

# **Bible 101**

# **Introduction**



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## INTRODUCTION

Rarely is it disputed that the Bible is the most influential book that mankind has encountered. However it must be honestly confessed that, at least in much of Western society, which arguably was born through the agency of the Bible, increased secularity has been paralleled by a decline in understanding and interest in this incomparable volume.

The aim of this course is to start with the proposition that belief, or indeed unbelief, cannot be exercised unless there is comprehension of the truth of the Bible. Faith, as is so wrongly understood, is not the response to abstract thought, to sentiment and tradition; it is not a leap in the dark. Rather faith is a leap in the light; it is the embrace of truth. Granted that faith does not necessarily grasp the totality of truth, yet it lays hold of sufficient truth that is regarded as being worthy of commitment to its claims.

So here we start with learning the truth about the Bible in a summary manner. We must learn its anatomy as well as something of the flesh that adheres to this form. However we must also grasp that for the human authors employed, the truth contained in Scripture has supernatural vitality that far transcends mere literary structure. If we simply stop at the arrangement of the Bible, we are in danger of dying of thirst when a soul quenching spring is before our very eyes.

So we take seriously the prescription of Jesus Christ: “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32).



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# BIBLE INTRODUCTION 101

## FOUNDATIONAL STUDIES IN THE WORD OF GOD

### I INTRODUCTION

- A. The book that we are about to study is the most influential volume that the human race has ever encountered, in spite of many feverish attempts to burn, ban, and blaspheme it.
1. On this fact alone the Bible demands the most serious study and investigation, whatever our presuppositions or bias about it may be.
  2. When the present Queen of England was crowned, the Archbishop of Canterbury presented her with a copy of the Authorized Version of the Bible and the accompanying exhortation:

Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing this world affords. Here is wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.<sup>1</sup>
  3. Today the current president of the United State, George W. Bush, tells us that:

I read the Bible regularly. . . . I read through the Bible every other year. During the years in between, I pick different chapters to study at different times. I have also learned the power of prayer. I pray for guidance. I do not pray for earthly things, but for heavenly things, for wisdom and patience and understanding.<sup>2</sup>
  4. Hence, only a fool or bigot would ignore such a legacy, yet we live in an appallingly illiterate age insofar as the Bible is concerned. Bible and study aids abound, but biblical ignorance yet more abounds!
  5. Whatever the student's attitude may be toward the Bible, the presupposition of this study is that it is the very Word of the only living God. There will be repeated references to evidence, both from within and without this volume, that this conclusion is true.
- B. The various names given to the Bible.
1. "The Holy Bible."
    - a. It is *holy*, sacred, or set apart from that which is common, and set apart unto that which is especially to be revered. It is not like any other book, since it has come from the mouth of a holy God (II Tim. 3:15-16; I Pet. 1:15-16), and for this reason it is to be treated reverently.

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<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce. *The English Bible*, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, *A Charge To Keep*, pp. 137-38.

- b. It is a *book*, “Bible” being derived from the Greek, βιβλίον, *biblion*, having the root meaning of a type of reed from which papyrus was made. In the time of Jesus Christ it referred to either a parchment scroll or a collection of papyrus sheets.
2. The Holy “Scriptures.”
- a. This is common terminology in the New Testament division of the Bible. Paul writes concerning “the gospel of God . . . in the sacred/holy Scriptures/writings [γράμματα, *gramatta*]” (Rom. 1:1-2). These are “the sacred/holy Scriptures/writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” and thus are “Scripture [γραφή, *graphē*],” inspired by God (II Tim. 3:15-16).
  - b. Hence, it is truth inscripturated, that is written down through the use of words taught by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:12-13; I Peter 1:20-21). It is a concrete, not fluid, objective, not subjective, propositional revelation, that is a tangible record as distinct from subjective dreams, visions, opinions, or “truth” by consensus (Jer. 23:28-29).
3. “The Word of God,” or “the Word of the Lord.”

Other names include “the oracles of God” (Acts 7:38), “the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; II Pet. 3:5), and “the word of the Lord” as repetitively used in Jeremiah (cf. 1:2, 4, 11, 13).

4. A fundamental presupposition.

In view of the preceding references concerning the Bible’s consistent claims to be the Word of the only true and living God, the presupposition of this study is that this claim is authentic. Other evidence in this regard will be supplied later in this manual. Further, it is believed, according to the Apostle Peter, “that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (II Pet. 1:20-21). Here authority is preserved in confluence. In other words, while God has used human agency in the writing of the books of the Bible, as was the case with Mary being the human agent and mother of Jesus Christ, yet the Spirit of God so inspired these writings that they consequently were preserved from error, in the same way that Jesus Christ was preserved from sin at birth and throughout his life (Luke 1:35; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I John 3:5). Hence the wise student of the Bible will pray to God that He, through the illumination of His Spirit, will grant a true understanding of His Word (Ps. 119:18). In other words, this course will regard the Bible as more than religious literature.

5. Homework exercises.

- a. What various terms describe the Scriptures or Word of God in Psalm 119?
- b. What does Jesus Christ say about Scripture or Word of God in John 10:35; 17:17?
- c. What does the Apostle Paul say about Scripture in II Timothy 3:16-17?

## II SELECTING A BIBLE

- A. Choose a Bible that is first of all accurate and precise, and not a paraphrase that nevertheless may have colloquial appeal.
1. Our first concern must be truth, God's intended meaning, not linguistic trendiness, cultural novelty, or personal preference. Hence, accuracy of translation is of vital importance.
  2. Bible language, especially in the New Testament, often makes a point that is based upon precise grammar (Gal. 3:16), and word meanings (Rom. 3:21-26).
- B. Choose a Bible that was translated by a committee of godly men, that is conservative evangelical scholars. None of the human authors of the Bible were liberals, that is skeptics regarding the Word of God to which they had access.
1. Hence, avoid primary reliance upon translations by one man since a panel is less prone to prejudice. In spite of J. B. Phillips' mastery of English expression, yet in his individual paraphrase of the New Testament, *Letters to Young Churches*, he takes unwarranted liberty in reversing the meaning of I Corinthians 14:22.
  2. In spite of the historic importance of the 1611 King James Version, it is not *today* the most accurate modern translation. This estimate is not intended to make light of the great reverence that this version has accumulated. However, as a challenging exercise, look up the following references in a KJV and ask yourself if you are clear as to the meaning of the quoted words or expressions. Then refer to the translation of these same verses in the NKJV, NASB, ESV, or NIV.

- |                                   |   |                                |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Genesis 29:17<br>"tender-eyed" | 9. Job 28:1<br>"fine"                     | 17. Nahum 3:5<br>"discover"    | 25. John 10:24<br>"doubt"              |
| 2. Genesis 37:22<br>"rid"         | 10. Psalm 22:17<br>"tell"                 | 18. Nahum 3:19<br>"bruit"      | 26. Acts 17:3<br>"alleging"            |
| 3. Joshua 9:5<br>"clouted"        | 11. Psalm 139:15<br>"curiously"           | 19. Mark 6:20<br>"observed"    | 27. Acts 28:13<br>"fetched a compass"  |
| 4. Judges 1:23<br>"descry"        | 12. Isaiah 3:18<br>"tires"                | 20. Mark 6:25<br>"by and by"   | 28. I Corinthians 10:24<br>"addicted"  |
| 5. I Chronicles 18:4<br>"houghed" | 13. Isaiah 43:13<br>"let"                 | 21. Mark 9:33-34<br>"disputed" | 29. I Corinthians 16:15<br>"addicted"  |
| 6. II Kings 5:23<br>"be content"  | 14. Isaiah 57:5<br>"clift"                | 22. Luke 19:13<br>"occupy"     | 30. II Corinthians 4:2<br>"dishonesty" |
| 7. Nehemiah 13:26<br>"outlandish" | 15. Jeremiah 18:11<br>"devise a device"   | 23. Luke 21:34<br>"surfeiting" | 31. Ephesians 6:4<br>"nurture"         |
| 8. Job 17:3<br>"strike hands"     | 16. Ezekiel 39:11, 14, 15<br>"passengers" | 24. John 2:3<br>"wanted"       | 32. Philippians 3:21<br>"vile"         |

Well, how did you fare? But further, consider how a person reading the KJV for the *first time* might understand these words, and many others besides.

3. Recommended modern translations are as follows.

While this author recommends the NASB and ESV as his primary choices, yet in close study of the text there have been times when he has preferred the translation of the KJV, NIV, and NKJV.

a. The New American Standard Bible (NASB).

First published in 1960, this complete revision of the American Standard Version of 1901 is renowned for its literal accuracy and sensitivity to grammatical tenses. The translators were conservative.

b. The New International Version (NIV).

First published in 1978 as a complete Bible, this wholly new version is more free flowing as a “thought for thought” translation. Though thoughts are meaningless apart from specific words. The translators were conservative.

c. The New King James Version (NKJV).

First published in 1982, this revision of the classic English version was intended to update the language with as little change as possible. The translators were conservative.

d. The English Standard Version (ESV).

First published in 2001, this revision of the Revised Standard Version by conservative scholars, which also resorts to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, is described as “essentially literal” in contrast with the NIV.

4. Modern translations *not* recommended are as follows.

a. The New English Bible (NEB). Above all other translations, this version has a definite liberal bias (Gen. 11:1), including blatant and irreverent “conjectural emendation” (F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 169-70). This involves alteration (John 19:29), and rearrangement of the text without manuscript warrant (Hos. 2:11-12; Joel 3:9-12; Amos 5:7-9; Nahum 1:2-14). Consider also the use of “expiation” rather than “propitiation” in Romans 3:25.<sup>3</sup>

b. The Good News Bible (GNB). Claiming to be a translation, yet its paraphrase style avoids precise and intentional meaning, such as in Romans 3:25; I John 4:10, where “propitiation” is evasively described as, “the means by which people’s sins are forgiven.”

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<sup>3</sup> D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 3:20-4:25 -Atonement and Justification*, pp. 65-80.

- c. The Living Bible (LB). While honestly confessing to be a paraphrase with numerous clarifying footnotes, and in spite of the notorious accuracy of I Kings 18:27, yet it is often wrongly treated as a translation. The attempt to paraphrase Romans 3:21-26 is quite inadequate. Originally composed by one man, though also submitted to more scholarly examination, it will be best appreciated if placed on a commentary shelf rather than with Bibles. More recently a Roman Catholic version has been published, inclusive of the Apocrypha, which has the dubious qualification, "A Thought-For-Thought Translation."

C. Choose a quality reference Bible.

1. A flexible leather cover with a strongly sewn binding will last the longest. It is worth the extra cost.
2. Choose a large type style with plenty of margin space so that not only will you avoid squinting, but also you will be able to write your own notes, even between lines. The paper quality is important in that it should be suitable for adding notes. Hence, in spite of the temptation to preserve the initial newness, do not hesitate to write notations with a fine pen. Keep in mind that after a number of years, you will nevertheless need to replace your present version, especially when it has been subject to heavy use.
3. It is highly desirable that your Bible be set in type that is comfortable for reading, that it has a good cross reference system, concordance, reference maps, and space for writing notes. Further explanation will be provided concerning these features.

### III OPERATIONAL MECHANICS

#### A. Introduction.

While many people today will readily volunteer their opinions about the Bible, yet the truth is that vast multitudes of religious individuals are ignorant concerning the most elementary facts and features of the inscripturated Word of God.

1. You can pray as much as you like, but God will not instantly inject basic Bible knowledge into your soul. Rather, you have to exercise your responsibility before God in the area of faculties that have been given to all. God will not spoon feed you.
2. A medical student has to learn thoroughly the intricate details of human anatomy before he is allowed to practice medicine. Similarly a student who learns a new language has to first master the details of vocabulary and grammar before he is able to communicate in that language. In either case, that initial period of learning basic facts may not prove to be a thrilling experience. But such preparation is without question of crucial importance. In the instance of the faithful student, it is the hope of future competence and enlightenment that drives him to attain mastery of elementary details. So the effective Bible student will strive to know the basic anatomy of the Word of God to the end that he might be a competent servant of Christ for the glory of God.

#### B. The Divisions and Books of the Bible.

1. The two-fold division.

Here the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Scriptures are most commonly distinguished. However, the truth of Hebrews 1:1-2 best indicates the diversity in unity that is reflected in these complementary revelations, with Jesus Christ being the uniting hinge.

- a. The Old Testament, comprised of 39 books.

“Old Testament” here means “Old Covenant,” בְּרִית, berith, or old agreement, specifically with regard to the covenant God made with the nation of Israel shortly after it had been redeemed out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and arrived at Mt. Sinai (Exod. 20:1-26; 24:1-8). It is vital that this bilateral covenant should be distinguished from the unilateral Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21; Gal. 3:17-18).

- (1) The four major Christian Old Testament divisions.
  - (a) *The Law*, or Pentateuch (five-volumed), or Torah, (instruction) as the Jews call it. Genesis through to Deuteronomy.
  - (b) *History*, principally with regard to Israel. Joshua through to Esther.
  - (c) *Poetry*, that is especially devotional, relational, ethical. Job through to Song of Solomon (Canticles).

- (d) *The Prophets*, both major, Isaiah through to Daniel, and minor, Hosea through to Malachi.
- (2) The three major Jewish Old Testament divisions (Tanakh).
  - (a) Torah (Law): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
  - (b) Neviim (Prophets):
    - 1) Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.
    - 2) Latter Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
  - (c) Kethuvim (Writings):
    - 1) Poetry & Wisdom: Psalms, Proverbs, Job.
    - 2) Rolls (Megilloth): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther.
    - 3) Historical: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I & II Chronicles.
- b. The New Testament, comprised of 27 books
 

“New Testament” here means “New Covenant” or new agreement, specifically which God promised to Israel through Jeremiah (31:31-37; cf. Heb. 8:7-13) and fulfilled through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:15; 12:24; cf. “eternal covenant,” 13:20). The five major divisions are as follows:

  - (1) *The Gospels*, concerning Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry. Matthew to Luke, (synoptic), and John, (Johannine).
  - (2) *History*, principally concerning the early Church. Acts of the Apostles.
  - (3) *The Epistles of Paul*, concerning the interpretation of Jesus Christ and the function of local churches. Romans through to Philemon.
  - (4) *The General Epistles*, Hebrews through to Jude.
  - (5) *Prophecy*, or unveiling of the present and future. Revelation.
- c. The Bible library, divisions, and book summaries.

