of Acts as the Gospel is preached (**Examples:** Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19, etc.).
- 2) In the case of offenses as described in Matthew 18:15-18, where when a dispute is resolved, both parties are cleared of their misdeeds as appropriate.
- 3) In the case of willful sin in the church, if a brother sins willfully and is unwilling to receive correction, we let them

go, and their sins are held against them until they repent. An example of this would be what happened in the Corinthian church. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11; see also 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14,15)

Three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40)

How do we explain Jesus having to be dead three days and three nights.

Matthew 12:40

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Here are two possible explanations.

The High Sabbath

John records that this was the high sabbath (John 19:31). In John 19:31, the term “high Sabbath” refers to a special Sabbath that coincided with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins on the 15th of Nisan (the first month of the Jewish calendar) immediately following Passover. This Sabbath is considered “high” or “special” because it is one of the major Jewish festivals during which no work was permitted, similar to the weekly Sabbath.

The Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be observed the first month of the year (the month of Nisan) (see Exodus 12:1-20). This 14th Day is the Preparation Day for the Passover. The evening of the 14th Day.

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<p>Jewish Thursday begins Wednesday evening, 6 p.m.</p> <p>14th Day of Nisan, Preparation Day.</p> <p>Passover begins at 6 p.m.</p> <p>Jesus has the Last Supper in the Upper Room. That night He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.</p>	<p>Jesus crucified at 9 a.m. in the morning.</p> <p>On the Cross 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.</p> <p>Buried in the tomb before 6 p.m. that day.</p> <p>Jewish Friday, begins 6 p.m. Thursday evening.</p>	<p>Feast of Unleavened Bread begins Jewish Friday.</p> <p>Day of Convocation. High Sabbath.</p> <p>Leviticus 23:6,7 John 19:31</p> <p>Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) begins 6 p.m. Friday evening.</p>	<p>Weekly Sabbath begins Friday evening 6 p.m. till Saturday 6 p.m.</p>	<p>Early Sunday morning Jesus was raised from the dead</p>
	First Night	Second Night	Third Night	

The Jewish night / day

The evening and the morning are considered one day (Genesis 1:5).

A second option is to look at the night / day considering whatever happened during that night / day period as having happened on that day, hence counting that day (night / day) period in. In this approach, the High Sabbath and the Weekly Sabbath coincide on the same day.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Jewish Thursday begins Wednesday evening, 6 p.m.	Jesus crucified at 9 a.m. in the morning.	Feast of Unleavened Bread begins Jewish Friday.	Early Sunday morning Jesus was raised from the dead
14th Day of Nisan Preparation Day.	On the Cross 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.	Day of Convocation. High Sabbath.	
Passover begins at 6 p.m.	Buried in the tomb before 6 p.m. that day.	Leviticus 23:6,7 and Weekly Sabbath.	
Jesus has Last Supper in the Upper Room. That night He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.	Jewish Friday begins 6 p.m. Thursday evening.	Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) begins 6 p.m. Friday evening.	
First Night / Day (Thursday night / Friday morning)	Second Night / Day (Friday night / Saturday morning)	Third Night / Day (Saturday night / Sunday morning)	

While we personally do not propose either as the definitive happening, we are open to both explanations and focus on the fact that Jesus did die for us, was raised from the dead, and did fulfill all prophecy.

When that which is perfect has come (1 Corinthians 13:9-13)

A passage that is sometimes used to support the notion of Cessationism (an expiration date for the supernatural) is found in 1 Corinthians 13.

Let's take a look at this.

1 Corinthians 13:9-13

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

In 1 Corinthians 13:9, Paul lets us know that we only prophesy “in part.” God does not reveal everything to us. We only prophesy the piece, or portion of information that God reveals. This is also true of all revelatory gifts and the function of all the gifts of the Spirit. Each gift or manifestation of the Spirit is only an expression of a piece or portion of our infinite God and all that He is.

