

Interpreting the Scriptures

Teacher Manual

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Contents

Lesson 1-4 – Introduction to Hermeneutics.....	3-34
Lesson 5 – Bridging the Gaps.....	35-43
Lesson 6 – Foundations for Biblical Study.....	44-54
Lesson 7 – The Context Principle.....	55-63
Lesson 8 – The Comparative Mention Principle.....	64-70
Lesson 9 – The Progressive Mention Principle.....	71-79
Lesson 10 – The Complete Mention Principle.....	80-88
Lesson 11 – The Covenantal Principle.....	89-96
Lesson 12 – The Ethnic Division Principle.....	97-107
Lesson 13 – The Chronometrical Principle.....	108-114
Lesson 14 – The Breach Principle.....	115-124
Lesson 15 – The Christocentric Principle.....	125-133
Lesson 16 – The Moral Principle.....	134-140
Lesson 17 – Identifying Figures of Speech.....	141-149
Lesson 18 – Interpreting Symbols.....	150-156
Lesson 19-20 – Interpreting Types.....	157-171
Lesson 21 – Interpreting Parables.....	172-182
Lesson 22 – Interpreting Narratives.....	183-188
Lesson 23 – Interpreting Prophecy.....	189-199
Lesson 24 – The Application of Hermeneutics.....	200-209

Note to Users: The following course is intended to be studied in conjunction with the book *Interpreting the Scriptures* by Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin.

Lesson 1-4 Introduction to Hermeneutics

Who has ever heard someone say that we need to have a healthy love for ourselves if we are going to be able to love others? They will use Luke 10:27 where Jesus says that we are to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” Yet when you look at the context you find out very quickly that the passage has nothing to do with loving ourselves, but loving others in a sacrificial way (The Good Samaritan).

Who has ever heard someone commenting on how a person’s talents or gifts will open doors for them causing them to rise in leadership opportunities and then quote Proverb 18:16 from the King James Version of the Bible, “A man’s gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men”? Later they come to find out that this passage is actually talking about bribing your way to the top.

A gift will get you in to see anyone. –CEV

Who has ever indicated that it is good for people to enter into the experience of their teaching first before they expect others to do so and then quote II Timothy 2:6 from the KJV, “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits”? Later they come to realize that this passage is suggesting that the people who do the work should be able to take a portion of the spoils first.

The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. –NIV

These illustrations all point out the need for a study of biblical interpretation. The Bible is the most important book in the world. The Bible is still the bestselling book of all time. But the Bible has been abused and misused by many. It has been used to justify all manner of strange doctrines. It has been used to justify all kinds of bad behavior. Even atheists will throw words of the Bible back at Christians when they use phrases like “judge not.” They do not realize when they say things like this that they are totally misunderstanding the intent of the Scripture that they have quoted.

The Bible is open to being used in these ways because people do not utilize proper principles of interpretation. That is what this course is about. Studying proper principles of interpretation so that when we stand up and preach or quote from the Bible we can do so with a sense of authority. We can do it in a way that we know God will back us up.

I. Is the Bible an open or a closed book?

Do you have to have a seminary degree to understand the Bible? Can the average Christian understand the Bible or is it a futile endeavor? Must we go to the clerical elite to understand the truth of God’s word?

A. The Bible is a closed book to the lost (I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 4:3-4).

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

I Corinthians 2:14

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

II Corinthians 4:3-4

B. The Bible is an open book to the believer.

God has given the Holy Spirit to the believer to help lead and guide them into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is the “anointing” Who will instruct us through the word (I John 2:27).

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. John 16:13

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. I John 2:27

1. The basic message is clear to all.

Even though many Christians disagree on many of the particulars of Scripture, there is very little disagreement when it comes to the central message and the basic truths taught in the Scripture.

While everything in the Bible is not equally clear (II Pet. 3:15-16), the main message is sufficiently clear for us to be saved and accomplish God’s purpose.

And remember, the Lord is waiting so that people have time to be saved. This is just as our beloved brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him--speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do the other parts of Scripture--and the result is disaster for them. –NLT

- a. The Bible was written to average Christians. The writers assumed that the readers of their material would understand it (John 20:30-31; I Pet. 2:1-3).

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. John 20:30-31

...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby... I Peter 2:2

- b. The Bible was given to enlighten everyone from children to adults (II Tim. 3:14-15).

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The very fact that the Bible was written in the common Greek of the day rather than that of the educated elite supports the fact that the Bible was written to the common man.

- c. The Bible in and of itself is able to direct people to salvation in Christ (I John 1:1-4).

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life--the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us--that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

This is why reformers over the years, beginning with Martin Luther, were so motivated to get the Bible into the common language of the people. They knew that if people could just read the Bible without any other assistance they would be changed forever.

- d. The Bible is written in a language that is fundamentally clear.

If you sit down with the Bible (especially the New Testament) and read it like any other book, you would find the main message to be understandable. Modern translations help us a great deal with this. Sometimes we struggle with understanding the Bible the same way we would struggle understanding Shakespeare. If we are reading archaic English that is no longer used, we can be misled.

How about this verse from the King James Version? Psalm 59:10

The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.

Notice how more modern translations render the first half of this verse:

My God of mercy shall come to meet me... –NKJV

In his unfailing love, my God will come and help me. –NLT

God in dependable love shows up on time... –Msg

The word “prevent” in early English meant “come before” and is derived from the Latin words “*prae*” meaning “before” and “*ventus*” meaning “come.” Later in the evolution of language the principle meaning of the

word “prevent” became “to keep from happening, to thwart, to hinder or forestall.” Quite a difference!

This is just one example of obsolete words that can confuse the believer who is reading older versions. But as a rule the principle message of the Bible is clear.

When it comes to the overall clarity of the Bible, one author put it this way to illustrate what is being said.

“Consider this statement: ‘Go to the Kroger store and buy 10 pounds of potatoes.’ Now we might reasonably ask which Kroger store and which kind of potatoes. If we were unfamiliar with American culture, we might even ask what a potato is and how much a pound is. But would it never be acceptable to interpret this statement to mean: ‘Go to the Himalayan Mountains and meditate on your navel?’ Would it be correct to say no one can be confident he understands this statement?

“Now consider this statement: ‘He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him’ (John 3:36). We might reasonably ask who the Son is, what ‘believe’ means, or if ‘believe’ and ‘obey’ are being used synonymously. But would it ever be acceptable to interpret this statement to mean: ‘It doesn’t matter what religion you believe because everyone goes to heaven?’ Would it be correct to say that no one can be confident he understands this statement?”

- e. The main message of the Bible is continually repeated.

While some of the doctrines of the Bible may receive more or less treatment, the primary tenets of the Christian faith are repeated continually throughout. This is why the Early Church fathers were able to settle on creedal statement such as the Apostles’ Creed.

James Sire puts it this way...

“When it comes to the central core of the Christian faith . . . the biblical evidence is overwhelming. The deity of Christ, the triune nature of God, the creation of the world by God, the sinfulness of all humanity, salvation by grace through faith, the resurrection of the dead—these and many other such matters are clearly taught in scripture.” --James Sire, *Scripture Twisting* (InterVarsity Press, 1980, pp. 12-13)

R.C. Sproul puts it this way...

“The Bible is basically clear and lucid. It is simple enough for any literate person to understand its *basic message*. This is not to say that all parts of the Bible are equally clear or that there are no difficult passages or sections to be found in it. Laymen unskilled in the ancient languages and the fine points of exegesis may have difficulty with parts of scripture, but the essential content is

clear enough to be understood easily.” --R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (InterVarsity Press, 1977, p 15.)

2. There is revelation reserved for those with a “hearing ear” (Mt. 13:12-17).

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” 11 He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’ 16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

3. There is revelation reserved for those who hunger and thirst (Pro. 25:2; Mt. 5:6).

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter. Proverbs 25:2

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Matthew 5:6

4. There is revelation reserved for certain prophetic seasons in God’s program (Dan. 12:4, 9; Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:5; Col. 1:26; Rev. 5:1-2).