THE OLD TESTAMENT		
LAW	<p>GENESIS EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY</p>	<p>The beginning of man and the Hebrew people. The redemption of Israel out of Egypt. Laws for the priesthood and the people of Israel. The nation of Israel in the wilderness. A review of the law given to Moses.</p>
HISTORY	<p>JOSHUA JUDGES RUTH I SAMUEL II SAMUEL I KINGS II KINGS I CHRONICLES II CHRONICLES EZRA NEHEMIAH ESTHER</p>	<p>Israel takes possession of the promised land. The reign of the Judges of Israel. A godly romance during the reign of the Judges. Israel's monarchy from Samuel to Saul Israel's monarchy under David. Israel's monarchy from Solomon to Elijah. Israel's monarchy from Elijah to captivity. Israel's history from Adam to David. Israel's history from Solomon to captivity. Return from captivity to Jerusalem Temple restoration. Return from captivity to Jerusalem wall restoration. Israel's deliverance while in captivity.</p>
POETRY	<p>JOB PSALMS PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON</p>	<p>God's vindication through Job's suffering. The Hebrew hymnal of praise to God. The wisdom of Solomon and other authors. The futility of life without God. A godly song of love for the betrothed.</p>
PROPHECY	MAJOR	<p>ISAIAH JEREMIAH LAMENTATIONS EZEKIEL DANIEL</p> <p>A princely prophecy of salvation by Israel's holy Jehovah. The doom and restoration of Jerusalem. Mourning in captivity and the cry for mercy. The fall of Jerusalem and the rise of the New. God's sovereignty over Israel in captivity.</p>
	MINOR	<p>HOSEA JOEL AMOS OBADIAH JONAH MICAH NAHUM HABAKKUK ZEPHANIAH HAGGAI ZECHARIAH MALACHI</p> <p>Unfaithful Israel called to repentance. The day of the Lord and the promise of the Spirit. Punishment of Israel and the nations. Judgment upon Edom and Judah restored. God's salvation comes to repentant Nineveh. Punishment followed by salvation for God's people. The destruction of Nineveh in judgment. The vindication of God in history. God's certain judgment upon Judah and the nations. Encouragement to rebuild the Temple. Prophecies of the glory of Messiah's kingdom. Warning and encouragement about Messiah's day.</p>

OLD TESTAMENT (39 BOOKS)

THE NEW TESTAMENT								
GOSPELS	{ MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN }	SYNOPTIC	Jesus Christ as Messiah, the King. Jesus Christ as the active Servant. Jesus Christ as the Son of man for all.	} NEW TESTAMENT (27 BOOKS)				
		JOHANNINE	Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God.					
		HISTORY	ACTS		The Christian Church, established, empowered.			
		PAULINE EPISTLES	{ ROMANS I CORINTHIANS II CORINTHIANS GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS I THESSALONIANS II THESSALONIANS I TIMOTHY II TIMOTHY }		} PASTORAL	The gospel of the righteousness of God. Disorder and discipline in the church. Defense of discipline in the church. Justification through faith apart from the law. The gospel and the church. Christian joy and fellowship. The sufficiency and preeminence of Christ. The encouragement of Christ's second coming. The time and manner of Christ's second coming. Doctrine and order in the local church. Zeal and faithfulness in Christian ministry. Leadership, church duties, and exhortation. Reconciliation with a repentant slave.		
GENERAL EPISTLES	{ HEBREWS JAMES I PETER II PETER I JOHN II JOHN III JOHN JUDE }					Jesus Christ's superiority over Judaism. The outworking of authentic faith. Kept by God's power during persecution. Living with apostasy, expecting Christ's return. Fellowship with God and His children. Walking in truth and shunning error. Showing hospitality and warning the unruly. God's elect warned concerning apostasy.		
						PROPHECY	REVELATION	The Lamb's triumph at the end of the age.

2. The chapter and verse divisions

The earliest manuscripts, Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament, did not contain chapter or verse divisions. Indeed they also lacked spacing between words and sentences. The present chapter divisions in our Bibles were invented in 1205 by Stephen Langton, a professor in Paris who subsequently became Archbishop of Canterbury and incorporated his system into a Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible. It was Robert Stephanus, a Parisian book printer, whose published versification of the Bible in 1571 has prevailed to the present. Chapter summaries used in the KJV were first introduced into Coverdale's English Bible of 1535, based upon the Latin Vulgate.

## 3. Memorization.

Learn, by memory and in right order, all of the sixty-six books of the Bible, even if as a Christian you have been ignorant of these facts for many years. Embarrassment at this point is not only a shame, but also a frequent cause of not studying the Bible, especially during church services. After all, who wants to seem ignorant to the person we are sitting next to? Keep in mind that memorization is a matter of cultivation. Make a tape cassette of your own recitation of the books of the Bible, then listen to it over and over again. Alternatively, write out the sixty-six books on cards, either individually or in groups, for periodic review. Here is a poem that may be helpful

In GENESIS the world was made by God's creative hand.  
 In EXODUS the Hebrews marched to gain the Promised Land.  
 LEVITICUS contains the Law: holy, just and good.  
 NUMBERS records the tribes enrolled, all sons of Abr'ams blood.

Moses in DEUTERONOMY recounts God's mighty deeds.  
 In JOSHUA, into Canaan's land, the host of Israel speeds.  
 In JUDGES their rebellion oft provokes the Lord to smite;  
 But RUTH records the faith of one well-pleasing in His sight.

In FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL, of Jesse's son we read:  
 Ten tribes, in FIRST AND SECOND KINGS, revolted from his seed.  
 Then FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES see Judah captive made;  
 But EZRA leads a remnant back by princely Cyrus' aid.

The city walls on Zion's hill NEHEMIAH builds again;  
 While ESTHER saves her people from the plots of wicked men.  
 In JOB we read how faith will live beneath affliction's rod:  
 And David's PSALMS are precious songs to every child of God.

The PROVERBS like a goodly string of choicest pearls appear.  
 ECCLESIASTES teaches men how vain are all things here.  
 The SONG OF SOLOMON exalts sweet Sharon's lovely rose:  
 Whilst Christ the Savior and the King the rapt ISAIAH shows.

Then JEREMIAH's solemn voice apostate Israel warns:  
 In plaintive LAMENTATIONS he their awful downfall mourns.  
 EZEKIEL tells in wondrous words the Temple's mysteries:  
 Whilst God's great Kingdom yet to come DANIEL in vision sees.

Of judgment stern, and mercy mild, HOSEA loves to tell.  
 Then JOEL describes the happy days when God with man shall dwell.  
 Among Tekoa's herdsmen next, AMOS receives his call:  
 While OBADIAH prophesies of Edom's final fall.

JONAH enshrines a wondrous type of Christ our risen Lord.  
 MICAH pronounces Judah lost—lost, but to be restored.  
 NAHUM declares, “On Nineveh just judgment shall descend,  
 When God's consuming wrath like fire is poured out to the end.”

Chaldea's fast approaching doom HABAKKUK's visions give,  
 Next, ZEPHANIAH warns the Jews to turn, repent and live.  
 Stern HAGGAI spoke to those who saw the Temple built again;  
 And ZECHARIAH prophesied of Christ's triumphant reign.

MALACHI was the last who touched the high prophetic chord;  
 Its final notes sublimely show the coming of the Lord.

MATTHEW and MARK and LUKE and JOHN the Gospel story give,  
 Describing how the Savior came, and died that we might live.  
 ACTS tells how the apostles preached with signs in every place:  
 And Paul in ROMANS shows how men are saved through faith by grace.

The Apostle in CORINTHIANS exhorts, instructs, reproves:  
 GALATIANS proves that faith in Christ alone the Father moves.  
 EPHESIANS and PHILLIPIANS tell what Christians ought to be.  
 COLOSSIANS bids us live for God, and from all sin be free.

In THESSALONIANS we are taught the Lord will come from heaven.  
 In TIMOTHY, and TITUS too, a shepherd's rule is given.  
 PHILEMON marks a brother's love, which only brethren know.  
 HEBREWS reveals Christ's priestly work, prefigured long ago.

JAMES says that without holiness, faith is but vain and dead.  
 And PETER points the narrow way in which the saints are led.  
 JOHN, in his epistles three, on love delights to dwell:  
 While JUDE gives warning terrible of angels once who fell.

Last, REVELATION prophesies of that tremendous Day,  
 When all the kingdoms of the world with noise shall pass away!

4. The hands-on use of the Bible.
  - a. There is no substitute for *physically* making use of the Bible, that is burrowing around. Learn to approximate where a book might be; for instance, Psalms is found to be in the middle of the Bible. The following exercise is designed to have you actually become acquainted with the books, chapters, and verses of the Bible.
  - b. Complete the following exercise that is designed to familiarize you with the Bible.
    - (1) Turn to and read II Chronicles 34:21.
    - (2) Turn to and read Psalm 34:21.

- (3) Turn to and read Proverbs 4:19.
- (4) Turn to and read Joel 3:2.
- (5) Turn to and read John 5:24.
- (6) Turn to and read Romans 8:1.
- (7) Turn to and read Colossians 1:13.
- (8) Turn to and read I Thessalonians 5:9.
- (9) Using the NASB, what are the contrasting features in all of these references?

### C. Translation and study features.

On page 4, four modern translations were recommended for serious Bible study, namely the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New International Version (NIV), the New King James Version (NKJV), and the English Standard Version (ESV). Any of these versions may be purchased with few or many translation and study helps. The following explanations assume the use of a reasonably comprehensive reference or study edition.

#### 1. Translation features that explain the text.

##### a. Words in italics.

These indicate additional words that clarify the English sense. They give a smoother meaning, though they are not directly part of the original text, as is indicated in Ruth 2:16; Psalm 146:8; Colossians 2:2; I Timothy 5:9 (NASB, NKJV only). The NIV and ESV do not include italics. However consider II Corinthians 2:12 where only the NKJV includes “preach” in italics while the NASB does not.

##### b. Textual explanations.

#### (1) Literal renderings.

- (a) NASB, margin (John 21:5).
- (b) NIV, footnote (Gal. 1:15).
- (c) NKJV, margin (Ps. 110:5).
- (d) ESV, footnote (Rom. 5:1).

#### (2) Factual details.

- (a) NASB, margin (Acts 19:31).
- (b) NIV, footnote (John 19:39).

- (c) NKJV, margin (Matt. 17:27).
  - (d) ESV, footnote (Luke 10:35).
- (3) Old Testament manuscript variations.
- (a) The Massoretic Text (M.T.), compiled by the Massoretes or Jewish grammarians of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., is still the most trusted O.T. Hebrew text of today.
    - 1) NASB, margin (Zeph. 1:5).
    - 2) NIV, footnote (Job 7:20).
    - 3) NKJV, margin (Mal. 1:12).
    - 4) ESV, footnote (Isa. 21:8).
  - (b) The Septuagint (LXX), or Greek version of the O.T. translated c. 250 B.C., is the most important of its type.
    - 1) NASB, margin, (Hos. 7:14).
    - 2) NIV, footnote (Isa. 27:8).
    - 3) NKJV, margin (Lam. 3:53).
    - 4) ESV, footnote (Eccles. 9:2).
  - (c) The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), are an important collection of O.T. manuscripts dating back to c. 200 B.C. They were discovered in high caves beside the Dead Sea in 1947, the most significant find being an almost complete scroll of Isaiah.
    - 1) NASB, margin (Isa. 18:7).
    - 2) NIV, footnote (Isa. 37:20).
    - 3) NKJV, margin (Isa. 21:8).
    - 4) ESV, footnote (Isa. 28:16).
- (4) New Testament manuscript variations.
- (a) Rom. 14:19; 16:24 (NASB). Both this version, the NIV and the ESV, as distinct from the NKJV, rely more upon the older manuscripts, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, of the fourth and fifth centuries respectively.
  - (b) John 13:32; Acts 8:3 (NIV).

(c) Rom. 11:6; Heb. 12:28 (NKJV). This version, as distinct from the NASB and NIV, gives precedence to the Majority Text family of N.T. manuscripts, dating no earlier than the fifth century. Refer to the preface of the NKJV for further explanation.

(d) Mark 2:16, 22; Acts 28:29 (ESV)

c. God's personal covenant name.

In the O.T., there is frequent reference to "God" (Elohim, Gen. 1:1) and "Lord" (Adonai, Gen. 18:27) in Hebrew, which titles address the God of Israel in generic terms that infrequently also refer to heathen gods. However there is also frequent reference to "GOD" and "LORD" with the use of capital letters, this being a translation of "Yahweh" of "Jehovah," in Hebrew יהוה, or pointed as יהוה, being God's own personal name. This was exclusively revealed by God, through Moses, only to His people Israel (Exod. 3:13-15).

2. Study features that explain the text.

- a. Chapter, paragraph, and verse divisions are helpful, as are subject headings, though they are not found in the original and inspired text. Being arbitrary, they may vary from version to version, such as with the paragraph divisions in the Psalms. Consider the NASB marginal comment on Jonah 1:17 which indicates that, in the Hebrew Bible, this verse is Jonah 2:1.
- b. Cross references are usually listed in the center or outer margin, and even sometimes within the text itself. Sometimes they are linked together in a chain system that enables a student to cover a whole biblical subject. They are especially helpful regarding parallel accounts in the four Gospels. Turn to Matthew 14:13 and note how all four gospel accounts of "The Feeding of the Five Thousand" are listed (NASB; NIV; NKJV; ESV).
- c. Reference maps, with a suitable index, ought to be frequently consulted with regard to historical narratives. Especially consider desert and mountainous regions, national and tribal borders, journey directions of Israel, Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, and Paul as a missionary. Using a map index, distinguish between the several places that are called "Antioch" and "Caesarea."
- d. A reasonably complete concordance bound into a reference or study Bible is a must for the serious study of the Word of God. It enables the student to quickly locate a Bible passage while at the same time revealing other related references. It should be supplemented by a more complete concordance of the version of the Bible that is being used.

#### IV READING THE BIBLE WITH PROFIT

- A. The Bible presupposes man's responsibility for reading, just the same as he is responsible for the obtaining of material food, its preparation, and even its placement in the mouth! The high level of literacy today only makes man all the more responsible for giving precedence to the most important book in human history.
1. Man is responsible for his *ignorance* of the Word of God (Matt. 22:28-29)
  2. Man is responsible for his *neglect* of the Word of God (Luke 24:25).
  3. Man is responsible for his *mishandling* of the Word of God (II Cor. 2:17;; 4:2).
  4. Man is responsible for his *knowledge* of the Word of God (II Tim. 2:15; I Pet. 2:2).
- B. What method of Bible reading shall we employ? Before making a decision at this point, consider the wise advice of C. H. Spurgeon taken from a sermon titled, "Understandest What Thou Readest?" based upon Acts 8:30-33.

The Bible was meant to be understood, and it benefits us in proportion as we get at the meaning of it. The mere words of Scripture passing over the ear or before the eye, can do us little good. I heard a person say once, concerning a great doctrine which I hold to be very plainly taught in Scripture, that he had read the Bible through—I think he said six times—on his knees, but he could not find that doctrine. I replied, "Brother, that is an awkward position in which to read the Bible. I should have sat upon a chair, and studied the page in a natural and easy posture. Moreover, I should not have galloped through it at the rate at which you must have raced over the chapters. I should rather have read a little at a time, and tried to understand it." "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Acts 8:30), that is the question. "I read a chapter every morning," says one. Quite right; keep that up, but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "Well, I learn the daily text." Yes, but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" That is the main point. The butterflies flit over the garden, and nothing comes of their flitting; but look at the bees, how they dive into the bells of the flowers, and come forth with their thighs laden with pollen, and their stomachs filled with sweetest honey for their hives. This is the way to read the Bible: get into the flowers of Scripture, plunge into the inward meaning, and suck out that sacred sweetness which the Lord has put there for your spiritual nourishment. A thoughtful book needs and deserves thoughtful reading. If it has taken its author a long time to write it, and he has written it with much consideration, it is due to him that you give his work a careful perusal.<sup>4</sup>

1. The Spirit of God gave Philip the evangelist great wisdom when he asked the Ethiopian eunuch, "Do you understand what you are reading?" It was a question perceptive of human nature with regard to the Bible.
2. It is possible to have a very comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, and complementary learning, as did Nicodemus, "the teacher of Israel," and yet be blind to the most important of truths (John 3:3, 9-10).

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<sup>4</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, XXX, pp. 411-412.