Then in 1 Corinthians 13:10, Paul lets us know that what is in part, that is the gifts of the Spirit, will be done away with when “that which is perfect” has come. Some have used “that which is perfect” to refer to the Bible, the complete Scriptures. The Scriptures are perfect in that the Scriptures (the Bible) is the inerrant, inspired Word of God. We must apply the hermeneutical principles we have studied in this book. Both in the immediate context of the chapter and in the larger context of this epistle, “the Bible” is not mentioned and does not seem to be in the author’s mind. However, from both the immediate context of the same chapter and the larger context of 1 Corinthians (chapter 15), we observe clearly that Paul the apostle is referring to the coming of the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul clearly indicates what he is referring to.

“That which is perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10 is explained to us in 1 Corinthians 13:12 as us seeing Him “face to face” and knowing even as we are known. The apostle John also writes, “...we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Hence, to state “that which is perfect” refers to the compilation of the Bible is a violation of basic hermeneutical principles. The phrase “that which is perfect” clearly refers to us seeing Jesus “face to face”.

Consider this—even the Eternal Word, who became flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, ministered under the anointing of the Spirit during His earthly ministry (Luke 4:17,18; Acts 10:38). Then how much more should we be dependent on the anointing and supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, even as we minister the written Scriptures.

The apostle Paul knew the Old Testament Scriptures. He also had the revelation which he wrote down for us in his epistles, and yet, when he himself ministered, he was completely dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4,5).

So, the Word does not do away with the work of the Spirit. Rather the Word and the Spirit work together to bear witness to Jesus Christ as the Son of God. “*For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one*” (1 John 5:7).

Continuationism—Biblical reasons

Applying the hermeneutical framework we have developed, we present here 10 reasons (in point form) why we can conclude that the Scriptures plainly teach that miracles continue in our day and time.

1) God has not changed.

The Bible presents an unchanging God. The God of the Bible is the God of today. He worked miracles then and He works miracles today.

2) The ministry of Jesus and His commission.

The Lord Jesus ministered healing, deliverance, and miracles. He commissioned His disciples to do the same. We are proclaiming the same Gospel of Jesus Christ and must do so in the power of the Spirit.

3) Bible faith.

Faith in God works in the same way today as it did in Bible times because God has not changed, and His Word is still the same.

4) Sin, satan and demons are still at work.

The powers of darkness are still continuing their oppressive work. In the Old and New Testaments, the works of darkness were confronted and overthrown through the supernatural power of God. This continues on till today.

5) Problems and challenges.

In both Testaments, God intervened in daily life situations by demonstrations of His supernatural power delivering people and demonstrating His goodness. People still face problems and challenges, and God still intervenes in life situations in supernatural ways.

6) The Holy Spirit is at work.

The Holy Spirit is at work today in and through the Church. There is no indication in Scripture that God the Holy Spirit has lost His power or opted not to work supernaturally through the

Church.

7) Gifts are still given to believers.

The Church of Jesus Christ is still functioning today. God gives gifts to His people to fulfill their role and function in the Body. There is no place in the New Testament that indicates God has withdrawn gifts that demonstrate His supernatural power and only gives other kinds of gifts.

8) Ministry gifts are in the Church.

God has placed the ministry gifts of the apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher and evangelist, and a Biblical New Testament expression of these ministry gifts requires the demonstration of the supernatural.

9) A better covenant, a more glorious ministry.

The New Testament teaches that we are in a better covenant and hence, have a more glorious ministry. This means that ministry in the New Covenant should manifest greater glory, more power, greater signs, wonders and miracles than under the Old Covenant.

10) Until that which is perfect is come.

As explained earlier, the apostle Paul indicates that the gifts of the Spirit will continue until we see Jesus face to face. The supernatural manifestations of the Spirit still continue in the Church today.