But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase. Daniel 12:4

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith--to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. Romans 16:25-27

When we say that there is “revelation reserved” we mean that the more responsive we are to the word, the more we hunger and thirst after the living God, the more we have yielded to the Holy Spirit of God the more we will be able to understand.

II. What does the word “hermeneutics” mean?

A. The simplest definition of “hermeneutics” is “the science or art of interpretation.”

Hermeneutics is a word that is derived from the name of the pagan god Hermes who brought messages from the pagan gods to mortals, “translating” them as it were. The related Greek verb *hermeneuo* means to bring someone to an understanding of what is conveyed in another language, making it clear and intelligible and thus in a sense “translating” it.

1. It is a science because it involves the quest for truth by means of the recognition and application of ordered principles of research.

Just like a scientist applies the laws of nature to search for truth, so the student of the Bible searches for truth—not in a careless or a random way, but by applying principles or laws of interpretation to the task.

2. It is an art because it involves the skillful application of knowledge and natural ability to the task of interpretation.
3. It is interpretation because it seeks to translate the thoughts and intents of the originator into the language and understanding of the recipient.

Webster defines “interpretation” as explaining or telling the meaning of something and presenting it in understandable terms.

In interpretation you are seeking to place yourself in the writer’s shoes, setting aside any preconceived ideas with the ultimate goal of arriving at the author’s original intent.

B. Other definitions include:

The science of interpretation, or of finding the meaning of an author’s words and phrases, and of explaining it to others. –Webster’s Dictionary

Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation theory. Traditional hermeneutics - which includes Biblical hermeneutics - refers to the study of the interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law.

–Wikipedia

Essentially, hermeneutics involves cultivating the ability to understand things from somebody else’s point of view, and to appreciate the cultural and social forces that may have influenced their outlook. Hermeneutics is the process of applying this understanding to interpreting the meaning of written texts and symbolic artifacts (such as art or sculpture or architecture), which may be either historic or contemporary. –Unknown

General hermeneutics refers to the various sets of rules which are used in the interpretation of materials presented through many forms of communication. Communication is the transmission and reception of thoughts and feelings in a

medium common to both sender and receiver. All forms of communication, including speech, literature and the arts, present subject matter which require interpretation by the proper application of rules of general hermeneutics.

—Interpreting the Scriptures, Conner, Malmin, pp. 3-4

Principles of hermeneutics are used commonly (almost subconsciously) when we listen to music, read poetry, study history, analyze literature and enjoy a work of art. The person who observes the work of art seeks to understand the meaning or the intent of the artist. What was the artist trying to communicate?

- C. Biblical hermeneutics differs from other hermeneutical forms in several ways.
1. Biblical hermeneutics deals principally with applying hermeneutical principles to the Bible.
 2. Biblical hermeneutics deals with interpreting words from God to man as opposed to other forms that seek to interpret communication from man to man.
- D. A biblical encouragement toward hermeneutical study can be found in II Timothy 2:15.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

1. We must be diligent.

This means that we must “exert ourselves with earnest diligence” because there are obstacles and difficulties involved. Other translations say...

Study... --Amp

Earnestly endeavor... --ABUV

Do your best... --NIV

Work hard... --NLT

2. We must do it to please and be approved of by God.

This verse tells us that we should be more concerned about the approval of God. After all, it is God’s word that we are handling.

Other translations say it this way...

Earnestly seek to commend yourself to God... --Wey

Try hard to show yourself worthy of God’s approval... --NEB

Aim first at winning God’s approval... --Knox

Work hard so God can approve you... --NLT

Concentrate on doing your best for God... --Msg

3. We must be willing to do the work of it.

When it comes to the Word, you must see yourself as a worker. This is your livelihood. Paul speaks of laboring in word and doctrine (I Tim. 5:17). We need to get good at this. Leaders are to give themselves to the Word (Acts 6:4).

*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who **labor** in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The **laborer** is worthy of his wages."* I Timothy 5:17-18

The word "labor" in this passage literally means "to feel fatigue." This is not a casual work. The analogy given is that of an ox treading out the grain.

4. We must rightly divide or be accurate in our use of the word.

To rightly divide literally means to "cut straight." This implies that there is a proper interpretation of what is being said. Other translations state it this way:

Ever cutting a straight path for the message of truth. –Mon

Driving a straight furrow, in your proclamation of truth. –NEB

Rightly laying out the Word of Truth. –Alf

Correctly analyzing the message of truth. –Ber

Skillfully handling the word. –Rhm

Accurate in delivering the message of truth. –TCNT

Declaring the word of truth without distortion. –Con

Laying out the truth plain and simple. –Msg

Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth. –Amp

Be eager [or, diligent] to present yourself approved to God [as] a worker with no need to be ashamed, cutting straight [fig., teaching accurately; or, interpreting correctly] the word of truth. –Analytical-Literal Translation

5. When we do not rightly divide the word of God we can end up ashamed.

This implies that an accurate interpretation is achievable for the person who will take this role seriously.

What are the main three ways that the Scripture can be used or misused in our teaching?

- We can have a wrong doctrine with a wrong (misinterpreted) verse to support it.
- We can have a right doctrine with a wrong verse to support it.
- We can have a right doctrine with the right verse to support it.

If we operate under the first two of these options, we will be ashamed as an interpreter of the Word.

III. Why is the application of hermeneutical principles necessary?

The application of hermeneutical principles is necessary whenever something hinders the spontaneous understanding of any type of communication given. It is common when dealing with cross-cultural or historical communications for gaps to exist between the interpreter and the materials to be interpreted. Hermeneutics sets up rules to bridge these gaps.

“When a person is familiar with the materials he hears or reads the process of understanding occurs without effort. Interpretation is present but it functions so spontaneously that it is not evident. When a person is confronted with strange materials his process of understanding becomes self-conscious. An effort is made to find rules that will guide the interpreter through such materials. The conscious setting up of rules is hermeneutics.” –Bernard Ramm

There are several possible gaps that can occur between the sender and the receiver in communication.

A. Historical Gap

In that the interpreter is separated from his materials in time there is a historical gap. Some of the material in the Bible was written as much as 4000 years ago.

B. Cultural Gap

In that the interpreter’s culture is different from that of his text there is a cultural gap. Most of us in the modern world do not know that much about sheep herding and farming especially in the way that was done centuries ago before modern machinery and farm equipment.

C. Linguistic Gap

In that the text is usually in a different language than that of the interpreter there is the linguistic gap. Even though the Old Testament was written primarily in ancient Hebrew and the New Testament was written primarily in ancient Greek, modern Greek and modern Hebrew are not exactly the same.

D. Geographical Gap

In that the document originates in another country from the interpreter there is the geographical gap and the biological gap (the flora and fauna).

Example of the “heath in the wilderness” and “tumbleweed Christianity.”

For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Jeremiah 17:6

The heath is a bush related to the juniper that often grows where nothing much else will grow. Somehow it is able to draw nutrients from the most sterile of soils including very rocky terrain. While it is not much to look at it is not a tumbleweed.

The goal of biblical hermeneutics is to ascertain as closely as possible the meaning intended by the original author. We want the interpreter to remain *under* the authority of the text instead of imposing his or her meaning on the text. If we can accomplish this, we can hear God speak to us through his inspired author!

Example: Interpreting the US Constitution.

Conservatives believe it should be interpreted the way the founders meant. Liberals have an evolutionary view of the constitution in that it should be interpreted the way the majority feels it should be interpreted in their day. There are those that feel the Bible needs to be brought up to date to suit modern views and lifestyles. But God’s Word is not subject to a vote of the people!