3. It is possible to be intensely curious about the Bible, even like the “noble-minded Jews” Paul met at the synagogue in Berea, Macedonia (Acts 17:10-11), and yet still be blind to the truth.
  4. But what can be said for the Ethiopian eunuch, Nicodemus, and the Bereans, even in their unbelief, is that they all, though well educated, were teachable and aware of their need of understanding!
- C. As Spurgeon recommends, read the Bible daily (Ps. 88:9; Acts 17:10-11). If you have not read all sixty-six books, then plan to cover the whole Bible over a set period using one of several methods.
1. Establish the time each day that best suits your schedule and metabolism. Though it may be suitable for many, it is not mandatory that the Bible be read first in the morning according to Psalm 5:3; 59:16. Other Scripture passages equally describe the saint seeking fellowship with God during the day (Ps. 25:5; 102:2) as well as the night (Ps. 16:7; 17:3). Pick the time when you will be least likely to rush. Remember also that some people by their very constitution will be able to better study the Bible later in the day rather than early. The reverse may also be the case.
  2. Plan 1. Refer to the “Bible Reading Schedule” of Robert Murray M’Cheyne that is widely published and enables the reading through of the whole Bible in one year. As a variation, it also allows for the reading of the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in a year.<sup>5</sup>
  3. Plan 2. Obtain *The One Year Bible*, NIV, KJV, and *The One Year Chronological Bible*, NIV, published by Tyndale Press.
  4. Plan 3. Having read the whole Bible through, then consider reading major sections and chapters that relate to a particular doctrine or character or period. But always return to reading consecutively right through the whole Bible.
    - a. Using a one volume Bible dictionary, or a topical concordance such as Nave’s Topical Bible, discover the major passages that relate to a doctrine, character, or historic period.
    - b. Read certain Old Testament and New Testament books consecutively because of their close relationship with each other, for example, Genesis and the Gospel of John, Leviticus and Hebrews, Joshua and Acts, Isaiah and Romans, Daniel and Revelation, Zechariah and Matthew.
- D. Additional helps to profitable Bible reading are as follows.
1. Avoid humdrum, legalistic, rapid, superficial reading. Rather, first pray, “Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes. . . . Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law [instruction]” (Ps. 119:12, 18).

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M’Cheyne*, pp. 623-628.

- a. Read it through using mental application. Seek advice concerning the use of suitable commentaries after studying the text; avoid unrelated devotional sentiment, but do desire that God's truth will effect and move the heart.
  - b. Pray it in, that is through meditation and extended reflection. Ruminant over the truth during daily activities.
  - c. Write it down, using outlining, cross references, illustrations, quotes, as you mark your Bible.
  - d. Work it out, that is consider personal applications that need to be put into practice, as the Word of God provides stimulation.
  - e. Pass it on, or share the truth with winsome enthusiasm. Actively participate in group Bible study under qualified leadership and neighborhood witnessing.
2. What about dullness? Perhaps at times you don't feel like reading the Bible, though at other times you very much desire the Word (Ps. 1:1-2; 19:10). Sometimes the Bible passages you are reading do not come alive.
- a. Admit that, whatever dullness or lack of enthusiasm you feel, the problem rests with yourself and not the Bible (Heb. 4:12).
  - b. Be honest! Would you feel just as dull if you were reading a newspaper or magazine? If so, then your problem may be physical. But if not, then your problem is possibly the result of carnal indulgence and conflict. In that case you need to confess your poor spiritual eating habits that produce sluggishness and upgrade your spiritual diet (Ps. 73:1-17).
  - c. Remember that in a condition of spiritual dullness you need the Bible more than ever. In such a case, read God's Word because it is right to do so, quite apart from how you feel. You will be surprised how quickly the toxins of carnality are replaced with a newfound vitality.
  - d. Sometimes our familiarity with certain well-known passages of the Bible produces presumption concerning our understanding of the truth. Hence, when we come to these portions, we need to acknowledge such a possibility and read the Word of God with even greater care and deliberation.
  - e. Because a period of spiritual dryness may possibly lead to neglect of reading the Bible, mark every chapter you read with a tick. In this way you will easily be able to recommence your study program.
3. Consider reading the Bible to yourself aloud. Philip the evangelist found the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53 aloud (Acts 8:26-30). The Jews have always considered reading the Scriptures aloud to be a superior way of improving retention.
4. Read the Bible both alone and with others, such as in a family gathering.

E. C. H. Spurgeon provides us with further good advice in a sermon titled, “How to Read the Bible” based upon the words of Jesus Christ, “Have you not read?” (Matthew 12:3-7). The outline is as follows.<sup>6</sup>

1. Introduction.
  - a. The Scribes and Pharisees were studious readers of the Bible.
  - b. The Scribes and Pharisees were blind readers of the Bible.
2. Understand what you read.
  - a. With alert minds.
  - b. With meditation.
  - c. With prayer.
  - d. With means and helps.
3. Discern the spirit of what you read.
  - a. In historical narratives.
  - b. In ceremonial precepts.
  - c. In doctrinal statements.
  - d. In Jesus Christ.
4. Profit from what you read.
  - a. In spiritual life.
  - b. In comfort.
  - c. In nourishment.
  - d. In guidance.

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<sup>6</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, XXV, pp. 625-636.

## V THE CANON OF THE BIBLE

### A. Introduction.

We need to recollect here that the Bible is comprised of sixty-six books written by approximately 40 authors over a period of 1600 years.

1. The term “canon,” comes from the Greek word κανών, kanōn, meaning a rule, a standard, hence a measure of authoritative teaching. Compare the use of this same Greek word in Galatians 6:16.
2. The “canon of Scripture” is that recognized and accepted collection of sixty-six books of the Bible which conforms to a standard, especially that of being God-breathed or inspired (II Tim. 3:16), and consequently is infallible, that is truthful and without error.
3. To say that the Scriptures are “canonical” is to declare that they have been recognized as the Word of God written, and thus have accepted authority which is unique, that is distinct from all other books.
4. When the Old Testament and New Testament canons were recognized as complete, it was not man determining the parameters of the Word of God, but rather man identifying the Word of God. J. I. Packer illustrates this point well when he writes:

The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly He gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up.<sup>7</sup>

### B. The Old Testament Canon of Scripture.

1. After the Babylonian exile concluded during the fifth century B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, an even greater regard for Scripture resulted, especially on account of the fulfillment of prophecy, such as with Jeremiah 25:11.
2. Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, was written about 450 B.C. when Ezra, a father of the Scribes and one of the most learned men of the Hebrews, was alive.
3. Ezra was probably involved in the identification of the completed Old Testament canon, which was certainly recognized no later than 300 B.C. Following the writing of Malachi, it was the conviction of the Jews, as expressed by intertestamental writers, that God had ceased to speak directly through trustworthy prophets.
4. The Hebrew Old Testament, or Tanakh, is comprised of twenty-four books. (Refer to pages 6-7 for the Christian classification of the Old Testament.) The traditional three-fold classification, as inferred in Luke 24:44, is as follows:
  - a. The *Law*, or Torah (instruction): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, (5).

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<sup>7</sup> J. I. Packer, *God Speaks Man*, p. 81.

- b. The *Prophets*, or *Neviim*, (8).
  - (1) Former: Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, (4).
  - (2) Latter: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve (Minor Prophets), (4).
- c. The *Writings*, or *Kethuvim*, (11).
  - (1) Poetical: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, (3).
  - (2) Five Scrolls: Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Esther, (5).
  - (3) Historical: Daniel, Ezra & Nehemiah, I & II Chronicles, (3).

### C. The extracanonical books of Judaism.

#### 1. The lost books of the Old Testament.

- a. The Old Testament mentions numerous books that are no longer available, such as, the Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14); the Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13); the Book of the Acts of Solomon (I Kings 11:41); the Visions of Iddo the Seer (II Chron. 9:29); the Record of Shemaiah the Prophet (II Chron. 12:15).
- b. However, should any of these books be discovered today, they would not be considered as inspired any more than a work of the Cretan philosopher, Epimenedes, which Paul presumably quotes in Titus 1:12. Because Peter, John, and Paul were moved by the Spirit of God to write books that were recognized as canonical, it does not follow that newly discovered writings by these same authors would be similarly recognized.

#### 2. The Apocrypha.

- a. The term “apocryphal” means “hidden, legendary, less than true, of doubtful authenticity.”
- b. This particular collection of 15 books includes history, poetry, prophecy, romance, and bizarre legend.
- c. The Roman Catholic Church accepts the full Apocrypha as canonical, particularly on account of the support which II Maccabees 12:39-45 gives to the doctrine of prayers for the dead. However, along with the uncertainty of the Early Church and Martin Luther’s rejection of the Apocrypha as inspired, Protestantism has unanimously agreed that this body of interesting literature is certainly not canonical, for the following reasons:
  - (1) The Jews have never accepted the Apocrypha as canonical, even though it so substantially concerns them.
  - (2) The New Testament, Jesus Christ, and the Apostles, never quote from the Apocrypha.

- d. The Church of England accepts the Apocrypha for instruction, but not as inspired of God along with Scripture. For this reason the original King James Version of the Bible included the Apocrypha, though most editions omitted it following 1630.
3. The Pseudepigrapha.
- a. This collection of Jewish literature written between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. was never seriously considered for recognition as being canonical. Although the standard collection is comprised of eighteen titles, yet since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, others have come to light.
  - b. Their imitative, apocalyptic style draws upon the Hebrew canon so that comfort might be obtained by a persecuted people. Titles include, The Book of Adam and Eve; The Martyrdom of Isaiah; The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs; The Assumption of Moses; The Psalms of Solomon; Psalm 151.

D. The New Testament Canon of Scripture.

1. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament. These were formally acknowledged at the Council of Hippo in North Africa, 393 A.D., and the Council of Carthage in North Africa, 419 A.D. Both gatherings were under the influence of Augustine. While this may appear to suggest an extended delay, certain facts should be born in mind.
  - a. Athanasius, the great defender of Jesus Christ as the “God-man,” declared all 27 books of the New Testament to be canonical, c. 367 A.D.
  - b. Concerning II Peter, probably the most disputed book in the New Testament, B. B. Warfield declares that there is more evidence for its authenticity than the writings of the Greek historians, Herodotus and Thucydides.<sup>8</sup>
2. The antilegomena, or disputed books. While the accepted books of the early church numbered approximately twenty during those formative centuries, being called the homologoumena, yet the remaining seven books were, for various reasons, disputed.
  - a. Hebrews. The chief reason was its anonymity of authorship.
  - b. James. There was a supposed conflict with Paul’s writings.
  - c. II Peter. Its style was considered quite different from I Peter.
  - d. II & III John. These were too personal, without apostolic claims.
  - e. Jude. In vs. 9, 14-15, reference is possibly made to Pseudepigraphical writings.
  - f. Revelation. Its apostolicity and millennialism were questioned.

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<sup>8</sup> B. B. Warfield, *Syllabus on the Special Introduction to the Catholic Epistles*, pp. 116-117.

E. The extracanonical books of Christianity.

1. The lost books of the New Testament.

- a. From Luke 1:1-4 it would seem that gospels other than the recognized four were in circulation. We do not have access to an earlier letter to Corinth (I Cor. 5:9), or Paul's letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16). Again, what are the sources of Jude 9, 14-15?
- b. However, we repeat that should some of these writings be discovered, they would not be recognized as inspired of God, for there is good reason to believe that the Canon of Scripture is closed (Jude 3).

2. The New Testament Apocrypha.

- a. This collection is not fixed. But it does include some writings that were seriously regarded in terms of canonicity as well as containing probable elements of truth.
- b. The best known of these writings are, The Epistle of Barnabas; The First and Second Epistles of Clement to Corinth; The Shepherd of Hermas; The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve; The Apocalypse of Peter; The Acts of Paul and Thecla; The Epistle to the Laodiceans; The Gospel According to the Hebrews; The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians; The Seven Epistles of Ignatius.

3. The New Testament Pseudepigrapha.

- a. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea during early fourth century, described these writings as, "totally absurd and impious." Geisler and Nix write of them:
 

Virtually no orthodox Father, canon, or council considered these books to be canonical and, so far as the church is concerned, they are primarily of historical value. These books indicate the heretical teaching of gnostic, docetic, and ascetic groups, as well as the exaggerated fancy of religious lore in the early church.<sup>9</sup>
- b. The Gospel of Thomas is a far more famous example of hundreds of such works. It tells of the infant Jesus making clay sparrows that fly away, of his withering curse of an ungodly lad.

F. The divine ordination and human recognition of the Canon of Scripture.

1. The human recognition of the Canon of Scripture involved rules.

- a. Apostolic authority and verification.
- b. The rule of faith, that is judgment by known truth.
- c. Catholicity, or universal acceptance.

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<sup>9</sup> Geisler & Nix, *A General Introduction To The Bible*, p. 301.

- d. Contemporary witness, or proximity to the early church.
  - e. Internal witness of the Spirit of God.
  - f. Acceptance in early church worship, such as in lectionaries.
2. The divine ordination of the Canon of Scripture involved God's sovereign oversight.
- a. In II Peter 1:20-21 we are told, "that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved [borne along] by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." If God so superintended the writing of the individual books of the Bible, then it is to be expected that He would likewise superintend the gathering together of those books.
  - b. In both Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9, Jesus indicates his awareness that these Gospels would be part of the Canon of Scripture. Surely this suggests that he knew of the other books as well. Why would He have such knowledge? Because His Father has sovereignly determined such a Canon.

## VI THE LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

### A. Hebrew, the language of most of the Old Testament.

1. Hebrew is a semitic (Shemitic, cf. Gen. 9:18-19) and oriental language that is believed to be rooted in the arrival of Abraham in Canaan. It was well developed by the time that Israel was redeemed out of Egypt.
  - a. Other semitic languages are Arabic, Syriac, Canaanite, Phoenician, Ethiopic, Moabite, Aramaic.
  - b. The word “Hebrew” may be derived from the Hebrew verb, עָבַר, *abar*, meaning “to cross/pass over,” cf. Gen. 10:21 re Heber, just as Abraham, the father of the Hebrew race, crossed over the Euphrates River to enter the land of promise (Josh. 24:2-3).
  
2. Hebrew is a highly picturesque, poetic language, yet less grammatically precise than New Testament Greek.
  - a. It is very physical, even visceral, such as when:
    - (1) “My bones are dismayed” (Ps. 6:2).
    - (2) “My inmost being (kidneys) will rejoice” (Prov. 23:16).
    - (3) “My feelings (bowels) were aroused for him” (S. of S. 5:4).
    - (4) “My heart (liver) is poured out on the earth” (Lam. 2:11).
  - b. It is rich in human representations of God.
    - (1) Anthropomorphisms, that attribute human physical features to God (Isa. 59:1; Zech. 4:10).
    - (2) Anthropopathisms, that attribute human emotions to God (Gen. 6:6; Zeph. 3:17).
  - c. It has poetic structure called “parallelism” that is distinct from regular rhyme or meter. It usually involves two line couplets that reflect a variety of relationships.
    - (1) Antithetical parallelism (Ps. 1:6).
    - (2) Synonymous parallelism (Ps. 2:1).
    - (3) Climactic parallelism (Ps. 96:7).
    - (4) Synthetic parallelism (Ps. 95:3, 6).

## (5) Emblematic parallelism (Ps. 42:1).

3. The Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 consonants, א ('Aleph), ב (Beth), ג (Gimel), ד (Daleth), ה (He), ו (Vav), ז (Zayin), ח (Heth), ט (Teth), י (Yodh), כ (Kaph), ל (Lamedh), מ (Mem), נ (Nun), ס (Samech), ע ('Ayin), פ (Pe), צ (Tsadhe), ק (Qoph), ר (Resh), ש/שׁ (Sin/Shin), ת (Tav). Vowels were originally passed on orally, but later vowel points were added, mainly below each letter. This pointing system was finalized about 900 A.D. by the Massoretes.
  - a. The Hebrew letters were originally pictographic, as in Chinese. A basic word has three consonants, with stress being placed upon the last syllable. However, sometimes the stem or root of a word is reduced to one consonant.
  - b. Note the alphabetic acrostic construction of Psalm 119. Each one of the 22 divisions, comprised of eight verses, represents a Hebrew letter in correct order. That Hebrew letter is first in the text of that division.
4. The Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 is as follows. Note that it is read from right to left.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ  
 zteraah tev miyamahsah te mihole arab tihsareb

## B. Aramaic, the language of the remainder of the Old Testament.

1. Aramaic is likewise a semitic or oriental language that is used mainly in Daniel 2:4b-7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26. It was the language of Syria, Assyria, Persia, and so acquired an international and diplomatic significance.
2. Specifically, Aramaic was commonly known as Chaldean, the language of Babylon. Hence it is significant that the main Aramaic passages are in Daniel and Ezra, the authors of which spent much time in Babylon.
3. Upon the return of Israel from its Babylonian captivity, the new inhabitants of Judea spoke Aramaic more commonly than Hebrew. Hence Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Scriptures became necessary and are known as Targums.