For further study please consider these resources available for FREE download at apcwo.org/books

- *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*
- *Ministering Healing and Deliverance*

- *The Wonderful Benefits of Praying in Tongues*
- *Understanding the Prophetic*
- *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*

Women and men—headship, leadership, gifting

There is much debate whether women can be in positions of leadership in different contexts (This has led to differing positions, often referred to **egalitarianism**—men and women are equal and **complementarianism**—only men hold leadership positions). Let us apply the hermeneutical framework developed in this book to provide a brief on this matter.

When we consider the general context of Scripture we observe the following:

- 1) There is God’s government or authority structure established that we must respect in their given context. In God’s government, man was created first and therefore, carries responsibility in those areas where headship has been specifically assigned to him (1 Corinthians 11:1-12). The one domain or area where headship is specifically assigned to the man is the home, specifically assigned to the husband (Ephesians 5:23). In the house, the husband is the head and provides leadership. Headship is for responsibility and does not indicate superiority. We must not extend this headship given to the husband at home to all other spheres of human activity. The Bible does not do this.
- 2) God has worked through women in both Testaments. He has anointed them and used them to do things of significance in spiritual, social and political / government contexts such as Miriam, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Anna the prophetess, the daughters of Philip, the co-workers of Paul, Lydia, Aquila and Priscilla.

- 3) The Scriptures teach clearly that men and women are in equal spiritual standing before God. Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 3:7.
- 4) In the distribution of spiritual gifts, grace and calling, there is no distinction between men and women. Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:8-11. All gifts are for people in the church, not specific to male or female.

Leadership: The Bible does not state that only men should hold leadership positions in the church, in government or in the workplace. God has worked and continues to work through both men and women in leadership positions.

Calling, gifts, graces, ministries and anointing: These are distributed to both men and women equally.

Family: The Bible does state that the husband is the head of the wife, giving him this position of responsibility to provide for, protect, and lead his family. The wife is to submit to the husband and work together with him in the home. Both are co-equal within marriage before God and have equal access to spiritual gifts and graces. In situations where the husband fails to fulfill his role as the head, leader, and provider, the wife, empowered by God, steps in and cares for the family.

Can a believer depart from Christ and lose their salvation?

This is a topic that has been debated and discussed extensively. We present Scriptures to consider, where the end observation is that—the New Testament clearly indicates it is possible for those who once believed in Christ to relinquish their faith and turn away from faith in Jesus Christ.

- Can those who have once tasted salvation come to a place where there is no more repentance? Hebrews 6:4-6

- Can a believer draw away from the faith? Hebrews 10:26-39
- Can a brother sin a sin that we are told not to pray for anymore? 1 John 5:16
- Can believers stray from the faith? 1 Timothy 1:19,20; 1 Timothy 5:15,24; 1 Timothy 6:9,10; 1 Timothy 6:20,21
- What happens to a believer who lives according to the flesh? Romans 8:5-13
- What does the apostle John challenge us with as believers? 1 John 2:4; 1 John 2:9-11; 1 John 3:4-15
- What does it mean to be disqualified? 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 13:5,6
- Will a Christian who ‘practices’ works of the flesh inherit the Kingdom of God? Galatians 5:16,19-21
- Is it possible for a believer to be deceived and depart from the faith? 1 Timothy 4:1-3
- Why did Peter state that it would be better not to have known the truth? 2 Peter 2:20-22
- What if we do not endure to the end? Matthew 10:22
- Can names be blotted out of the Book of Life? Exodus 32:32,33; Revelation 3:5
- Can there be faith without works? Is a man justified by faith only, or by faith and works? Ephesians 2:8,9; James 2:17-26
- Can a gift once received be discarded, rejected, or lost? Romans 6:23; Hebrews 6:4-9

How can names be blotted out of the Book of Life?

The Bible mentions about the Book of Life in Exodus 32:32,33; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; Revelation 13:8; Revelation

17:8; Revelation 20:12,15; Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:19.