“A person has interpreted the thoughts of another when he has in his own mind a correct reproduction or photograph of the thought as it was conceived in the mind of the original writer or speaker. It is accordingly a purely reproductive or photograph of the thought as it was conceived in the mind of the original writer or speaker. It is accordingly a purely reproductive process, involving no originality of thought on the part of the interpreter...The moment the Bible student has in his own mind what was in the mind of the author or authors of the Biblical books when these were written, he has interpreted the thoughts of the Scriptures.”

–*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, pg. 1489

IV. Why is hermeneutics so important for the leader?

Hermeneutics is important for many reasons. It is important...

A. Because when the Bible is correctly interpreted it has supernatural power (Is. 55:11; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

If we try to apply the Scripture to an area of life or living and do not have the correct understanding of it, we cannot expect a true biblical result. The Sword of the Spirit can lose its edge.

B. Because many people misuse the Bible to support personal revelations (II Pet. 1:20-21).

The main thing to keep in mind here is that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private opinion. And why? Because it's not something concocted in the human heart. Prophecy resulted when the Holy Spirit prompted men and women to speak God's Word. –Msg

A common phrase among many so-called “spiritual” believers is “the Lord showed me.” That phrase seems to trump any serious attempt to interpret a passage of Scripture using tools of interpretation. Unfortunately what the “Lord told” one person is often completely different to what the “Lord told” another person reading the same text.

Often times when Christians meet for Bible study the question is asked, “What does this verse mean to you?” It is amazing the variety of answers you can get for one verse. Actually it doesn't really matter what the verse means to me. It matters what it means to God. Perhaps it would be better phrased, “What do you think God means in this verse?”

However, we do not want to be overly sensitive here. There is a devotional reading of the Bible where God will speak to His people in unusual ways. However, when it comes to interpreting what God meant when He spoke through the prophets of old, it is important that we follow proper rules of interpretation.

C. Because many divisions in Christianity are based on poor hermeneutics.

You wonder how Christians who share the same Bible can have so much diversity among them. There are four primary reasons for this:

1. They have a different view of the Bible and inspiration.
2. They operate with different hermeneutical principles.
3. They approach the Scriptures with pre-conceived ideas.

You can find a proof text for just about anything if you want to. To do so, however, you have to disregard hermeneutical laws.

4. They have a dispensational theology that marginalizes much of the Bible.

If you are a classic dispensationalist you may see most of the Scripture as being for the Jewish people and very little left for the church or Gentile world. In some spiritual camps the Epistles of Paul are about the only Bible they have that they feel specifically applies to them.

D. Because most heresies are the result of poor hermeneutics.

Heresies are often nothing more than a distortion of truth or a truth out of balance. All kinds of books have been written about a host of subjects and many of them are filled with proof texts. Just because you see a proof text cited behind a sentence does not mean that the sentence and the proof text say the same thing.

False prophets never claim to be false. They simply wrest the scripture to fit what they want it to say.

Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do the other parts of Scripture--and the result is disaster for them. II Peter 3:16b

The truth is that the Bible can be made to prove almost anything. Everyone seems to agree that the Bible is the Word of God and yet they come up with such diverse conclusions. "Who is right?" Surely, God is not teaching, for example, that one is saved by good works and also teaching man is saved by God's grace without works.

The Mormons justify "baptism for the dead" from the Scripture (I Cor. 15:29). Another group will insist on head coverings for women and short hair for men from the Scripture (I Cor. 11:1-16). Another group will insist that "speaking with other tongues" is no longer valid for today since the completion of the Bible based on the Scripture (I Cor. 13:8-10).

God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). In order to teach the Bible accurately we must exercise caution in our application of it. We must seek to properly interpret it which means coming to a place where we can accurately reflect the original meaning the writer intended when he penned the words. The original meaning the author intended is the interpretation and must be found before you can apply it or make application of the passage. A faulty interpretation will produce a faulty application and therefore it is vital to correctly interpret the Scriptures.

Sometimes I wonder if one of the biblical writers (e.g. John or Paul) were to hear our exposition of the passages that they penned, would they respond by saying, "I said what?" "Did I really mean all of that?" "How did you get that out of such a simple comment?"

E. Because deception will be a major problem in the end times (I Tim. 4:1-2; II Tim. 4:1-4; Mt. 21:4-5).

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron... I Timothy 4:1-2

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. II Timothy 4:1-4

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."
Matthew 24:4-5

1. There will be many false and deceptive ministries (Mt. 24:5; Mark 13:6).

- False prophets (Mt. 24:11)
- False christs (Mt. 24:23-24; Mark 13:21-22)

Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, He is there!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. Mark 13:21-23

2. There will be many deceptive signs and wonders (Mt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; II Th. 2:9).

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:24

3. There will be many false and deceptive doctrines (I Tim. 4:1).

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...

Believe me when I tell you that false prophets and false apostles will be armed with the word of God. They will have many proof-texts for their strange teaching. However, when you examine their proof texts closely you will find that they do not actually say what they purport them to say.

F. Because there is no perfect version or translation of the Bible.

Anything that has been touched by man can be tainted by the predisposition of the man doing the work. Even when teams of people are employed to do the work of translation there can be bias that ends up being reflected in the text.

When you understand how the Bible came to us without the benefit of computers, copiers and other modern printing equipment it is amazing how well preserved it is. All of the earliest copies of the Bible were handwritten. That means that simple errors of copying can occur. Although there are no original manuscripts of any of the books of the Bible, fortunately there are a variety of ancient texts available to use for comparison. Often by comparing texts the best possible and

most reliable rendering can be established. Most modern translations are made in light of this research.

It should also be remembered that there are no truly literal translations of the Bible because no two languages are exactly alike. Most modern translations are attempts at translating thoughts and ideas. But whose interpretation is going to prevail. That is why you can have such diverse renderings of the same passage in different translations (See Appendix).

Example of a difference in translations:

Compare I Samuel 6:19 in different versions

NKJV

*Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck **fifty thousand and seventy men** of the people, and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.*

NIV

*But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, **putting seventy of them to death** because they had looked into the ark of the LORD . The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them...*

The NIV does not translate the words “50 oxen” because of the apparent difficulty in the idea that 50,070 people would be found in such a small town of Beth Shemesh. But the issue is easily resolved when we find that “oxen” means both “oxen” (Deut. 7:13; Ps. 8:7; Pro. 14:4) and “thousand”.

One possible translation would reflect that 70 men and 50 oxen were slain by God. For a small village this could still be considered a great slaughter.

Question: Does this possible variant reading in any way affect the overall meaning of the text or the nature of God’s judgment? NO!

The great need today then in determining what the Bible really teaches is a correct method of interpretation. If the Bible is the Word of God and God’s revelation to man, then surely God would not give us His revelation without a way to discern what He meant. For God not to give us a way to interpret the Bible is to leave the interpretation of Scripture to human wisdom that is at best faulty. To have the interpretation of Scripture rest on man’s wisdom is to have “flesh” interpreting that which is “spiritual.”

V. What beliefs about the Bible form the basis for our hermeneutic?

Your view of the Bible affects your treatment and your interpretation of it. Does the Bible contain the word of God? Or is it the word of God?

A. This study of hermeneutics accepts the view of plenary, verbal inspiration.

The following is a doctrinal statement taken from our course Basic Doctrine (See Basic Doctrine I, The Doctrine of Scripture):

We believe in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the accepted canon of the Scriptures as originally given and that they are infallible and uniquely authoritative and free from error of any sort in all matters with which they deal, including scientific and historical as well as moral and theological issues.

This statement contains three important words: plenary, verbal and inspiration.

1. The word “plenary” means “full” or “complete.” Plenary inspiration means that the entire Bible is totally inspired by God.
 - a. Inspiration does not merely apply to portions of the Bible, but it applies to the entire book.
 - b. Inspiration does not merely apply to doctrinal issues, but it applies to every area covered.
2. The word “verbal” means “relating to words.”
 - a. Verbal inspiration means that God not only gave the subject matter to be recorded, but the very words that are used are inspired of God (Jer. 1:9; I Th. 2:13; I Chr. 28:11-12,19).