## C. Greek, the language of the New Testament.

1. Greek, that is the language of the New Testament, is western or occidental, being part of the Indo-European family of languages. It is a language of precision and great beauty that has illustrious and historic roots.
  - a. Ancient or Attic Greek was the high dialect of the philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as Athens during its time of cultural supremacy, c. 500-300 B.C.
  - b. Koine of Common Greek was the more cosmopolitan dialect that overwhelmed the western world from 300 B.C. to 500 A.D. including such notable cities as Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, as well as Athens.

- (1) It was spread abroad through the conquests and culture of the armies of Alexander the Great. In spite of later conquest of the divided Greek Empire by Rome, yet this language retained its dominant place amongst common society.
  - (2) Alexander was a Macedonian who was tutored by Aristotle, no doubt in the high Attic style. But his soldiers and merchants spoke in the more common social and economic terms.
  - (3) The Greek of the New Testament is, in the main, that common, everyday language, that common world language of the time of Christ. How providential it was that such a universal language was available for the rapid and accurate proclamation of the Gospel.
- c. Modern Greek is similar to Koine Greek, though a broader vocabulary is involved, as well as modification of grammar and developed meaning. For instance, in Ephesians 1:14, ἀρραβών, arrabōn means “downpayment” or “pledge,” but in Modern Greek it means “engagement ring.”
- d. The Koine Greek alphabet consists of 24 letters that were originally written as capitals, without spacing between words, as a saving on costly papyrus and parchment. These manuscripts are called “Uncials.” The later scripted alphabet, used in manuscripts called “Minuscules” after the ninth century, is as follows: α (Alpha), β (Beta), γ (Gamma), δ (Delta), ε (Epsilon), ζ (Zeta), ε (Eta), θ (Theta), ι (Iota), κ (Kappa), λ (Lambda), μ (Mu), ν (Nu), ξ (Xi), ο (Omicron), π (Pi), ρ (Rho), σ/final ς (Sigma), τ (Tau), υ (Upsilon), φ (Phi), κ (Chi), ψ (Psi), ω (Omega). The New Testament Greek of John 1:1-5 is as follows.
- <sup>1</sup>Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. <sup>2</sup>οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. <sup>3</sup>πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ λογος. houtos ēn en archē pros ton theon. panta di autou egeneto, kai χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδ’ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν <sup>4</sup>ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ chōris autou egeneto oude hēn ho gegonen en autō zōe ēn, kai hē zōe ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων <sup>5</sup>καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ ēn to phōs tōn anthrōpōn kai to phōs en tē skotia phainei, kai hē σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν. skotia auto ou katelaben.

## 2. Biblical insights into New Testament Greek.

- a. A word of caution concerning over-reacting to the meaning of Greek words.

- (1) Commonly ἐκκλησία, ekklēsia, meaning “church,” is explained as a compound of ἐκ, ek, meaning “out of,” plus καλέω, kaleō, meaning “I call.” The supposed meaning is, “a called out body of believers.”

- (2) But during the time of Christ, not prior, this word simply meant “an assembly/gathering,” whether sacred or secular. In Acts 19:32, *ekklēsia* describes a screaming heathen mob of people who are unhappy with the effect of Christianity upon their idol manufacturing enterprises, specifically concerning Diana (Latin) or Artemis (Greek) of the Ephesians.
  - (3) Hence, “assembly/gathering” is the correct interpretation, while “a called out body” is at best only an illustration. Certainly a church is “a called out body,” but this truth is primarily taught by the interpretation of I Peter 2:9.
- b. How Greek tenses portray graphic pictures.
- (1) John 4:13-14. “Drinks” in v. 13 is in the present continuous tense. “Drinks” in v. 14 is in the aorist, point action tense. Men wander from well to well in this world without being satisfied. But on drinking of Christ, through faith, they are eternally satisfied and wander no more.
  - (2) John 4:29-30. The imperfect tense, continuous action in the past, of v. 30, “and were coming to Him,” is accurate in the NASB. At the woman’s testimony, people were streaming out of Sychar towards Christ. In v. 35 Jesus beholds this crowd coming towards him.
  - (3) John 4:49-50. The imperfect tense of v. 50, “and he was going,” suggests immediate response, as the NASB translates, “and he started off.”
  - (4) Luke 7:47-48. The perfect tense of v. 48, that is a present state resulting from past action, “Your sins have been forgiven,” suggests that the woman had earlier encountered Christ’s forgiveness.
- c. How Greek conditional sentences illuminate the truth.
- (1) In English, a conditional sentence normally indicates a “maybe yes” or a “maybe no” situation. E.g., “If this man is telling the truth. . . .” But this is not always so in Greek.
  - (2) Luke 19:8. A first class conditional sense assumes a premise to be true. Hence, Zaccheus had indeed defrauded people.
  - (3) Luke 7:39. A second class conditional sentence assumes a premise to be false. Hence, the Pharisee does not really believe that Jesus is a prophet.
- d. How Greek negatives shed light.
- (1) John 4:14. The strongest negative in a double form, οὐ μή, “ou mē,” emphasizes that Jesus does indeed satisfy the thirsty heart.
  - (2) Matthew 13:54-55. A question with the negative, οὐ “ou,” expects a positive answer. Yes, Jesus is the carpenter’s son. Also John 7:25.

- (3) Matthew 26:25. A question with the negative, μή, “mē,” expects a negative answer. Judas is denying that he will betray the Son of Man. Also John 7:26.
- e. How the meaning of Greek words expounds the Bible.
- (1) Galatians 2:13. The NKJV, NIV, and ESV use “hypocrisy” in place of the more antiquated “dissimulation” found in the KJV. The Greek word here is ὑποκρίσις, hupokrisis, hence “hypocrisy.” The actor on an ancient Greek stage was a ὑποκριτής, hupokritēs, because he wore different masks to portray various characters. He was not in reality what he appeared to be.
- (2) Galatians 6:17. The KJV, NKJV, NIV, and ESV, use “marks” to describe Paul’s physical evidence for boasting in Jesus Christ. But the NASB more graphically translates “brandmarks” since the Greek word here is στίγματα, stigmata.
- (3) I Thessalonians 1:6. The KJV and NKJV translate “followers,” which in the NASB, NIV, and ESV, is better translated as “imitators.” The Greek word here is μιμηταί, mimētai, from which the English word “mimics” is derived.
- (4) II Peter 2:3. The KJV uses “feigned words,” which is better translated “made up stories” NIV, or “false words” NASB and ESV. The Greek is πλαστοῖς λόγοις, plastois logois, or literally “plastic words,” which is a good contemporary representation.
- (5) II Peter 3:18. The KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, and ESV, all use the word “grow,” which is quite accurate. However the Greek word is αὐξάνω, auxanō, from which is derived the English word “auxins,” these being plant hormones that stimulate vertical growth. Hence in context here, the Christian’s spiritual growth hormones are, “the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- (6) Jude 3. The KJV reads “earnestly contend,” the NKJV and NASB “contend earnestly,” and the NIV and ESV “urge you to contend.” The Greek is ἐπαγωνίζομαι, epagōnizomai, which literally means to “intently agonize” or “fight hard upon.”
- (a) The present tense stresses a protracted, continuous fight.
- (b) The root ἀγών, agōn, originally described a stadium, a place for contesting and agonizing.
- (c) The preposition ἐπί, epi, is added to the front of the verb which it intensifies, the resultant meaning being, “to contend by standing upon the truth in its defense.”

- f. How Greek compounds are instructive.
- (1) Acts 2:38. The KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, and ESV all use the word “repent.” The Greek word here is μετανοέω, metanoēō, being a compound of μετά, meta, meaning “after,” and νοέω, noeō, meaning “I think.” Hence, to repent is “to think after,” that is to have a change of mind.
  - (2) Galatians 4:4-5. The KJV has the expression, “the adoption of sons,” the NKJV, NASB, and ESV, “the adoption as sons,” and the NIV, “the full rights as sons.” The Greek word here is υιοθεσία, huiōthesia, a compound of υἱός, huios, meaning a “son,” and the verb τίθημι, tithēmi, meaning “I place.” Hence, adoption is “son placement” from bondage and servitude as a slave into family privilege.
  - (3) Ephesians 2:21-22. The KJV describes the church as “an habitation of God through the Spirit,” the NKJV, “a habitation of God in the Spirit,” the NIV, “a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit,” the NASB, “a dwelling of God in the Spirit,” and the ESV, “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” The Greek word here is κατοικητήριον, katoikētērion, being a compound of κατά, kata, as an intensifier meaning “down,” and οἰκητήριον, oikētērion, meaning “a dwelling.” Hence, the New Testament church is “a more permanent dwelling place” of God in/through the Spirit, that is more permanent when compared with the Old Testament temple as referenced by way of application in v. 21.

## VII INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

### A. Basic qualifications.

#### 1. Natural ability.

- a. The Bible presupposes human responsibility for reading, studying, wrestling with, and applying the written truth of God. God's revelation does not fall out of heaven into our passive souls. Rather, active digging and toiling in the Bible is necessary for commensurate spiritual reward. Insofar as we are able, this will involve the pursuit of subsidiary disciplines such as linguistics, history, geography, philosophy (with caution), etc. This does not mean that everyone must be a scholar, but it does mean that the Christian will eagerly, diligently study according to his distinctive ability (II Tim. 2:15; 4:13).
- b. By way of illustration, gold does not fall into the gold-miner's pocket. Rather, he must sweat and dig deep for the rich veins of the precious metal. Should he take his task casually and merely search at only a surface level, he may find himself deluded with the discovery of fool's gold, or iron pyrites.

#### 2. Spiritual ability.

- a. If your citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and you desire to know the meaning of God's Word from heaven, then you must be equipped with a heavenly frame of mind (Rom. 12:2). This will include:
  - (1) Regeneration. You must be born again by God through His Spirit so that you may be enabled to perceive the truth of God's Word which was previously unknown on account of the blinding nature of sin (John 3:2; I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 4:3-4; Tit. 3:5-6). This life of God comes when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin. Thus we receive:
    - (a) A new nature (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).
    - (b) A new life (Rom. 6:4; I Pet. 3:18).
    - (c) A new mind (Rom. 12:2; II Tim. 1:7).
  - (2) Spirituality. When the child of God grieves the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30), or quenches the Spirit of God (I Thess. 5:19), static is introduced into the line of communication. His vision becomes hazy while his hearing is impaired. However, when he walks by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), in obedient submission, and is actively filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), then his mind is illuminated (Matt. 6:22; I Cor. 2:15; 3:1-3). Thus there results:

- (a) A teachable spirit.
  - (b) A discerning attitude.
  - (c) A disciplined style lifestyle.
- (3) Hunger and thirst. A baby that does not desire even milk is sick; its natural inclination is to crave for simple food and gradually progress toward a more mature diet. The normal expectation for a new Christian is that of thirsting after God's Word; such a desire for good spiritual nutrition aids his digestion and growth (I Pet. 2:1-3; II Pet. 3:18). Thus there results:
- (a) Hunger pangs.
  - (b) Determined digestion.
  - (c) Persistent feasting.
- (4) Reverence. According to our view of the God of the Word, so will follow our veneration of the Word of God, and contrariwise. When we clearly see that this Word is that of the holy and sovereign God of heaven, then and only then will we approach this Word with right fear rather than flippant familiarity. Irreverence towards God's Word results in blindness regarding profound truth; reverence results in illumination (Heb. 12:28-29; I Pet. 1:17), with resultant:
- (a) Submissive humility.
  - (b) Ready obedience.
  - (c) Profound understanding.
3. By way of application, now let us be honest with ourselves. Are our qualifications valid or counterfeit, evident or nonexistent?
- a. Do we show birthmarks that indicate our regenerate state and godly parentage?
  - b. Could it be said of us by those Christians we most often fellowship with that we are spiritual? Do we desire for spiritual graces as personified in the Lord Jesus Christ?
  - c. Do we have an insatiable appetite for God's Word? What does our soul most frequently feed upon?
  - d. Is our regard for the Word of God one of awe or easy familiarity? Do we esteem the Bible as "more desirable than gold, . . . sweeter also than honey" (Ps. 19:10)?

## B. Basic presuppositions.

1. Any one who knows something about the Bible has presuppositions concerning the Bible. These presuppositions are a grid, or a definite basis for judgment through which we pass the Bible and thus arrive at certain conclusions.
  - a. Presuppositions which are antagonistic towards the claims that the Bible makes for itself inevitably lead to a destructive attitude towards Holy Scripture. Presuppositions which are in harmony with the claims that the Bible makes for itself frequently lead to a reverent regard for the totality of Scripture.
  - b. By way of illustration, a learned scholar rejects the sixth century B.C. date for the writing of Daniel, chiefly because he is predisposed towards a view which rejects the possibility of precise predictive prophecy. Thus his rationalistic and humanistic methodology leads him to suggest a second century B.C. date of authorship.
  - c. Hence, according to the grid of our understanding and world-view when we approach the Bible, so go our conclusions.
    - (1) The evolutionist, having a grid of gradualism, randomness to order, human development and progress by natural selection, views man as attaining personal divinity by a process of moral improvement. The Bible itself has evolved alongside of man.
    - (2) The humanist, having a grid of rational man as being supremely autonomous, views depraved, fallen man in the Bible to be an unworthy perspective that modern and advanced society ought to reject.
    - (3) The naturalist, having a grid that is pantheistic where all is God, views the Bible abstractly and as merely a lesser form of revelation. The Bible is good for looking inward rather than outward.
    - (4) The creationist, having a grid of fiat origination by God derived from the Bible, views the Bible harmoniously and as originating from God. He, unlike the other above mentioned schools of thought, makes the Bible his presupposition rather than subjecting it to prior, entrenched presuppositions.
2. Hence this study of the proper interpretation of the Bible declares those presuppositions upon which it is based. They will prove to be a constructive base for personal study.
  - a. All of the Bible is the Word of God, that is God-breathed, God-expired, God-exhaled, verbal, propositional truth (II Tim. 3:16). Refer to Chapter XI where fifteen evidences uphold the authority of the Bible as the Word of God.
  - b. Consequently, because God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), all of the Bible with regard to the original manuscripts is infallible, that is truthful and inerrant in whatever field of knowledge it touches upon (Matt. 5:18; John 10:35; 17:17).

- c. The Bible is perspicuous, that is essentially clear with regard to its basic message. Not all of the Bible is easy to understand, but its central and pervasive gospel message is unclouded (Ps. 19:7; Hab. 2:2; Matt. 22:9-10; Luke 16:29).
- d. The Bible assumes a certain standard of literacy which the man in the street is responsible for obtaining.

### C. Basic principles for interpreting the Bible.

1. By way of definition: “Hermeneutics is the science and art of biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not mechanical imitation.”<sup>10</sup>
2. The principle of one interpretation of the Bible.
  - a. When one is witnessing to unbelievers concerning the Bible, it is common to hear the reply, “Well, that is merely your interpretation. Who is to tell if you are right since there are so many interpretations of the Bible. You can make the Bible say anything that suits.” How then shall we reply? Simply by pointing out that there is only one interpretation of any given passage in the Bible. The intent of the Holy Spirit in conveying truth was singular, not multifarious, when He moved the human authors of Scripture to write what they did.
  - b. By way of illustration, when the last will and testament of a wealthy man is declared, it is not open to a multitude of interpretations. It is assumed that the deceased had a singular meaning in mind when he expressed his desires, even though others, out of selfish motives, may have attempted to read into that document numerous interpretations. The appointed attorney will employ certain rules of interpretation whereby he arrives at the one, true interpretation.
  - c. By way of illustration, Earl D. Radmacher relates an interesting experience.

