

EFFECTIVE

BIBLE STUDY:

HOW TO

UNDERSTAND AND

APPLY GOD'S WORD

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Humanity's greatest need is to possess and understand God's Word. Without a rudimentary knowledge of Scripture one cannot be saved. For faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). We must receive with meekness the ingrafted word that is able to save our soul (Jas. 1:21).

Only from the Bible do we learn about God, Christ and the way of salvation. Only there do we learn of heaven and hell. In no other place can we learn what we must do to have our sins washed away. Yet to set about studying God's Word is a daunting task. My Bible has 1290 pages of small print. It has an abundance of names and words with which most are unfamiliar. Surrounding us are hundreds of churches and teachers each with different ideas about God's Will. They are shouting their faulty views for all to hear. Many people are confused by their clamor and some brought to despair thinking they will never be able to understand this sacred book.

Those who have dedicated themselves to preaching the gospel of Christ owe it to God, to themselves and to those they seek to teach to "handle aright the word of truth." To make sure that they have delivered God's message as he intended it, without deletion or addition.

The purpose of this book is to help the sincere student equip himself so he can properly interpret God's Word and then deliver it to those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness (Matt. 5:6).

The reader will notice that the chapters of this volume vary in length and depth. They were written over a period of several years and for different occasions. For this book, the author has compiled and arranged them in the order he deemed most useful for the reader.

John Waddey
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"To read and understand God's Word is a rewarding experience. To read and not understand is frustrating and discouraging.

*The following points will help you in your study. Ask yourself:
Who wrote the book? To whom did he write? Upon what subject did he write? When did he write? Why did he write?*

When these questions are correctly answered you will have a templet that will make the correct understanding of a given book possible."

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1.

PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY

The first step in meaningful Bible study is prayer, fervent prayer that God will open your mind and your heart to receive with meekness His implanted word that is able to save your soul (Jas. 1:21). Pray that He will help you rid your mind of every preconceived idea, of every prejudice that would hinder you from knowing His will. Pray that He will protect you from Satan who will try to snatch the truth you have learned from your heart (Matt. 13:19). Pray that your heart will be tender and eager to yield to the commands and exhortations you find in His Word; that you will gladly correct any mistaken prior view or misconduct. Pray that He will help you love his Word (Ps. 119:97) and long for it as the baby longs for his mother's milk (I Pet. 2:2). Then you will be ready to begin your study of the greatest book in the world.

2.

YOU AND GOD'S WORD

God has revealed his will to humanity in the pages of the book we call the Bible. To those who utilize it, the Bible provides wonderful words of life. To those who neglect to study the Bible, it is a sealed book that cannot benefit them in this life but will judge them in the last day (John 12:48). To profit from your Bible the following steps must be taken.

I. You must read your Bible. For many the Bible is an adornment on a table, a convenient place to keep family records or to store mementoes. For some it is a statement to others that you recognize it as an important book. None of these reasons will benefit the owner. Jesus asked a man, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). An unread Bible is as helpful as an unread map. Great and wise people have acknowledged the importance of Bible reading. Abraham Lincoln wrote, "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible." Gen. Douglas MacArthur said, "never a night goes by, be I ever so tired, but I read the Word of God before I go to bed."

II. You must interpret what you read. When the Jews returned from Babylon and rebuilt Jerusalem, they assembled and Ezra the scribe read in their hearing the words of God's law (Neh. 8:2-3). Then the Levites "Caused the people to understand the law...and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading" (Neh. 8:7-8). Many folks do read God's word on a regular basis, but never invest the necessary time and effort to understand it. To read without properly interpreting is like a person who eats but does not digest his food. To interpret a message we must discover the meanings of unfamiliar words, we must compare scripture with scripture, we must consider the context and the purpose of the author. This extra effort will yield the proper understanding of the message.

III. Having read and properly interpreted the portion of scripture before you, you must then determine what you are to do with the message. Are there commands to be obeyed? Are there examples to be followed? Are there warnings to heed? Are there things you must change in your life? To hear his words and not do them is to be like the foolish man who built his house on the sand (Matt. 7:26).

IV. With the knowledge you have attained you are now able to and must discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:14), truth and error, the faithful teacher and the false (I John 4:1). Those who fail to do so will most likely fall into sin and error. They will be victimized by those who would lead them astray. Remember even God's people can be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6) and the failure to use the knowledge God has given them.

Let us all resolve to read, interpret, apply and use God's precious Word all the days of our lives. With the psalmist let us sing, "Thy testimonies are wonderful; Therefore doth my soul keep them. The opening of thy words giveth light; It giveth understanding unto the simple" (119:129-139).

3.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

The Christian believes the Bible to be the inspired word of God. Our knowledge of our God is derived from the Bible; it is our holy guide for worshiping and serving Him. We live our daily life by its precepts; and it is our fountain of hope for a better life after this one.

Hordes of unbelieving sceptics daily work to discredit the Bible, to prove that it is a fraudulent, human production. They ridicule the Christian for believing the Bible to be a divine production. These liberals or modernists, as they are labeled, claim to preach Jesus, yet they argue that the Bible is a human production and almost totally unreliable. They will say that the Bible is inspired, but in reality they only mean that it bears the marks of literary genius as do the writings of Shakespeare, Milton and Browning. A common expression of their concept is "the Bible contains the word of God."

Our belief in the inspiration of the Bible is not dogmatic, i.e., without proof, but rather many proofs exist and because of them we believe. The Bible claims inspiration. In the Old Testament, we often read: "Thus saith the Lord;" "God spake;" "The Lord testified, saying;" "The Lord hath spoken it." There are 2,500 such phrases in the Old Testament. The New Testament abounds with similar statements, suggesting its inspiration. Paul writes "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16-17). Peter says "For no prophesy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:20-21). John penned the book of Revelation, yet he said "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev.2:11).

What is the nature of inspiration? Our word "inspiration" is translated from the Greek "*theopneustos*" (**Theos** means God; and **pneustos** means breathed). "The word implies an influence from without, producing effects which are beyond natural powers" (Miller). "The author has been overshadowed by a power outside himself." Inspiration then preserved the recipient from error in his teaching. It is because of its inspiration that we have full faith in the reliability and authority of the Bible. Truly it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway (Ps. 119:105). You owe it to yourself to be a diligent student of this wonderful inspired book which God has given us.

4.

MORE THOUGHTS ABOUT INSPIRATION

The Apostles were not reporters taking dictation. Rather, God's Holy Spirit guided them in writing their messages so that the end product was a perfect message without fault or flaw. Jesus told the Apostles, that he would send them the Holy Spirit. "When he the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). "He shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26). Peter explained that "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21). Paul explained his inspiration thusly, "which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:13). Later he wrote, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37). If we truly believe the Bible to be God's Word, then we will not refuse to accept what its divinely guided writers said. If they are wrong in some points, then we

cannot possibly trust them in others since we would not know if they were right or wrong. The entire New Testament is the will of Jesus Christ delivered to us through the hands of his specially chosen and Spirit-guided writers. It will judge us in the last day (John 12:47-48). Think about these things and accept God's word for all it claims to be.

5.

THINGS THAT KEEP US FROM UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE ALIKE

It has long troubled people that not everyone sees the Bible alike. The Bible's message is one. It is a universal message for all of humanity. Correctly understood, it will yield the same lessons for all men everywhere. But the fact remains that there are great differences in how people understand the Bible. Why?

* Everyone comes to the Bible from his family's religious background. He may have been raised in a Catholic or a Baptist home. It may have been a Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist family. He may have been raised in a family of unbelievers who mocked and ridiculed the Bible. If he is fortunate, he was raised in a godly Christian home. These past impressions will be with him as he opens God's book. They will shape his thinking and the meanings he attaches to certain words and concepts. In many cases they will be obstacles he must overcome.

* Everyone comes to the Bible with some prior religious teaching. This will be more than just having a Catholic or Muslim family. He might have attended a particular kind of church or received instruction in a non-Christian religion. This may have been received from listening to radio or television teaching, from literature he has read or in a school where he was educated. The ideas he first received will be either true, false or a blend of the two. Such fallacious ideas must be overcome before he will correctly understand God's Word.

* Everyone lives in a particular cultural/religious environment. A man raised in China will be greatly influenced by the government's militant atheism and the Buddhism of his society. The person raised in India will be exposed to Hinduism from his earliest days. In Saudi Arabia the culture and religion will be Islamic. In Poland it will be Catholic and in Eastern Europe, the Orthodox faith. Whatever his culture may be, it will greatly influence his religious thoughts and values. It will be as though he reads the Bible through glasses tinted by his culture. This can be a hinderance.

* A person's education will affect the way he understands the Bible. The man with little or no education will have a difficult time understanding any serious literature, including the Bible. The person with a great deal of higher education may be filled with pride and thus find it hard to take the Bible seriously. The person who does not read or comprehend well will have a difficult time correctly understanding the Scripture. Some education is tainted with skepticism and is a channel for instilling belief in godless evolution. The recipient of such education will have a hard time accepting much that he reads in the Bible.

* Without a logical approach to one's reading one will fail to understand the Bible. Inspired writers set forth their facts and information. From them they drew their conclusions. In the New Testament this is most evident in the writings of Paul. The conclusion of a proposition may not be reached until the entire chapter has been read. We must be able to glean related information from other books and verses if we are to understand the Book.

* The prior belief and attitude the student holds regarding the Bible will influence his understanding. If he sees it only as a collection of myths and legends he will not understand it. If he thinks of it only as a love-letter from God he will miss its meaning. If he sees it only as a book of maxims and good advice he will fail to grasp its message.

* Without a proper method of study one cannot understand the Bible as God intended. Reading only one's favorite passage will leave a person with an incomplete view of the Bible. Skipping from page to page will not yield a meaningful understanding. Starting with the most difficult books will not result in correct knowledge. Rushing through the text without serious study cannot produce understanding. Failing to understand the difference in the Old and New Covenants will lead to confusion. Not recognizing and understanding the figurative and symbolic language of the sacred writers will confound the readers efforts.

* Without diligent study one will never understand the Bible. This is the book of God. It is humanity's greatest literary treasure. It was 1600 years or so in making. It cannot be understood by skimming or speed reading. Only sustained,

serious study and research will yield the desired results of Bible knowledge.

* To understand the Bible there must be a **willingness to accept that which is found therein**. Many folks have a difficult time accepting that which is new and different to them. Things that challenge their long-held views are rejected. The Bible speaks of the converts in Berea who received Paul's teaching with all readiness of mind (Acts 17:11). When a new truth is found the old ideas that are contrary to that must be discarded. This some find difficult to do.

None of these disabilities are permanent or indelible. They must and can be overcome. Across the ages, millions have successfully done so. Let every person who wants to live in heaven search the Scriptures daily. Let him apply himself with diligence to the wonderful words of inspiration that are able to save his soul (Jas. 1:21). They will yield to him the peaceable fruits of salvation.

6.

SOME FAULTY APPROACHES TO BIBLE STUDY

Many people read the Bible to no profit. Their failure comes from the use of a faulty method or from a faulty motive. Some of these we consider below.

* Some read Scripture **without expecting to understand it**. They labor under the impression that the Bible is a great mystery that cannot be understood. All their reading is from a sense of duty, but produces nothing of value.

* Some approach the Bible as a **mystical document**, filled with secrets and hidden meanings. If it is to be understood at all one must have illumination from the Holy Spirit. Such students either wait until the Spirit reveals something to them, or else they read without expecting to fathom it unless God should choose to lay it on their heart. They tend to confuse their dreams, their wants or their ideas with the voice of God. We see this demonstrated in the wild speculations of the many teachers who claim they have discovered hidden prophecies in the Bible.

* Some mistakenly think that the correct meaning of any particular scripture that they *feel*, at the moment they are reading, is God's will. We call this the **subjective approach**. The problem is every subjective reader will arrive at different conclusions with each thinking his is the correct understanding. They fail to understand that the Bible is an objective standard with one meaning for all who properly read and understand it.

* Some read the Bible **looking for verses that seem to verify the beliefs and convictions they already hold**. To them the Bible is used to validate and prove what they assume to be true. They study not to learn God's word or will but to back up their own word.

* Others read the Bible **hoping to discover some fact or scrap of information that no one else has found or known**. They have no real desire to understand a particular book, chapter or verse. They just want to find the oddity which they can then use to impress others.

* Some go to the Bible **like a person shopping at the supermarket**. As they pour over its pages, they accept and take away only such truths that please them. The Bible is not their authority or guide. It is for their convenience.

* Some read the Bible **through lenses tinted by their race, culture, their political views, their religion or philosophy**. One or more of these things taints their understanding and leaves them with a faulty view of God's Word and will.

* Some attempt to understand a book, a chapter or a verse **without consideration of the context**. The context involves such things as the general theme of the book, or chapter and the specific purpose of the writer in the surrounding verses. There is the cultural context which involves such things as the period of time, nationally, the environment, the geographical setting, the problems being discussed. Out of its proper context, a verse can easily be made to mean something other than what its author had in mind.

* Some fail to properly understand the Word of God because of reading the Bible in a manner that is **too literalistic**. They fail to understand that much of the Bible is written in poetic style. It abounds with figures of speech and symbols that must be taken into consideration.

* Others fail to understand that different portions of the Bible are written in **different literary styles**. Genesis is history.

Exodus through Deuteronomy contain much statutory law. Job and Psalms are poetry. Proverbs is wisdom literature. All of the prophets save Jonah are written in poetic style. The Gospels are biographical while Acts is History. There are 21 epistles or letters to churches and individuals. Each genre is interpreted differently. To read poetry as law is to misunderstand it.

* Some read the Bible to find some flaw or error by which to discredit it. Others read the Bible hoping to justify themselves or to find an excuse for their sins.

* Some are under the impression that the interpretation of the Bible is the province of reverend "holy men." This grew up first in Catholicism and still exists in much of Protestantism. It discourages folks from reading and studying independently. It bestows great power and influence on preachers who seldom discourage this method.

* Because they are seeking to please men (Gal. 1:10), some fail to see the true meaning of a particular verse. This is especially true of those that have to do with sin.

* Some folks misinterpret God's Word as they seek to make a name for themselves. They thirst for recognition as the first or the only person to discover the meaning of some verse.

* Many have wrested bible verses in an effort to make them harmonize with the latest claims of science. The Christian believes the Bible, properly interpreted, is right regardless of the ever-changing claims of scientists. Remember most modern scientists are skeptics and many are atheists.

To discover the proper meaning of God's Word demands serious effort and discipline on the part of a student. A lazy or careless reader will never arrive at a full understanding of Scripture. It will often result in misunderstanding and misapplication of verses.

Not every verse misunderstood poses a spiritual danger, but when we wrest vital truths and make them teach error rather than what God intended we do so to our own destruction (II Pet. 3:16).

In this study we will be learning a proper way to arrive at a correct understanding of God's Word.

* The author is indebted to D. R. Dungan and his fine book, *Hermeneutics*, for the idea of this lesson.

7.

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

The Bible says, "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Paul says that we should "understand what the will of the Lord is." Yet there is great confusion about the Bible's meaning. Someone says, "If the learned doctors cannot agree, how can we, the unenlightened laymen, hope to agree? How can we hope to understand?" Another says, "The Bible means one thing to me, another to you, we will just have to disagree." Others, in disgust, turn away and reject the Bible.

Consequence of Denying We Can Understand the Bible Alike

* The Bible claims to be a revelation of God's will to man (Eph. 3:3). If men cannot come to a mutual understanding of it, then God failed in his attempt to reveal his will to man. Thus He would be subject to error and weakness and not all powerful and divine.

* If the impossibility lies in man's inability to understand the Bible; then we have God, the creator of man, demanding unity of faith of us when we are not capable of rendering it. This would make God unjust and unmerciful: a slanderous charge against His character.

* If we cannot understand the Bible alike, no one can be sure he understands it at all. Thus mankind is left without any certain guide, lost without chart or compass, on a storm-tossed sea of doubt and confusion, temptation and sin. Man cannot successfully direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23), he cannot be 100% sure of what is right and wrong, he cannot save himself (Rom. 3:23). If this is true we are of all creatures most miserable. How can we bear to live? How dare we to die?

* If the Bible cannot be understood, then God is guilty of giving to the world a useless Book that has been one of the chief sources of disagreement among the human family.

* If the Bible cannot be understood, then men are greater than God. For many men have written instruction manuals, rule books and text books and are understood by all who study them with diligence; and they are understood alike.

We Can Understand the Bible—and We Can Understand it Alike

Because the Bible is a Book made to be understood. It is a Divine book given to man by his Creator. God guided the pen of each writer so that they wrote infallible truth. (II Tim. 3:16-17) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God...." It claims itself to be a revelation, i.e., a making known. (Eph. 3:3). Different people have read it and understood it alike. Independent Christians in Taiwan, Norway, Russia, India, Ethiopia and Spain have read the Bible to the same understanding as the Church of Christ in this country.

Man is capable of comprehending it. His mind can be educated to understand it just as he can by study understand a text book on algebra, rules of a game or regulations of an organization. The Bible itself gives testimony to the point that it can be understood. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). If any man willeth to do His will he shall know of the teaching. (John 7:17) "...every one that hath heard from the father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17). "The entrance of thy word giveth light; It giveth understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130). "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). God expects all Christians to study diligently, carefully and prayerfully that we all might speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among us.

The Bible can be understood by you and by me; by any honest soul willing to lay aside all prejudice and previous religious indoctrination. We must desire to know God's will and obey it regardless of what any man thinks or says. We must be willing to recognize Jesus as the one in the world today with all authority (Matt. 28:18). We can understand the Bible alike and be united in Christian fellowship. It is not what the Bible teaches that divides us, it is what the Bible does not teach. It is the traditions, creeds and religious teachings created in the minds of men that keep us apart. Won't you cast them aside as filthy garments and build your house on the never failing Scriptures?