Then the LORD touched my mouth and said, “See, I have put my words in your mouth!” Jeremiah 1:9

- b. Verbal inspiration does not mean that the writers were in a trance and that their personalities were totally overruled by the Spirit.
- c. Verbal inspiration means that the Scripture is perfectly inerrant (without error) in all of its words and every one of its words (John 10:35b; Mt. 5:17-19; Acts 24:14).

John 10:35 says that “*the Scripture cannot be broken*” or annulled.

Paul said that he believed “*all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets*” (Acts 24:14).

3. The word “inspiration” means “God-breathed” (II Tim.3:16-17; II Pet. 1:21; II Sam. 23:2).

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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

II Timothy 3:16-17

The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.

II Samuel 23:2

If this is not your view of the Scripture, the work of hermeneutics changes dramatically. If your view of Scripture is that the Bible is not “The Word of God” but it only “contains” the word of God you have an altogether different task.

On the one hand, it is much easier. It is easier because you can simply read the Bible for a general understanding of God and His nature.

On the other hand, it is more difficult because you have to differentiate between what is meant to be authoritative and what is merely the opinion of the human author. This is often the work of what has been labeled “higher criticism.”

B. This study of hermeneutics accepts as fact that there are no contradictions in the Bible.

The fact that we sometimes come to a place where we see “apparent contradictions” only highlights the fact that we need hermeneutical principles to guide us. Most “apparent” contradictions are the result of two things.

Either...

1. We lack understanding regarding some aspect of the texts in question.

Or...

2. We are bringing assumptions or biases to the work of interpretation.

It is possible for contradictions to arise out of improper transmission of the text or, in some cases, a version or translation of the text that exercises a great amount of liberty. But if we are talking about the original Greek and Hebrew texts as we have them today, this is very rare and, when it does occur, such errors in no way affect basic biblical doctrine.

C. This study of hermeneutics accepts the view that the Bible is one book given to us by the one true God.

“For 40 different men to write 66 books in three languages over a period of 1600 years and have them become one harmonious book is humanly impossible. The unity and progression of thought together with the absence of contradiction indicates that the Bible really had only one author.” –Kevin Conner

1. The New Testament is an extension of the Old Testament.

People have at times employed various sayings that help illustrate the relationship of the old and the new. The following are some samples:

The New is in the Old contained
The Old is in the New explained

Or,

The New is in the Old concealed
The Old is in the New revealed

2. The New Testament cannot be understood without the Old Testament.

You can go to the Old Testament and discover the seeds for everything that is in the New Testament within the types and shadows or in the prophecies of the Old Testament that foretold what was to take place in the new.

3. The Old Testament cannot be understood without the New Testament (I Pet. 1:10-12).

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into. I Peter 1:10-12

Sometimes multiple chapters of the Old Testament are unlocked by one simple key given in the New Testament. In the same way, the Old Testament can shed light on what is being discussed in the New Testament.

You cannot understand one without the other. You cannot understand the eternal purpose of God without both testaments working together. You see the Bible is one book.

Even though the actual writing of the Bible spans many centuries and includes sixty-six books authored by over 35 human authors, it is one, miracle book that unfolds God's will and purpose for mankind.

If this is not your view of Scripture the work of hermeneutics changes dramatically. If your view of Scripture is that the Bible is two books written for different people in different ages you have an altogether different task.

On the one hand, it is much easier. It is easier because you can simply read the New Testament (or at least parts of it) as a New Testament believer.

On the other hand, it is more difficult because you have to differentiate between what is meant to be for now and what was for then and what is meant for me and what is meant to be for someone else.

We will discuss this more later when we talk about the relationship of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

VI. What is the relationship between revelation, illumination, inspiration, interpretation and application?

These five words describe God's process of communication to man.

A. Revelation

Revelation is the act of God's communicating or transmitting His knowledge to man (Deut. 29:29). The Bible is not man's thoughts about God, but God revealing Himself to man. In such a case it would usually involve the communication of knowledge that could not otherwise be known.

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

B. Illumination

Illumination is the divine ability to understand that which is given by revelation (I Pet. 1:10-12; Luke 24:32, 45). Many of the prophets of old had revelation but did not have illumination on their revelation.

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. I Peter 1:10-12

C. Inspiration

Inspiration of Scripture is the divine ability to write down revelation without making a mistake (II Pet. 1:21).

1. Inspiration has to do with the recording of the truth—the process.
2. Inspiration was the power that enabled men to write things accurately in a book (Ex. 17:14; Jer.30:2).

"Inspiration is the strong, conscious inbreathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to truth. It is God speaking through men, and the Old Testament is therefore just as much the Word of God as though God spoke every single word of it with His own lips. The Scriptures are the result of divine inbreathing, just as human speech is uttered by the breathing through a man's mouth."

--Great Doctrines of the Bible, William Evans

D. Interpretation

Interpretation of Scripture is the process of discovering what the Scriptures actually say based on the application of principles or rules of interpretation.

E. Application

Application of Scripture is the act of putting the specific revelation into the context of our individual life situation. The Bible only has one interpretation, but many applications.

F. The believer receives **illumination** on the **revelation** which was given by **inspiration** and makes **application** to his or her life situation based on proper biblical **interpretation**.

VII. What are some errors in thinking that can affect one's interpretation of the Bible?

There are many common errors in thinking that can have a strong effect on how we look at the Bible and interpret it. Here are four such errors.

A. Error 1: Simply believing that having a pure heart is enough.

Many Christians feel that if they have an honest heart and a sincere desire for more of God whatever they read they will understand. Paul spoke of the unbelieving Jews as those who had zeal without knowledge (Rom. 10:2).

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Unfortunately many Christians are like this. They are zealous and passionate about God, but they often speak without knowledge or understanding. You can be sincere and you can also be sincerely wrong.

B. Error 2: Simply believing that if I pray and ask the Holy Spirit He will give me the correct interpretation.

Most people pray before they read the word and ask the Holy Spirit to guide them and to help them understand the passage, as well they should. However, just because they prayed, and just because they feel like they heard from God relative to the passage it does not guarantee that the result is a correct interpretation.

C. Error 3: Simply believing that every commentator or every pastor who has expounded a particular passage has done so correctly.

Remember what we said about versions of the Bible. This is even more important when it comes to commentaries. Commentaries and books about the Bible all come from a human source and should be seen as "secondary sources." They will

be tainted by the author's belief system. They will be affected by the time frame in which they lived.

Every time I pick up a book to read, I want to find out what I can about the author and the author's situation. This will tell me a great deal about the author's possible biases.

Do you realize that we know more about the original manuscripts today than scholars have known throughout modern history? Do you know that the tools we have for research today are the best that they have ever been?

We also have to be careful about just listening to what others have said in their preaching and teaching. We all have favorite preachers and it is easy to just preach a message that we have heard them preach. But have we done the research to know that their interpretation of a passage is correct. We are in particular danger when a preacher gives an unusual twist to a commonly known passage.

Example: I had a student once in Homiletics class who had come up with some very unusual insights pertaining to some commonly understood passages. When I read his manuscript I couldn't believe what I was reading. I decided to check out his research. Unfortunately, he had transposed one of his numbers from Strong's Concordance and was applying the definition of the wrong word to all of his passages. Thankfully, he had not yet preached the message. He may have had a great experience preaching, but before it was over he would have been ashamed.

We need to be like the Berean believers who listened to Paul's new insight and interpretation (Acts 17:11).

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

D. Error 4: Simply believing that such accuracy is not really important.

I am sure that all of us would agree that accuracy is important in such areas like brain surgery or rocket science. It is important for us to acknowledge that our spiritual life and our knowledge of God that comes to us through the Word of God is far more important.

The well known Christian speaker and writer Charles Colson stated, "The longer I'm a Christian, the more I'm in fear of misinterpreting the Bible. It's an awesome responsibility."

VIII. What are some of the factors that make interpreting the Bible a challenge?

Besides bridging the gaps previously mentioned...