There are obvious questions of interest that we would like to ask. When were / are names written in the Book of Life? Can names be removed (blotted out) from the Book of Life?

Let's consider a few of these Scriptures.

Revelation 13:8

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation or before the foundation of the world. This is in keeping with the rest of Scripture (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27,28; 1 Peter 1:19,20). However, Revelation 13:8 does not imply or indicate that the Book of Life was written in advance from the foundation of the world. So, we shall leave this assumption aside.

The Bible does not state when a person's name is written into the Book of Life.

It does however indicate that a person's name can be taken out of the Book of Life.

Exodus 32:32,33

³² **Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”**

³³ **And the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.**

Revelation 3:5

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Revelation 22:19

and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Hence, we arrive at our conclusion using...

- **argument from silence** (drawing conclusions based on what is not explicitly stated in Scripture),
- **proof by contradiction** (demonstrating the truth of a statement by showing that denying it leads to an absurd or contradictory conclusion) and
- the **principle of consistency** (if a principle applies in one situation, it should apply consistently in similar situations unless explicitly stated otherwise).

For God to write people's names into the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world based on His foreknowledge and then, to blot their names out would indicate an error on His foreknowledge, and we know God cannot make a mistake. His knowledge is perfect. (**Proof by contradiction**).

The Bible also does not tell us specifically when a person's name is written into the Book of Life. (**Argument from silence**)

Since a person's name can be blotted out from the Book of Life based on their choices and actions here on earth, it is only logical to conclude that their name is entered into the Book of Life, in the first place, based on their choices and actions. (**Principle of consistency**).

Hence, we conclude that there is a Book of Life that records the names of people who will enter into God's eternal kingdom. God has not written names into this Book in advance. Names are written in or blotted out based on people's choices

and actions. When a person chooses to believe in Jesus Christ and God's provision of salvation, choosing to follow God, their name is written in. If a person chooses to deny Jesus Christ after having made an initial commitment, their name is blotted out.

Sabbath

Why do we not observe the seventh day (Saturday) as the Sabbath?

The Old Covenant clearly stated the observance of the seventh day (our Saturday) as the Sabbath, the day of rest.

In the New Covenant, through His death, the Lord Jesus removed the requirements that was against us (Colossians 2:14). Hence, we are no longer under the laws and requirements of the Old Covenant, including the keeping of the Sabbath (Colossians 2:16-23). Instead, each individual is free to observe a particular day or all days as days unto the Lord (Romans 14:4-8). The Early Church began gathering on the first day of the week, being the Resurrection day, and called this the "Lord's day" (Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10). So, we continue doing this— although there is nothing restricting us from gathering and worshipping together on any other convenient day (as in some parts of the world, the believers gather together on a Friday, etc.).

Polygamy and monogamy

Why did God permit polygamy in the Old Testament? Why did this change in the New Testament?

God's original plan for marriage is clearly stated in Genesis 2:24.

As things progressed, man made his choice to practice

polygamy. People did so for several reasons including social, economic, political alliances and survival concerns. God did not deter man from making this choice. This divine tolerance did not indicate divine approval or divine plan.

In the New Testament, God specifically reaffirmed His original intent for marriage, monogamy (Matthew 19:4-6). This became all the more significant because in the New Testament, marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with the Church (Ephesians 5:31,32). Monogamy expresses the life of godliness that we are called to live (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8) and is also the standard set for Christian leaders (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6) in becoming an example for all to follow.

God did not change His mind about this matter. His original plan was clear from the beginning of the creation of Adam and Eve. He allowed man to make his choice and do as he please for a time (Acts 17:29-31), but later called us back to His original design.

God and genocide

How could God be a loving God when He commanded His people in the Old Testament to kill and destroy tribes, their people, and their cities? Is this not 'genocide'?

The issue of God commanding the destruction of certain tribes and cities in the Old Testament is one of the most challenging theological and ethical questions. It raises questions about God's justice, mercy, and love as well as how we understand the cultural, historical, and spiritual context of these events.