8.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR BIBLE

I. Your Bible is Inspired of God (II Tim. 3:16-17).

- A. This means the words originated from the mind and mouth of God (II Sam. 23:2).
- B. It is not human in origin and content.
- C. It is authoritative. We must not go "beyond what is written" (I Cor. 4:6).
- D. It is infallible, i.e., in its original state, without mistakes or flaws. Jesus said, "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).
- E. It is of immense and eternal value.
- F. It is unique in that there is not another book in the world that is its equal.

II. It Consists of Two Distinct But Related Covenants.

- A. There is an Old and a New Covenant (Heb. 8:7-8).
- B. The Old Covenant was written primarily for the Hebrew People:
 - 1. Deut. 5:1-3.
- C. The New Covenant has superseded the Old.
 - 1. Heb. 8:7-13.
 - 2. The Old Covenant is not our guide for salvation, worship and life (Rom. 7:4).
- D. Although the Old Covenant is no longer binding on us, it is of great value for our study and learning (Rom. 15:4).

III. The Old Testament is a Collection of 39 Separate But Related Books.

- A. Books of Law (Jews called it "The Torah").
 - 1. **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy**
 - 2. These were written by Moses (John 1:17).
 - 3. **Genesis** is a history of the beginning of all things.
 - 4. **Exodus** tells of the exodus of Israel from Egypt.
 - 5. **Numbers** tells the history of Israel in the wilderness.
 - 6. **Deuteronomy** is a recapitulation or retelling of the Exodus story.
- B. Books of Israel's History:
 - 1. **Joshua** tells of the invasion, capture and settlement of Canaan.
 - 2. **Judges** tells the history of early Israel in Canaan and her dark ages of failure.
 - 3. **Ruth** is a short historical biography essential to establish the royal lineage of the coming Christ.

4. **I & II Samuel** relates the life, work and leadership of Samuel the Prophet. It includes the records of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David.

5. **I & II Kings** contain the history of the later kings of the Hebrews.

a. **I Kings** relates the life and reign of King Solomon and the division of the nation at his death.

b. **II Kings** tells the history of the divided kingdom to its fall at the hands of King Nebuchanezzar of Babylon.

6. **I & II Chronicles** records the spiritual and religious history of the Hebrew nation. They cover the same period of history as II Samuel.

a. **II Chronicles** covers the same period of history as that of I & II Kings. It deals only with the history of the southern Kingdom of Judah.

7. **Ezra** deals with the restoration of the Hebrew people from Babylonian Captivity. It relates their reestablishment in their ancestral homeland and the restoring of their temple and worship.

8. **Nehemiah** deals primarily with the rebuilding of the ruined city of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity.

9. **Esther** is an historical account of how the Hebrew people were saved from extermination by a Jewish woman named Esther, who had risen to be a queen in Persia.

C. Books of Poetry:

1. **Job**. This book explores the problem of human suffering, particularly, why do righteous people suffer?

2. **Psalms** contains 150 hymns. It is the hymnal of Israel's worship. The psalms were written by David and others.

3. **Proverbs** contains sage advice for practical godliness and happiness. It was written by Solomon.

4. **Ecclesiastes** is a philosophical study based on Solomon's search for meaning, purpose and happiness in life.

5. **Song of Solomon** is a song celebrating the beauty and happiness of married love. It was written by Solomon.

D. Books of Prophecy:

Prophets were God's spokesmen, preachers to the Hebrew people. They always preached; sometimes they predicted future events.

1. **The Major Prophets**. They are called major because they wrote the larger books of prophecy and their careers lasted for long periods of time and were more illustrious.

a. **Isaiah**, who preached to the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the crisis of the Assyrian invasion, ca. 750-698 B.C. He made remarkable predictions about Christ.

b. **Jeremiah**, who preached to the Southern Kingdom during the crisis of the Babylonian invasion and overthrow of Judah, ca. 628-587 B.C. He predicted the New Covenant of

Christ.

c. **Lamentations**, a poetic piece written by Jeremiah, bemoaning the fall of Jerusalem to the invading Babylonians.

d. **Ezekiel**, who preached among the captive Hebrews in Babylon, ca. 597-585 B. C. His message was that the Jerusalem and her temple were doomed to destruction.

e. **Daniel**, who worked among the Hebrews while in captivity to the Babylonians and Persians, ca. 606-536 B.C. He predicted the coming kingdom of Messiah.

2. **The Minor Prophets**: so called because their books are brief in content and they had shorter, less illustrious ministries. They are no less inspired or valuable than the Major Prophets.

a. **Hosea**, who served among the people of the Northern Kingdom, c.a. 750-725. The tragedy of his domestic life reflected the unfaithfulness of the Hebrews to Jehovah.

b. **Joel**, who preached among the people of Judah, c.a. 830 B. C. He predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ.

c. **Amos**, who preached to the people of Samaria, ca.965-950 B.C. He predicted that David's dynasty would be restored when Messiah came.

d. **Obadiah**, who preached among the people of Judah c.a. 820-805 B.C. He condemned the evils of the nation of Edom.

e. **Jonah**, a prophet of the Northern Kingdom of Israel who was sent to deliver God's warning of judgment to Nineveh, capital of the aggressor nation, Assyria, ca. 785-745.

f. **Micah**, who preached to the people of Judah c.a. 738-698. He predicted the place of Messiah's birth.

g. **Nahum**, who predicted the doom of Nineveh, c.a. 663-612 B.C.

h. **Habakkuk**, who preached in Judah in ca. 609 B.C. He could not understand how God could allow the idolatrous Babylonians to overrun the Hebrews.

i. **Zephaniah**, who preached in Judah ca. 625 B. C. He predicted judgments on Judah and her neighbors at the hands of Babylon.

j. **Haggai**, who preached in Judah among the returned exiles from Babylonian Captivity, c.a. 520 B. C.

k. **Zechariah**, who preached among the Hebrews who returned from Babylon, encouraging them in rebuilding the temple of God, ca. 520 B. C. He predicted Christ's reign as both priest and king over God's kingdom.

l. **Malachi**, who preached among the Hebrews in Judah c.a. 450-425 B. C. He predicted the coming of John the Baptist and Messiah.

IV. The New Testament of Jesus is a Collection of 27 Books.

It is the standard for the faith worship and practice of Christianity. (Compare Matt. 28:20).

A. The Gospels: They are short biographies of Jesus.

1. **Matthew, Mark and Luke** are called **synoptics** because they "see things alike", i.e., they relate the same story in the same basic way.

a. **Matthew**, who wrote for the Jews, presenting Jesus as their promised messianic king.

b. **Mark**, who wrote for the Romans, presenting Jesus as the man of action.

c. **Luke**, who wrote for the Greeks, stressing that Jesus was the perfect or ideal man.

2. **John**, who wrote to show the divine and spiritual side of Christ's life and ministry.

B. History: **The Acts of the Apostles** was written by Luke and records the founding and early history of the church as it spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

C. The Epistles: These are letters written by the Apostles of Christ to further explain the Christian faith, warn against heresies and encourage and strengthen the Christians.

1. **Paul's Epistles:**

a. **Romans** is the premier book of Christian doctrine. It stresses how we may be made righteous before God.

b. **I Corinthians** records how the Apostles dealt with the many problems that confronted the early Gentile Christians.

c. **II Corinthians** is a defence of Paul against his enemies.

d. **Galatians** was written to Gentile Christians explaining that they are free from the obligations of Judaism and Moses Law.

e. **Ephesians** stresses the glory of the church of Christ.

f. **Philippians** stresses the joy we have in Christ.

g. **I Thessalonians** is a treatise declaring the true teaching about the second coming of Christ.

h. **II Thessalonians** warns against false teachings regarding Christ's coming.

i. **I Timothy** contains instructions to a young preacher about his work and duties.

j. **II Timothy** is Paul's final letter before his execution. He exhorts his young friend to faithfulness.

k. **Titus** is a letter to a young preacher dealing with church organization.

l. **Philemon** is a personal letter by Paul on behalf of a run-away slave he had converted.

2. **General Epistles:** so called because they were not written to a specific congregation.

- a. **Hebrews** is a doctrinal treatise showing the Hebrew Christians that Christ and his New Covenant have superseded the Old Covenant of Judaism. The author is unknown.
- b. **James** is a message of practical Christianity by James the brother of Jesus.
- c. **I Peter** was written to encourage Christians to faithfulness in the face of persecution.
- d. **II Peter** is a warning against moral corruption and apostasy.
- e. **I John** was written by the Apostle John who stresses the importance of walking in fellowship with Christ.
- f. **II John** is a personal note written to a Christian lady warning her against opening her home to false teachers.
- g. **III John** is a personal note to Gaius commending his generous support of missionaries.
- h. **Jude** warns against apostate teachers who would despoil lives and churches.

3. **Prophecy: The Book of Revelation** depicts the struggle between Christ and his church and the pagan Roman Empire. It predicts the ultimate victory of the Cause of Christ.

9.

USEFUL TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

To understand the Bible it is obvious that one must be able to read. To read with comprehension we must understand the meaning of the words we encounter.

* To understand the words of our Bible we need a **good dictionary** of the language in which we are reading. It is not enough to own a dictionary, the serious student must make it his practice to look up the meaning of every unknown word he encounters in his Bible reading.

* To learn what we need to know about persons, places and things mentioned in the Bible we need a **good Bible dictionary**. In the English language the standard is **Smith's Bible Dictionary**. There are half a dozen excellent Bible dictionaries available. A Bible dictionary will be of tremendous help to the serious student.

* Since many words used in our Bible have special definitions not always found in a regular dictionary, the student would be greatly helped if he could have a copy of **Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words**.

* To be able to find needed verses in the Bible, the student must have a **concordance**. For English readers the standard for generations has been **Cruden's Concordance**. **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible** not only has the words of the Bible, it has an abbreviated dictionary which provides the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew terms used by the original writers. A **topical concordance** groups together verses on specific subjects and is thus very helpful in researching subjects and preparing sermons.

* There are many **translations of the Bible** into the English language. While the student will have a bible from which he studies and preaches, he will be blest to have in his possession other translations of God's Word. By comparing them, they will often help him discover the meaning of obscure and difficult passages or words of the sacred text.

HOW TO STUDY GOD'S WORD

Most would agree that Bible study is a good thing in which all should engage. Unfortunately, many people find it difficult to develop and maintain a program of Bible study. The following suggestions will be helpful to anyone who wants to become a serious student of Holy Scripture:

- * First we must have **determination** to learn God's Word. Wishing and hoping will not suffice. With your mind and will commit yourself to the task.
- * We should strive for **daily** periods of study. A hit and miss program seldom bears much fruit. But a regular schedule of study will soon yield good fruit of growing knowledge. Soon the habit will be set and you will look forward to your time for study.
- * There must be **dedication** to your task. Scripture study is a holy pursuit. You are seeking to know God, to understand his will and to be more like him. A heart dedicated to God will quickly and eagerly absorb the truths learned. Satan will not easily discourage you from your pursuit.
- * To succeed in study one must have a **design** or a plan. This is true of any course of study on any subject. Every school teacher is expected to have a daily study plan. Every text book is written with a design in mind. To randomly pick a page of the Bible to read will yield little useful knowledge. But to study a topic, or a particular book of the Bible will be productive.
- * In Bible study there should be a spirit of **devotion**. In prayer we talk to God. Through the pages of his word, he speaks to us. Study should always be coupled with prayer for God's help in grasping the meaning he intends for us and for the strength to apply the lessons to our life.
- * A successful student will be a **diligent** worker. Remember Paul's admonition, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, ... handling aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Study is hard work but the rewards are worth all the effort.
- * A wise person will study **deeply**. He will not be content to skim the surface. He will want to plumb the depths of a given subject, to follow a theme to its proper conclusion. The ancient Persians said, "Drink deeply of the Perian springs (the source of wisdom) or not at all for a little knowledge is a dangerous thing."
- * A good student will use **divers** tools for his work. To understand the Bible you will need to consult additional works such as dictionaries, concordances and commentaries. Don't hesitate to use any tool that helps you better understand God's word.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

Do you understand your Bible when you read it? To be able to read and understand the Scripture is the greatest need of modern man. The following suggestions will help us to that end:

1. **Read it often.** "Blessed is the man that delights in the law of Jehovah and meditates on it day and night" (Ps. 1:2).
2. **Read it slowly.** "Every one that is hasty hasteth only to want" (Prov. 21:5).
3. **Read it regularly.** "These words, which I command thee...shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6-7).
4. **Read it earnestly.** "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (Heb. 2:1).
5. **Read it persistently.** "Give heed to reading...Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest...Continue in these things" (I Tim. 4:13-16).
6. **Read the words by finding out their meaning...use a dictionary.**
7. **Read the thought by grasping the author's meaning.** The inspired writers "combined spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:13).
8. **Read it progressively in its natural order and sequence.**
9. **Read it naturally as you would any other book, ancient or modern.**
10. **Read but a little at a time, fixing each thought in your mind until you comprehend it and make it yours.** "Therefore, shall the word of Jehovah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line; line upon line; here a little, there a little" (Is. 28:13).
11. **Read with a prayerful heart, a teachable mind and a broken and contrite spirit.** "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word" (Is. 66:2).
12. **Read it remembering that dangerous errors grow out of imperfect and one-sided views of things.** "Take heed how ye hear" (Luke 8:18). We must seek "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).
13. **Read each passage as if it was the only one and then read it again in relation to the stupendous whole.** Some who take a verse from its setting, or fail to consult the whole composite of teaching on the subject, "Wrest the scriptures unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16). Taking separate verses by themselves, the Bible can be forced to teach most anything.
14. **Read, remembering that all truth is harmonious and that God being its author, will at last make it plain to you,** "If any man willeth to do His will, He shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God..." (John 7:17).
15. **Read asking, Who wrote this? When did he write? Why did he write? To whom did he write?**
16. **Read it, remembering there are two testaments; an old and a new (Heb. 8:6,13).** We must always rightly divide the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). The Old is the New Testament concealed. The New is the Old Testament revealed.
17. **Read it, not to store your mind with "arguments" or to teach others, but to feed yourself; to enlighten yourself in the ways of God.** As young Samuel, say, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth" (I Sam. 3:9).
18. **Read it, believing that the promises of God are not for some other people or age, but for you.** Bring yourself face to face with God and his truth. "he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises..." (II Pet. 1:4).

19. **Read it, comparing scripture with scripture.** Search the scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11).
20. **Read it, resisting the devil,** remembering he wants to snatch the word out of your heart! (Jas. 4:7; Matt. 13:19).
21. **Read it forcing your faith out on the promises of God.** We must "walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7).
22. **Read it, endeavoring to see with the eyes of those who took part in or witnessed the scenes portrayed.** Remember these things were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4).
23. **Read it, determined to obey from the heart...**from that moment on, all you have learned. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves" (Jas. 1:22).

(The above suggestions were set forth by Ashley Johnson in his book, **Ten Lessons in How to Read, How to Understand, and How to Remember the Bible**, printed in 1903. To these I added the last and the scripture thoughts included.)

12.

STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED

It is the Christian's duty and privilege to study the sacred writings. By such study, he will inform himself, please Jehovah and prepare himself to teach his fellow man. A method of study is essential to profitable study. The following suggestions are taken from the book, **Discovering the Bible: I**

1. Look for the relation of the passage to its context.
2. Look for its meaning in its historical and general setting.
3. Translate it into terms of ordinary speech and find its central point.
4. Place it in the context of the Christian message as a whole.
5. What specific message is it meant to convey?
6. Look for the important and difficult words (difficult because we do not understand them or because we have heard them so often that they have lost their meaning for us).
7. What is their contemporary meaning?
8. Note the relevance of the passage for us personally, and as a church.
9. How does it affect what we believe and what we do?

Another helpful list of study guidelines borrowed from Grace Saxe. Her suggestions are for dealing with the study of the Bible by chapters.

1. What is the principle subject of this chapter?
2. What is the leading lesson of this chapter?
3. Which is the most important verse in this chapter?
4. Who are the principle persons in this chapter?
5. What does the chapter teach concerning Christ?
6. Is there, in this chapter, any example for me to follow?
7. Is there, in this chapter, any error for me to avoid?

8. Is there, in this chapter, any duty for me to perform?
9. Is there, in this chapter, any promise for me to claim?
10. Is there, in this chapter, any prayer for me to echo? 2

There are some personal qualifications that will aid us in our search for divine knowledge. We take these from D.R. Dungan's great text book, **Hermeneutics**: 3

1. Good Common Sense is the first requisite to understanding the Bible. "The more the student will study plain questions, and the more he may know men as they are, the more likely will he be able to understand the word of God."
2. Faith in the Inspiration of the Scriptures will help the student to understand them. It prompts the most potent and thorough investigation. "The unbeliever reads it out of mere curiosity, or that he may find some fault... He is not in sympathy with it and is in no way prepared to understand it."
3. Mental industry is essential to any proper investigation. "There is no essential difference between the study of the Scriptures and the study of any other subject, respecting the mental outlay necessary to success. An occasional hour or lesson may accomplish something toward learning, but not much."
4. A desire to know and do the truth is necessary. There must be a good and honest heart (Luke 8:15). A man must will to do His will (John 7:17).
5. Spiritual purity is a large factor in Biblical interpretation. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). "How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God, ye seek not" (John 5:44). "The natural man receiveth not the things of God: for they are foolishness unto him..." (I Cor. 2:14).
6. A correct translation will help towards a reliable exegesis. Since Dungan's day we have the great **American Standard Version** of 1901 and its more recent revision. All students would do themselves a favor to make it their study Bible.
7. A general and thorough education is of great value in the interpretation of the Word of God. "There is a mental drill in the attainment of knowledge that will greatly assist in preparing for the effort necessary to a full and complete investigation of the Scriptures." "A good knowledge of the lands of the Bible will render many things plain which, without such knowledge would be dark."
8. A knowledge of the original languages in which the Scriptures were written would be of great assistance in getting an accurate and intimate acquaintance with the Bible.
9. We should expect to understand the Bible, otherwise all our efforts would be little more than a pious waste of time. This principle is true in all areas of study, how much more so in the study of the Scripture.
10. The blessing of God is needed, and may be had for the asking. "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not" (Jas. 1:5).