I am reminded of an encounter I had on a university campus after speaking in a class on comparative religions. A student approached me asking for further opportunity to “rap” with me. Obliging, I set up a time and place for that same afternoon. Upon meeting, we got right into the discussion and had not proceeded very far until I appealed to Scripture for support of a position. At that point my challenger protested, “There are many different interpretations of that statement of Paul.” Somewhat irritated, I responded, “Wait just a moment! Earlier today you asked for more time to “rap” with me. Now I have come to “wrap” but I don’t see any presents to wrap or any wrapping paper. Now I don’t know how we are going to wrap without presents or wrapping paper.” He looked at me as though I had lost my mind and responded, “But that isn’t what I meant!” “Oh, I’m sorry,” I said, “But after all, there are many interpretations to what you said. Now, lets wrap! Despairing he said, “We can’t even communicate.” “Precisely!” I responded. “We can’t continue an intelligent conversation unless I am willing to understand what you mean by what you say. Now, how about allowing Paul the same privilege?”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Earl D. Radmacher, “A Response to Author’s Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, & the Bible*, eds. Radmacher and Preus, pp. 433-434.

- d. When we declare that there is only one interpretation of any given passage in the Bible, we are stating that our sole desire regarding true interpretation is that of accurately gaining the full mind of the author on any issue he wished to communicate.
- (1) In this regard two extremes must be avoided.
    - (a) *Under interpretation.* Only a limited understanding of the author's intended meaning is obtained. Such an approach tends to treat the Bible lightly, superficially, and arrive at generalities rather than specifics.
    - (b) *Over interpretation.* More is obtained from a passage than was ever divinely intended. Such embellishment or imposition tends toward the spiriualizing of Scripture.
  - (2) In this regard, a passage of Scripture may have a fuller sense, *sensus plenior*, that involves two subjects. In Psalm 2, God's sole authorial intent was that a primary reference to David should merge with a supreme reference to Jesus Christ, as Acts 4:25-28 indicates.
- e. Careful distinction should be made between the interpretation and application of the Bible. For while there is only one interpretation of any given passage, yet there may be many resultant applications.
- (1) While interpretation involves singular authorial intent, application leads to the relating of that intent to a meaningful, contemporary life situation. In simple terms, "what the Bible means," is interpretation, while, "what the Bible means *to me*," involves application.
  - (2) Interpretation must precede application, and in this area there is much neglect today. Because of overly pragmatic desires, as well as a common antipathy to the preeminence and discovery of the truth, it is common for people to merely glance at a passage of Scripture, yet spend much time in subjective speculation about what they believe they should do. Remember, that before a doctor can do something for you at a most practical level, he has to spend years studying the truth about medicine as preparation for practical ministry.
  - (3) By way of illustration, application must have explicit support from the correctly interpreted Word of God. A man once suggested that because David continued as King of Israel after he had committed the sins of murder and adultery, therefore a Christian today could continue to hold a position of spiritual leadership in a local church if he had committed similar sins and was truly repentant. Is this a correct application from the interpretation of II Samuel 11-12? Obviously not since the standards of Christian leadership are obtained from a right interpretation of I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.
    - (a) The interpretation of David's situation is correct. As a repentant sinner and adulterer, yet he continued as a King of Israel.

- (b) The application is unsatisfactory in that it is presented as a direct but unsupported admonition for the Christian.
  - (c) The application is unsatisfactory in that the New Testament presents different standards for Christian leaders, namely being “above reproach” (I Tim. 3:2, 10).
  - (d) The application is unsatisfactory in that it ignores important dispensational distinctives, especially between theocratic Israel and the Church as the Body of Christ. David was polygamous. Would it therefore be in order for Christian leaders to be like David in this matter?
3. The principal of literal interpretation.
- a. Antipathy and misunderstanding concerning literal interpretation.
    - (1) It is common to hear the modern pagan of our day, as well as the liberal student of Scripture, state concerning the Bible, “Now you obviously can’t take all of the Bible literally.” But, and at this point we must pay careful attention, it is indeed of fundamental importance that we *do* interpret the whole of the Word of God literally. But someone immediately objects:
      - (a) Does God have eyes and eyelids (Ps. 11:4)? Does God have wings (Ps. 17:8)? Does God have hands and ears (Isa. 59:1)?
      - (b) The answer is emphatically “No” to all of these questions, which are based upon letterism rather than literal interpretation.
    - (2) It is also common for conservative evangelical Christians to believe that they should take the Bible literally as far as possible, that is as far as reason and common sense will allow, but beyond that point they are at perfect liberty to spiritualize passages that would otherwise suggest absurd meanings. Nevertheless we would maintain that it is of fundamental importance that we take the *whole* of the Word of God literally.
      - (a) However this dual hermeneutic involves a serious problem in that it approaches the text of the Bible with two distinctive possible approaches that may be employed.
      - (b) Furthermore, an additional weakness of this hermeneutic is that of its subjective rather than its objective emphasis. In other words, it remains up to the individual as to whether one should interpret literally or spiritually.

b. Literal interpretation defined.

(1) According to Bernard Ramm:

The literal meaning of a word is the *basic, customary, social designation of that word*. . . . The major hermeneutical issue is not between a narrow, unimaginative, wooden literalism or a fanciful, imaginative allegorical system. The basic issue is whether the Biblical documents are to be approached in the normal, customary, usual way in which men talk, write, and think. . . . Of course the literal interpretation of Scripture does not blindly rule out figures of speech, symbols, allegories, and types. The *literal* meaning of a figure of speech is its *proper* meaning.<sup>12</sup>

(2) In other words, there is only ever one sense intended for a passage of Scripture, and that one sense, however figurative it may be, is yet the literal sense.

(a) Hence, the literal sense of any passage may be subdivided into two main categories.

1) The plain-literal meaning is used by David in Psalm 55:6 when he declares, “O that I had *wings* [italics added] like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest” NASB.

2) The figurative-literal meaning is used by David in Psalm 17:8 when he declares concerning God, “Hide me in the shadow of Thy *wings* [italics added]” NASB.

(b) What guidelines shall I employ that will indicate whether the plain-literal or figurative-literal meaning is intended?

1) The plain-literal is to be expected before the figurative-literal, especially when there is some doubt in mind.

2) Whichever meaning obviously contradicts known facts is to be rejected.

3) The immediate context will frequently indicate which meaning is intended.

4) The frequency of such a statement and its accepted meaning in other parts of the Bible, especially with regard to a particular human author, will often be determinative.

c. The fundamental emphasis then of literal interpretation is that of objectivity rather than subjectivity, or standard meaning rather than imported meaning.

(1) We desire to discover the singular mind of God without imposing our own views upon this sacred truth.

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<sup>12</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 90, 93, 95.

- (2) We are concerned, not about *an* interpretation, but *the* interpretation, not about the mind of *man* so much as the mind of *God*, not so much truth for *me* as truth as it is sourced in *God*.
- (3) We desire, not the opinions of men, however innumerable they may be, or plausible they may appear, but the glorious, singular, revealed mind of God.
- (4) By way of illustration, consider the following citation of William Tyndale by J. I. Packer.

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err nor go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way. Nevertheless, the Scripture uses proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle or allegory signifieth, is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. The principle of grammatical interpretation.

##### a. The problem of antipathy towards grammar in general.

- (1) Today, the average Christian is both lazy with regard to the precise analysis of the text of the Bible and ignorant concerning basic English grammar, let alone Hebrew or Greek grammar.
- (2) By way of illustration, sixteenth and seventeenth century English Puritans were often called “precisians” because of their moral scrupulousness and disciplined lifestyle. One such preacher recounted how a member of his congregation declared that his messages were very precise, to which he replied that this observation was correct since his God was very precise.
- (3) By way of illustration, grammar is the skeleton or framework of language that is designed to be clothed with the flesh or siding of truth. He who operates on the body of language without being aware of the structure of that body is not a surgeon, but a butcher.
- (4) Consider how the following examples of how precise grammar exactly determines the meaning of God’s Word.
  - (a) Luke 24:33-34, NASB. When the two disciples who had been with Jesus on the Emmaus road returned to Jerusalem, grammar determines that the declaration of v. 34 was made, not by the two who had just rejoined the eleven disciples, but by the larger number already gathered in that room.

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<sup>13</sup> J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism’ and the Word of God*, pp. 103.

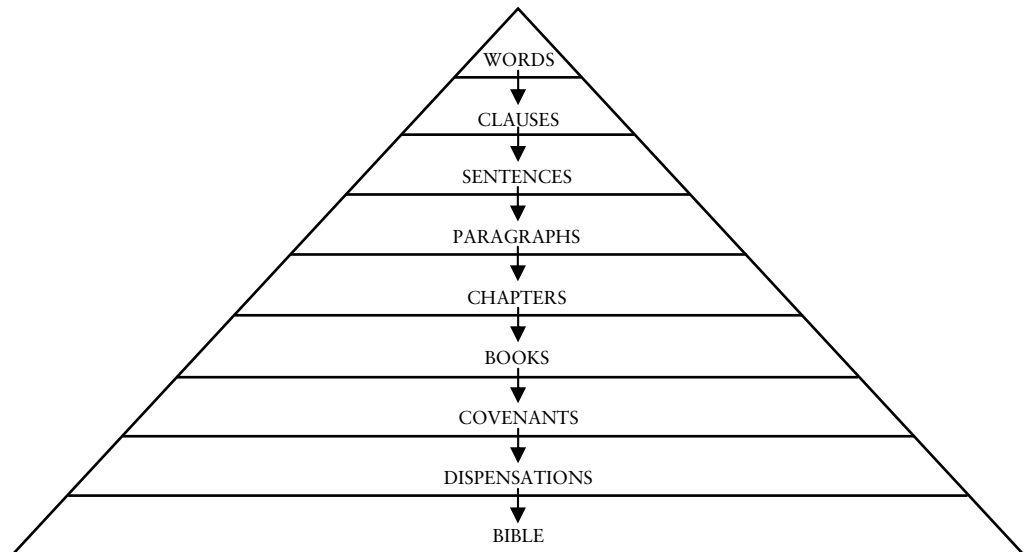
- (b) John 1:1. With this verse the Jehovah's Witness declares that here is proof of the apostle describing Jesus Christ as only "a god." However grammar declares that the reason for the absence of the definite article is not on account of Jesus being less than God, but because John is careful to avoid the implications of the rendering, "God was the Word."
  - (c) Galatians 3:16. Paul argues that Jesus Christ is the promised singular seed of Abraham by means of appealing to the singular of "seed" in Genesis 22:18.
- (5) By way of illustration, it has been well said that the life of the Christian is governed by the nature of Greek prepositions. Consider the significance of "in," "out of," "with," "by," "from," "to," in the New Testament with regard to sanctification.
- b. Know the basics of English grammar.
    - (1) Morphology (word meanings).
      - (a) Precision in the meaning of key Bible words.
      - (b) Knowledge of Greek and Latin roots.
      - (c) Knowledge of synonyms and antonyms.
    - (2) Syntax (word relations).
      - (a) A clear understanding of the differences between nouns, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, verbs, participles, infinitives, prepositions, conjunctions, particles, etc.
      - (b) A clear understanding of the differences between cases, persons, numbers, tenses, moods, voices, etc.
  - c. Know some basics concerning the Hebrew and Greek languages.
    - (1) Old Testament Hebrew is essentially an oriental language used in a semitic setting (refer to pp. 21-22).
    - (2) New Testament Greek is essentially a western language used in a western setting (refer to pp. 23-26).
5. The principle of historical interpretation.
- a. Since Christianity is basically a historic faith that is grounded upon Jesus Christ as an historic person who lived, died and rose again at a point of time in history, and is recorded in a Book that is a collation from different historic settings, it is of fundamental importance that we discover the levels and eras of history in which God's Word was written.

- (1) God's selective use of specific segments of history is part of His revelatory process; it is not that which we can presently discard on the pretext that the setting of modern history is different.
  - (2) Hence, to discover the true historic setting of a passage of Scripture is to discover part of God's Word revelation.
- b. Culture goes hand-in-hand with historical development. It is the geographic lifestyle, the distinctive social way of life that distinguishes one community from another, especially with regard to the distinction between Jew and Gentile.
- (1) Thus a knowledge of Bible geography is important. "To try to interpret the Bible without a basic geographical understanding of Bible lands is like trying to watch a drama with no scenery."<sup>14</sup>
  - (2) Thus a knowledge of local agriculture, commerce, dress, marriage customs, sporting activities, methods of warfare, etc., is of great interpretive importance.
- c. Progress of revelation must be understood in terms of historical movement.
- (1) We are not declaring that God reveals progressively from error to truth, from fable to historic narrative, as liberal theology does.
  - (2) We are declaring that God reveals progressively, and always truthfully, from civilization to civilization, from shadow to substance, from type to reality, as evangelical theology teaches.
6. The principle of theological interpretation.
- a. The analogy of faith. The passage of God's word that we study is, in accordance with the consistency of God's holy and truthful nature, in full agreement and harmony with the totality of the Bible. Hence, our interpretation of such a passage will anticipate such unity in the truth. There may be distinctive characteristics in the writings of Peter, John, and Paul, yet not so as to result in contradictory doctrine. However, we must be careful that overall agreement is real and that disagreement is not due to human limitation.
    - (1) It is true that exegesis of the text leads to a systematic body of doctrine and not vice versa.
    - (2) Yet our edifice of doctrine ought to be a check upon our exegesis.
  - b. With caution it is suggested that the doctrinal opinions of other reliable men of God be consulted, while acknowledging they are good servants and bad masters. However, never forget that good doctrine is a result of good exegesis. But beware of imposing our doctrine upon our exegesis.

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<sup>14</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 97.

- (1) Consider the Systematic Theologies of Calvin, Hodge, Shedd, Strong, Berkhof, etc., especially their Scripture indices.
  - (2) Consider the logical relationship of truth being studied with the logical consistency of truth already known.
  - (3) Consider the respect opinions of mature local church saints (Heb. 13:7).
7. The principle of unitary interpretation.
- a. By way of introduction, the Bible is to be interpreted literally, grammatically, historically, and theologically. However, it also needs to be studied analytically and synthetically.
    - (1) It is important to understand that analysis, that is dissection into parts, also requires synthesis, that is reassembly into a whole, or else our study remains fragmentary.
    - (2) Hence, we first study the smallest units, that is words, and then progress to increasingly larger units, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, etc., until we have finally comprehended the context of the whole Bible. We diagram this process as follows.



- b. Word studies.
  - (1) Read the passage to be studied several times so as to select the most important words and clauses.
  - (2) Determine the form of each word selected, that is whether a noun, adjective, or verb, and then parse it.

- (3) Discover the root meaning of each word in its classical setting, but do not necessarily use this information to over-interpret its biblical setting. Consider the word “church,” p. 24.
  - (4) Establish the Old or New Testament meaning in general, while paying special attention to cross references, synonyms, antonyms, and marginal notations.
  - (5) Determine the specific meaning of each word in the passage in question by drawing upon the preceding and following context.
  - (6) Where appropriate, make application of the truth of each word in context to one’s own contemporary situation.
- c. Word relationships.
- (1) Diagram the sentence, establishing the main verb, as well as major and subordinate clauses.
  - (2) Pay particular attention to connectives such as, “Therefore,” “But,” “And.”
    - (a) What is the importance of “Therefore” in Romans 12:1?
    - (b) What is the importance of “Therefore” in Philippians 3:15; 4:1?
    - (c) What is the importance of “in this” in I Peter 1:6?
  - (3) Discover exactly what a certain preposition means, such as “by” KJV or “through” NASB in Romans 3:22.
  - (4) When pronouns are used, carefully identify those people or things that are being referenced.
    - (a) Who are the “us” in II Peter 3:9?
    - (b) What are the “These things” of I John 5:13?
  - (5) What type of verbal action is indicated? Is there any intended contrast between verb tenses? If so, why?
  - (6) Is there a certain word order that indicates a particular emphasis?
  - (7) Does the presence or absence of the definite article “the” shed light?
  - (8) Do case relationships exclude a certain meaning?
  - (9) Are compound or intensive word forms being used?