Let's try to understand this by keeping the entirety of Scripture before us.

God commanded the Israelites, at times, to destroy certain groups of people such as the Canaanites, Amalekites, and other neighboring tribes (Deuteronomy 7:1,2; 1 Samuel 15:3). The reason behind this command can be understood as a) divine judgment on sin, b) preservation for redemption and c) not based on hate or prejudice.

- **Divine judgment:** Many of these tribes were deeply corrupt, engaging in practices like child sacrifice (Leviticus 18:21), temple prostitution, and extreme idolatry. These practices were abominable to God and had a devastating moral and spiritual impact. God gave the Canaanites over 400 years to repent (Genesis 15:16). Their destruction was not sudden or without warning. The destruction of these nations was an act of divine judgment on sin, much like the flood in Noah's time (Genesis 6-8) or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). It was not arbitrary but a response to persistent wickedness.
- **Preservation for redemption:** God commanded the removal of these nations to prevent Israel from being corrupted by their practices and idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:4). The spiritual purity of Israel was essential for God's redemptive plan, which ultimately brought salvation to all nations through Christ.
- **Not based on hate or prejudice:** Genocide is the deliberate extermination of a particular ethnic, racial, or religious group, often driven by hate or prejudice. It is clear that God's commands were not based on ethnic hatred or prejudice. They were acts of judgment against sin, not against ethnicity. The Canaanites were judged for their actions and moral corruption, not their ethnicity or race. Some individuals and groups who repented were spared (**Examples:** Rahab and her family in Joshua 2; the Gibeonites in Joshua 9). This

shows that the commands were not indiscriminately applied but allowed for mercy. These commands were specific to certain groups in a particular time and place and were not a general principle of warfare or conquest.

God is still a loving God, a holy God and a just God. God's judgment and mercy are fully revealed in Jesus Christ. The cross demonstrates both God's justice (punishing sin) and His love (offering salvation). God's ultimate purpose was / is to offer salvation to all people and demonstrate His love for all people of all nations.

Saul and the witch of En Dor (1 Samuel 28:1-20)

Did the witch (medium, spiritist) really bring prophet Samuel back from the dead?

There are some who suggest that it was a demonic spirit impersonating Samuel.

There are others who suggest that God actually caused Samuel to come forth at that moment (like how Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration), even though it was a witch / medium who summoned Samuel from the dead. However, the settings are so starkly in contrast to each other, Saul engaging a medium, and Jesus being transfigured, it is hard to accept this reasoning.

Here are some points for consideration:

- Only God has power over hell to bring someone back from *hades*; satan does not have the power to do so.
- For God to empower a witch to bring a dead prophet back would be a contradiction of good empowering evil and doing what He taught His people not to do (Isaiah 8:19).

- Messengers of satan can appear as angels of light and perform lying signs and wonders (2 Corinthians 11:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Hence, we can arrive at the conclusion that in this incident, it was an evil spirit impersonating Samuel, stating correctly Saul's spiritual condition and predicting beforehand what they would attempt to bring about the next day, the death of Saul, his sons and the defeat of the Israelite army before the Philistines. We state this because the setting was that of a witch engaging with her familiar spirits and God would not participate or empower such a practice (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

25

PREACHING AND TEACHING

One of the objectives in studying and working on interpreting Scripture correctly is so that we can then communicate truth to others. This is a short and simple chapter on communicating Bible truth. Homiletics, which is the art and science of preaching involving interpreting Scripture, organizing its message, and delivering it effectively, is in itself a vast topic and must be addressed in a separate book.

We present here a few essential thoughts on preaching and teaching to help guide in the delivery of Bible truth to others.

Broadly speaking when communicating Bible truth, we could be either preaching or teaching.

1 Timothy 2:7

for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

2 Timothy 1:11

to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

Preaching is proclamation. The primary objectives in preaching are to inspire, encourage and motivate.