Hopefully all these ideas will be helpful as God's children study to seek God's approval.

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1. de Dietrich, Suzanne, **Discovering the Bible**, Nashville Source Publishers, 1953.
 2. Smith, Wilbur, **Profitable Bible Study**, Natick, Mass., W.A. Wilde Co., 1963.
 3. Dungan, D. R., **Hermeneutics**, Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Co. (no date)

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Man's greatest need is knowledge of God's truth; which if known, can make us free from sin, superstition and ignorance (John 8:32). One of man's greatest problems is understanding that Sacred Volume, the Bible. It was the author's privilege for many years to teach a course in Hermeneutics for ministerial students. The repeated study of this material has been as rewarding to the teacher as to the students. Perhaps some of the lessons learned will be interesting to and beneficial for other students also.

The word "hermeneutics" means the science of interpretation. The "morning star of the reformation," John Wycliffe (1324-1384), set forth the following maxims in poetic form to facilitate their retention:

"It shall greatly help ye to
understand Scripture,

If thou mark

Not only what is spoken or written,

But of whom,

And to whom,

With what words,

At what time,

Where,

To what intent,

With what circumstances,

Considering what goeth before

And what followeth." 1

These eight simple rules would work wonders in solving the reigning confusion in the religious world about the meaning of God's Word. It would do the same in many a Bible class or conversation of Christians.

In his book **Protestant Biblical Interpretation**, Bernard Ramm offers the following principles for a proper understanding of the Word of God:

1. The Bible is to be interpreted in view of the fact that it is an accommodation of divine truth to the human mind.
2. Realize that the Bible is progressively unfolded, becoming more clear as it nears the completion.
3. Interpretation must keep a sound historical basis.
4. We must discover the meaning from the passage, not attribute one to it in advance.
5. Give preference to the clearest and most evident interpretation of a passage.
6. Statements should not be taken to have more than one meaning unless very strong reasons warrant this.

7. Interpretation is one; application may be manifold.
8. Interpret the Bible harmonistically.
9. Everything essential in Scripture is clearly revealed.
10. Interpretations must square with the original languages, i.e., Hebrew and Greek.
11. Difficulty, or even ignorance as to the meaning of some passages must be admitted.
12. Obscure passages must not take precedence in interpretation over clear passages.
13. Interpretations should be checked, when possible, by secular studies (i.e., archaeology, history) and by the great efforts of Bible scholars in the past.
14. Each of the two Testaments must be searched for assistance in understanding the other. 2

May these lessons assist us as we follow the example of the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily to see if their teacher had correctly represented God (Acts 17:11).

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1. Smith, Wilbur, M., **Profitable Bible Study**, Natick, Mass. W.A. Wilde Co., 1963
 2. Ramm, Bernard, **Protestant Biblical Interpretation**, Boston, Mass. W.A. Wilde, 1950

14.

PROFITABLE BIBLE STUDY

Bible study has many advantages, a few of which we will notice in this lesson. Perhaps our focusing on these benefits will motivate our readers to be more diligent in their study of the Sacred Volume.

Bible Study will Make Us Aware of Our Sin and Convict Us

An old system for the effective treatment of disease called for the following steps:

1. Proper diagnosis of the trouble;
2. Removal of the cause of the illness;
3. Carefully prescribed diet;
4. Adequate program of exercise.

The Word of God when diligently studied and obeyed will accomplish these four things for us, thus ensuring our spiritual

health.

The Word is "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). *Kritikos*, translated discern, means to diagnose. James likens God's Word to a mirror designed to help us see ourselves as we truly are (Jas. 1:23-24). If we confess our sins, God is righteous to forgive us (I John 1:9). Confess is from the Greek *omolegeo* which means "to say the same thing as when two people disagree, but finally one is convinced that he is wrong and admits the same." Thus when we confess our sins, we are admitting and agreeing that the word is right when it describes us. Paul affirms that the inspired word is "profitable for reproof, for correction... that (we) may be complete..." (II Tim. 3:16). Without God's revealed truth, we would never have known our sins nor the harm they do unto us (Rom. 7:7).

The poet Izaak Walton praised the Scripture in the following lines:

Every hour
I read you kills a sin,
Or lets a virtue in
To fight against it.

The great reformer, John Calvin, observed:

"No human writings, however sacredly composed, are at all capable of affecting us in a similar way... the Sacred Volume... will so affect you, so pierce your heart, so work its way into your very marrow... making it manifest that in the Sacred Volume there is a truth divine, something that makes it superior to all the gifts and graces attainable by man."

The Scripture Cleanses Us From the Pollution of Sin

It tells us if we will confess our sins, God will cleanse us (I John 1:9). The psalmist asked, "wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?" The answer is revealed, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119:9). The Savior told his disciples, "Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Every soul which enters the church is cleansed by the washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:25-26).

The Divine Word Imparts Strength to Its Reader

God's message is like energy-providing food for our inner man. When sin weakens us, the Scripture supplies us with the strength needed to overcome. "Man," said Jesus, "shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Job said, "I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Paul commended the Ephesian elders to "...the word of his grace which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32). Alexander MaClaren said, "If the Word of God dwells in your heart, the fangs are taken out of the serpent."

The Bible Instructs Us What We Are To Do

To recover from illness or surgery, there must be proper exercise. Likewise, we must put into practice what we have learned. James reminds us to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only..." (Jas. 1:22). The wise man is he that "heareth these words of mine and doeth them" (Matt. 7:24). We will never advance far in our study of the Word" if we throw up a screen of disobedience behind which we live."

In the Scriptures We Have A Sword For Victory Over Sin

"The sword of the Spirit... is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). David sang, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11).

The Word of God Makes Our Lives Fruitful

The righteous man who delights in the law of Jehovah and meditates thereon day and night" shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season" (Ps. 1:3). Joshua taught his people:

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Josh. 1:8).

The Bible, When Read, Will Give Us Power in Prayer

The Lord promised: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it will be done unto you" (John 15:7).

Conclusion: Every Christian, every day, should thank God for every line of Holy Writ. Every day, every Christian should read and study that he might grow strong in the Lord and the strength of his might. Especially should those who teach others be diligent students of the Word.

* The author is indebted to Dr. Wilbur Smith's excellent volume, **Profitable Bible Study** for the heart of this lesson.

15.

THE BIBLE MUST BE RIGHTLY DIVIDED

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15 KJV). Bible study can be the richest experience of one's life, or it can prove to be extremely frustrating. One reason some have difficulty in understanding God's message is that they fail to make the proper distinctions in Scripture. The following thoughts will help the sincere Bible student attain the knowledge he desires.

1. The Bible is a library of 66 books, written by some 40 men over a period of 1600 years. While each book must be read and studied for its own unique message, we must never neglect to note the interrelations of the books with each other. Moses wrote the first five books of our Old Testament. **Genesis** tells the origin of the Hebrew nation and how they got into Egypt. **Exodus** tells how they became enslaved and then were delivered. **Leviticus** tells how their national religion came to exist. **Numbers** relates how they spent 40 years wandering toward Canaan, their new homeland. **Deuteronomy** rehearses the exodus from Egypt and the 40 years of wilderness wandering. The historical background for the various psalms can be found in the books of **Samuel, Kings and Chronicles**. **Paul's epistles** must be studied in light of the history of the **Acts of the Apostles**.
2. Within the Scripture are words of both inspired and uninspired men. Care must be taken to ascertain who is speaking and if he is directed by the Holy Spirit or not. For example in Genesis 3:4-5, we read the words of Satan as he tempted Eve. Surely one would not treat these as he would the words of God or an inspired prophet. Inspiration guarantees that we have a true record of what was said. It does not guarantee that every person quoted was telling the whole truth.
3. The Bible is written in various literary styles. Books like **Genesis** and **Joshua** are history. Their message is expressed in simple prose. **Psalms** and **Proverbs** are poetic in nature and abound in figurative language. For example, David writes:

"My heart is like wax; it is melted within me" (Ps. 22:14). Surely no one could view these words as literal. So it is with thousands of other expressions. A good rule to remember is "All words of Scripture are to be understood in their normal literal sense unless the context (the setting in which they are found) forbid such." Then we look for a figurative meaning. This lesson is extremely valuable when you study the prophets such as **Ezekiel** or **Revelation**. Another case in point is history and prophecy. Is the writer relating events past (history) or the present; or is he predicting things yet to come? Jeremiah relates the historical facts of Jerusalem's capture by Babylon (Jer. 52:1-30). But he also predicted the overthrow and destruction of Babylon in 50:21-28 which occurred 50 years later.

4. The Bible consists of an Old and New Covenant. In Hebrews the Apostle speaks of "the first covenant" and then the "second covenant." The first covenant was the Old Testament law that God made with the Hebrew nation when he brought them out of Egypt (Heb. 8:9). The new covenant was made by Jesus (Heb. 8:6-8). The first covenant is now old and longer binding upon us (Heb. 8:13). All men today are subject to the new covenant of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-19, John 12:48). Thus you do not need to build an ark, even though Noah was commanded to do so (Gen. 6:14). You need not offer a lamb for sacrifice even though the Hebrews were so obligated (Lev. 1:10). You must, however, obey Jesus and his New Covenant, if you would please God. Christ asked, "why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Of what value then is the Old Testament? Much in every way. It is the history of God's scheme of redemption. It tells us our origin and how things came to be as they are. It is of immeasurable value as a background for our New Testament study. Paul writes that things "written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Rom. 15:4). What great lessons we learn from its study. But if we wish to learn what to do to be saved, we must look to Jesus and his New Testament (Matt. 17:3-5). The same is true for instruction about the church or worship today.

What is the practical application of all this? This concept of the two covenants, properly understood, will keep you from serious religious error. We do not observe the seventh day Sabbath (Ex. 20:8) because it is an Old Testament ordinance given to the Israelites (Deut. 5:12-15). We worship on the first day (Sunday) because it is the day of Christ's resurrection (John 20:1-9); the day the Holy Spirit came to begin his ministry (Acts 2:1-4, compare Lev. 23:15-21); the day the church began (Acts 2:1-47); and the day early Christians worshiped (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2). The thief on the cross could be saved by Christ without baptism because he was yet under the Old Covenant which lasted till Christ died (Heb. 9:16-17; Col. 2:14-16). Under Christ's covenant we must believe and be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:48).

May each of us study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

16.

THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

Do you know the difference between the Old and the New Testaments? Failure to "rightly divide the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15), has resulted in much religious confusion. The word "covenant" is used synonymously with "testament" when referring to the two major divisions of the Bible. Allowing the scriptures to speak, notice the contrast between the Old and the New Covenants.

- * Priests and Levites were ministers of the Old (Heb. 9:1-10). Christians are able ministers of the New Covenant (II Cor. 3:6).
- * The Old was a ministration of the letter that brought death, while the New is a ministration of the spirit that giveth life (II Cor. 3:6-7).
- * The Old was a ministration of the spirit of condemnation but the New is a ministration of righteousness (II Cor. 3:9).
- * The precepts of the Old covenant were written in stone (II Cor. 3:7); those of the New are written on the heart (Heb.

8:10).

* The Old Covenant was glorious but was done away; the New is more glorious and remaineth to this day (II Cor. 3:11).

* The Old Covenant is now aged and nigh unto vanishing away (Heb. 8:13); ours is a New and living Covenant (Heb. 8:8; 10:20).

* The Old Covenant was one of bondage; the New is of freedom (Gal. 4:24-26; 5:1).

* The Old Covenant was given to the Jewish nation by Moses and the prophets (Deut. 5:2-3). The New was given to all the world by God's Son (Heb. 1:1; Mk. 16:15).

* The Old was but a shadow of good things to come; the New is the real form and substance of God's plan (Heb. 9:1,11; 10:1).

* The blood of animals dedicated the Old covenant. That could never take away sins (Heb. 9:19-20; 10:4). The blood of Christ ratified the New (Matt.26:28). It does take away sins (I John 1:7).

* The first Covenant was taken away (Heb. 8:13) that He might establish the second (Heb. 10:9).

God's will for faith, worship and service in our age, is found in the New Testament, not in the Old. To seek to live and worship by the Old Testament is to be entangled in a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1).

The Church of Christ in every place follows the New Covenant or Testament of Jesus.

17.

ESTABLISHING NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORITY

"and whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." (Col. 3:17)

I. As founder and head of the Christian religion, Jesus, has all authority.

A. Matt. 16:18: "I will build my church." Eph. 1:22: God "gave him to be head over all things to the church."

B. Matt. 28: 18: "All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth."

II. Christ delegated his authority to his Apostles.

A. Acts 1:8: "But ye (Apostles) shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be my witnesses."

B. John 17:8: "The words which thou (God the Father) gavest me (Christ) I have given unto them (Apostles)."

C. John 20:22-23: Upon receiving the Holy Spirit they could forgive or retain sins.

D. Matt. 16:19: Being given authority, they could loose or bind in the name of Christ.

E. Acts 2:42: The Jerusalem church continued steadfastly in the "Apostles' teaching."

F. Gal. 1:6-9: Not even an angel from heaven could change their inspired message.

III. The Apostles and the inspired men were guided and directed by the Holy Spirit to record the will of Jesus in the inspired books of the New Testament..

A. II Tim. 3:15-17: "Every scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

B. I Cor. 14:37: "The things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord."

C. John 12:48: "The word that I (Jesus) spake, the same shall judge him in the last day."

D. Rev. 20:12: We will be judged by the things written in the books of God.

IV. How the New Testament is the exclusive authority in Christianity.

A. The New Testament is the exclusive authority in Christianity.

1. Although we love and respect the Old Testament as God's word, it is clearly no longer the rule for our faith, worship and work under Christ.

a. Col. 2:14-17: The Law was nailed to the cross, let no one judge you thereby.

b. Rom. 7:1-76: We are dead to the Law.

c. II Cor. 3:4-11: The old covenant is passing away, the new remains.

d. Heb. 8:6-13: We have a new covenant, the old is nigh unto vanishing away.

e. Matt. 17:1-5: We are to hear Christ, not Moses and Elijah.

B. We must have Biblical authority for everything we do in religion (Col. 3: 17).

1. That which is not done by Bible authority must of necessity be done by human authority (Matt. 21:23-27).

C. Authority is found in the Scriptures in three ways:

1. Direct statements authorize.

a. Declarative statements (Mark 16:16).

b. Imperative statements (commands) (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:48).

c. Interrogative statements (I Cor. 12:29-30).

d. Hortatory statements (Rom. 6:2).

2. Note: There are two kinds of commands: 1. Specific 2. Generic.

(a) **Specific Commands** specify: A command must give one or more specifications or it is not a specific command. We must always do what is specified in a command, e.g. Genesis

6:14-16, build an ark of gopher wood, etc.

(b) **Generic Commands** are general in their nature. "A generic command authorizes things not mentioned, by leaving one or more ways, methods or means to human judgement, and by necessary inference leaves something to human opinion, choice, or option. In all such commands we must leave such items in the realm of human liberty, where God left them..." (Gus Nichols).

(1) "Go preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15).

(2) "Visit the fatherless and the widow" (Jas. 1:27).

D. The Bible authorizes by Implication or Necessary Inference.

1. Acts 22:16 implies Saul still had sins before baptism.
2. Acts 8:38-39 implies that the Eunuch's baptism was by immersion.
3. I Tim. 3:2 "husband of one wife; rule his family, etc., implies that elders were men, not women.

E. The Bible authorizes by Approved Examples:

1. Actions that were condemned as sinful for men living then are wrong for us today
 - a. Simon's attempt to buy the gift of God (Acts 8:18-24).
2. Actions which were obligatory for some men, but not for all (such as use of spiritual gifts) are not obligatory for us today since we do not have the gift.
3. Actions which were acceptable in fulfilling some generic command but not the exclusive way of so doing.
 - a. Meeting in an upper room (Acts 20:6-14).
4. Actions that are the fulfillment of a specific command:
 - a. Everyone privileged to preach (Acts 8:4) based on Matt. 28:19.
5. **NOTE:** Approved examples are binding on us only if there is an underlying specific command making that the exclusive way to obey God in that particular. Otherwise, their example only reflects their choice of expedients to fulfill a general command.

F. Not All Examples are Binding:

1. Acts 2:44-46; 4:34-37 - Disciples selling possessions and giving to the poor. See also Acts 5:4.
2. Acts 11:29-30 - Sending financial help by the hands of men.
3. Acts 14:23 - Fasting with appointment of elders.
4. Acts 16:1-4 - Paul circumcised Timothy.
5. Acts 20:1-13 - Lord's Supper observed at night in an upper room.

G. The Law of Silence: The Law of Silence. It is a unique point in establishing New Testament authority that when God specifies something to be done, all other alternatives are thereby excluded. If God does not make a thing acceptable by one of the above mentioned means of authorization, He thereby forbids it. God does not have to say "thou shalt not" to forbid a thing.