- d. Contextual considerations.
- (1) In simple terms, to look seriously at the context of the passage we are studying means that we don't look at the Bible with doctrinal/cultural blinders on. Of course this is not an easy matter to accomplish. Rather, we consider the panorama of meaning that is being conveyed.
  - (2) The preceding context.
    - (a) Consider conjunctions, or parenthetical elements.
    - (b) Consider the development of the argument and seek to enter the flow of the author's thought.
  - (3) The following context.
    - (a) Consider conjunctions and conclusions.
    - (b) Consider the subsequent development of the argument and seek to enter into the flow and climax of the author's thought.
  - (4) The overall context.
    - (a) Consider the biblical covenants, their conditional or unconditional nature, as well as their relevance for the Christian.
    - (b) Consider the biblical dispensations, or historic economies in which God's unchanging saving grace is displayed through differing agents and agencies.
    - (c) Consider the overall argument of the book being studied, especially the big idea being propounded.
    - (d) Consider the culture which permeates the author's thoughts.
- e. Figures of speech, and other literary modes of expression.
- (1) Metaphor. One object is identified as another that is basically different yet illustrative. Hence, "You are my rock and my fortress" (Ps. 31:3 NASB).
  - (2) Simile. While this expression is similar to the metaphor, it differs in that one object is introduced with "as" or "like" with regard to another that has some parallel qualities. Hence, "And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water" (Ps. 1:3 NASB).
  - (3) Symbol. A symbol is an object that is frequently used to represent something else. Hence, the human body is a symbol of the church of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 12:12-28 NASB).

- (4) Metonymy. One term is used for a related term. Hence, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup” (I Cor. 11:26 NASB).
- (5) Anthropomorphism. A human physical characteristic is ascribed to God. Hence, “For the eyes of the LORD move to and from throughout the earth” (II Chron. 16:9 NASB).
- (6) Anthropopathism. A human personality characteristic is ascribed to God. Hence, “and the Lord will change His mind about the misfortune which He promised against you” (Jer. 26:13 NASB).
- (7) Personification. A non-personal object is attributed with personal characteristics. Hence, “Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains sing together for joy” (Ps. 98:8 NASB).
- (8) Hyperbole. A deliberate exaggeration is made for emphasis. Hence, “And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge” (I Cor. 13:2 NASB).
- (9) Typology. A type is a divinely purposed, Old Testament foreshadowing of a New Testament spiritual reality. Hence, “For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (I Cor. 5:7 NASB).
- (10) Parables and allegories. A parable is a true to life story that has abiding and spiritual significance. It is an extended simile that is intended to both conceal and reveal (Matt. 13:11-13). An allegory is an extended metaphor (John 10). In their interpretation, consider the following.
  - (a) Discover as much as is possible concerning the cultural, geographic, and historic setting of the story.
  - (b) Establish the main truth of the earthly story as well as the secondary matters that pertain to it.
  - (c) Consider the context which makes necessary the telling of this story, especially the spiritual problem.
  - (d) Be concerned with discovering the one central truth that the parable is attempting to teach, and apply with caution when fitting together the smaller details. Consider Matthew 13:18-23, and how our Savior interpreted the Parable of the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils.
  - (e) Note that all of the details do not have to mesh perfectly (John 10:7, 11 NASB).

#### D. J. I. Packer and “The Interpretation of Scripture.”

This is part of a book written by J. I. Packer titled *‘Fundamentalism’ and the Word of God*, originally published in 1958.<sup>15</sup> It includes a succinct explanation concerning a proper approach to interpreting the Bible that will help the reader avoid those dangerous shoals and reefs of subjectivism and spiritualization that lead to misunderstanding and ultimately doctrinal error. Having considered “The Divine Origin of Scripture” and “The Nature of Scripture,” we are now led to consider “The Interpretation of Scripture.”

Scripture, as we have seen, is a many-sided interpretive record of an intricate cross-section of world history. The Word of God is an exceedingly complex unity. The different items and the various kinds of material which make it up—laws, promises, liturgies, genealogies, arguments, narratives, meditations, visions, aphorisms, homilies, parables and the rest—do not stand in Scripture as isolated fragments, but as parts of a whole. The exposition of them, therefore, involves exhibiting them in right relation both to the whole and to each other. God’s Word is not presented in Scripture in the form of a theological system, but it admits of being stated in that form, and, indeed, requires to be so stated before we can properly grasp it—grasp it, that is, as a whole. Every text has its immediate context in the passage from which it comes, its broader context in the book to which it belongs, and its ultimate context in the Bible as a whole; and it needs to be rightly related to each of these contexts if its character, scope and significance is to be adequately understood.

An analogy may help here. A versatile writer with didactic intent, like Charles Williams or G. K. Chesterton, may express his thought in a variety of literary forms—poems, plays, novels, essays, critical and historical studies, as well as formal topical treatises. In such a case, it would be absurd to think any random sentence from one of his works could safely be taken as expressing his whole mind on a subject with which it deals. The point of each sentence can be grasped only when one sees it in the context, both of the particular piece of work from which it comes, and of the writer’s whole output. If we would understand the parts, our wisest course is to get to know the whole—or, at any rate, those parts of the whole which tell us in plain prose the writer’s central ideas. These give us the key to all his work. Once we can see the main outlines of his thought and have grasped his general point of view, we are able to see the meaning of everything else—the point of his poems and the moral of his stories, and how the puzzling passages fit in with the rest. We may find that his message has a consistency hitherto unsuspected, and that elements in his thought which seemed contradictory are not really so at all. The task of interpreting the mind of God as expressed in His written Word is of the same order as this, and must be tackled in the same way. The beginner in Bible study often feels lost; he cannot at first grasp the Bible’s over-all point of view, and so does not see the wood for the trees. As his understanding increases, how-ever, he becomes more able to discern the unity of the biblical message, and to see the place of each part in the whole.

##### *a. Interpreting Scripture Literally*

Scripture yields two basic principles for its own interpretation. The first is that the proper, natural sense of each passage (i.e., the intended sense of the writer) is to be taken as fundamental; the meaning of the texts in their own contexts, and for their original readers, is the necessary starting-point for enquiry into their wider significance. In other words, Scripture statements must be interpreted in the light of the rules of grammar and discourse on the one hand, and of their own place in history on the other. This is what we should expect in the nature of the case, seeing that the biblical books originated as occasional documents addressed to contemporary audiences; and it is exemplified in the New Testament exposition of the Old, from which the fanciful allegorizing practiced by Philo and the Rabbis is strikingly absent. This is the much-misunderstood principle of

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<sup>15</sup> Packer, *‘Fundamentalism’ and the Word of God*, pp. 101-114.

interpreting Scripture *literally*. A glance at its history will be the quickest way of clearing up the confusion.

The Mediæval exegetes, following Origen, regarded the ‘literal’ sense of Scripture as unimportant and unedifying. They attributed to each biblical statement three further senses, or levels of meaning, each of which was in a broad sense allegorical: the ‘moral’ or ‘tropological’ (from which one learned rules of conduct), the ‘allegorical’ (from which one learned articles of faith), and the ‘anagogical’ (from which one learned of the invisible realities of heaven). Thus, it was held that the term ‘Jerusalem’ in Scripture, while denoting ‘literally’ a city in Palestine, also referred ‘morally’ to civil society, ‘allegorically’ to the Church, and ‘anagogically’ to heaven, every time that it occurred. Only the three allegorical senses, the Mediævals held, were worth a theologian’s study; the literal record had no value save as a vehicle of figurative meaning. Mediæval exegesis was thus exclusively mystical, not historical at all; biblical facts were made simply a jumping-off ground for theological fancies, and thus spiritualized away. Against this the Reformers protested, insisting that the literal, or intended, sense of Scripture was the sole guide to God’s meaning. They were at pains to point out, however, that ‘literalism’ of this sort, so far from precluding the recognition of figures of speech where Scripture employs them, actually demands it. William Tyndale’s statement of their position may be quoted as typical:

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the scripture hath but one sense, which is but the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way. Nevertheless, the scripture uses proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle or allegory signifieth, is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently.

Tyndale castigates the Scholastics for misapplying II Corinthians 3:6 to support their thesis that “the literal sense . . . is hurtful, and noisome, and killeth the soul”, and only spiritualizing does any good; and he replaces their distinction between the literal and spiritual senses by an equation which replaces John 6:63, “God is a Spirit, and all his words are spiritual. His literal sense is spiritual . . . if thou have eyes of God to see the right meaning of the text, and whereunto the Scripture pertaineth, and the final end and cause thereof.”<sup>16</sup> Fanciful spiritualizing, so far from yielding God’s meaning, actually obscured it. The literal sense is itself the spiritual sense, coming from God and leading to Him.

This ‘literalism’ is founded on respect for the biblical forms of speech; it is essentially a protest against the arbitrary imposition of inapplicable literary categories on scriptural statements. It is this ‘literalism’ that present-day Evangelicals profess. But to read all Scripture narratives as if they were eye-witness reports in a modern newspaper, and to ignore the poetic and imaginative form in which they are sometimes couched, would be no less a violation of the canons of evangelical ‘literalism’ than the allegorizing of the Scholastics was; and this sort of ‘literalism’ Evangelicals repudiate. It would be better to call such exegesis ‘literalistic’<sup>17</sup> rather than ‘literal’, so as to avoid confusing two very different things.<sup>18</sup>

The modern outcry against evangelical ‘literalism’ seems to come from those who want leave to sit loose to biblical categories and treat the biblical records of certain events as myths, or parables—non-factual symbols of spiritual states and experiences. Many would view the story of the fall, for instance, merely as a picture of the present sinful condition of each man, and that of the virgin birth as merely expressing the thoughts of Christ’s superhuman character. Such ideas are attempts to cut the knot tied by the modern critical denial that these events really happened, and to find a way of saying that, though the stories are ‘literally’ false, yet they remain ‘spiritually’

<sup>16</sup> Tyndale, *Works* (Parker Society), I. 404 ff. The judicious Richard Hooker was making the same point when he wrote: “I hold it for a most infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when a literal construction will stand, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst” (*Laws of Eccles-iastical Polity*, V. lix. 2).

<sup>17</sup> Or, “to the letter.” B.E.H.

<sup>18</sup> For a good short review of some of the narrative and didactic forms of Scripture, see J. Stafford Wright, *Interpreting the Bible* (Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1955).

true and valuable. Those who take this line upbraid Evangelicals for being insensitive to the presence of symbolism in Scripture. But this is not the issue. There is a world of difference between recognizing that a real event (the fall, say) may be symbolically portrayed, as Evangelicals do, and arguing, as these persons do, that because the fall is symbolically portrayed, it need not be regarded as a real event at all, but is merely a picture of something else. In opposing such inferences, Evangelicals are contending, not for a literalistic view, but for the very principles of biblical literalism which we have already stated—that we must respect the literary categories of Scripture, and take seriously the historical character of the Bible story. We may not turn narratives which clearly purport to record actual events into mere symbols of human experience at our will; still less may we do so (as has been done) in the name of biblical theology! We must allow Scripture to tell us its own literary character, and be willing to receive it as what it claims to be.

It may be thought that the historic Protestant use of the word ‘literal’ which we have here been concerned to explain is so unnatural on modern lips, and that such a weight of misleading association now attaches to the term, that it would be wisest to drop it altogether. We argued earlier that the word ‘fundamentalist’ should be dropped, as having become a barrier to mutual understanding, and the case may well be the same here. We do not contend for words. We are not bound to cling to ‘literal’ as part of our theological vocabulary; it is not itself a biblical term, and we can state evangelical principles of interpretation without recourse to it (as indeed, we did in the opening sentences of this section);<sup>19</sup> and perhaps it is better that we should. If we do abandon the word, however, we must not abandon the principle which it enshrines; namely, that Scripture is to be interpreted in its natural intended sense, and theological predilections must not be allowed to divert us from loyalty to what the text actually asserts.

#### *b. Interpreting Scripture by Scripture*

The second basic principle of interpretation is that Scripture must interpret Scripture; the scope and significance of one passage is to be brought out by relating it to others. Our Lord gave an example of this when he used Genesis 2:24 to show that Moses’ law of divorce was no more than a temporary concession to human hard-heartedness.<sup>20</sup> The Reformers termed this principle the analogy of Scripture; the Westminster Confession states it thus: “The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”<sup>21</sup> This is so in the nature of the case, since the various inspired books are dealing with complementary aspects of the same subject. The rule means that we must give ourselves in Bible study to following out the unities, cross-references and topical links which Scripture provides. Kings and Chronicles throw light on each other; so do the prophets and history books of the Old Testament; so do the Synoptic Gospels and John; so do the four Gospels and the Epistles; so, indeed, do the Old Testament as a whole and the New. And there is one book in the New Testament which links up with almost everything that the Bible contains: that is the Epistle to the Romans, of which Calvin justly wrote in the Epistle prefacing his commentary on it: “If a man understands it, he has a sure road opened for him to the understanding of the whole Scripture.” In Romans, Paul brings together and sets out in systematic relation all the great themes of the Bible—sin, law, judgment, faith, works, grace, justification, sanctification, election, the plan of salvation, the work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the Christian hope, the nature and life of the Church, the place of Jew and Gentile in the purposes of God, the philosophy of Church and of world history, the meaning and message of the Old Testament, the duties of Christian citizenship, the principles of personal piety and ethics. From the vantage-point given by Romans, the whole

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<sup>19</sup> P. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Matt. 19:3-8, dealing with Deut. 24:1.

<sup>21</sup> I. ix.

landscape of the Bible is open to view, and the broad relation of the parts to the whole becomes plain. The study of Romans is the fittest starting-point for biblical interpretation and theology.

*c. Problems and Difficulties*

The scientific study of Scripture is a complicated and exacting task. The biblical languages have their own distinctive idioms and thought-forms. Each writer has his own habits of mind, vocabulary, outlook and interests. Each book has its own character, and is written according to stylistic conventions which it is not always easy to see. Each book has its own historical and theological background, and must be interpreted against that background; thus, we should not look in the Old Testament for clear statements about the Trinity, or the believer's hope of a future life, for these things were not fully revealed till Christ came. All these factors must be borne in mind, or we shall misinterpret Scripture.

This does not mean that only trained scholars can study the Bible to any profit. Its central message is so plainly stated in the text that the most unlearned of those who have ears to hear and eyes to see can understand it. "The unfolding of thy words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple."<sup>22</sup> The technicalities of scholarship may be out of the ordinary Bible-reader's reach, but none the less he can, with God's blessing, grasp all the main truths of God's message.

Those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.<sup>23</sup>

It is only over secondary matters that problems arise. Here, however, ignorance of the background of biblical statements and allusions, coupled (no doubt) with failure to enter adequately into the writer's mind,<sup>24</sup> leave us on occasion in doubt as to what the texts mean, and how they fit in with other texts and with the rest of the Word of God. But these uncertainties affect only the outer fringes of the biblical revelation. And in fact, this class of problem steadily yields to patient study as our knowledge grows. As in all scientific enquiry, however, the solution of one problem raises another and we have no reason to expect that all the problems that crop up in biblical exposition will ever be completely solved in this world.