Teaching is explanation. The primary objectives in teaching are to explain, clarify and instruct. A good teacher makes complex things look very simple and easy to understand. A bad teacher makes simple things look very complex and difficult to

understand.

Like different methods in Bible study, there are many different types of sermons that one can prepare and deliver.

Expository: Explain and apply a specific passage of Scripture.

Topical: Address a particular theme or topic using multiple Scriptures.

Textual: Focus on a single verse or short passage.

Narrative: Tell the story of a Biblical event or character.

Inspirational: Directed to inspiring, encouraging, calling to action.

... and many more.

The old and the new

Matthew 13:52

Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.”

There are times we bring our fresh new insights and there are times we repeat, remind and review what has already been communicated. Both are essential for the growth and development of God’s people in their spiritual journey.

Biblical objectives in preaching and teaching

One of the starting points when preparing to minister God’s Word is to be clear what we are to achieve through the presentation of God’s Word in the time allotted. Are we evangelizing, encouraging, establishing believers in truth or equipping believers for ministry? Once our objective is clear, we now focus our preparation on that objective.

Evangelizing and proclaiming the Gospel

Our goal here is to present Jesus Christ and to help people encounter and embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior. Depending on our audience, we may take an approach to appeal to the mind and then reach the heart, or demonstrate the power of Jesus Christ, or do both. The end goal is to challenge them to make a decision about Jesus Christ and what they will do with the message of the Gospel.

Encouraging and inspiring believers

When our goal is to inspire, motivate, exhort or encourage believers, moving them to action, we then tailor the message in ways that touch the heart and the mind. Using real-life stories, Biblical illustrations, and casting vision on simple and practical ways they can do what God calls them to do usually moves people into action.

Establishing believers in the truth

As we saw at the beginning of this book, this is one of the primary calls to ministering the Word. God's people need to be established in the Word of God so that they can build their lives on a solid foundation and be strong in times of adversity or when winds of deception blow.

Equipping believers for the ministry

God desires for all His people to serve Him. For this, believers need to be equipped to do the work of the ministry. We need to be able to teach and impart God's Word so that believers can then engage actively in areas of ministry that God has called them to.

Simple practices in Biblical homiletics

1) *Preparation*

Prayer: Seek God's guidance, wisdom and anointing. Pray for the people you are ministering to.

Study: Conduct thorough exegesis and understand the historical, cultural, and literary context of the text.

Structure: Organize the sermon with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion.

2) *Delivery*

Clarity: Use simple, understandable language.

Engagement: Connect with the audience through stories, illustrations, and relatable examples without drawing attention to self. Stir up the hearts and minds of people.

Passion: Deliver with conviction and enthusiasm, coming from a personal connection to the message.

Preach the text, not opinions: Anchor the message in Scripture ensuring it reflects God's Word, not personal ideas.

Proclaim Christ: Make Christ central in every sermon.

Maintain simplicity and focus on a few key points: Avoid overloading with excessive details; focus on a central message or theme.

Explain the text clearly: Break down complex ideas into understandable concepts.

Teach contextually: Where appropriate, explain the historical, cultural, and literary background of the passage.

Encourage active engagement when possible: Use questions, discussions, and activities to involve learners.

Instruct systematically: Present content logically and progressively.

Use supporting resources and tools: When possible, make use of presentation tools and other visuals, for example, maps, diagrams, and historical data to enhance understanding.

Repeat, remind, review: Especially in a pastoral setting, repeat, remind, and review over time (months / years).

3) Application

Relevance: Show how Biblical truths apply to contemporary life.

Call to action: Encourage, inspire and motivate specific responses that God desires in His people.

Equip for life and ministry: Show learners how to apply Biblical principles in their daily lives and ministry.