1. Lev. 10:1-4. Nadab and Abihu sinned against the Law of Silence by offering strange fire which God had not commanded.
2. I Chron. 13:6-13; 15:1-2, 11-15; I Sam. 6: 1-11. Uzzah was killed because they did not comply with the law in transporting the ark of God. The ark of the covenant was to be carried on the priest's shoulders. God had not specifically forbidden using an ox-cart.
3. Gen. 6:14-16, Noah obeyed this rule. God authorized gopher wood, he did not need to forbid oak, etc.
4. Heb. 7:11-14, Christ could not be a priest on earth for he was of the tribe of Judah, of "which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests." Specifying Levites to be priests forbade all others even without mentioning them.
5. I Cor. 4:6 (American Standard Version), "That in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written."
6. II John 9-11, We must abide *in* the teaching of Christ to have God's blessings. To go onward and abide not in his teaching is to be without God and Christ.

a. We can abide in the teaching of Christ only by doing those things approved by Christ in his word. Anything done without God's authority leaves one without Christ.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| (1). Instrumental music | (4). Infant Baptism |
| (2). Incense | (5). Etc. |
| (3). Sprinkling | |

H. Expedients: "For anything to be expedient according to Bible teaching, it must:

1. Give advantage in doing what God would have man to do, and
2. Be authorized by his word. Even though man may feel that a particular thing would give certain advantages in carrying out God's instructions, if that thing is not authorized by the Bible, then that thing is not expedient. For a thing to be expedient, it must first be lawful."
3. "When God tells man **what** to do without telling him how to do it, man is free to do that which in his judgment is most expedient."
4. "When God tells man **what** to do and also **how** to do it, then *the how* is as binding as *the what* in the doing of whatever it is that is to be done." Thomas Warren.

The author is indebted to:

Thomas B. Warren, **Liberalism and the Use of Instrumental Music in the Worship of God.**

Gus Nichols, **How to Establish Bible Authority**, as published in the Freed-Hardeman College Lectures of 1970,

entitled, **The Church Faces Liberalism**, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville.

18.

GENERIC AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY

The word *generic* derives from our word *general*. It is the opposite of *specific*. Thus generic authority is general authority without specific details being given. For example: Christ said "Go preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). No instructions are given about how we are to go. So we conclude we are authorized to go by car or bus, plane or train, by foot or bicycle....on the basis of this generic authority.

But when Christ said preach "the gospel" that specifies what we are to preach. I have specific authority to preach the gospel of Christ and that excludes, the doctrines and commandments of men, human philosophy, psychology, etc.

A specific command excludes all others. For example Christ said "Go make disciples...baptizing them" (Matt. 28:19). The word baptize is a verb with specific meaning. It means to immerse. Thus this specific command necessarily excludes sprinkling, pouring, or any other type of actions.

The command to "work that which is good to all men" (Gal. 6:10) is generic or general. It sets forth an obligation without specifying any particular means for fulfilling it. Thus we are free to use many methods in ministering to our neighbors and yet do so by the generic authority Christ has given us.

These concepts are especially important when we come to the question of praising God. The Scripture says, "speaking one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Since there are three possible ways to make music: vocal music, instrumental music and a combination of the two kinds, when God specified one of them it excludes the others. To sing is very specific, thus we are limited to that way of expressing our praise.

These points will be useful to you a thousand times as you study and seek a correct application of the words of the Savior. I hope this brief study has been helpful.

THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THE LAW OF CHRIST

Inspired writers refer to the New Testament as “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2); “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas. 1:23) and a “law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). This being the case, how say some among us that we are not under a law of God? They love to say that we should not view the Bible as divine law. Are they so ignorant of the book they claim to teach? Do they not believe what the Scripture says of itself? Do they think they know more about God’s Book than the Holy Spirit who gave it? Could it be that in order to sell their agenda to a Bible-believing, Bible oriented people, they must first convince them that the Scripture is not law, therefore it will be no great thing if its words are ignored?

If the Bible is not divine law, then no man is a sinner. For “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15). If we have no divine law, how can some be called “lawless” in their conduct? (II Thess. 2:7; I Tim. 1:9). If the Scripture is not law, how could some men in the church be desirous of teaching “the law?” (I Tim. 1:7). If there is no law in Christ, we would have no knowledge of sin, or of right and wrong, “for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). If the New Covenant is not God’s law, then no man need worry about being judged by it in the last day (John 12:48). If it is not law, then we can do anything we desire in the name of religion and not worry about having to give account unto God (II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12). If the Scripture is not law, then James and Paul were mistaken in calling it that. If that is so, how can we have confidence in other things they said? That would mean the New Covenant is not reliable and free from error, would it not? If God had wanted to tell us that his written word is His law to guide and govern us in matters of faith, practice and worship, what do these “deniers of God’s law” feel He should have said, beyond what he has said, to make it clear?

It is true that we are not under the Law of Moses (Heb. 8:6-13; Rom. 7:4). It is true that we are saved by God’s grace rather than by law-keeping (Eph. 2:8-9). It is a fact that our response to God must be one of faith rather than an attempt to earn salvation by works of law (Rom. 3:21-22). But it is a flagrant error to teach men that God’s Word should not be viewed as law.

CHRISTIANS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Somehow a terrible misconception has been “leaked” in many areas concerning the attitude of Churches of Christ toward the Old Testament. Some have concluded that we do not believe in that part of God’s Word. Nothing could be further from the truth. We accept every word of that Testament and make constant use of it in our teaching. There are great benefits to be derived from a careful study of the old covenant.

IT IS GOD’S INSPIRED WORD

When Paul said that “Every scripture is inspired of God” (II Tim. 3:16), he obviously included the holy scripture that the Jews possessed. When Jesus affirmed that “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), only the Old Testament was in existence. The Lord even went so far as to say that if we believe not Moses’ writings we cannot believe in Christ

himself (John 5:47). In Luke 24:44-45, Jesus explained that the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms were "the scriptures" or God's holy writings. This we believe and teach.

IT ANSWERS MANY QUESTIONS

The Old Covenant provides solid answers to life's most serious and perplexing questions. We would have no sure knowledge of the origin of the cosmos did we not have Genesis and other Old Testament verses that tell us God spoke these things into existence (Ps. 33:6). We would have no strong reply to the wild speculations of the evolutionist if God's Word did not give us the story of man's creation in Genesis one and two. Likewise, man's relation to God would be a mystery were it not for the creation record. Were it not for Genesis three we could only guess as to the origin of sin and the curse that rests upon man and creation. Such questions as the origins of the various nations and languages are answered only in the Genesis account. So also the riddle of the vast fossil record inscribed across the face of the whole earth is explained by the account of the flood in Noah's day. A hundred other questions are similarly answered in this book.

A FOUNDATION

The Old Testament is the foundation upon which the new covenant was erected. "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us into Christ..." (Gal. 3:24). The law was a shadow of good things to come (Heb. 10:1). It foreshadowed the coming Christian age. Jesus fulfilled all of those prophecies concerning Messiah written in the Old scriptures (Luke 24:44-45). The New Testament takes up just where the Old leaves off. It has well been said, "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old revealed."

A HISTORY

The Old Testament is a rich source of spiritual food for Christians. It provides multitudes of faith building lessons. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Rom. 15:4). Young Timothy had been taught those sacred writings from childhood and they made him wise unto salvation (II Tim. 3:15).

IT EXPLAINS NEW TESTAMENT TERMS

When one opens the New Testament he is immediately confronted with scores of institutions, persons and events that would forever be a mystery were it not for the Old Testament. What would we know of Melchizedek or Aaron, Moses or David without the Old Testament? What would we do with the hundreds of quotations from the Old Testament, without the context from whence they came? Would we understand the allusion to sacrifices and the temple had we only our New Testament?

WE PROFIT FROM ITS CHARACTER STUDIES

In Hebrews eleven, the writer draws numerous lessons from the lives of Old Testament saints. So can we profit from all of its characters? We learn lessons both of things to observe and things to shun. "Now these were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Cor. 10:6).

THE EVIDENCE OF ITS PROPHECIES

Jesus said that the Jew's scriptures bore witness to him (I John 5:39). The angel declared that Jesus was the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10). Peter told Cornelius that all the prophets bore witness of Christ (Acts 10:43). The 300 plus prophetic details of Christ's life and ministry provide an overwhelming basis for belief in Him as God's Son. The same is true of prophecies relating to the church.

Truly, we should be grateful to God for the Old Testament and read and study it thoroughly. However, it must be stated and understood that:

IT IS NOT OUR RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

As Christians, we are under Jesus and his New Covenant. Hear Paul, "But now we have been discharged from the law" (Rom. 7:6). Again, he states that the old law "passeth away" and the new remains (II Cor. 3:6-11). Christ "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Eph. 2:15). He took the Old Covenant out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Col. 2:14, 16-17). We have a better covenant, not like the one made on Sinai. That Old Covenant is becoming aged and is nigh unto vanishing away (Heb. 8:6-13). When Peter would have equally honored Moses, the law giver, Elijah the prophet, and Christ, God spoke from His throne saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:3-5).

While we thank God for preserving for us the Old Testament, we look to the New for answers to such questions as: How to be saved? How to Worship God Acceptably? How to live for Christ?

21.

THE LAW OF SILENCE

Total respect for God's word demands more than many are willing to give. We must recognize and accept the authority of God's silence. He does not have to say "thou shalt not" in order to prohibit a thing. Failure to recognize or accept this principle has been one of the fundamental, underlying causes of our religious differences. Some of those who went before us recognized the importance of this principle.

Church historian, J.M. D'Aubigne, wrote, "Luther was desirous of retaining in the church all that was not expressly contradicted by Scripture, while Zwingle was intent on abolishing all that could not be proved by Scripture" (*History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 342).

Dirk Phillips, Anabaptist preacher, wrote: "It is evident that whatever God has not commanded and has not instituted by express commands of Scripture, He does not want observed nor does He want to be served therewith, nor will He have His Word set aside nor made to suit the pleasure of men." (This was written by Phillips in the 16th century in his book *Vindication*, quoted by J.D. Murch, *Christian Only*, p. 15.)

That there is such a principle is clearly stated in I Corinthians 4:6 (American Standard Version), where Paul writes "that ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written." We see it applied in at least four instances.

In Acts 15:1 we read of certain brethren who taught circumcision as a Christian doctrine and insisted on its observance. The Apostles and elders wrote the brethren concerning this practice: "we have heard that certain (men) who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment" (Acts 15:24). They proceeded to repudiate the actions of these certain men. Even though circumcision had been commanded under the Old Covenant, it could not be bound upon the church since no commandment concerning it had been given.

In establishing the superiority of Christ over angels, the author writes, "having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son..." (Heb. 1:4-5). The very fact that God had not said to one of the angels these words which He spoke of the Son is proof of their inferiority to Christ.

While explaining the need for the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, the writer says, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah: as to which

tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests (Heb. 7:12-14).

When the Passover feast was instituted, God ordained that it be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month (Num. 9:1-5). When some men were unable to observe the feast for reasons beyond their control, they asked Moses if they could do so at a later date (vss. 6-7). No Scripture said "thou shalt not observe the feast at a different time." Yet even the great lawgiver Moses dared not to authorize such an exception without a commandment from Jehovah (vs. 8). When divine permission was given, only then did he allow the exception (vss. 9-11). Moses respected the law of silence.

The Application of the Law of Silence for Us Today

We are limited in our Christian faith and practice to that which God has authorized in his Word. Jesus said, teach "them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Paul warns that we must not go beyond the things which are written (I Cor. 4:6 ASV). John reminds us that only those who abide in the teaching of Christ enjoy the blessings of the Father and Son (II John 9). *We do not ask "where does the Bible forbid a thing?" rather we ask, "where is it authorized?"*

A thing may be authorized generically or specifically. The command to "Go preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15), is a general command that authorizes any and all modes of travel. "Preach the gospel" specifies what must be taught, thus forbids the teaching of human opinions, traditions, and philosophy.

We must never presume a thing is acceptable simply by the fact that it is not specifically forbidden. God did not specifically forbid carrying the ark of the covenant on an ox cart, yet doing so cost a man his life (I Chron. 13:6-10; 15:2, 13).

Even the world recognizes this principle. The pharmacist who fills a doctor's prescription is not at liberty to substitute another substance simply because the doctor did not say "thou shalt not" do so. He is bound to obey the law of silence!

If we do not respect the sacred silence of God's Word, then no one can object to infant baptism or sprinkling, counting beads, burning of incense, and a thousand other things that God did not specifically forbid being introduced into the faith and worship of the church. The concept that "I can do anything God does not forbid" in Christian worship lets in an avalanche that few are ready to accept. Nadab and Abihu violated this law by offering strange fire in worship which Jehovah "had not commanded them" (Lev. 10:1-3). God had not specifically forbidden the use of their fire by direct command. However, it was forbidden since he had specified that in burning incense they were to use the fire from the perpetual fire on the great altar before the tabernacle (Lev. 16:12-13).

It is the silence of the New Testament on instrumental music in worship that leads us to reject that practice and other like additions to our faith and worship. J.D. Murch comments on this theme:

"Within the last generation the Church of Christ has made a phenomenal growth. This is due to two things:

1. Its people have stood like a rock of Gibraltar for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," amid the doubt and confusion superinduced by liberalism. They have challenged the spirit of compromise and worldliness and dared to be a "peculiar" people teaching and practicing what they believe is the Bible way of life.
2. **They have come to realize that the silence of the Scriptures must be respected as well as the commandments of Scripture, but that obedience to its silences permits freedom of judgment and action (Christians Only, p. 313).**

Sadly, few Christians understand the "silence of the Scriptures" today. Every leader and teacher should familiarize himself with this important concept not only that his own faith might be strong, but that he might also teach others. When a generation grows up that does not know this principle of truth, they may well reason like Martin Luther, "I can do anything the Bible does not specifically forbid." Woe to the church when that day comes.

22.

SOME RULES FOR DETERMINING THE MEANING OF BIBLE WORDS

1. All words are to be understood in their literal sense, unless the evident meaning of the context forbids that.
2. Commands generally, and ordinances always, are to be understood literally.
3. The literal meaning of a word is that meaning given it by those to whom it was originally addressed.
4. In some cases, Scripture gives meanings to words, not found in the classics. In such cases the Bible becomes a dictionary in itself. By comparing the context and other usages of the same term we can determine the correct meaning.
5. Words of definite action can have but one meaning.
6. The writer's explanation is the best definition that can be found.
7. The proper definition of a word may be used in the place of the word.
8. Etymology will help reveal the meaning of a word. Most names of ancient persons and places had unique meanings.
9. By noting the parallel lines one can determine the special meaning of a word in poetic literature.
10. By antithesis, i.e., where two ideas are set in contrast one against the other, we can determine the meaning of a word or phrase.
11. By paying attention to the type of literature we are reading, we can find clues as to the way the words will be understood. For example: The statutory sections of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy we would expect to interpret very literally. The poetic books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes will contain large amounts of figurative language. The Book of Acts is history and is generally written in non-figurative terms. Revelation is a book of signs and symbols and thus much of it we interpret figuratively or symbolically.

23.

SOME FIGURES OF SPEECH USED IN THE BIBLE

1. **Parables.** Parables are the oldest and most common of all figures of speech. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The characters in a parable behave as real people do. They do nothing impossible. Jesus was the master craftsman of parables. See the Good Samaritan, (Luke 10:25-37).
2. **Fables.** A fable is "a feigned story...a fictional narration used to enforce some useful truth or precept..." It attributes human qualities to animate and inanimate things. The actions are unreal. It is often used to illustrate some blunder (Compare Judges 9:6-21).
3. **Similes.** A simile is a "word or phrase by which anything is likened in one of its aspects to another. A simile always provides the means of comparison with "like, as, like unto or some similar word. "The Spirit of God descending *as* a dove" (Matt. 3:16).
4. **Similitudes.** These are extended similes (See Matt. 7:24-27).

5. **Metaphors.** A metaphor is a word expressing similitude without the signs of comparison. "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen. 49:9). "This is my blood" (Matt. 26-28).
6. **Allegories** An allegory is a continued metaphor. It is a figurative application of real facts (See Eccles. 12:2-6).
7. **Metonymy.** A metonymy is a tool of speech whereby a thing is called by a different name. Parents are put for their children (Gen. 9:25-27). "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13). Authors are put for their literary works. "They have Moses and the Prophets." (Lk. 16:29-31) Instruments are put for their effects. "At the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16).
8. **Synecdoche.** This is a figure of speech whereby a part stands for the whole or the whole stands for a part. "That all the world should be enrolled" (Lk. 2:1). "The gospel was preached in all creation under heaven" (Col. 1:23). "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).
9. **Proverbs.** A proverb is a truth condensed to its smallest form. It is a short, pithy sentence containing a valuable truth.
10. **Irony.** To use irony is to say one thing while meaning another. It is "a kind of ridicule which exposes the errors or faults of others by seeming to adopt, approve or defend them." "Go cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them save you..." (Judg. 10:14).
11. **Sarcasm.** This is to speak bitterly; to sneer; a reproachful expression. The soldiers kneeled before Jesus, and "mocked him saying, Hail, King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:29).
12. **Hyperbole.** This is a figure of speech which uses exaggeration for the purpose of emphasizing a point. "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers" (Num. 13:33). "Every night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with tears" (Ps. 6:6-7).
13. **Apostrophe.** This figure is used when one turns away from the real audience and addresses an imaginary one. "O death where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:55). "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem..." (Luke 13:34-35).
14. **Personification.** This occurs when *inanimate* beings are spoken of as *animated* or endowed with life and volition. "The sea saw it and fled; Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams..." (Ps. 114:3-4).
15. **Interrogation.** This is when a question is asked, not for information, but to affirm or deny something. It is often called a **Rhetorical Question**. Paul asked the Corinthians, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus" (I Cor. 9:1).
16. **Prolepsis.** This figure makes use of present day knowledge or terminology to help clarify or identify some ancient person, place or event. Abraham came to Bethel (Gen. 12:8). It was named that by Jacob many years later. (See Gen. 28:10-19). Moses called it Bethel so the Hebrews could understand just where Abraham had camped.
17. **Ellipsis.** This is a literary device that intentionally omits a word for the sake of emphasis. The reader is forced to ponder and supply the word to get the correct meaning. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin (offering) on our behalf..." (II Cor. 5:21).
18. **Parallelism.** This is the literary style of Hebrew poetry. A thought is expressed two or more times to make its point clear. There are several varieties of parallelism:
- a. Synonymous parallelism where the lines are virtually the same. (See Prov. 6:2).
 - b. Antithetic parallelism where each line opposes the other. (See. Prov. 14:28).
 - c. Cumulative parallelism where several lines expressing similar thoughts are cumulated until a climax is reached.. (See Ps. 150).
19. **Antithesis.** This is a device where points of discussion are set in contract with each other. Jesus contrasted the teachings of Judaism with his own (See Matt. 5:21,27,33). Paul set the Old and New Covenants in antithesis (II Cor. 3:3-17).
20. **Types and Antitypes.** Certain persons, institutions and events of the Old Testament prefigured New Testament counterparts. Adam was a type of Christ (Rom. 5:12-19). He was the founder of the human race and Christ of the race of Christians. Moses was a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15-18). He was the deliverer and lawgiver of Israel as Christ is of us. The exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt was typical of our deliverance from sin (I Cor.10:1-10).