An idea that persistently haunts some people is that the presence in Scripture of passages which are hard to harmonize is an argument against regarding it as God's Word written in the sense we have explained, and that one is not entitled so to regard it until one has first reconciled all the seeming discrepancies to one's own satisfaction. If this were right, every apparent contradiction would be a valid reason for doubting the truth of the biblical doctrine of Scripture. But the idea rests on a confusion. Christians are bound to receive the Bible as God's Word written on the authority of Christ, not because they can prove it such by independent enquiry, but because as disciples they trust their divine Teacher. We have pointed out already that no article of Christian faith admits of full rational demonstration as, say, geometrical theorems do; all the great biblical doctrines—the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, the work of the Spirit in man, the resurrection of the body and the renewal of the creation—are partly mysterious, and raise problems for our minds that are at present insoluble. The doctrine of Scripture is no exception to this rule. But that should not daunt, nor even surprise us; for it is the very nature of Christian faith to believe, on the authority of God, truths which may neither be rationally demonstrated nor exhaustively understood. We must remember that God does not tell us everything about His acts and purposes, nor put us in a position to work them all out for ourselves. We shall not reach right views about the things of God by backing our independent judgment, but only by taking His word. We are wholly dependent on Him for our knowledge of His ways.

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<sup>22</sup> Ps. 119:130, RSV.

<sup>23</sup> Westminster Confession, I. vii.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. II Pet. 3:16.

God, then, does not profess to answer in Scripture all the questions that we, in our boundless curiosity, would like to ask about Scripture. He tells us merely as much as He sees we need to know as a basis for our life of faith. And He leaves unresolved some of the problems raised by what He tells us, in order to teach us a humble trust in His veracity. The question, therefore, that we must ask ourselves when faced with these puzzles is not, is it reasonable to imagine that this is so? But, is it reasonable to accept God's assurance that this is so? Is it reasonable to take God's word and believe that He has spoken the truth, even though I cannot fully comprehend what He has said? The question carries its own answer. We should not abandon faith in anything that God has taught us merely because we cannot solve all the problems which it raises. Our own intellectual competence is not the test and measure of divine truth. It is not for us to stop believing because we lack understanding, or to postpone believing till we can get understanding, but to believe in order that we may understand; as Augustine said, "unless you believe, you will not understand." Faith first, sight afterwards, is God's order, not *vice versa*; and the proof of the sincerity of our faith is our willingness to have it so. Therefore, just as we should not hesitate to commit ourselves to faith in the Trinity although we do not know how one God can be three persons, nor to faith in the incarnation, although we do not know how the divine and human natures combined in the person of Christ, so we should not hesitate to commit ourselves to faith in Scripture as the infallible Word of the infallible God, even though we cannot solve all the puzzles, nor reconcile all the apparent contradictions, with which in our present state of knowledge it confronts us. On all these articles of faith we have God's positive assurance; and that should be enough.

Accordingly, our methods of interpreting Scripture must be such as express faith in its truth and consistency as God's Word. Our approach must be harmonistic; for we know at the outset that God's utterance is not self-contradictory. Article XX of the Church of England lays down that it is not lawful for the Church so to "expound one place of Scripture, that it may be repugnant to another"; no more is it lawful for any individual exegete. Not that we should adopt strained and artificial expedients for harmonizing; this will neither glorify God nor edify us. What we cannot harmonize by a natural and plausible hypo-thesis is best left unharmonized, with a frank admission that in our present state of knowledge we do not see how these apparent discrepancies should be resolved. We may not, with the heretic Marcion and some modern Liberals, "criticize the Bible by the Bible", singling out some parts of Scripture as the authentic Word of God and denying the divine character of the rest because it seems to say something different from the parts approved; instead, we should confess the divine origin of all the Scriptures, and be guided in interpreting them by Augustine's axiom: "I do not doubt that their authors therein made no mistake and set forth nothing that might mislead. If in one of these books I stumble across something which seems opposed to the truth, I have no hesitation in saying that either my copy is faulty, or the translator has not fully grasped what was said" (Augustine read Scripture in Latin), "or else I myself have not fully understood."<sup>25</sup> We must base our study of Scripture on the assumption that governed the New Testament men in their study of the Old—that God's revealed truth is a consistent unity, and any disharmony between part and part is only apparent, not real.

#### *d. The Holy Spirit as Interpreter*

One final point concerning interpretation remains to be made. Scripture tells us that if we are to understand Scripture we need, over and above right rules, personal insight into spiritual things. Scripture sets before us spiritual truths—truths, that is, about God, and about created things in relation to God; and to grasp spiritual truths requires spiritual receptiveness. But no man has this by nature. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."<sup>26</sup> The habit of mind which enslaves the natural man, Paul tells us, is to set up his own "wisdom" and make it ultimate,

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<sup>25</sup> *Ep.* lxxxii.

<sup>26</sup> I Cor. 2:14.

and so he is compelled to dismiss as foolishness all that does not accord with it. Without spiritual enlightenment, he will never be able to see the foolishness of his own wisdom, nor the wisdom of the “foolishness of God”<sup>27</sup> proclaimed in the in the gospel; hence he will never forsake the one for the other. Our Lord confirms this view of man. His repeated diagnosis of the unbelieving Pharisees was that they were *blind*, lacking the capacity to perceive spiritual realities;<sup>28</sup> and He regarded spiritual perception, where He found it, as a supernatural gift from God.<sup>29</sup>

Now, the Holy Spirit has been sent to the Church as its Teacher, to guide Christians into truth, to make them wise unto salvation, to testify to them of Christ and to glorify Him thereby.<sup>30</sup> To the apostles, He came to remind them of Christ’s teaching, to show them its meaning, to add further revelation to it, and so to equip them to witness to all about their Lord.<sup>31</sup> To other men, He came to make them partakers of the apostolic faith through the apostolic word. Paul indicates the permanent relation between the Spirit, the apostles’ word and the rest of the Church in I Corinthians 2:10-16. The Spirit, he says, gave the apostles understanding of the gospel: “we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”; “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” Now the Spirit inspires and empowers their proclamation of these things to other men: “which things we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth”; Paul preaches, and knows that he preaches, “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”.<sup>32</sup> And “he that is spiritual”—he in whom the Spirit abides to give understanding—discerns the meaning of the message and receives it as the testimony of God. This applies no less to the apostolic word written than to the apostolic word preached; and no more to the apostolic writings than to the rest of the written Word of God. The Spirit, who was its author, is also its interpreter, and such understanding of it as men gain is His gift.

Not that the Spirit’s presence in men’s hearts makes patient study of the text unnecessary. The Spirit is not given to make Bible study needless, but to make it effective. Nor can anything in Scripture mean anything when the Spirit interprets. The Spirit is not the prompter of fanciful spiritualizing, or of applications of texts out of their contexts on the basis of accidental associations of words. The only meaning to which He bears witness is that which each text actually has in the organism of Scripture; such witness as is borne to other meanings is borne by other spirits. But without the Spirit’s help there can be no grasp of the message of Scripture, no conviction of the truth of Scripture, and no faith in the God of Scripture. Without the Spirit, nothing is possible but spiritual blindness and unbelief.

It follows that the Christian must approach the study of Scripture in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, sure that he can learn from it nothing of spiritual significance unless he is taught of God. Confidence in one’s own powers of discernment is an effective barrier to spiritual understanding. The self-confidence of nineteenth-century critical scholarship was reflected in its slogan that the Bible must be read like any other book; but the Bible is more than a merely human book, and understanding it involves more than appreciating its merely human characteristics. God’s book does not yield up its secrets to those who will not be taught of the Spirit. Our God-given textbook is a closed book till our God-given Teacher opens it to us.

A century of criticism has certainly thrown some light on the human side of the Bible—its style, language, composition, history and culture; but whether it has brought the Church a better understanding of its divine message than Evangelicals of two, three and four hundred years ago possessed is more than doubtful. It is not at all clear that we today comprehend the plan of

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<sup>27</sup> I Cor, 1:25; see the whole passage, 1:18 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Matt. 15:14; 23:16-17, 19, 26; John 9:39-41.

<sup>29</sup> Matt. 11:25; 16:17.

<sup>30</sup> John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14.

<sup>31</sup> John 14:26; 16:12-13; 17:20.

<sup>32</sup> I Cor. 2:4.

salvation, the doctrines of sin, election, atonement, justification, new birth and sanctification, the life of faith, the duties of churchmanship and the meaning of Church history, more clearly than did the Reformers, or the Puritans, or the leaders of the eighteenth-century revival. When it is claimed that modern criticism has greatly advanced our understanding of the Bible, the reply must be that it depends upon what is meant by the Bible; criticism has thrown much light on the human features of Scripture, but it has not greatly furthered our knowledge of the Word of God. Indeed, it seems truer to say that its effect to date has been rather to foster ignorance of the Word of God; for by concentrating on the human side of Scripture it has blurred the Church's awareness of the divine character of scriptural teaching, and by questioning biblical statements in the name of scholarship it has shaken confidence in the value of personal Bible study. Hence, just as the Mediævals tended to equate Church tradition with the Word of God, so modern Protestants tend to equate the words of scholars with the Word of God. We have fallen into the habit of accepting their pronouncements at second hand without invoking the Spirit's help to search Scripture and see, not merely whether what they say is so (in so far as the lay Bible student is qualified to judge this), but also—often more important—whether God's Word does not deal with more than the limited number of topics with which scholars at any one time are concerned. The result of this negligence is widespread ignorance among Churchmen as to what Scripture actually says. So it always is when the Church forgets how to search the Scriptures acknowledging its own blindness and looking to God's Spirit to teach it God's truth. There is no more urgent need today than that the Church should humble itself to learn this lesson once more.

We have now presented in positive outline the biblical approach to Scripture. Its text is word for word God-given; its message is an organic unity, the infallible Word of an infallible God, a web of revealed truth centered upon Christ; it must be interpreted in its natural sense, on the assumption of its inner harmony; and its meaning can be grasped only by those who humbly seek and gladly receive the help of the Holy Spirit.

## VIII A BRIEF SURVEY OF BIBLE HISTORY

### A. The major events of the Bible.

1. The creation (Genesis 1-2).
  - a. Establishes God as the Eternal, His sovereign dominion, and man's consequent accountability.
  - b. Eliminates atheism, humanism, agnosticism, polytheism, pantheism, fatalism, materialism, evolution.
  - c. Explains the origin of man. Whereas Genesis 1:1-27 describes creation in general, Genesis 2:4-9, 18-25, focus attention upon the creation of Adam and Eve in much greater detail.
2. The fall (Genesis 3).
  - a. Innocence or uncontested holiness gives way to the original human sin. The consequence is pervasive racial depravity, spiritual impotence, and pollution of the soul (Rom. 5:12).
  - b. Both the promise of the victorious seed of the woman (3:15) and man's expulsion from Paradise (3:22-24) indicate God's sovereign control over this affront to His goodness.
  - c. An understanding of this human calamity is basic to an appreciation of subsequent behavior and the provision of the gospel. This historic event concerning the first original man makes void any claims to inherent human goodness (Rom. 1:18-3:20).
3. The flood (Genesis 6-9).
  - a. It was universal, declaring God's wrath and judgment in the face of spurned grace. If the Flood was merely local, then God's covenant promise (Gen. 11:11-17) has subsequently been broken on many occasions.
  - b. It was typical of God's future dealings with this present unbelieving age which rejects grace and invites judgment (Matt. 24:37-39; I Pet. 3:18-22; II Pet. 3:3-7).
  - c. It was transforming in that new geographic and climactic conditions came as a result, including seasons, polar regions, and consequent reduced longevity (2:6; 5:1-32; 7:11; 7:11, 11:10-32).
  - d. It was covenantal in that it drew forth God's promise of regular seasons, abundant food (8:21-22), and peace (9:8-17).

4. The confusion at Babel (Genesis 11).
  - a. A unity of language results in human arrogance and the prospect of undreamt of heights of human wickedness (11:4-6).
  - b. A diversity of language brought about by sovereign intervention results in the restraint of man's ambitious designs (11:7-8).
  - c. A dispersal of mankind due to sin implies that man's efforts to accomplish international unity are doomed to fail (11:9).
5. The call of Abraham (Genesis 12-15).
  - a. The Gentile father of the Hebrew race is called in grace from paganism in Ur of the Chaldees to blessing in the land of Canaan.
  - b. God establishes a unilateral covenant that ensures a land inheritance, a national heritage, and international significance (14:14-17; 15:7-21; Gal. 3:29).
  - c. Abraham becomes the father of those who are justified by grace through faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-5, 9-25; Heb. 11:8-10).
6. The sojourn of Israel in Egypt (Genesis 37-50).
  - a. Through a famine and Jacob's favoritism directed towards Joseph, Egypt becomes a womb in which a family nucleus of seventy (Gen. 46:27) is implanted that gives birth to a nation of two million (Num. 1:44-46) following a gestation period of four hundred and thirty years (Ex. 12:40-41).
  - b. Egypt also represents bondage and captivity that necessitates redemption by means of God's sovereign, atoning intervention (Exod. 2:23-25).
  - c. The humiliation and exaltation of Joseph pictures both Jesus Christ and the Father's sovereign resolve to save His people (Gen. 50:20).
7. The exodus of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 1-15).
  - a. Here is redemption from captivity through the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:23; I Cor. 5:7).
  - b. Here is redemption unto liberty through the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses (I Cor. 10:1-4).
  - c. Here is redemption with spoils from a vanquished enemy (Exod. 3:20-22; 12:35-36; Eph. 4:8).

8. The giving of the Law to Israel (Exodus 19-Leviticus 27).
  - a. It is given to a redeemed people, who yet sin, as a means of reconciliation, as a standard for holiness and rule for duty and worship (Exod. 19:3-8; cf. Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19).
  - b. It is given as a bilateral, blood covenant (Exod. 24:1-8) and summary of God's righteous demands (Exod. 20:1-7; Deut. 5:6-21) that have the consequences of either blessing or cursing (Deut. 30:15-20). It does not nullify or replace the unilateral Abrahamic covenant of promise (Gal. 3:16-19).
  - c. It is given in its civil, social, and religious fullness in Exodus 21-Leviticus 27, and overall review in Deuteronomy 1-36.
9. The wilderness sojourn of Israel (Numbers 10-36).
  - a. From Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea, Israel's murmuring, rebellion, and unbelief result in a 38 year wilderness exile (Num. 10-14).
  - b. From Kadesh-Barnea via the wilderness back to Kadesh-Barnea, the old generation, except for Caleb and Joshua, is gradually replaced over 38 years (Num. 15-20). Both the rebellion of Korah and the disobedience of Moses intersperse this period.
  - c. From Kadesh-Barnea to the Jordan River opposite Jericho, the new generation experience victory, judgment by fiery serpents, and a plague that results from the idolatrous seduction of Balaam (Num. 21-25).
10. The conquest of Canaan by Israel (Joshua 1-12).
  - a. Under divine direction, Joshua and Israel cross the Jordan before the Ark of the Covenant (Josh. 3:7-17).
  - b. The cities of Canaan were grossly idolatrous and immoral. Hence, God uses Israel as an instrument of severe judgment (Lev. 18:19-30; Deut. 12:29-31).
  - c. The initial central, southern, and northern campaigns took approximately seven years. Essential to victory in these battles was the "obedience of faith" (Josh 21:43-22:6; Rom. 1:1-5).
11. The reign of the judges of Israel (Judges 1-Ruth 4).
  - a. Following the death of Joshua, gradual apostasy is paralleled with military failures and incomplete conquest (Judg. 1:1-3:7).
  - b. Six great invasions by foreign enemies were repulsed by the appointed judges, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson (Judg. 2:16). These leaders also settled disputes and maintained justice.