A. There are things within us that compound the problem.

1. We all have traditions that can cloud our perspective and limit our openness to the truth.

The Pharisees were such people who made the word of God ineffective because of their unbiblical traditions (Mt. 15:6).

2. We all have personal opinions, preferences and theological persuasions that can stand in the way of a pure reading of the text.
3. We all have certain experiences that can influence how we read a particular passage.

Because of these things it is easy to read things into or read things out of a text. Often times we have to use a spiritual “shoehorn” to make the passage fit into our interpretation. One important process in the discovery of the meaning of the text is just to read it like you would any other book and focus on the obvious, not the obscure.

B. There are things in God’s revelation that compound the problem.

1. God used a wide variety of people to communicate His message.

The people that God chose as instruments for delivering His word to us included doctors, tax gatherers, shepherds, prophets and fishermen. They consisted of the very educated and the completely uneducated (unlearned). They lived in different times, spoke a variety of languages and dwelt in unique cultures.

2. God used a wide variety of literary styles to communicate His message.

Some of the Bible is recorded as history (Kings, Chronicles), some as narrative (Ruth, Esther), some as poetry (Psalms), some as prophecy or some as simple letters to people or to congregations of people (Epistles).

3. God used many different methods of communication to His people.

Another factor which makes interpretation necessary is the variety of methods by which God has spoken to and through man (Heb. 1:1).

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways... –NIV

“In many separate revelations – each of which set forth a portion of the Truth – and in different ways God spoke of old to (our) forefathers in and by the prophets.” –Amp

The following list is taken primarily from *Interpreting the Scriptures* by Conner/Malmin (pg.5-6)

Ways God Has Spoken

- a. **Dreams** – A succession of images, thoughts or emotions passing through the mind during sleep (Num. 12:6; Joel 2:28; Mt. 1:20).

Then He said, “If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Numbers 12:6

- b. **Visions** – Something presented to the mind through other than natural means of sight while awake; seeing with the eyes open in the spiritual world; a supernatural appearance that conveys a revelation (Num. 12:6; Joel 2:28; Hos. 12:10; Acts 2:17; Acts 9:10, 12).

I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets. Hosea 12:10

- c. **Angel of the Lord** – Generally spoken of as a “theophany,” which is a manifestation and revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ before His incarnation; a manifestation or appearance of God to man (Gen. 18; Ex. 3; Judges 6 and 13; Dan. 10:16).

And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, “My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength.” Daniel 10:16

- d. **Similitude** – A shape, form of, model or pattern; a resemblance or likeness similar to the real; a person or thing resembling a counterpart (Num. 12:8; Deut. 4:12, 15, 16).

I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD [KJV, “the similitude of the LORD shall he behold”]. Numbers 12:8a

- e. **Types** – A thing embodying qualities characteristic of a particular person; the mark or impression of something to be imitated or avoided; an instance, sample, or specimen serving for illustration (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 10:6, 11; Heb. 8:5).

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Romans 5:14

- f. **Copies** – A thing formed after some pattern, a thing resembling another, its counterpart; emblematic of the real (Heb. 9:24; I Pet. 3:21).

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us... Hebrews 9:24

- g. **Shadows** – A faint and imperfect representation; an imitation of something having form without substance; a dark figure or image cast on a surface by a body intercepting the light; a foreshadowing (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; 10:1).

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Colossians 2:16-17

- h. **Examples** – A part of something; taken to show the character of the whole, a pattern or model, as of something to be imitated or avoided; an instance, sample, exhibit or specimen serving for illustration (Heb. 8:5; II Pet. 2:6).

*...who serve the **copy** [KJV, examples] and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." Hebrews 8:5*

- i. **Signs** – A token used in place of that which it represents; a signal to draw attention to something; a mark or a symbol having a specific meaning (Ex. 7:3; Is. 8:18; Ezek. 14:8; Mt. 12:39; John 12:33; Rom. 4:11).

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:39-40

- j. **Allegories** – A comparison sustained through numerous details; a symbolic narrative presenting an abstract or spiritual meaning using material forms; a story in which people, things and happenings have another meaning, usually a moral lesson (Gal. 4:24).

But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic [lit. an allegory]. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar... Galatians 4:23-24

- k. **Mysteries** – That which is secret and can be known only to the initiated; truth which can be known only by revelation (Rom. 16:25; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 5:32; I Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:20).

*This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
Ephesians 5:32*

- l. **Puzzles or Riddles** – A hidden saying, the meaning of which must be discovered; a knot of speech which must be unraveled; an obscure utterance which must be clarified. A puzzling question framed so as to require ingenuity in answering it; an enigma needing solution (Num. 12:8; Judg. 14:12-19; Ps. 49:4; 78:2; Ezek. 17:2).

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel...” Ezekiel 17:1-2

- m. **Proverbs** – A short didactic saying embodying a truth; a sentence briefly and forcibly expressing some practical truth (Ps. 49:4; Pro. 1:6; John 16:25; II Pet. 2:22).

These things I have spoken to you in figurative language [KJV, proverbs]; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. John 16:25

- n. **Parables** – A short story conveying some truth or lesson by a comparison; an earthly story with a heavenly meaning (Mt. 13:3, 10, 13, 34, 35; Mark 3:23; Luke 8:10; Heb. 9:9).

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.”

Matthew 13:34-35

- o. **Voice of Words** – The audible voice of the Lord in actual words; audible communication, utterance (Gen. 3:8-9; Num. 7:89; Deut. 5:22-28; Ps. 103:20).

Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him. Numbers 7:89

- p. **Prophecy** – To speak under inspiration concerning the present (forth telling) or concerning the future (foretelling); to either proclaim or predict (Ezra 5:1; Hos. 12:10; Heb. 1:1; I Pet. 1:10-12; II Pet. 1:20, 21).

I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets. Hosea 12:10

- q. **Writing** – To communicate through inscriptions; to use letters for characters as visible symbols of ideas and words (Ex. 31:18; 32:16; I Chr. 28:19; Dan. 5:5).

And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. Exodus 31:18

Even a cursory glance at the above list will serve to underscore the need for interpretation of the Word of God. In addition, there are many other factors which lead to the conclusion that the interpretation of Scripture is

of utmost importance. These fall into two main groupings:

- r. **Symbolic Group** – This includes areas such as interpretation of names, significance of numbers, and all other symbols used in the Bible. These require special interpretation, and will be dealt with later.
- s. **Figures of Speech Group** – Included here are metaphors, similes, hyperboles, idioms and others.

IX. What qualifications are needed for the effective interpretation of the Scripture?

While the text *Interpreting the Scriptures* mentions several qualifications for the interpreter including:

- Being a true believer (John 3:1-2; I Cor. 2:14-16; I Pet. 1:23),
- Living in submission to the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:7:16; I John 2:20, 27),
- Having a passionate heart toward the Word (Job. 23:12; Ps. 119:47; Jer. 15:16),
- Having a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23),
- Having a spirit of faith (Heb. 11:3, 6),
- Being a person of prayer and meditation (Ps. 1:2; Acts 6:4),
- Accepting the concept of total inspiration of the Scripture (II Pet. 1:21),
- Being diligent in the work at understanding (II Tim. 2:15),

There are a few that I want to highlight.

A. An effective interpreter must have a high level of reverence and respect toward the Word of God.

The Bible is not just another book in your library of books. While we do not worship the Bible, we recognize it as God's special gift to man. God went to extreme measure to make sure that we would be in possession of this great gift. We need to treat it accordingly.

The interpreters attitude should be that of the Psalmist, "Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law." (Ps. 119:18, See also: vs. 33, 34).

B. An effective interpreter must be humble before the Word of God.

This means that when we approach the Word of God we see it as our superior. We see it as a higher form of thinking. We are willing to submit to it and not hold our opinions to be above it. Pride locks us out of God's revelation (Jam. 1:21).