- a. For anything to be a type, it must have been a real person, thing , event or office.
- b. Scripture will identify and interpret types. We must not seek to make types of mere historical events.
- c. Types generally illustrate one or two primary points of likeness. It is important not to seek too many points of likeness in interpreting types, nor to conclude that every act or aspect of the type will be found in the antitype. Look for the main points of comparison.
- d. The antitype is always superior to the type.

24.

RECOGNIZING PARALLELISMS IS VITAL TO UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Hebrew writers had a method of expressing their ideas that was quite different from our English style. First **they often used a poetic style even when writing about the ordinary things of life. Second to emphasize a thing, they repeated it two or more times.** This repetition we call **parallelism**.

To create a parallelism, the author places beside each other several lines having the same or similar import. To form a mental picture of a parallelism think of the tracks of a train===== . Both are headed in the same direction yet they stand apart. One by itself is incomplete. Both rails are essential to make the track perform as intended. Instead of two lines, imagine two sets of words related, together providing a strong description of the writer or speaker's point.

For an illustration consider Proverbs 3:13:

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.”“

Both lines are saying the same thing. It would be a mistake to try to make a distinction between wisdom and understanding in this passage.

In parallels the reader might have trouble understanding one line, but the other when read will usually make the meaning plain. For example consider Prov. 21:1

“The king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah as the watercourses:
He (Jehovah) turneth it whithersoever he will.”

The second line explains the first. Just as God made the beds in which the rivers run, so he can make a king do His will.

There are many different kinds of parallels in Hebrew poetry:

- * There are **Synonymous Parallelisms**. In these the lines contain the same or nearly the same thought. For example:
“My son, keep my words,

And lay up my commandments with thee" (Prov. 7:1).

There is no appreciable difference in the two lines of this proverb.

* We next consider **Antithetic Parallelisms** in which the lines and sentences are set in opposition to each other.

For example: "A cheerful heart is a good medicine;

But a broken spirit drieth up the bones" (Prov. 17:22).

Generally the second line of the antithetic parallel will have the word "**but**" to note the contrast.

* There are **Synthetic Parallelisms**. In these, the succeeding lines, while not identical, do have a relation to each other.

Example: "Jehovah is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?

Jehovah is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1).

* There are **Cumulative Parallelisms** which consist of several related lines, each gaining on the previous one until a climax is reached.

Example: "There are three things which are stately in their march,

Yea four which are stately in going:

The lion, which is mightiest among the beasts, And turneth not away for any;

The greyhound;

The he-goat also;

And the king against whom there is no rising up" (Prov. 30:29-31).

His point is about the powerful king whom no one can challenge. He is like the lion, the swift greyhound and the proud he-goat with his powerful horns.

If the student will learn and keep in mind these points about parallelisms he will find hundreds of verses, once thought to be difficult, to be easily understood. He might also discover that in some of his applications of various psalms and proverbs he was wringing more out of them than the writer intended.

THE DOCTRINAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

When we seek to follow Jehovah, we want to understand His will for us. Man's greatest difficulty in Bible study has been in correctly understanding the doctrinal teachings of the inspired writers. Thomas Horne, in his *Introduction to the Bible*, offers some extremely helpful precepts for interpreting those doctrinal sections of God's Book.

- * The meaning of the Sacred Writings is not to be determined according to modern notions and systems; but we must endeavor to carry ourselves back to the very times and places in which they were written, and realize the ideas and modes of thinking of the sacred writers. (Some have a preconceived system of doctrine which they seek in the Bible, and to which they refer every passage of Scripture. (Thus they rather draw the Scriptures to their system of doctrine, than bring their doctrines to the standard of Scripture.)
- * Regard must also be had to the peculiar state of the churches, cities, or persons, to whom particular epistles, especially those of Saint Paul, were addressed; as the knowledge of such state frequently leads to the particular occasion for which such epistle was written.
- * In order to understand any doctrinal book or passage of Scripture, we must attend to the controversies which were agitated at that time, and to which the sacred writers allude: for a key to the apostolic epistle is not to be sought in the modern controversies that divide Christians, and which were not only unknown but also not in existence at that time.
- * The doctrinal books of Scripture, for instance, the Epistles, are not to be perused in detached portions or sections; but they should be read through at once, with a close attention to the scope and tenor of the discourse, regardless of the divisions into chapters and verses, precisely in the same manner in which we would peruse the letters of Cicero, Pliny, or other ancient writers.
- * Where any doctrine is to be deduced from the Scriptures, it will be collected better, and with more precision, from those places in which it is professedly discussed, than from those in which it is noticed only incidentally or by way of inference.
- * Doctrines peculiar to a certain age are better ascertained from writings belonging to that age, or the times immediately following, than from the memorabilia or writings of a later date.
- * Although the Scriptures sometimes speak of God after the manner of men, they are not to be understood literally, but must be taken in a sense worthy of God.
- * No doctrine is admissible, or can be established from the Scriptures that is either repugnant to them or contrary to reason or to the (general teaching of the whole).
- * It is a great importance to the understanding of the doctrinal books of the New Testament, to attend to and distinctly note the transitions of person which frequently occur, especially in Saint Paul's Epistles.
- * In applying the Scriptures as proof of any doctrine, it is necessary to ascertain, if all that is meant be expressed; or, if it be not expressed, what is necessarily implied, in order to complete the passage.
- * No article can be established from metaphors, parables, or single obscure and figurative texts. . . They were never intended to be a revelation of Gospel principles. Instead of deriving our knowledge of Christianity from parables and figurative passages, an intimate acquaintance with the doctrines of the Gospel is necessary, in order to be capable of interpreting them.

How many sects would have never been born if men had followed a correct system of hermeneutics concerning the

doctrine of Christ. Paul wrote, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). Let us also study with patience the truth that is set before us. For only those who abide in the doctrine of Christ have God (II John 9).

26.

INTERPRETING BIBLICAL PROPHECIES

In his memorable Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

Prophetic material fills a considerable portion of our Bible, more than most folks realize. Of the Old Testament's "23,210 verses, 6,641 contain predictive material, or 28 1/2 percent". Out of the New Testament's "7,914 verses, 1,711 contain predictive material or 21 1/2 percent." So, of the entire Bible's "31,124 verses, 8,352 contain predictive material or 27 percent of the whole".¹

Surely one of the great proofs of the inspiration of the Scriptures is the hundreds of fulfilled prophecies. One of the strongest types of evidence for Jesus' divine origin and mission is the more than 300 prophecies relating to his life and mission. No other area of study can be more exciting and rewarding than that of Biblical prophecies and their fulfillment. To that study we not direct our attention.

PROPHECY DEFINED

To understand the subject of prophecy, we must first understand what a prophet was and what he did. The best definition is a demonstration, and that we have in the case of Moses and Aaron. "And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet; Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh: (Ex. 7:1-2). This is amplified earlier in (Ex. 4:15-16). "And thou (Moses) shalt speak unto him (Aaron), and put the words in his mouth... And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people, and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God." Thus a prophet was a "mouthpiece" or a spokesman for God. David explained his role in recording God's will in (II Sam. 23:2): "the Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, And his word was upon my tongue." Some have mistakenly thought the prophets were primarily future tellers, but the careful student recognizes that they were fundamentally proclaimers of God's will, preachers of his message, and to a much lesser degree foretellers. This is exhibited by Paul in (I Cor. 14:3): "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and exhortation, and consolation."

William Webster defines prophecy as "God's communication to the church to be her light and comfort in time of trouble and perplexity."² Dr. Pye Smith describes prophecy as "a declaration made by a creature, under the inspiration and commission of the omniscient God, relating to an event or series of events, which have not taken place at the time the prophecy is uttered, which could not have been certainly foreknown by any science or wisdom of man."³

The Apostle John declares that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). By that he means that Jesus stands as the principle theme and ultimate goal of prophecy.

VARIOUS TYPES OF PROPHECY

Prophecy is not all of one type and kind. A discerning student will note at least six different categories of prophecy recorded in Scripture. In passing, we note that **false prophets** were busy issuing their uninspired predictions. Thus we have in Jeremiah 28:1-4 a false prophecy of Hananiah who predicted that the Hebrews would be freed from Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian yoke in two years, i.e., by about 594. He was rebuked by Jeremiah and discredited by the failure of his prediction. Moses had earlier said "when a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow

not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously..." (Deut. 18:22).

There are **general prophecies** which predict blessings or curses in broad general terms with few if any details. For example, Isaiah 14:1, "For Jehovah will have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land." The context helps us to see this as a prediction of restoration after the Babylonian exile. Numerous prophecies are of this category.

Some prophecies are **specific** as to details. Thus in Isaiah 44:28, God wrote "of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." These words were written no later than 700 B.C. Cyrus led the Medes and Persians to world dominance in 538 and commissioned the restoration of the Jewish nation in 536. Daniel's majestic prophecy of 70 weeks predicted with great accuracy the years of the public ministry of Messiah and his death in the midst of his 34th year. Accompanying his death would be the end of sacrifices and oblations of the Mosaic system, and the reconciliation of sinners. Following these events would be the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans (Dan. 9:24-27).

Many prophecies are written in **highly figurative and poetic language**. For example, the description of the character and conduct of those in Messiah's kingdom: "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together. And a little child shall lead them... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah." (Is. 11:6-9). Premillennialists continue to misapply this and expect a literal change in the nature of the beasts. The key is found in the 9th verse: They (disciples of Messiah) shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain (Messiah's kingdom).

Some prophecies have a **dual application**, i.e., they had a fulfillment for that contemporary age and a remote or distant fulfillment when Messiah came. The clearest illustration of this is seen in Nathan's promise to David. "When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men..." (II Sam. 7:12-14). In I Chronicles 22:6-11, David tells us that Solomon was the first object of this prediction. He says "the word of Jehovah came to" him saying Solomon "shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father..." In Acts 13:33-34, Paul tells us that Jesus was the ultimate recipient of "the holy and sure blessings of David." Numerous passages in the prophets we would interpret as mixed restoration (from Babylonian captivity) and Messianic promises. (See Is. 35:1-10).

Comparing some of the fulfilled prophecies of the New Testament with their Old Testament counterparts, we can see a **typical use of prophecy**. "Joseph took the young child and his mother and departed into Egypt"... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matt. 2:14-15). The citation directs us to (Hosea 11:1) which says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." The context clearly applies that passage to ancient Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Matthew's use draws a comparison between the two events related to coming out of Egypt. No one reading Hosea would ever have the remotest idea it referred to the flight of Joseph's family, had not Matthew told us. Another similar application is found in Matthew 2:18. "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children..." A comparison of Jeremiah 31:15 shows the verse initially had reference to the sorrow that came when the Babylonians ravaged Judah. The weeping in both cases was alike bitter.

Speaking of typical prophecy, we should briefly mention that great number of Old Testament people, institutions and events which the sacred writers said foreshadowed the Messianic Age. Paul wrote that the laws relating to meat, drink, feast days, new moon and sabbath day were "a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's (Col. 2:16-17). The Hebrew writer describes the Mosaic ordinances as "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things..." (Heb. 8:5). Thus Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem is typical of Christ, who is both king and high priest (Heb. 7:1-8:4). The Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt is typical of our salvation from sin (I Cor. 10:1-6). Since these types and antitypes are generally considered as a separate order, we will pursue them no further.

THE PURPOSES OF PROPHECY

At least five purposes of prophecy are easily discovered. By the very nature of his office, the prophet was a spokesman for God, who revealed his will to the people. Thus in Jeremiah 7:1-3, "The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah saying... Thus saith Jehovah... Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place." The details given included: "thoroughly execute justice"; "oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow"; "shed not innocent blood" and "walk not after other gods." Such prophesying made no prediction, but did make known the will of the Lord.

Prophecy gave the Hebrews hope during the dark days of trial and tribulation. When the Babylonian hordes were pressing the battle against Judah and the prospect of national collapse was imminent, Jeremiah comforted them with his predictions. "I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith Jehovah" (Jer. 51:24). "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her... (Jer. 51:64). Though the nation would be taken into captivity, he promised: "thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good work toward you, in causing you to return to this place"... home (Jer. 29:10). Of course we offer but a sampling.

The prophets pointed God's people toward his coming Messiah and his kingdom. More than 300 details of the glorious reign were given by those men of God. Isaiah wrote, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (Is. 9:6-7). "As the angel told John, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

The ancient prophecies fulfilled in Christ's life and death provided convincing evidence that he was truly the Son of God come down from heaven. To the two disciples traveling to Emmaus, he said "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27). Over and over again the Apostles appealed to the prophecies to establish Christ's claims. Peter said to Cornelius, "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name everyone that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

Even today, the prophecies read and examined, will create faith in the honest heart. John concludes his life of Christ saying, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God..." (John 20:30-31). Jehovah challenged the idolaters in Isaiah's day "...who hath showed this from ancient times; who hath declared it of old? Have not I, Jehovah? And there is no God else besides me..." (Is. 45:21). Fulfilled prophecy demands an omniscient God as its author.

SOME RULES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- * It is essential to understand the historical background of the prophet and his message.
- * You will need to ascertain the meaning and significance of geographical references, proper names and events, plants and animals.
- * Since all prophecy is not predictive, determine if the passage under consideration is didactic or predictive.
- * If the scripture under consideration is predictive, has it already been fulfilled? Is its threat or promise conditional?
- * Should an inspired New Testament speaker or writer declare that a given prophecy has been fulfilled in a specific way, that settles the matter.
- * Search to see if the subject being studied is treated elsewhere in Scripture. If so, a comparative study is imperative.
- * Be careful to keep the context in mind. Remember the flow of the passage which often transcends chapter and verse divisions.
- * In studying the prophets be aware that some elements will be brief and temporary in their application.
- * To properly understand the prophets, pay special attention to their poetic style which is highly figurative and full of

metaphorical and symbolic expressions.

* The prophets do not generally observe our Western system of chronological arrangement. Their writings are arranged by subject rather than time sequence.

* Some prophecies have dual meanings and refer to different events—one near, the other in the distant future; the one temporal, the other spiritual.

* Predictions of blessings or judgments are often conditional and may or may not be fulfilled depending upon the response of the recipients. Jeremiah 18:7-8 notes, "... if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

SOME EXAMPLES OF PROPHECIES ABOUT CITIES AND NATIONS

Among the most remarkable of the many prophecies are those relating to the great cities and nations of antiquity. Space will only allow us to consider a few examples. We first notice God's predictions about the great Phoenician city of Tyre. Ezekiel, God's prophet of the Babylonian exile wrote:

"Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock. She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea... For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will bring upon Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, from the north with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and a company, and much people. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field; and he shall make forts against thee, and raise up the buckler against thee. And he shall set his battering engines against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers. ... And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise; and they shall break down thy walls and destroy thy pleasant houses; and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. ... And I will make thee a bare rock; thou shalt be a place for the spreading of nets; thou shalt be built no more: for I Jehovah have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah" (Ezek. 26:3-14).

Careful examination reveals the following particulars in Ezekiel's prediction:

- A. Nebuchadnezzar would destroy mainland Tyre (vs. 8).
- B. Many nations would participate in her final destruction (vs. 3).
- C. She would be left as a bare rock (vs. 4).
- D. Fishermen would spread their nets upon her site (vs. 5).
- E. The debris of the ruined mainland city would be cast into the water (vs. 12).
- F. She would be built no more (vs. 14).
- G. Tyre would never be found again (vs. 21).⁵

"If Ezekiel had looked at Tyre in his day and had made these seven predictions in human wisdom, there would have been only one chance in 75,000,000 of their all coming true."⁶ It is a matter of historical record that all of Ezekiel's predictions were fulfilled as spoken.

Nebuchadnezzar attacked Tyre within three years of Ezekiel's writing. After a thirteen year siege, the Tyrians submitted. The bulk of her citizens fled to an island some one-half mile from the coast. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed mainland Tyre. The island city remained for several generations. Alexander the Great called upon the Tyrians to surrender to him in 333. When they refused to do so, his troops demolished the ruins of mainland Tyre and with the debris built a causeway some 200 feet wide out to the island. Following a bitter battle the island fortress fell. The Greeks reduced it to the ground. Although the city experienced numerous revivals over the centuries, she finally was ruined by the Moslems in 1291 and remains in that condition today. The site of the former commercial hub of the Mediterranean world is now a fishing village where the fishermen spread their nets.

BABYLON

Late in the eighth century B.C., Isaiah wrote: "And Babylon... shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there. But wild beasts of the desert shall be there..." (Is. 13:19-21).

"I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Is. 14:23).

The following particulars are noted in this remarkable prediction:

- A. The world's greatest city would become like Sodom and Gomorrah (13:19).
- B. It would never again be inhabited (13:20).
- C. Arabs would not pitch their tents there (13:20).
- D. Shepherds would not frequent the locale (13:20).
- E. Wild creatures of the desert would inhabit the ruins (13:21).
- F. It would be covered with swampy marshes (14:23).