Things to avoid when ministering the Word

- Avoid being casual, improper, or vulgar.
- Avoid drawing attention to self. Avoid self-promotion.
- Avoid politics. Don't use the pulpit to promote political parties or agendas.
- Avoid demeaning or attacking individuals.
- Avoid criticizing and combating other denominations.
- Avoid manipulation or control of people.

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DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did reveal God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, ***“For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).*** Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so, He came to provide a way for the entire human

race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him wholeheartedly.

“... through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:43).

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you decide to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I decide to believe in You and to accept what You did for me by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, and neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins.

Thank You, Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You.

Amen.

ABOUT ALL PEOPLES CHURCH

Our vision at All Peoples Church is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore, a voice to the nation and to the nations.

All Peoples Church is a **Jesus loving, Word focused, Spirit filled,** family church, an equipping center, a missions base and a world outreach.

- As a **family church**, we grow together as a community in Christ-centered fellowship, caring and serving each other in love as the assembly of God.
- As an **equipping center**, we empower and equip every believer to live victoriously, mature into Christlikeness and fulfill God's purposes for their lives.
- As a **missions base**, we engage in meaningful ministry to bless our city, nation and the nations with the full Gospel of Jesus Christ through the Word of God and supernatural demonstrations of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- As a **world outreach**, we serve locally and globally by nurturing godly leaders and Spirit-filled churches who can impact their regions for the Kingdom of God.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, the latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4,5; Hebrews 2:3,4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is the Holy Spirit's power, our passion is people and our goal is Christ-like maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at apcwo.org/locations or send an email to contact@apcwo.org.

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All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people and ‘Christian Leaders’ Conference’ are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of publications are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

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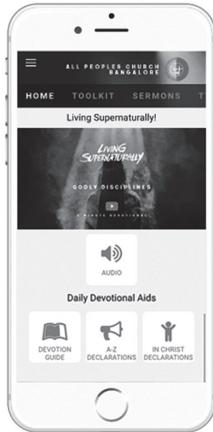
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ALL PEOPLES CHURCH BIBLE COLLEGE

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All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with a doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God and powerful demonstrations of signs, wonders and miracles, all flowing out of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

At All Peoples Church Bible College (APC-BC), in addition to sound teaching, we emphasize the love of God in demonstration, the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural work of God. Several young men and women have been trained and sent out to fulfill God's call over their lives.

We offer three programs.

- One-year Certificate in Theology and Christian Ministry (C.Th.)
- Two-year Diploma in Theology and Christian Ministry (Dip.Th.)
- Three-year Bachelor's in Theology and Christian Ministry (B.Th.)

Classes are held each weekday, **Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m.-12 noon, Indian Time (UTC+5:30)**. We offer three learning options.

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- **E-Learning:** Self-paced learning through the online portal apcbiblecollege.org/learn.

To **apply online**, and for more information about the college, curriculum, eligibility criteria, tuition costs and to download the application form, please visit apcbiblecollege.org.

The Bible is both a divine book and a human book. As a divine book we recognize the inspiration of the Scriptures and the supernatural power it releases into our lives. As a human book we recognize it was written in human language, within certain cultural contexts, using literary forms, language techniques, and communication styles and addressing a certain audience in Bible times. We need to learn, understand and interpret Scriptures being mindful of the human elements involved.

Our goal in Biblical interpretation is to correctly understand the meaning of the Scriptures so we can receive what God is speaking to us today. Interpreting Scripture requires dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit and the use of sound judgment and reason.

The apostle Paul emphasized the need to rightly divide the Word of God: *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). Our goal in this book is to learn how to handle the Word of God correctly under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We attempt to make the practice of correctly interpreting Scripture simple and easy to understand so that believers and ministers of the Word can apply these principles to their reading, study and ministry of God's holy Word. Our goal is to keep this simple and practical. We have also included some common questions and difficult topics so that we understand the interpretive process in arriving at a Biblical perspective on these topics.

May this book be a useful resource as you study, understand, interpret, apply and teach the Word of God.

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