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

C. An effective interpreter must be intellectually honest with the Word of God.

This means leaving our preconceived ideas on the shelf and being willing to let the Word of God speak for itself. This means not becoming defensive when the Sword of the Word cuts at one of our “pet doctrines.” This means holding our past opinions and beliefs loosely in the light of God’s Word.

We need to ask ourselves the question:

- Are we using the Bible to support our own ideas?
- Are we making the Bible say what we want it to say?
- Are we simply discovering the truth that God intended to communicate by it?

D. An effective interpreter must recognize the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament.

X. What is the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament that serves as an important foundation to biblical hermeneutics?

A. The Old Testament Scriptures serve as the foundation upon which New Testament believers built.

1. The Old Testament was the Bible of the Early Church.
2. The early apostles promoted the scripture of the Old Testament.
 - a. They gave themselves to the word (Acts 6:4).
 - b. They acknowledged the authority of the word (Acts 15:15-18).
 - c. They stressed the value of the word in assisting the people of God in fulfilling destiny (II Tim. 3:15-17).

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

II Timothy 3:14-17

3. The Old Testament scriptures were written for the New Testament believers.
 - a. They were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4).

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

- b. They were written to be an example for the people of faith at the end of the age (I Cor. 10:6, 11).

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these **things became our examples**, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.***

I Corinthians 10:1-11

Paul's comments make you wonder why publishers even produce copies of the New Testament without the Old Testament. Can you imagine someone writing a mystery novel and leaving out the last chapter? You are being carried along by this intricate plot and trying to second-guess the ending only to discover that the last chapter is missing. What a disappointment!

It's not much better walking in half way through a movie with an intricate plot that has been going for some time and trying to figure out what is happening.

B. The Old Testament and the New Testament reflect God's method of revelation—first the natural, then the spiritual (I Cor. 15:46; Rom. 1:20).

When Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, he encouraged them regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the events that would occur at that time. He referred to the changes that we would experience in our natural bodies. He said that our natural bodies would give place to new and spiritual bodies.

He unfolded a principle that relates to God's method of revelation to mankind. We could summarize that principle in the phrase, "first the natural, then the spiritual" (See: I Cor. 15:45-47).

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

As God has unfolded His purposes throughout history He seems to have followed the principle of the **natural preceding and foreshadowing the spiritual** (I Cor. 15:46). God has used the natural things of creation to teach us of spiritual things

(Rom. 1:20). He has used visual means (things clearly seen) to help us understand spiritual realities (things not seen).

1. The Old Testament dealings of God reflect that which is seen or the natural expression of God's plan.
2. The New Testament reflects the spiritual or that to which the natural pointed.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse... Romans 1:20

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. II Corinthians 4:16-18

The Old Testament priests *serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things...* (Heb. 8:5).

Hebrews 9:1-28 speaks of the first covenant, the Old Testament tabernacle with its priesthood and its sacrifices as being symbolic (vs. 9), unable to cleanse the conscience (vs. 9), temporary (vs. 10) and copies of the true (vs. 23, 24). It speaks of the new covenant which came in Christ as being greater, more perfect (vs. 11) and able to purge the conscience (vs. 14).

Hebrews 10:1-23 speaks of the Old Testament law as a shadow of good things to come as opposed to the very image (vs. 1).

The writer to the Hebrews helps us to see that the sacrifices of the Old Testament teach us about Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. It teaches us that the Aaronic priesthood gave way to a better priesthood of which we can all partake. The natural gives way to the spiritual. The shadow points to the image. The figure introduces us to the true. The temporal opens the door of understanding to the eternal. Note the following chart:

Old Covenant	New Covenant
Natural	Spiritual
Flesh	Spirit
Shadow	Image
Figures	True
Visible (Seen)	Invisible (Unseen)
Made with Hands	Not Made with Hands
Patterns	Heavenly Things
Observed by Sight	Observed by Faith
Temporal	Eternal

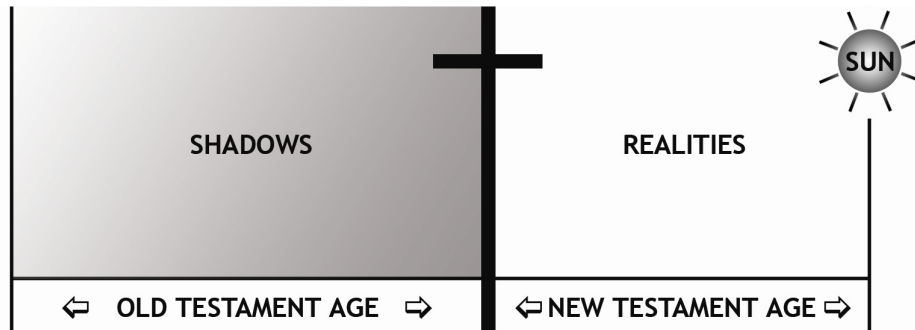
This chart illustrates the relationship of the Old to the New (See: Rom. 1:20; I Cor. 15:40-54; II Cor. 4:18; 5:1; Heb. 8:5; 9:1-28; 10:1-23). They are not separate entities or separate purposes. The Old Covenant gives place to the New Covenant. The New Covenant is an extension and fulfillment of the Old Covenant.

3. In the Old and New Testaments we are confronted with pairs of things—first the natural, then the spiritual.

You have the visible, natural and temporal things pointing to the invisible, spiritual and the eternal realities. Notice the following pairs of things in the Bible (natural and spiritual):

- a. There is a natural birth and a spiritual birth (John 3:3-6; I Pet. 1:23).
 - b. There is a natural circumcision and a spiritual circumcision of the heart (Col 2:11-13; Phil. 3:3).
 - c. There is a natural Israel and a spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16; Rom. 9:6).
 - d. There is a natural Jerusalem and a spiritual Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22).
 - e. There is a natural temple and a spiritual temple (Eph. 19-22; I Pet. 2:5).
 - f. There is a natural priesthood and a spiritual priesthood (Heb. 7:1-28; I Pet. 2:5).
 - g. There are natural sacrifices and spiritual sacrifices (Heb. 13:15; I Pet. 2:5).
 - h. There are natural enemies and spiritual enemies (II Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12).
- C. We must realize that the cross of Christ is the great divide between the natural and the spiritual.

It should be noted that the cross is the great dividing line between the natural and the spiritual, the shadow and the reality. When Jesus came He came as the transition point in history. This transition point has more significance than a mere change in the human calendar. This transition marks the entry into the age of fulfillment (See Chart on next page).



1. Jesus came to fulfill the letter of the law and introduce the spiritual principle that operated behind the law.

He came to fulfill the prophetic significance of the Passover Lamb by becoming the Passover Lamb to which all other previous lambs pointed.

2. Jesus introduced us to better things in the new covenant. They are better because they are not shadows of the real, but they are the very realities themselves!

Once Jesus brought in the true or the realities, there was no more need for the shadow. In fact, to go back to the shadow after the true has been manifest is to regress and to devalue what God has provided in Christ.

Notice the “Better Things” that the writer to the Hebrews highlights for us:

1. Better Revelation (Heb. 1:1-4)
2. Better Hope (Heb. 7:19)
3. Better Priesthood (Heb. 7:20-28)
4. Better Covenant (Heb. 8:6)
5. Better Promises (Heb. 8:6)
6. Better Tabernacle or Temple (Heb. 9:11)
7. Better Blood (Heb. 9:11-14).
8. Better Sacrifices (Heb. 9:23)
9. Better Possessions (Heb.10:34)
10. Better Country (Heb. 11:16)

This is why we will never go back to animal sacrifice as an expression of our worship to the Lord. Every animal that was slain in the Old Testament as a sacrifice for sins only pointed to the One who would come to take away the sins of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ provided the better sacrifice that did not merely cover sin but it cleansed all sin. To go back to animal sacrifice after experiencing Christ would be to deny the power and efficacy of the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God. It would actually be an abomination to the Lord.