Babylon's massive walls stretched 14 miles in each direction and encompassed some 196 square miles. Its double walls were surrounded by a moat of 30 feet wide. The outer walls towered 311 feet high and were 87 feet thick. Its 100 gates were of solid brass. The Euphrates flowed under the walls. It was believed to be invincible. But in 538 the Persians diverted the Euphrates and marched their troops under these impregnable walls. The overconfident defenders were engaged in a drunken orgy and had left the inner gates unguarded. The city fell in a night without a struggle. After a lengthy period of decline and decay it was finally abandoned in the Seleucid period, 300-100 B.C. Strabo the Roman traveler visited the site in the reign of Augustus Caesar (27 B.C.-14 A.D.) and observed, "the great city has become a desert."⁷ Thus it remains to this day. The interested student would be profited by reading the article on present-day Babylon in Josh McDowell's **Evidence That Demands A Verdict**, pp. 314-320.

MESSIAH

No study of fulfilled prophecy would be complete without a discussion of some of the great Messianic prophecies.

Perhaps the most spectacular of the Messianic predictions is Isaiah's spoken to King Ahaz in 734 B.C. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). No less an authority than Matthew details the fulfillment of this remarkable promise. After recording the words of the angel to Joseph, revealing the Holy Spirit as the cause and occasion of Mary's pregnancy, he adds: "And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us" (Matt. 1:21-23).

Luke, himself a medical doctor, verifies in his record the unique circumstances of our Lord's virgin conception (See Luke 1:26-36).

Micah the Morashtite wrote, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which are little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth... And he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah... he shall be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be our peace" (Mic. 5:2-5a).

In this prophecy of Micah we see the following details:

- A. Messiah's place of nativity -- Bethlehem (vs. 2a).
- B. That Messiah would be a ruler in Israel (vs. 2b).
- C. He would be born of a woman (vs. 3).
- D. The Messiah would be a male (vs. 4).
- E. His reign would be universal (vs. 4).
- F. He would be a king of peace (vs. 5).

The fulfillment of this remarkable description of Messiah's birth and ministry is common knowledge to every Bible student.

Space fails us to consider the spectacular predictions of Isaiah 52:11 - 53:12 where Christ's suffering, death and victory are vividly portrayed. Also we would cite the eager student to the 22nd Psalm, where his death on the cross is foretold in great detail.

May the few examples we have reviewed serve to stir the appetites of our readers for a more extended study. Hopefully the background information and guidelines for interpretation will be helpful in properly discerning the meanings.

We should remember the words of Peter: "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you... Even angels long to look into these things" (I Peter 1:10-12 NIV).

Surely this should inspire us to eagerly search the Scriptures and especially the prophets for the benefit of our own souls.
JHW

FOOTNOTES

1. J. Barton Payne, **Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy**, p. 13.
2. Patrick Fairbairn, **Imperial Bible Encyclopedia** Vol. 5, p. 302.
3. **Ibid.**
4. Bernard Ramm, **Protestant Biblical Interpretation**, pp. 227-232.
5. Josh McDowell, **Evidence That Demands A Verdict**, p. 285.
6. **Ibid.**
7. **Ibid**, p. 317.

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27.

PRINCIPLES THAT FORBID A PREMILLENNIAL INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY AND HISTORY

Introduction: The Theory. Premillennialists believe that:

- A. A coming world-wide dictator, who is Antichrist who will seek to make all men worship him.
 - B. All living Jews will return to Palestine.
 - C. The National Israel will convert to Christ.
 - D. The Rapture of the Saints for seven years in the sky while the great tribulation, a period of *unparalleled* woe comes upon the earth.
 - E. Christ will return to occupy David's literal throne in Jerusalem and reign in a glorious material kingdom on earth for 1,000 years.
 - 1. Converted Israel and resurrected saints to reign with him.
 - 2. The Hebrew temple will be rebuilt.
 - 3. Mosaic ordinances will be *reinstated*.
 - F. The resurrection of the just will occur before the millennial kingdom is established.
 - G. The wicked dead will be raised after the 1,000 years reign.
- ** We must always keep in mind that Christ came to do a spiritual work
- 1. Matt. 1:21...to save his people from their sins

2. Hebrews 9:24-28
3. Even though wicked men murdered him, still He was victorious in his mission.
4. Since his mission was spiritual, his kingdom would also be spiritual (John 18:36).

II. The cross was in the eternal plan of God. The cross had to come before the crown.

- A. Hebrews 10:5-10
- B. Luke 2:34-35. Simeon predicted his suffering.
- C. Rev. 13:8; I Peter 1:18-20
- D. Acts 2:23
- E. His death was no unforeseen rejection by the Jews. He knew it was happen that way.

III. The kingdom Jesus came to establish was a spiritual, not a temporal one.

- A. John 18:36
- B. John 3:5, entered by a spiritual, not physical birth.
- C. Twice he refused a material kingdom from the Jews.
 1. John 6:15
 2. John 12:12-13, 36

IV. Christ's kingdom was established and now exists, it is not a future occurrence.

- A. Col. 1:13
- B. Rev. 1:6, 9

V. Christ's spiritual kingdom is his church.

- A. Matthew 16:18-19
- B. When he spoke of his kingdom, he spoke of his church.
- C. Not two different things as Premillennialists say.

VI. Christ's kingdom is everlasting, no new dispensation or phase will supercede it.

- A. Daniel 2:44
- B. I Cor. 15: 24-26

VII. This kingdom is not local, like David's, but is universal.

- A. John 4:20-26
- B. Acts 1:6-8

VIII. Christ now is King over his kingdom, he does not have to wait until some future date.

- A. I Tim. 6:14-15
- B. Luke 1:32-33
- C. Hebrews 6:20; 7:2; 8:1

IX. Christ now reigns on David's throne in Heaven.

- A. Luke 1:32-33
- B. Acts 2:29-36
- C. Heb. 1:3, 8 "when he had made purification for sins he sat down..."
- D. Rev. 3:7
- E. Eph. 1:20-22
- F. Phil. 2:7-11

X. He could not reign on David's throne on earth.

- A. Jer. 22:28-30
- B. Matt. 1:12

XI. Christ is now high-priest in heaven and also a king on his throne.

- A. Heb. 8:1
- B. Zech. 6:12-13
- C. He could not be a high-priest on earth since he was not of the tribe of Levi.
 - 1. Heb 7:12-14; 8:4

XII. When Christ returns, he will deliver the kingdom up to the Father, not begin to reign on earth.

- A. I Cor. 15:24-28

XIII. All national and racial distinctions have been destroyed by Christ, Jews have no special standing with God today.

- A. Gal. 3:27-29
- B. Gal. 5:6

XIV. The Church...Christians, are the true Israel of God today, ethnic Jews are sinners like all others. They need Christ and his salvation.

- A. Gal. 3:27-29
- B. Gal. 6:15-16
- C. Gal. 4:28-31

D. Rom. 2:28-29

XV. We are now in "the last days", hence we should not expect another "age" to follow.

A. Acts 2:16-17

B. I Cor. 15:24-26

XVI. The land promises God made to Abraham were completely fulfilled in Joshua's day, Solomon's and Nehemiah's days.

A. Gen.15:18-19

B. Jas. 21:43-45, Joshua saw them fulfilled.

C. I Kings 4:21, Solomon ruled over all the promised land.

XVII. Christ's Second coming will end this earth's existence.

A. II Peter 3:10-13, There will be no time or place for a 1,000 year reign.

XVIII. When He comes, every eye will see Him, not the righteous and the Jews as they say.

A. Rev. 1:7

XIX. At His coming there will be one general resurrection of all the dead.

A. John 5:28-29

Conclusion: Premillennialism is a false belief because it clashes with the Bible at virtually every point.

28.

KEYS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

A. The name: Revelation is from the Greek **apokalupsis**, which means, an unveiling or a revealing.

B. Type of literature: It is called **apocalyptic prophecy**. It reveals things which must shortly come to pass (1:1).

1. It is the only New Testament book devoted primarily to prophecy.

2. It is a special type of prophetic literature, designated **apocalyptic**.

a. The apocalyptic writer presented his message in vivid signs and pictures, using symbolic terms and numbers.

- b. Three Old Testament books reflect this same type of prophecy: Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah. The author of Revelation alludes to these books repeatedly.
- c. The apocalyptic style of writing flourished in Israel from the days of the Maccabees until the defeat of Bar-Kok-Ba in 135 A.D.
- d. Uninspired Jewish apocalyptic books of the same period include: **Enoch, The Sibylline Oracles, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Ascension of Isaiah, The Assumption of Moses, The Apocalypse of Baruck, and Fourth Ezra.**
- e. Though there are some similarities between the Revelation and these uninspired apocalypses, the difference is notable.

C. Some characteristics of Apocalyptic literature:

- (1) An intense despair of present circumstances and an equally intense hope of divine intervention in the future.
- (2) The use of symbolic language, dreams and visions.
- (3) The introduction of celestial and demonic powers as messengers and agents in the progress of God's purpose.
- (4) The prediction of a catastrophic judgment of the wicked and a supernatural deliverance of the righteous.

D. Some differences in apocalyptic and prophetic literature:

- (1) A prophet usually spoke his message first and might later write it. The apocalyptic message was always written.
- (2) One of the chief concerns of the prophet was social morality, but the apocalyptic writer emphasized impending judgement and deliverance.
- (3) A prophet attempted to reform society, but the apocalypticist believed the present state to be beyond remedy, that only divine intervention could help. (De Santo).

E. The reason for the use of the veiled and obscure apocalyptic style is much the same as Jesus' purpose in using parables:

- (1) Comp. Matt. 13:11-15.
- (2) It was written to conceal its message from the enemy without and to reveal it to the saints.

Some Useful Principles for the Proper Interpretation of Apocalyptic Literature:

- 1. In seeking to understand these perplexing books, we must always remember that obscure passages must be interpreted in the light of the clear teachings of the Scripture, not vice versa.
- 2. Only by a thorough acquaintance with the prophetic portion of the Old Testament is one prepared to interpret and teach Revelation.
- 3. Although John's message is saturated with allusions to the Old Testament, we must not force Old Testament meanings upon John's words. Let John apply his own meanings. The important question is not where John got his material, but what is the Holy Spirit saying through John? Learn the general use of a certain symbol and then look for John's application.

4. To properly understand these books, the student must seek to know the authors, the conditions under which they wrote and their relation to those who received the message. Also, the conditions the recipients were facing is essential background material.
5. In the case of Revelation , “We must try to feel as Christians felt when they saw their brethren torn by wild beasts in the amphitheater, or burn as living torches one ghastly night in Rome” (F. Farrar).
6. It is wise to interpret symbols as we do parables; i.e., find the central truth which is being portrayed and let the details fit in, in the most natural way.
7. We must be reminded not to give to symbolic numbers a literal interpretation. Also the opposite is true, we must not give to a number a symbolic meaning that was intended to be understood literally.
8. Similar prophecies of the same event must be carefully compared in order to elucidate more clearly the sense of the prediction. (T. H. Horne).
9. It is usual with the prophets to express the same thing in a great variety of ways. These different expressions of the same lesson amplify and clarify the lesson being set forth.
10. The progressive order of time is not always to be looked for in prophetic writings; for they frequently resume topics which they have formerly treated, after other subjects have intervened and discuss them yet more. (Horne).
11. As symbolic actions and prophetic visions greatly resemble parables and were employed for the same purpose, i.e., more powerfully to instruct and gain the attention of the people, they must be interpreted in the same way as parables. (Horne).
12. We must not pry curiously beyond what is expressly written. Nor should we describe as being fulfilled, prophecies which are yet future. Similarly if a prophecy is once certainly and completely fulfilled, we have no right to look for some additional fulfillment.
13. Concerning commentaries, the views of the writers on Revelation are so utterly conflicting that the student soon finds himself driven to take from each whatever of useful suggestions he may find and then proceed independently in his search for the meaning and lesson of the book. (J. A. Smith).
14. In Revelation, we have an interpretation of history, not as man sees it, but as God sees it.
15. What the student must consider in each attempted interpretation is not whether every minute detail can be explained and every question answered, but whether the system has grasped the main points of the book and successfully explained them in a logical, internally harmonious way that is consistent with the rest of the Scripture.
16. Remember that God alone has the final word in interpreting prophecy. He gave the vision, he knows the true answer (II Pet. 1:20).
17. We should approach these books with that humility of spirit which is willing at times to frankly say, “I do not know.” (D. W. Richardson).
18. Remember that the benefits are so many and the lessons so vital, that whether we ever master the interpretation of all the symbols, we will still be enriched beyond measure by our study.

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The Book of Proverbs has been described as a guide to practical godliness. Martin Luther wrote, "Every man aiming at godliness should make it his daily handbook of devotion..."

What is a proverb? "A proverb is a short sentence conveying some moral truth or practical lesson in a concise, pointed form." Solomon described a proverb when he said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in network of silver" (Prov. 25:11). By this he means a proverb is an ornate, beautiful way of expressing a truthful and important matter. Proverbial teaching is one of the most ancient methods of instruction. It was widely used among the Eastern people. We still make use of proverbs when reminding people of their duties. For example, "A stitch in time saves nine." "If you are not going to do a job right, better not to do it at all." "A penny saved is a penny earned." "As the twig is bent so is the tree."

Solomon is the principal author of this book, but it also includes chapters by Agur, the son of Jakeh, the oracle (Chapter 30) and the lessons King Lemuel's mother taught him (Chapter 31).

The author of I Kings tells us that "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much...and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt...And he spake three thousand proverbs..." (I Kings 4:29-32). Of his 3,000 proverbs only some 800 have been preserved for us. Solomon tells us that "he pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs" (Eccle 12:9). This means that he gleaned many of his proverbs from other wise men's work. The Holy Spirit guided him in so doing that those recorded are truly the message of God for humanity.

The Book of Proverbs has four main divisions. The first nine chapters are moral lessons given by Solomon to his sons. Chapters 10-29 contain miscellaneous advice for all who wish to live a godly and successful life. Chapter 30 is a short collection of proverbs by Agur and chapter 31 is a poetic portrait of a worthy woman, written by King Lemuel on advice of his mother.

While the Book of Proverbs is easy to read, many of its proverbs are difficult to understand as the author intended. The reason is two fold.

1. Those who read from the old King James Version of the Bible will often be stumped by the wording which reflects our language as it was 400 years ago. A modern speech translation such as the New International Version will prove very helpful in grasping their true meaning.
2. Some fail to understand the type of literature in which the Proverbs are written and the proper method for interpreting them. The proverbs are written in the style of Hebrew poetry. The Jew's poetry was different than ours. It did not rhyme. Their method was the use of parallelisms, i.e., they repeated their thought two or more times. For example, "Be not thou envious against evil men: Neither desire to be with them" (Prov. 24:1). In each line he says essentially the same thing but with different wording. The most common type of parallelisms was the contrasting or antithetic parallel. "A soft answer turneth away wrath; But a grievous word stirreth up anger (15:1). Note how the word "but" sets up the contrast. Do this, *but* don't do that.

The single most important fact for properly interpreting the Proverbs is that they are "general rules and recommendations

for life and thus for many of them you will sometimes see an exception to that rule. The Law of Moses contained statutory laws for Israel. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2). That was the law, no exceptions were tolerated. But notice the difference in the Proverbs. "When a man's ways please Jehovah, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (16:7). Ask yourself, did Jesus's ways please the Lord? Yes! Were his enemies at peace with him? They hated Him and eventually killed him. The same was true of Stephen, Paul and the other Apostles. Generally, it is true, that if your ways please the Lord you will get along with people, even those who don't like you, but not in every case. There are exceptions.

Failure to understand the above point leads the student to misunderstand God's message and often causes him to doubt God's Word. This principle is seen in the following verses:

* "Jehovah will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: But he thrusteth away the desire of the wicked" (10:3). Is this true? Yes. God does take care of and provides for the righteous. Do the righteous sometimes suffer want? What of Job? God may have some other reason, unknown to us, for allowing the righteous man to suffer.

* "The righteous shall never be removed; But the wicked shall not dwell in the land" (10:30). Again we ask is this true? Yes! But sometimes the righteous are removed, driven out of their homes by war or wicked persecutors and sometimes the wicked end up taking the homes of the righteous. But on the whole, the righteous get along unmolested and the wicked are hounded by the law and land in jail.

* "Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth correction; But he that regardeth reproof shall be honored" (13:18). This is a true statement. The proud, stubborn person who will not listen to the reproof of his parents, teachers or elders will come to poverty and shame...but as we look about us we do see an occasional exception to this rule. Sometimes the proud, stubborn person becomes rich and famous. Look at some of the professional athletes who make millions but whose behavior is lawless and shameful. It is true that the person who accepts correction will prosper in his field of labor and be honored for his success. But occasionally the good man who is willing to accept correction works for a wicked boss who does not respect him and will not advance him, preferring fools like himself.

The proverb that we must consider is that in 22:6. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it. We all have known devout parents who raised their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), but something happened. One or more of their children forgot or turned their backs on their parents' teaching. Perhaps they turned to a life of sin, or they might have left Christ's church for some man's religious organization. Many parents have read Proverbs 22:6 and felt that it must be their fault that their child has gone astray. They mistakenly assume that it is a fixed law that a child properly raised and taught will of necessity walk in the sacred path.

These guilt-ridden parents fail to remember that God has given each of us volition or freedom of will. We can make our own choices, be they right or wrong. God did not make us programable robots. If a parent can so teach us that it will evermore be impossible for us to go astray, then we have no volition or freedom. But experience teaches us that the average child, if well-trained and taught in the ways of God, will follow that training throughout his life. That is Solomon's point. But there will be exceptions. Some children grow up stubborn and rebellious. Some prefer to follow their friends rather than their parents. Some dabble in drugs and alcohol and become addicted.

It is true that some who are rebellious in their youth will eventually grow up, settle down and return to the roots and values of their parents. But not all will do so.

Still, it is the case that if you want your child to be godly in his adult life, you must teach him or her to be godly in

childhood. If you want them to be honest you must teach them honesty. If you want them to be law-abiding citizens you must train them to be such. If you raise them up in the way they should go, the odds are great that they will follow the path on which you have set them. But if your son or daughter is the exception to this rule, you should not punish yourself. You did your duty to them. They rejected it and will have to answer for their choices (II Cor. 5:10).