- c. Yet Israel spurned the judges, so that “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 2:17; 21:25). Even so, in the midst of this period of declension, there remained a righteous remnant such as Ruth describes.
12. The reign of King Saul (I Samuel 8-31).
    - a. Following the evil judgeships of Samuel’s sons, Israel’s desire for a king, as other worldly nations, is satisfied in Saul, despite Samuel’s warning (I Sam. 8:5-7, 10-22). Israel desired a good thing in a bad way (Deut. 17:14-20).
    - b. He commenced with humility, military attainment, and promising leadership (I Sam. 11:5-15), as David sadly acknowledged (II Sam. 1:1-27). He shunned revenge (I Sam. 11:12-13), and endeavored to keep the Mosaic law (I Sam. 14:31-34).
    - c. Nevertheless, Saul was a failure as a king in that he acted presumptuously as a priest (I Sam. 13:8-14), established a foolish vow (I Sam. 14:24-30), disobeyed the Lord (I Sam. 15:1-35), became jealous of David (I Sam. 18:5-9), and consulted with a witch (I Sam. 28:6-7).
  13. The reign of King David (I Samuel 16-I Kings 2).
    - a. As a man after God’s own heart (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), David was raised from a shepherd to a courtier under King Saul and to the throne of Israel as the nations greatest king (II Sam. 7:8-9).
    - b. He was a righteous man who yet sinned and found grace through faith (I Sam. 11; Ps. 32; 52; Rom. 4:6-8). Consequently, David had numerous enemies, even at close quarters (Ps. 41).
    - c. As a skilled commander, David unified Israel, extended the kingdom, and defeated numerous enemies (I Sam. 17-18; II Sam. 5:12; I Chron. 28:2-4). In addition to his political acumen, he was a man of culture who evidenced great musical and poetic talent (I Sam. 16:14-23; II Sam. 23:1).
    - d. Above all, David was a man anointed by God to foreshadow the promised Messiah (II Sam. 7:11-16; Luke 1:31-33; Rom. 1:1-5; Rev. 5:5).
  14. The reign of King Solomon (I Kings 1-11).
    - a. Solomon’s kingdom manifested wisdom with regard to the government of his people (I Kings 4:29-34), peace in relation to surrounding nations (I Kings 4:24-25), and glory with respect to wealth, architecture, and military might (I Kings 10:14-29).
    - b. His preeminent construction was the temple which took seven years and involved 180,000 laborers. The sanctuary was covered with gold costing \$700,000,000. Of similar magnificence was Solomon’s palace, which took 13 years to complete.

- c. However, Solomon's later apostasy resulted from his neglect of the commands of Deuteronomy 17:14-17. His harem was comprised of 700 wives and 300 concubines! His personal spiritual declension led to pagan worship and despotism. It is not surprising that the kingdom was divided at his death (I Kings 12).
15. The Assyrian captivity (II Kings 18).
  - a. Following the death of Solomon in 931 B.C., Israel was divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) under King Jeroboam and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) under King Rehoboam. Without exception, there followed for the Northern Kingdom, with its headquarters in Samaria, a succession of evil dynasties that inevitably led to God's judgment and deportation to Assyria in 722 B.C. The North was re-peopled with Chaldeans.
  - b. During this 200 year period, notable prophetic voices went unheeded including those of Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, and Micah. But Jonah gave Israel hope of success and prosperity (II Kings 14:25).
  - c. Jeroboam introduced a foreign priesthood, calf worship at Bethel and Dan so that the people might be kept from returning to Jerusalem. After Omri built Samaria, Ahab and Jezebel introduced Baal worship. Political, military, and agricultural prosperity, including friendship with the South, eventually ended in chaos and oblivion.
16. The Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 1-29, 34-39; Ezekiel 4-24).
  - a. From the commencement of King Rehoboam's reign over Judah in 931 B.C. until the Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C., the Southern Kingdom has eight good kings, notably Jehosaphet, Azariah, Hezekiah, Josiah, and twelve bad kings, especially Ahaz and Manasseh.
  - b. During the era of the divided kingdom, prolonged periods of spiritual revival under Asa, Jehosaphet, and Azariah, kept the principal blight of idolatry in check. However, during Judah's solitary kingdom period after the exile of Israel and following Hezekiah's reformation, the intense wickedness of Manasseh provoked God to declare His captivity judgment of the nation (II Kings 21:10-15), in spite of the prophetic warnings of Isaiah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.
  - c. In 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar first captured Jerusalem and extracted tribute. His initial deportation at this time included Daniel. However, Zedekiah revolted in 588 B.C. and sought aid from Egypt against Jeremiah's advice. Nebuchadnezzar then besieged Jerusalem for 2½ years, after which he leveled the city with its temple and blinded Zedekiah. The temple vessels and all but the poor were deported to Babylon in 586 B.C.
17. The restoration period (Ezra; Nehemiah; Haggai; Zechariah).
  - a. The first return from Babylon to Jerusalem involved a contingent of 50,000 exiles under Zerubbabel according to the decree of Cyrus in 537 B.C. (Ezra 1-6). This was in agreement with the prophetic record (Isa. 44:28; Jer. 25:11; 29:10; cf. Dan.

9:1-3). The purpose of this return was to rebuild the temple, though the work was halted for near fourteen years due to Samaritan opposition and selfish interests. However, the prophecies of Haggai (520 B.C.) and Zechariah (520 B.C.) inspired the people to recommence building until completion in 516 B.C.

- b. The second return from Babylon to Jerusalem involved a contingent of 2,000 exiles under Ezra according to the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7-10; Neh. 8-12). The purpose of this return was to establish covenant renewal, temple worship, and feast celebrations in the face of mixed marriages and neglect of the law.
  - c. The third return from Babylon to Jerusalem involved a small contingent under Nehemiah according to the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. (Neh. 1-7; 13). The purpose of this return was the rebuilding of the city wall, as well as the instituting of temple, Sabbath, and social reforms. In spite of great opposition the wall was completed in 52 days. The later reforms were contemporary with the prophecy of Malachi (c. 430 B.C.).
18. The intertestamental period (430 B.C.-30 A.D.).
- a. From the writing of Malachi at about 430 B.C. to the public ministry of Jesus Christ which commenced around 30 A.D., there is a 400 year silent period of revelation. After Malachi had prophesied regarding God's covenant love for a proud and dishonorable people and His call for repentance (Mal. 3:6-7), the reigning Persian world empire began to weaken as succeeding leaders were poisoned and various regions fragmented.
  - b. Alexander the Great came from the west like a swift he-goat (Dan. 8:5-8) with his small but highly skilled army of 40,000 men. At the Battle of Issus in 332 B.C. he conquered the much larger army of Darius III and so established the succeeding Greek world empire. His subsequent conquest of Palestine, Egypt, and the Persian capitals of Babylon and Susa, consolidated his realm before his death at the age of 32. His legacy of pervasive Greek culture continued through his partitioned kingdom under four of his succeeding generals, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander, and Lysimachus. Palestine suffered under recurring conflict between the empires of Ptolemy and Seleucus until Antiochus Ephimanes, the evil Assyrian Seleucid leader, assaulted Judaism with the most fiendish anti-semitism. Refer to I Maccabees 1 in the Apocrypha.
  - c. In 167 B.C. Mattathias, a Judean priest of Modein with his five sons, led a notable Jewish revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. Refer to I Maccabees 2 in the Apocrypha. Against overwhelming odds under the leadership of Judas at the death of his father, the Hasmonean kingdom was established. On December 25, 165 B.C., the temple was cleansed and rededicated for the worship of Jehovah. Recovering more of Palestine, the dynasty saw prosperity and religious reform. Rivalry between the sects of the Pharisees and the Sadducees weakened the unity of the kingdom until civil war was followed by subjugation to Rome.
  - d. In 63 B.C. the Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem and outraged the Jews by entering the Holy of Holies in the temple. He appointed Antipater, an

Idumean, over the affairs of Palestine, whose son Herod commenced his infamous reign in 37 B.C. His rule was one of terror, architectural glory, and a horrible death of a foul disease.

19. The life and atonement of Jesus Christ (Matthew-John).

a. His birth and early childhood.

Preexisting in eternity past (John 17:5), the Son of God was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:23) as absolute deity and true humanity (Phil. 1:5-8). As the son of Joseph and Mary, Jesus “kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

b. His public ministry.

(1) The early Judean ministry.

Acknowledged by John the Baptist (John 1:29), Jesus is anointed by the Spirit (Matt. 3:13-17), then tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1-11). Having chosen his first disciples (John 1:35-52), He cleanses the temple (John 2:13-22) and challenges Nicodemus (John 3:1-15). After baptizing at Jordan (John 3:22-36), Jesus departs northward for Galilee (John 4:1-4).

(2) The great Galilean ministry.

Rejected at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), hostility mounts in spite of numerous miraculous signs. Calling more disciples, controversy arises concerning the Sabbath (Matt. 12:9-14). Following the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), the Twelve are taught by parable, miracle, and personal assignment (Matt. 8-13). After the death of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-12), Jesus rejects the offer of kingship (John 6:14-15). Further unbelief in the face of signs such as the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-71) leads to wider ministry in the outlying areas of Phoenicia and Decapolis (Mark 7:24-37). Returning to Jerusalem for two feasts, further antagonism to Jesus leads to an attempted seizure (John 10:22-39).

(3) The final year ministry.

Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi is followed by Jesus’ initial announcement of his death, then the transfiguration (Matt. 16:13-17:8). Departing Galilee with a final word of woe (Matt. 11:20-30), Jesus travels towards Judea via Perea and Samaria. The Seventy are sent forth (Luke 10:1-24) while special emphasis is placed upon discipling the disciples concerning prayer (Luke 11:1-13), faithfulness (Luke 12:1-59), counting the cost (Luke 14:25-35), the right use of money (Luke 16:1-31), forgiveness and humility (Luke 17:1-10), marriage and divorce (Mark 10:1-16). Returning to Bethany, Lazarus is raised (John 11:1-44) following which the final months before passion week are spent in the Jericho region instructing the disciples. Again Jesus returns to Bethany just prior to his triumphal entry (Luke 19:11-28).

## c. His atonement ministry.

## (1) Passion week.

- (a) Friday – arrival at Bethany (Luke 19:28).
- (b) Saturday – Sabbath supper and Jesus' anointing at the home of Simon the leper (Mark 14:3-9).
- (c) Sunday – Triumphal Entry as Messiah (Matt. 21:1-11).
- (d) Monday – Returning to Jerusalem, the fig tree is cursed and the temple again cleansed (Mark 11:12-18).
- (e) Tuesday – The fig tree has withered. The challenge by the Sanhedrin is solemnly denounced. Greeks seek Jesus (Mark 11:19-12:40; John 12:20-36).
- (f) Wednesday – The Olivet discourse. Judas conspires with the chief priests (Matt. 24: 1-51; Luke 21:5-22:6).
- (g) Thursday – Eating the Passover, Jesus washes the disciples' feet. Judas withdraws as the betrayer. After the Lord's Supper is instituted, Jesus discourses before retiring to Gethsemane (Luke 22:7-46; John 13:1-18:1).

## (2) Death and resurrection.

- (a) The Friday religious trials before the Jewish rulers (Luke 22:47-71).
- (b) The Friday civil trials before the Roman rulers (Luke 23:1-25).
- (c) The crucifixion and burial. The first three hours on the cross are in the light; the second three hours are in darkness, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm (Mark 15:24-37). Following supernatural phenomena, Jesus is buried in a rich man's tomb (Matt. 27: 51-61).
- (d) The Saturday interval of desperation (Matt. 27:62-66).

## (3) Appearance and ascension.

- (a) The first appearances are to the women, Peter and John, the Emmaus disciples, and the upper room gathering (Luke 24:1-43).
- (b) The later appearances are again to the upper room gathering, the 500 brethren, the disciples in Galilee, and finally the apostles on Mt. Olivet (John 20:26-21:25; I Cor. 15:6; Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:9-12).

20. The Church founded at Pentecost (Acts 2).

- a. During the ten days after Jesus' ascension up till the day of Pentecost, the apostles prayerfully waited for "what the Father had promised" (Acts 1:4). During that period, a gathering of 120 believers witnessed the appointment of Matthias as the necessary replacement for Judas (Acts 1:12-26).
- b. The outpoured Holy Spirit inaugurates God's new agency in the world, the Church of Jesus Christ.
  - (1) This outpouring is now possible since Jesus Christ has gone to the Father having made atonement for sin (Matt. 16:16-18; John 7:38-39; 16:7-14).
  - (2) This outpouring signifies, by means of tongues of fire and the gift of unlearned languages, the charter members of the Church, namely the twelve apostles (Acts 2:3-4; Eph. 2:19-20).
  - (3) This outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh" ushers in the age of the universal gospel for Jew and Gentile (Matt. 24:14; Acts 1:8; 2:17, 39).

21. The missionary outreach to the Gentiles (Acts 9-28).

- a. The conversion of Paul (Acts 9).

At Paul's conversion, Ananias is advised by the Lord Jesus, "Go [to Paul], for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16; cf. Rom. 1:5; 11:13; 15:15-16; Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 3:1-8; I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 4:17). His ministry never neglected witness to the Jews.

- b. Peter at Caesarea (Acts 10).

While Peter remains as a pillar of the Jewish church in Jerusalem and an apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:9), yet it was necessary that his eyes be opened to God's saving purpose for the Gentiles. This required a graphic vision in triplicate (Acts 10:10-16) at Joppa resulting in encounter with the centurion Cornelius at Caesarea, his conversion, and heaven's blessing of the outpoured Holy Spirit (Acts 10:24-49)

- c. The Church at Antioch (Acts 11).

Persecution leads to the expansion of the Gentile church at Syrian Antioch to which Barnabas, "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24), is sent by the leaders at Jerusalem. Here he recruits Paul from Tarsus, the result being, "for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

- d. Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14).

Paul and Barnabas minister in southern Asia Minor. John Mark defects. Refer to subsequent greater detail concerning this journey.

e. The Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15).

Jewish Christians from Jerusalem assert in Antioch that “unless you are circumcised [convert to Judaism and observe the Law] according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1, 5). Paul and Barnabas head a delegation to Jerusalem where they confer with the other apostles. Peter testifies that, “we believe that we [Jews] are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [Gentiles] also are” (Acts 15:11). Consequently the delegation returns to Antioch with a letter essentially granting liberty to the Gentiles (Acts 15:22-29).

f. Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 15-18).

Having sharply separated from Barnabas, Paul recruits John Mark. Returning to Asia Minor, they are directed to Macedonia and Greece.

g. Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 18-21).

Again returning to Asia Minor, Paul has an extensive ministry at Ephesus. He also returns to Macedonia and Greece.

h. Paul’s final journey to Rome (Acts 22-28).

Assailed by the Jews in Jerusalem and tried in Caesarea, Paul appeals to Caesar. His captive voyage ends at Rome where he is eventually martyred.

22. The second coming of Jesus Christ Acts 1; II Thessalonians 1).

- a. According to the promise of the Son of God given to His disciples (John 14:3; II Pet. 3:3-4) and the announcement of the angelic witnesses (Acts 1:9-11), Jesus Christ shall return personally, bodily, visibly, gloriously, at the end of this age (Matt. 24:3, 29-31; Rev. 1:7).
- b. He shall return as a bridegroom for His bride, the Church (Rev. 19:6-7), as the gatherer of his elect (Matt. 24:31), as the reaper of wheat for his barn (Matt. 13:30).
- c. He shall return as the judge of the world (Rev. 19:11-16), as the banisher of the reprobate (Matt. 7:22-23), as the harvester of the tares for destruction by fire (Matt. 13:30).

**B.** The major characters of the Bible.

1. Adam (Genesis 1-3; I Corinthians 15; Romans 5). The root meaning of his name is “ground,” so that Adam is “the earthy one” (Gen. 2:7).
  - a. He is the original human being created in innocence (I Cor. 15:45).
  - b. He is the representative head of the human race (Rom. 5:12, 17-19).