XI. What is the most important result of all hermeneutical study?

The Bible has been given to us to make us “wise unto salvation.” The whole purpose of the Bible is to introduce us to God and to direct us back to God. The tragedy is that we can become experts in our knowledge of the Word and our interpretation of the Word but miss the God of the Word. We can use the Word as a weapon on people or we can use it to bring life and salvation to the world.

Let us all commit ourselves to making hermeneutics an applied science. That is, we are those who first of all readily apply the truths that we discover to our own lives and our own walk with the Lord.

David said in Psalm 119:33-34...

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Amen and Amen!

Note: For more information regarding the history and development of hermeneutics and various hermeneutical methods employed by some, see the text, *Interpreting the Scriptures*, by Ken Malmin and Kevin Conner.

Appendix, Lesson 1-4

Bible Translations or Versions Chart

Translation or Version	Reading Level	Summary	Methodology of Translation Passage Comparison of Matthew 4:19
King James Version (KJV)	12	The now classic English translation of the Bible dating from 1611. Though difficult for many to understand because of its sometimes archaic language, it is loved for its familiarity and poetic beauty.	Literal And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.
New International Version(NIV)	7	This popular translation seeks to balance the concerns of literal and dynamic equivalence translation philosophies.	Literal with freedom to be idiomatic “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”
New Living Translation (NLT)	6	Authoritative text with a fresh, clear style that is enjoyable to read. A leading thought-for-thought translation that accurately communicates the meaning of the original Greek and Hebrew texts.	Dynamic Equivalence Jesus called out to them, “Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!”
New King James Version (NKJV)	7	A translation that updates the language of the KJV while preserving its basic literary structure.	Literal Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
New American Standard Bible (NASB)	10	Translates the original text as literally as possible, preserving word-for-word equivalency and original sentence structure in English wherever possible.	Strictly literal And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	7	Translation sponsored by the National Council of Churches of Christ. Generally literal word-for-word philosophy.	Literal And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”
New American Bible (NAB)	7	The official translation of the Roman Catholic Church in America. This fairly literal translation includes the deuterion-canonical books in all editions.	Literal He said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
Contemporary English Version (CEV)	5	A dynamic equivalence translation that avoids difficult vocabulary and sentence structures to produce a straightforward translation that’s understandable to the modern reader.	Dynamic Equivalence Jesus said to them, “Come with me! I will teach you how to bring people in instead of fish.”
The Living Bible (TLB)	8	Paraphrase by Kenneth Taylor that communicates the essential message of God’s Word to the average English reader. Simplifies theological language so it’s easy to understand.	Paraphrase Jesus called out, “Come along with me and I will show you how to fish for the souls of men!”
The Message	5	A colorful paraphrase by Eugene Peterson that seeks to capture the message of the original text in a creative and impacting way.	Paraphrase Jesus said to them, “Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.”

Lesson 5

Bridging the Gaps

Much of the material in this lesson is also a part of the course Prayer and Personal Bible Study. It is repeated here especially for those who have not taken that course.

I. What is the most significant challenge when it comes to studying the Bible?

The most significant challenge to fully understanding the Bible is bridging the communication gaps that exist between the contexts in which the Bible was written and our present day context. The truth of what was being communicated by God is in a very real sense locked up in the actual biblical context. In order to fully understand the Bible we must bridge four primary gaps.

A. The Language Gap

The Bible was written in languages which, for the most part, are not understood by those reading it today. The primary languages of the Bible are Hebrew and Greek with some portions having been originally written in Ancient Chaldean or Aramaic. Even for those who speak some of these languages today there is a problem. Ancient Hebrew and *Koine* Greek are not the same as their modern day counterparts. All language evolves over time. Just compare the English of Shakespeare and modern English and it is easy to see how language can change over time. What happens when you add thousands of years to the development of a language?

If we are to understand the Bible in its context, we need to know some things relative to the languages in which the Bible was written.

1. We need to know what the words meant when they were written down by the author. Because words tend to evolve in meaning with time, it is important to know what that word meant when it was actually written.
2. We need to know the idiomatic expressions and figures of speech that are used in the Bible and what their contemporary equivalents are. When Solomon indicated that the Shulamite woman had “doves eyes” (Song 1:15), what exactly did he mean?
3. We need to know the origin, formation and history of the words (etymology). For instance when you understand that the Greek word for obedience (*hupakoe*) is a compound word composed from the verb meaning “hear” (*akouo*) and the word meaning “under” (*hupo*), it helps you to understand God’s concept of obedience. It means that we are to hear and respond as those that are under authority.
4. We need to know the significance of different grammatical constructions as to how they have a bearing on the meaning of the text.
5. We even need to understand the literary style (i.e. poetic, historical, prophetic, apocalyptic, etc.) in which a passage is written to better understand its present

day application. You cannot interpret the Song of Solomon the same way that you would the Book of Judges. They are different types of literature. One is very literal and the other is very symbolic or figurative (Song 2:8-9).

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice.

B. The Cultural Gap

In addition to a language gap there is a culture gap. The Bible was written in the context of an eastern and agrarian culture that is not consistent with the culture of most of those reading the Bible today. Much of the culture of the Bible is built around farming, sheep-herding and systems of bartering. Many of the cultural practices of the people in the Bible are not a part of our modern culture. Even the actual authors who wrote over many centuries did not share the exact same culture. The culture of Daniel is much different than the culture of Amos.

God is not interested in the duplication of biblical culture, per se, but He is interested in the principles by which the culture operated. In order to understand the principle behind the practice, we must understand certain things.

1. We must understand what the culture of the day was and how it has a bearing on the passage in question. Much of the New Testament material about head coverings, meat offered to idols and women being silent in the church can be understood more fully when one understands some of the cultural practices of the day.
2. We must understand the material elements of culture including such things as transportation, cooking, clothing, tools for farming, weapons of warfare, housing and animal life (e.g. taxation, balances and scales, weights and measures, raising sheep, etc.).

- a. How big or little was the woman's offering (Mark 12:42)? How much is "two mites." It is clear. The passage goes on to say that it is a "quadran."

Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

- b. How valuable is a sparrow (Mt. 10:29, KJV)? The Bible says that two of them are sold for a farthing. Or if you buy five you can get five for two "farthings" (Luke 12:6, KJV). What is a farthing?

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Matthew 10:29, KJV

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Luke 12:6, KJV

- c. How expensive was the bonfire that was built by those confessing their deeds (Acts 19:18-19)? How much was fifty thousand pieces of silver or drachmas? The drachma was a day's wage for a common laborer. Fifty thousand drachmas was a lot of money.

And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. –NIV

- d. How much manna was gathered and placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 16:33)? How much is an omer? The passage itself goes on to answer the question. An omer is one-tenth of an ephah (16:36). That settles it.

And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations".... Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah.

3. We must understand the social order of the society in which the verses were written including such things and marriage customs, biblical trades, economics, legal requirements, civil laws and other social customs (e.g. betrothal, smelting, avenger of blood, cities of refuge, etc.).
4. We must be able to distinguish between the cultures that are referenced including the cultures of the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans and, of course, the Jews. What was the Roman law regarding scourging and crucifixion? What was the way in which the Romans paraded those conquered by them?

How many times have you heard great teaching on Jesus receiving thirty-nine stripes on His back? Some have even gone a step further and suggested that Jesus received thirty-nine stripes for each of the major sickness groups. Not only does this insult medical science it reflects very poor hermeneutics. While the Romans had a law pertaining to the giving of stripes, that law only applied to Roman citizens. When it came to giving stripes to suppressed people groups, they had no such law.

C. The Historical Gap

In addition to the language and culture gap we also face an historical gap. The various books of the Bible were written in an historical context that is much different than the world of today. Many of the nations that are referenced in the Bible do not even exist today. The super powers of the biblical world are not the super powers of the present world (e.g. Nineveh, Edom, Hittites, etc.). And yet, so much of the Bible centers around these cultures and the world events that surrounded them.