30.

RULES FOR INTERPRETING BIBLICAL STATEMENTS RELATIVE TO SCIENCE

Over the years the author has discovered many helpful sets of rules or guidelines for interpreting various aspects of the Bible. These we share with the hope that they will help the reader to be a better student of the living oracles.

In our scientific age, with new facts and theories being presented daily, the Christian has to examine some of them within the light of God's Word. Since most science courses in public education and non-Christian colleges are presented from an atheistic point of view, we need guidelines to help us understand correctly what the Bible says about scientific matters.

It is a remarkable thing that anybody should take seriously the scientific statements of an oriental book whose contents were written 2,000-3,500 years ago. Not only its friends but enemies believe the Bible has an important voice in these matters that must be vindicated or condemned. This is really proof of its uniqueness and supernatural nature. No other book is so treated: i.e. the Koran, the Vedas, mythologies, etc.

How shall we treat the data of the Bible that deal with the world of nature? The five points following are from Bernard Ramm:

1. The Bible presents the world in terms of the average observer. Its language is the language of appearance which has been called "phenomenal language."
2. There are certain accommodations to the culture of the people that are necessary and in no way infringe upon inspiration nor the scientific chasteness of the Bible.
3. We must be very careful to avoid making the Bible too predictive of modern science.
4. Most of the science mentioned in the Bible is in outline form. This is especially true of the first chapters of Genesis. In an incredibly short document we have the creation of the entire universe from nothing to man. Hence it is the province of the sciences to fill in the details of what is a sketch in the Bible.
5. Our scientific interpretations of the science of the Bible must be kept fluid. The reason for this is that we cannot know what the specific interpretation of the generalized statements of the Bible are until we know what the data of science are. Just as history gives us clues to the meaning of prophecy, so that prophetic passages take on depth and particularly as they are interpreted in the light of history; so as our knowledge of science increases our ability to interpret the statements of the Bible grows with equal pace. *

Remember the Bible is not a science text book, but when the great Jehovah speaks, He speaks with the knowledge and

authority of the Creator of man and the universe. We can put complete confidence in His declarations, but we must take all precautions to properly understand what He says.

* Ramm, Bernard, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, Boston, W.A. Wilde, Col, 1950, pg. 134

31.

METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

There are numerous ways to study the Bible. Each is beneficial. For example:

1. You can simply have a plan whereby each day you carefully read a portion of God's Word. Since the Old Testament is much longer than the New, most folks read two portions of the Old to one of the New. Starting with Genesis, read three chapters per day. Beginning with Psalms, read two additional chapters daily. Beginning with Matthew read two chapters per day. Continue this daily program until you have finished the entire text of God's Word. Then start over again. The nature of God's book is such that you will never exhaust its contents, nor grow weary of your study. This repetitive reading of God's Word will enlighten mind and give you great strength in resisting Satan. It will give you familiarity with the whole of God's Book and make your detailed studies more fruitful.
2. You may wish to study a particular topic or subject such as faith, the church, baptism, marriage, etc. To do this you would need a concordance which would identify all the verses wherein your subject is mentioned.
3. You may choose to make a biographical study of the life of Bible characters. Again a concordance will expedite your study.
4. A chronological study is very useful. For example you can take the four Gospels and identify each episode in the life of Christ in relation to the unfolding days of his life. You could read the Book of Acts and insert the study of Paul's Epistles at the point where the recipients are mentioned in Acts. The same could be done with the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.
5. You can pursue a devotional study to renew and strengthen your faith and your relationship with God. The Psalms are very good for this.
6. You might study practical lessons on godly living in daily life. The Book of Proverbs would be very valuable for this.
7. You might find it necessary to make a careful study of some particular doctrine or practice about which there is controversy. In this type of study your concordance will be invaluable.

8. Your study might be to find the biblical answer to some question that has been raised by you or by others.

9. You might wish to study a particular book of the Bible in order to properly understand and teach it.

10. The key in all of your study is to do your best to gather and consider all the scriptural material on a given subject or question before you draw your conclusions. To draw your conclusion before you have examined the whole matter can prove to be embarrassing. The one verse or reference you neglected to check might be the one that will invalidate your conclusion, thus proving you wrong. More than the embarrassment, you have a moral obligation before God to "handle aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). You dare not mislead those who are seeking God's will.

Suggestions for the Study of a Particular Book of the Bible

A. Preliminary study.

1. Determine Who is the author? What were his circumstances? Who are the Recipients? What were their circumstances? When was it written? What is the general theme? What were the purposes of the author?

B. Read the book through without stopping to wrestle with difficulties. You want to gain familiarity with the whole of the book.

C. Read the book in other translations. Modern speech translation will prove very helpful for your study.

D. Then study the book in a slow, methodical way, identifying problem verses, making notes and checking references and related verses. Make use of your dictionary and commentaries if you have them.

E. Make a list of the verses you would like to memorize, of important lessons you must remember.

D. Do not allow yourself to be stuck too long on an obscure verse or book. Move on. You will discover that as your general knowledge of God's book increases, it will throw light on those verses once considered incomprehensible.

E. It is better to know something about the whole of the Bible than to have mastered one book, but be ignorant of the rest. Your goal, in time, will be to be familiar with every word, verse and chapter of every book but that will take years of study.

F. In your teaching, never pretend to know things you do not know. When you are confronted with a verse you do not understand or a question, the answer of which you do not know, just say, "I will research the matter and get back with you as soon as I can." The teacher who pretends to know what he does not will soon be discovered and lose his credibility. That you cannot afford to do.

BEWARE OF THE "NEW HERMENEUTICS"

To justify their changes in the faith, worship and practices of the church the promoters of unscriptural changes had to find a way to get around those Bible verses that clearly tell us what God expects of us and those that forbid adding to and taking from Scripture. Thus they came up with a new way of interpreting the Bible. The term *hermeneutics* means the science of interpretation. That they have a new hermeneutic tells us that they have cast aside the old traditional way that our brethren have used in interpreting the Bible for something of recent origin. In reality their new hermeneutic is not new. The denominational world has been using it for a good 150 years. It is best summarized as *"I want, therefore I believe."* *"I believe such to be true or acceptable therefore the Bible must be read in a way to justify my conclusion."* Bro. Thomas Olbricht, former professor of Bible at Abilene and later at Pepperdine, is the man to whom credit should go for popularizing the new hermeneutic among our preachers. In his book, *Hearing God's Voice*, he reports that he taught and trained more than 2,000 young preachers over his teaching career. This book tells how he came to abandon the old approach for interpreting Scripture and how he learned his new way. He learned it while studying at Harvard University...a school whose academic atmosphere and approach are quite opposite to simple Bible Christianity. In his book he sets forth the basics of his new approach to the Scripture.

Among the many features of the new hermeneutic are the following:

- * The New Testament is not to be viewed as the law of Christ which must be carefully followed. Rather it is to be viewed as a love-letter full of nice but nonessential suggestions.
- * Promoters of it insist that no sharp distinction should be made between the Old and New Testaments. Since it is all God's Word, therefore we can appeal to the Old Testament for approval of things we wish to do. Primarily this is their way to find scriptural support for the use of instrumental music.
- * They flatly reject the idea that to be acceptable to God we should look to commands, examples or necessary inferences. Borrowing from the contemporary denominational scholars they reason that one can read and pray and God will give him an explanation...of course different people might come up with different understandings of the meaning. They also say that rather than a teacher or preacher studying and learning the meaning from the Scripture, it is better for the entire class or church to discuss the matter and arrive at a consensus...which they would take to be God's guidance.
- * They do not believe the Bible to be inerrant and perfect as we have previously believed. They do concede it is God's book but they accept the idea that it can and does have some mistakes here and there.
- * They firmly reject the idea that there is a pattern of doctrine, worship and activities with which we are bound to comply. Their new approach allows them to reject verses that speak of the pattern God has given us (II Tim. 1:13).
- * Their approach to the Bible allows them to pick and choose those things they like and reject anything they find distasteful to them.
- * They are vocal in denying that we should seek to restore the ancient faith and practices of the original church.
- * They reason that Christ's church consists of all devout religious souls and groups that believe in Christ. Thus we are wrong to think of ourselves as God's one and only true church.
- * They are greatly enamored by the teaching of schools such as Harvard, Yale and Princeton and the professors of those schools. They tend to take what they might have to say over anything our brotherhood scholars might have said about a given subject.
- * On the whole, they tend toward a liberal rather than a conservative approach to Christianity and Scripture; all the while denying that fact.
- * They borrow heavily from the secular philosophy of postmodernism. Among its chief points are
 1. There is no absolute truth, rather all things are subject to change.
 2. That one's culture can and should determine how he will view things
 3. That old beliefs are by nature suspect and should be deconstructed.
 4. That truth is subjective. Thus that which is truth to one man may not be so to others.
 5. That truth is not static and fixed, rather new truth is being constantly revealed and discovered.

6. That it is a great sin to be critical of other's beliefs or practices. Of course they criticize us for so doing! I do not say that they take these points to the extreme that unbelievers of the world do, but they are definitely influenced by these principles.

The New Hermeneutic is an essential tool for those who are determined to change the church from a committed, Bible-believing and obeying body of believers into an evangelical Protestant denomination. This is a major battle that must be fought and won if we are to survive.

33.

WHAT THE BIBLE IS LIKE

Such a marvelous, multifaceted thing is our Bible that no single illustration is adequate to describe it. Sacred writers use numerous pictures to describe God's wonderful book and the various purposes it serves.

* God's Word in Jeremiah's mouth was like a fire (Jer. 5:14; 23:29). Fire refines and purifies, burning away the dross. It also destroys things that cannot resist its flames. So does God's Word.

* The same prophet pictures Scripture as a **hammer**. "Is not my word like...a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). A hammer can be a useful tool for building up a structure, but it can also smash and destroy that which is unwanted, undesirable, unyielding or imperfect. In the hands of a skilled blacksmith, a hammer can beat and shape the hot iron into something useful. A capable teacher of God's Word can save a soul from ruin. He can help rebuild a life or a broken family. God's word can break a hard and stubborn heart and bring it to repentance. It can convict a sinner of his wickedness pronounce him guilty.

* Jeremiah also describes Scripture as **food** for the hungry soul. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart..." (Jer. 15:16). The author of Hebrews tells us that God's Word contains both milk for babes in Christ and strong meat for adults in the faith (Heb. 5:13-14). As the physical man will weaken and perish without adequate physical food, so will the spirit of man perish if it does not receive sufficient spiritual food from God's Word. Those who regularly partake of the Word will grow strong in the Lord (Matt. 4:4).

* Paul describes the Bible as the **sword of the Spirit** (Eph. 6:17). He sees the Bible as the offensive weapon given to the Christian soldier to use in confronting, battling and defeating sin and error. When Scripture is wisely used, the man of God can best any adversary with his spiritual sword.

* In his 19th Psalm, David compares the value of the Word of God to much **fine gold** (19:10). It is a treasure of spiritual wealth. It will bring to the spirit of man the wonderful things he needs and desires. It is worth pursuing and retaining once it is found.

* In the same psalm, David says that God's Word is "Sweeter also than **honey** and the droppings of the honeycomb." (Ps. 19:10). Refined sugar was unknown to ancient man. Honey was their only source of sweetness. It was highly prized and eagerly sought for. It delighted those privileged to eat it. So is God's Word a delight to those who know and partake of it.

With such a wonderful treasure in our possession, how can we possibly neglect to read it, study it and make it the standard of our lives? May it be that every person who wears the name of Christ will be known as a person of the Book of God.

WHAT BIBLE STUDY WILL DO FOR YOU

A good salesman helps his prospect to see the value his product will mean to him. Once this benefit is established, the closing of the sale is fairly easy. To get more people studying God's Word we need to show the immediate personal advantages the student will receive. Wilber Smith* has set forth seven important things Bible Study will do for one:

I. It Discovers and Convicts us of Sin. Before a sick person can be helped, his condition must be diagnosed: whatever is causing the trouble must be removed, a wholesome diet must be followed and suitable exercise must be engaged in. The same is true of moral and spiritual ills. The word is God is the "discerner of the thoughts and intents of our hearts," (Heb. 4:12). Again the Word of God is like a mirror, reflecting the true nature and condition of our soul, (Jam. 1:23-24). John Calvin wrote:

"No human writings, however sacredly composed, are at all capable of affecting us in a similar way. Read Demosthenes, Cicero, read Plato or Aristotle, or any other of that class. You will, I admit, feel wonderfully allured, pleased, moved, enchanted, but turn from them to the reading of the Sacred Volume, and whether or not it will affect you, so pierce your heart, so work its way into your very marrow,...making it manifest that in the Sacred Volume there is a truth Divine, something that makes it superior to all the gifts and graces attainable by man." Institutes of the Christian Religion."

II. It Cleanses us From the Pollution of Sin. The Psalmist asked and answered a universal question: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." (119:9). Jesus assured his disciples "now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Izaak Walton penned these truth filled words of eulogy to the Word of God:

"Every hour
I read you kills a sin,
Or lets a virtue in
To fight against it.

III. Bible Study Imparts Strength to the Soul. As food provides strength for the physical man, the spiritual man receives his strength from the Word. The scriptures are milk for the babe and meat for the full-grown (Heb. 5:12-14). But we must eat them (Jer. 15:16).

"...If you want to be strong, let Scripture truth occupy and fill and be always present to your mind. There are powers to rule and to direct all conduct, motive powers of the strongest character in these great truths of God's revelation" (Alexander Maclaren).

IV. Scripture Study Instructs Us As to What We Are to Do. The wise man whose house stood the stormy test had heard the word of God and done it (Matt. 7:24-27). God's ways are not man's ways (Is. 55:8-9). Had God not revealed His will to us, we would never have known what we should do to please Him.

V. A Sword for Victory Over Sinful Temptations is provided by study of God's Word (Eph. 6:17). This is the Christian's only offensive weapon. When the Lord was tempted by Satan, the Sword of the Spirit drove Satan back in every assault (Matt. 4:1-11). Psalm 119:11 says "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee."

VI. Our Lives Are Made Fruitful by Bible Study. The man who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates therein day and night is like an evergreen tree, planted by a water stream that bears fruit and prospers (Ps. 1:1-3). God promised

Joshua that meditation upon God's Word and obedience thereto would bring prosperity and success (1:8-9).

VII. **It Gives Us Power in Prayer.** Jesus promised, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

Surely no more profitable pursuit is available to man with benefits immediately available and accruing even into eternity.

Search the Scriptures.

* Smith, Wilbur, M., **Profitable Bible Study**, Natick, Mass. W. A. Wilde., 1963.

35.

THE VALUE OF MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD

In addition to possessing the book of God in our homes, we need to deposit it in our hearts. American Prisoners of War in Vietnam kept their faith, their sanity and their hope alive by sharing the Scriptures, prayers and sacred songs they had long ago stored up in their hearts. And thus even though they were deprived of the printed word, the Word was yet able to sustain them. Memorization takes effort and time, but the rewards are worth it all.

There was a time when it was common for youngsters to memorize vast amounts of scripture: at school, in home devotions and in Bible School. Preachers quoted most of their verses. Some memorized whole chapters, even entire books of Holy Writ. Some with special talents of memory could recite vast portions, if not all of the New Testament. We need to continue to emphasize this important method of learning God's Word for numerous reasons. Some of those reasons we now share.

God taught Israel to memorize his message. "...these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6-7). How blest is that family where this admonition is followed. How many sins will be driven away before they can take root. How much spiritual strength will be generated! How better could we make certain our heavenly calling?

Spiritual growth depends upon our knowing God's Word. "...as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2). Food must be taken into the system and digested before it benefits the body, so must the Scriptures to strengthen the soul.

Memorization makes possible the uninterrupted communion of the soul with God. David wrote: "I will bless Jehovah who hath given me counsel; yea my heart instructeth me in the night seasons. I have set Jehovah always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:7-8). Whether at work or traveling, in school or at some social event, the memorized word is there to keep us pure and to guide us aright. No night is so dark as to rob the mind of truth thus committed.

Scripture in the heart contributes to an effectual prayer life. Jesus tells us: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). Perhaps this explains why so many modern disciples have barren prayer lives, for the absence of His Word in our hearts will have the opposite effect. Since prayers must be according to the Divine will one can easily see how a heart filled with Scripture would be more able to pray acceptably (Matt. 26:39).

The Word of God stored in the mind provides powerful assistance in soul-winning. From infancy, Timothy had "known the sacred scriptures which (were) able to make (him) wise unto salvation" (II Tim. 3:15). When memorized, the gospel

which is the power of God unto salvation is instantly available for every need (Rom. 1:16). Whether you meet the prospect on a plane, in the coffee shop or at work, you can teach him.

To enjoy the full benefits of the indwelling Spirit of God, we must be full of the inspired word. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul exhorts us to "be filled with the Spirit and in a parallel passage in Colossians 3:16 he says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly..." The blessings of God's Holy Spirit are received in conjunction with the Scriptures. Let us fill our hearts and minds with the memorized Word.

The example of Jesus encourages us to memorize Scripture. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, the Master successfully defended himself by the Word of divine truth stored up in his heart (Matt. 4:1-11). The same Word strengthens us as we "resist the Devil" (Jas. 4:7). Can any of us afford to neglect this powerful preventive to sin? To be a Christian means to follow Christ's example (I Pet. 2:21).

Memorization makes possible continued meditation upon the Word of God at all times. The psalmist wrote, "Oh how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). Again we read, "Blessed is the man... (whose) delight is in the law of Jehovah and on his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2).

Scripture laid up in the heart provides comfort and strength in times of trouble. "Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me (Ps. 119:92-93).

The Word in the memory will satisfy our spiritual appetite. Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). The soul that hungers and thirsts for God's righteousness will cherish the words of truth securely stored in the depths of his being. "Man shall not (cannot, JHW) live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Hear the patriarch Job, "I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

Victory over sin is achieved through the memorized Word. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking hold thereto according to thy word... Thy word have I laid up in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:9, 11).

The Word is a vital part of the "whole armor of God" that prepares us for spiritual combat (Eph. 6:11-17). Notice that none of these items of spiritual armor can be separated from God's Word. Since so much of the Christian's life is spent in combat, fighting the "good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12), we cannot afford to be without ready access to the truth. Quietness and contentment accompany the word of God when preserved in the heart. Listen to the Spirit's Word, "Great peace have they that love thy law; and they shall have no occasion of stumbling" (Ps. 119:165).

A bountiful harvest always follows when the seed of God's word is diligently planted in the human heart. God's word will not return unto him void, but it will accomplish that which he pleases and prosper in the thing whereto he send it (Is. 55:11). One will never be disappointed at the results when he takes the time to memorize the precious words of life. The reward will be manifold, the consequences will be realized even beyond the grave.

Let all of God's children daily feed upon God's word and store it in the memory banks of their minds that it might guide them in all earthly pursuits and protect their journey unto eternity.

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

The psalmist wrote "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right" (Ps. 119:128). The first Christians were guided by the "apostle's teaching" (Acts 2:42). They were taught to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus. . ." (Acts 20:35). The Lord's church has always thus honored and been guided by the Sacred Word. However, this has not been the attitude of all churches.

Someone has said that the Scriptures are like the Sun and the church is like a clock. A clock is commonly found to be fast or slow. It may even stop, be clogged with foreign matter or broken. The Scriptures have come from God. The church being composed of human beings is earthly and fallible. As the sun moves with mathematical precision and never needs to be reset nor adjusted, so the Scripture is always the sure standard. The human leadership of churches is often found to be out of harmony with God's Word. When this happens, the church always needs to reset itself according to the Bible. Never should man even think of altering the message of Divine Revelation to match a changing church.

There are three common trends in current religious thought to which that this lesson is applicable:

1. The papal concept of the infallibility of the church. Repeatedly the teaching of God's Word has suffered as men sought to adjust the sun (Scripture) to match the clock (Catholic Church). Yet in spite of all the efforts, the clock is still incorrect in its time. The sun is still as true as the day God created it.

2. The theology of many Protestant churches often rejects basic principles of the Biblical message. God's message is emasculated in order to fit their existential humanistic philosophy. This is often styled liberalism or modernism. Such theologians deny the supernatural element of the Bible so they try to interpret it so as to excise the miraculous content.

No intelligent person would ever think of trying to adjust the sun to agree with his inaccurate clock. If there is any discrepancy, the clock must be changed to match the sun. Only a fool would contemplate the former. Really the same is true of those who try to recast the supernatural message of God's word to fit their church doctrines.

3. Tragically some of God's own people have taken it upon themselves to change certain aspects of the church which they do not care for. To sell their ideas to others, they twist and manipulate the Scripture seeking to make their unscriptural changes look acceptable. Like their one mentioned above they are trying to reset the sun so it will agree with their faulty ideas about the faith and worship of the church.

The word which Jesus spake shall judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Churches of Christ must be content to let the word of God speak and then do their best to obey its every precept. We hope that you share this view?

YOUR REMARKABLE BIBLE

Likely, on a shelf in your home is a book called The Bible. Far fewer have read this ancient book than own it. The Bible is a collection of 66 smaller books. It is divided into two major sections; the Old Testament, given to the ancient Hebrews to order their lives and worship (Deut. 5:1-6) and the New Testament of Christ given to those who would follow Jesus. The first five books of the Old Testament were written by Moses some 3500 years ago. The New Testament was completed by the end of the first Christian century. The Bible consists of several different types of literature: law, history, biography, poetry, practical advice, philosophy, hymns, epistles and prophecy. Men from many stations of life participated in writing this book, yet it is perfectly harmonious in content. This is accounted for by the fact that the Holy Spirit of God guided all of them in their writing (II Pet. 1:21). Paul says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (II Tim. 3:16). "Inspired" means, "God breathed" and implies the message originally came from the mouth of God. Being of God, it is without error in its content. In the Old Testament, 2,500 phrase express the thought, "Thus saith the Lord." This supernatural nature of the Bible is seen in the following points:

- * **It is indestructible.** It has survived the combined assaults of atheists, heathen, powerful governments, opposing religions and even disloyal friends. Its attackers have perished but it still stands, unscarred and impregnable.
- * **It is incomprehensible.** Some of the greatest minds on earth have spent a lifetime studying this Holy Book only to find it as unfathomable as at the beginning of their quest. The finite mind of man cannot master an infinite production,
- * **Its style is different than any other book. The brevity of its record is remarkable.** The most important body of information in the world can be carried in one's coat pocket or purse. **The omissions** of the record mark it as divine. Think of all the extra things you would have put in the Bible had you written it. God gave us only what we needed. **The impartiality** of this book is significant. The truth is told about its heroes, including their dismal failures. Men do not write their books after this fashion.
- * **The fulfilled prophecies** call for an inspired author. Hundreds of predictions written down hundreds of years before the fact have been fulfilled in a remarkable way.
- * **The discoveries of archaeology** have verified the Biblical record of history, geography and ancient people.
- * **The positive impact of the Bible on humanity** distinguishes it from any other book ever written. Where the Bible is circulated, read and believed civilization reaches its highest peak and individual freedom is most fully realized. Where it is absent, tyranny, enslavement and ignorance prevail.
- * The Bible is the essential foundation of Christianity, for without a Bible we would have no knowledge of Jesus, what to believe or do in order to please him.
- * The Bible is the most important document in the development of Western Culture and civilization. Its is the foundation for our laws, our value system, our ethics, our concept of marriage and family and of social responsibility.
- * It was the single most important volume in the development of our English language.
- * The Bible is the most loved and probably the most hated book in our society.

Take time to read this Book sympathetically and carefully. You will feel in yourself the proof of its divine character. It will make you a wiser, better person. It will help you see yourself as you really are. It will give you direction for life and help you find peace with God. It is the standard by which you will be judged in eternity (John 12:48).

THE MANIFOLD VALUE OF THE BIBLE

What price could we put on the Bible? Just how could we measure its value? David wrote that God's word was "more precious than fine gold" (Ps. 19:10). In during Communism's reign of terror, disciples were willing to pay a month's wages for a Bible and risk government harassment in so doing. This may seem strange to some Americans who have never taken time to read one of the numerous Bibles in their home. There are many values that flow from God's holy book, each of which provides an incentive to study it diligently. Consider some of these values:

Practical Value: "The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying" (John Flavel). "The Bible is the one book to which any thoughtful man may go with any honest question of life or destiny and find the answer of God by honest searching" (John Ruskin).

Personal Value: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). Other books were written for our information, but the Bible was given for our transformation.

Educational Value: "I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without a Bible" (William Lyon Phelps). "The opening of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119:130).

Literary Value: Again we quote from Dr. William L. Phelps, former president of Yale University. "From even a literary point of view (the Bible is) the greatest book in the world." The famous English author Charles Dickens, wrote, "The New Testament is the best book the world has ever known or will know." Our American patriot, Patrick Henry, said, "There is a book worth all other books which were ever printed."

Social and Civic Value: "For more than a thousand years the Bible collectively taken has gone hand in hand with civilization, science, law—in short, with the moral and intellectual cultivation of the species, always supporting and often leading the way" (Samuel T. Coleridge). The brilliant Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I have always said... that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers and better husbands."

Political Value: "The Bible has been the Magna Carta of the poor and the oppressed" (Thomas H. Huxley). Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). "It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible reading people" (Horace Greeley).

Religious Value: "The Bible is the only source of all Christian truth, the only rule for the Christian life;—the only book that unfolds to us the realities of eternity" (Sir M. Hale). Peter expressed it thusly, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Eternal Value: "Do you know a book that you are willing to put under your head for a pillow when you are dying? Very well; that is the book you want to study when you are living. There is only one such book in the world" (Joseph Cook). It is amazing how few infidels are found on the death-bed. All men instinctively reach out for the hope set forth in the Holy Bible. Jesus warned, "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). In the Apostle John's visions of the judgment he saw all the race of man before the judge of the universe with "the books opened" and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books..." (Rev. 20:11-12).

With Immanuel Kant we affirm, "The Bible is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced." The question is, what use are we making of this marvelous book?

DON'T NEGLECT YOUR MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION

You may have heard of people who inherited some precious object or found it at a yard sale or thrift store but did not recognize its value. Not realizing its worth they may have neglected or abused it to their own loss. Such is commonly the case with people's bibles. The following lines will help you see how notable people, whose lives were also full and busy, viewed God's Word.

Thomas H. Huxley, noted scientist and agnostic wrote "there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact, that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life all that is best and noblest in English history...By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities and earns the blessings or the curses of all times..." (*The Contemporary Review*, Dec. 1871).

James A. Froude, critic of Christianity wrote, "The Bible, thoroughly known, is a literature in itself—the rarest and richest in all departments of thought and imagination which exists."

Frederic Harrison wrote, "The English Bible is the true school of English literature. It possesses every quality of our language in its highest form. The book which begot English prose is still its supreme type."

Lord Macaulay wrote: The English Bible—a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone show the whole extent of its power and beauty.

To his son, Charles Dickens wrote, "I put a New Testament among your books...because it is the best book that ever was or ever will be in the world, and because it teaches you the best lessons by which any human creature who tries to be truthful and faithful can possibly be guided."

In his *History of European Morals*, Lecky wrote, that those who believe and live by the Bible have "covered the globe with countless institutions of mercy, absolutely unknown to the pagan world."

Don't neglect your most precious gift. Read it like you would any other book. Read it regularly and systematically. Read it, believing it is a message from God to you personally. Read it with faith in its genuineness and truthfulness. Read it with a desire to understand God's will for your life that you might obey it. For this you will never feel you have wasted your time nor suffered harm by so doing.

(Quotes from *The Book Nobody Knows* by Bruce Barton, Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc. NY, 1956).

LOYALTY TO THE SCRIPTURES

God has spoken to us in the pages of our Bible (Heb. 1:1-2). To be loyal to the Father we must be loyal to His divine book. The word "loyalty" suggests that one is "unswerving in allegiance, faithful to a cause, ideal or custom" (Webster). Because one is loyal he will "Buy the truth and sell it not (Prov. 23:23). He will honor God by speaking his word faithfully (Jer. 23:28). A loyal saint will contend for the faith (Jude 3) and defend the gospel (Phil. 1:16). Being loyal we will pledge ourselves to God's word as did David:

"Oh how I love thy law" (Ps. 119:97)

"I will never forget thy precepts" (Ps. 119:93)

"I shall keep thy law; yea I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Ps. 119:34)

"I will speak of thy testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame (Ps. 119:46)

While every brother would loudly amen the above sentiments, observation tells us that not all mean the same thing when they speak of loyalty to the Word.

I. Some are loyal to the black, leather-bound book in a blind, emotional way. This loyalty is fighting-strong yet fuzzy and nebulous in content. For in addition to the divine truths recorded in the book they are fiercely loyal to their opinions about the Bible. They are loyal to interpretations of the Scriptures, hallowed by long use, even though they are incorrect. Even if it means denying the obvious context or the lexical meaning of a word, they will be loyal to the traditional view of a verse.

While loyalty is a commendable virtue and essential to salvation, blind loyalty is like blind faith. Only truth can make one free from error (John 8:32). Even as zeal without knowledge led the Jews into opposition to the faith of Jesus (Rom. 10:2-3), so loyalty without proper knowledge will often set a man at variance with the truth of the gospel.

II. God would have us be loyal to his word, **correctly understood**. Catholics interpret Matthew 16:18 to say that Peter is the foundation of the church. While I am totally loyal to Matthew 16:18, I know the foundation is Christ (I Cor. 3:11).

Our loyalty is tested when we learn that the Bible's true message differs from the brotherhood's traditional understanding of it. A loyal Christian is willing to adjust his views if his interpretation is found to be deficient. Paul provides us just such an example: "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:7). But when he learned his error, he tells us, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision..." (Acts 26:19). This should be our attitude toward every new truth we learn.

God's great doctrines do not need irrational, unsound, faulty interpretations or arguments to defend them. They have a more noble strength and foundation than that. The Apostles never stooped to use "cunningly devised fables when (they) made known... the power and coming of (the) Lord Jesus..." (II Pet. 1:16), nor should we.

To cling to an argument we know is invalid is a form of intellectual dishonesty. When our adversaries discover it, not only will they laugh us to scorn, even our sound arguments will have less impact on their hearts. They will assume that all of our arguments are likewise defective. However, even if the opponent never caught us mishandling the Scriptures, the omniscient God who searches the minds and hearts would see us and hold us accountable.

False teachers seek to discredit the church and her preachers by suggesting that our faith and practice are based on preference and tradition rather than Scripture properly understood. Let all of God's children "Give diligence to present (themselves) approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES CAME TO US

I. How Were Our Present 27 Books Chosen?

By the end of the second century the collection of canonical books (i.e., those which were genuine Scripture) was agreed upon...excluding all others. No official act of a church body decreed it...it was simply a universal recognition of genuine and superior over spurious.

II. Rules For Determining Canonical Books:

Canon defined: Its basic meaning is *reed*. Since a reed was sometimes used as a measuring rod, the word canon came to mean a standard or rule. It is also used to refer to a list or index, and when thus applied to the Bible, denotes the list of books received as Scripture (From *How We Got the Bible* by Lightfoot).

Rule 1. Apostolicity. Was it written by an Apostle or did the author sustain an intimate relation with the Apostles that would raise it to apostolic level?

Rule 2. Contents. Were the contents of such a spiritual character to entitle it to this rank? On the basis of this test, most of the apocryphal (of doubtful origin) and pseudepigraphal books (falsely attributed to apostolic men) were eliminated, and ours verified.

Rule 3. Universality. Was the book universally received by the church?

Rule 4. Inspiration. Did the book give evidence of inspiration?

Rule 5. Inspiration of selection. God in His providence guided the selection of the proper books.

III. Transmission of the Text:

Our knowledge of the original autographs (the original handwritten copies) has arrived through four channels. These will be noticed below. The original copies of the inspired books are called *autographs*. None of the autographs remain today. In 303 A.D., Diocletian, emperor of Rome, ordered all sacred books destroyed by fire. Most likely the autographs perished then. Copies of them remain for us. Our present Greek text of the New Testament is reconstructed from the following sources:

1. **Hand written copies of the Greek Text.** Some ten years ago there were 232 copies described as uncials. The text of these is in all capital letters. Thus far 2,440 minuscules or cursive copies have been found. Of these, forty are 1,000 years old or more.

The Chief Greek Manuscripts are:

- a. **Vaticanus** from 350 A.D. contained in Vatican Library.
- b. **Sinaiticus**, dated 375 A.D. It was found by Count Tischendorf in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai in 1844. It is dated 375 A.D. It was sold to the British museum in 1933 for one half million dollars.
- c. **Alexandrinus**, dated 425 A.D. It was once in the Library at Alexandria in Egypt. It was presented by Cyril Lucar, patriarch of Constantinople to King Charles I of England in 1627.
- d. **Ephraemi Rescriptus**. The sermons of Ephraemi of Syria were written over the Scripture text. It dates from 450 A.D. It is now located in the National Library of Paris.
- e. **Codex Beza**, dated 5th century This was found in the monastery of St. Irenaeus at Lyons, France in 1562. It is now in University of Cambridge..
- f. **Codex Washingtonius**, written in late 4th century. It was-purchased by C.L. Freer of Detroit in Cairo, Egypt in 1906.

It is now in the Smithsonian Institute.

g. **Codex Clermontanus**, dated from the 6th century. It was found in Clermont, France. Now kept in Paris. Codex means book.

2. **Translations or Versions** in ancient languages. Fifteen different ancient translations are extant.

- a. Syraic, Sinatic, Curetonian and Peshitta from about 150 A. D.
- b. Egyptian, Thebian and Memphitic, from the 3rd century.
- c. Latin, African Latin, 150 a.d. and Jerome's Vulgate, 384 a.d.
- d. Armenian, from the 3rd or 4th century.
- e. Gothic, from the 4th century.
- f. Ethiopic, from 600 a.d.

3. **Lectionaries**. Of these, 1,700 have survived. (An arrangement of Bible passages for weekly reading).

4. **Papyri**. A large collection of papyri documents have been collected. These contain writings and correspondence from the early Christian centuries that add much supporting evidence to our text.

5. **Quotations** from the ancient Christian writers. We have 38 large volumes of these writings. The chief ones are:

- a. Ignatius of Antioch who died 116 a.d.
- b. Marcion of Pontus and Rome, who died in 165 a.d.
- c. Justin Martyr who lived from , 100-165 a.d.
- d. Tation of Syria and Rome, 120 a.d.
- e. Irenaeus of Asia Minor and Gaul, lived 140-203 a.d.
- f. Polycarp of Smyrna, He live from 69 -155 a.d. He was a disciple of John the Apostle.
- g. Clement of Alexandria who lived 155-215 a.d.

Scholars, working from these sources have been able to provide us with a highly accurate copy of the New Testament as it existed in the earliest days of the second century. Your Bible is entirely dependable and trustworthy.

"The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men.—It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture for its matter. —It is all pure, all sincere; nothing too much; nothing wanting." (John Locke).

"A single line in the Bible has consoled me more than all the books I have ever read" (Immanuel Kant).

Anatoly Schransky, Russian dlssident, once spent 130 days in solitary confinement because he would not surrender a small copy of the book of Psalms that his wife and sent him while in prison.

The deathless Book has survived three great dangers: the negligence of its friends; the false systems built upon it; the warfare of those who have hated it" (Isaac Taylor).

"The books of men have their day and grow obsolete. God's Word is like Himself, 'The same yesterday, today and forever'" (Robert Payne).