1. We must understand the political world and the relationship of the various nations to each other.
2. We must understand the economic and religious forces that were at play in the time when the books were written. This is particularly true when trying to understand the Old Testament prophets.

D. The Geographical Gap

A fourth gap that must be bridged is the geographical gap. The story of the Bible took place in various geographical settings that are totally unfamiliar to the average reader of the Bible. In addition, the geography of the Bible varies from large cities (Rome) to rural deserts (Sinai Peninsula) and from the beginning of a city (Babel) to its full development as a city (Babylon).

1. We must understand the topography of the land.

Did you know that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a road that went down (Luke 10:30). In fact, Jerusalem was 3000 (.9 km) feet above sea level and Jericho was 1000 (.3 km) feet below sea level. The actual road was about 17 miles (27 km). It is a very rugged, mountainous pass and a difficult journey.

How far did Elijah run when he went from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel (I Kgs. 18:42-46)? Would it help you to know that he was a marathon man? He actually outran Ahab and his chariot a distance of about 16 miles (over 20 kilometers).

2. We must understand the plant and animal life of the land.

The Bible makes reference to various types of trees including fig trees, olive trees, cedar trees and palm trees. It often uses them in a symbolic way. In order to understand the symbolism connected with them it is helpful to learn something of the trees themselves. It also uses animals to symbolize certain things, whether it is Herod the fox or disciples being as harmless as doves.

3. We must understand the climate and weather patterns of the land.
4. We must understand mountains, rivers and seas.
5. We must understand the proximity of one nation to another.

II. What are some of the tools that will help to bridge the communication gap?

Digging deeper in the word of God is much like mining for precious gems. Gems are rarely found lying on the surface of the ground. Fortunately, others have gone before us and developed tools for mining the gems from God's word. It would be foolish not to take advantage of them.

The following are some of the basic tools with which the serious Bible student should become familiar. All of these books are available electronically through various Bible Software programs. However, hard copies of these books can also be used very easily.

A. Concordances

1. A concordance is a compilation of all of the places that a particular word occurs in the Bible.
 - a. There are modern language concordances as well as concordances for the original language text of the Bible.
 - b. There are exhaustive concordances and complete concordances.
 - c. There are concordances that are specific to specific versions of the Bible.
2. A concordance can be used to find a passage when you know some specific words in the passage for which you are looking. It is best to try to find the least used word in the text.
3. A concordance can be used to find all of the places where a certain word occurs.
 - a. If you are using a modern language concordance, it will tell you all of the places where that modern language word occurs.
 - b. If you are using an original language concordance (i.e. Greek or Hebrew) it will tell you where all of the places are where that original language word occurs in the Bible.

B. Lexicons

Lexicons are dictionaries of words that help you to understand the meaning and origins of words as they are used in the original languages. Many lexicons require a certain amount of familiarity with Greek or Hebrew. However, many modern lexicons have a numbering system where you can easily locate the words that you are trying to search.

C. Bible Dictionaries or Encyclopedias

Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias are a wonderful resource for background information and summaries of biblical material. Unfortunately the Bible is not catalogued alphabetically. People, places, doctrines, and all other information is scattered throughout its pages. These books function just like other dictionaries and encyclopedias except they focus on topics that are specifically related to the Bible.

D. Bible Handbooks

Bible handbooks are books that are meant to be read along with your personal Bible reading. They often give insights into a variety of things including archeological findings, relevant historical data, background to the Book and many other useful bits of information. Their weakness is that usually they are not large books and cannot do full justice to any of the areas that they attempt to cover. I might mention that our School of Ministry courses on Old Testament and New Testament Survey can be of sum help here in understanding the setting and the main messages of each book of the Bible.

E. Bible Atlases

Bible atlases are books of maps that help you understand many things about the geographical world of Bible times. Atlases may be large or small and can offer information on topography, rainfall, weather patterns, proximity of nations, areas of land mass and distances for travel. They usually give you information related to various times in history past and may even compare Bible times to modern times. Large ones may also include information about vegetation, animal life and other relevant facts. Perhaps the greatest help they provide is in assisting you to visualize the movements of people and groups of people as recorded in the Bible (e.g. The wilderness wanderings, the journeys of Paul, etc.).

F. Commentaries

Commentaries are written by scholars who try to expand a person's understanding concerning what is being read in the Bible. They are organized by chapter and verse of the books of the Bible. Commentary sets can consist of one volume to 66 volumes. Commentaries can be affected greatly by the theology of the person who is doing the writing, but most commentaries can be very helpful since they draw from many sources and bring information together for the purpose of unfolding specific passages of scripture.

G. Manners and Customs of the Bible

There are many such books that help the student of the Word to discover any customs that might have a bearing on the passage under study. They can be very helpful in unlocking the true intended meaning of the passage.

In addition to these books there are many other resources for the student of the Bible. In a sense you can go as deep as you want to go or as time permits for any particular study. One thing that we know for sure is that we will never exhaust the Bible, the word of God.

It should be remembered, however, that all of these books (as good as they are) are not to be placed on the same authority as the Bible. They are all written by human authors and are, therefore, subject to misinterpretation.

Resources for Bridging the Gap

THE LINGUISTIC GAP:

Concordances:

1. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Abingdon). For those who study from the KJV Bible.
2. *Zondervan's Exhaustive Concordance* (Zondervan). For those who study from the NIV Bible.
3. *The NASB Exhaustive Concordance* (Thomas Nelson). For those who study from the NASB Bible.
4. *New Englishman's Greek Concordance* (Baker)
5. *New Englishman's Hebrew & Chaldee Concordance* (Baker)
6. *Young's Analytical Concordance* (Eerdman's)

Lexicons:

1. *Greek-English Lexicon*, Arndt & Gingrich (University of Chicago Press)
2. *New Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon* (Baker)
3. *New Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon*, Gesenius (Baker)
4. *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Zondervan)
5. *Greek-English Lexicon*, Liddell & Scott (Oxford)

Word Studies:

1. *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, John R. Kohlenberger III (Bethany House)
2. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Harris, Archer, Waltke (Moody)
3. *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown (Zondervan)
4. *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Rienecker & Rogers (Zondervan)
5. *Word Studies in the New Testament*, M.R. Vincent (Eerdman's)
6. *Expositor's Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll (Eerdman's)
7. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A.T. Robertson (Broadman Press)
8. *Christian Words*, Nigel Turner (Nelson)
9. *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, R.B. Girdlestone (Eerdman's)
10. *Synonyms of the New Testament*, R.C. Trench (Eerdman's)
11. *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, Bruce Metzger (Theological Book Agency, Dist.)
12. *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*, Nigel Turner (T&T Clark)
13. *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses*, E. Burton (T&T Clark)
14. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E.W. Bullinger (Baker)
15. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, Moulton & Milligan (Eerdman's)
16. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Kittel, Ed. (Eerdman's)

Grammars:

1. *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, Machen (MacMillan)
2. *Manual Grammar of the Greek Testament*, Dand & Mantey (MacMillan)
3. *Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, J. Weingren

4. *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, A.T. Robertson (Broadman Press)

THE CULTURAL GAP:

1. *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, Gower (Moody Press)
2. *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, J. Freeman (Logos International)
3. *Harper's Encyclopedia of Bible Life*, Miller, Miller, Bennett, Scott (Harper & Row)
4. *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, A. Edersheim (Eerdman's)
5. *Life and times of Jesus the Messiah*, A. Edersheim (Eerdman's)
6. *Insights into Bible Times and Customs*, Weiss (Moody)
7. *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, Jeremias (Fortress Press)
8. *All the Holy Days and Holidays of the Bible*, H. Lockyer (Zondervan)
9. *All the Trades and Occupations of the Bible*, H Lockyer (Zondervan)
10. *The Bible and Archaeology*, J.A. Thompson
11. *Ancient Israel*, R. DeVaux (McGraw Hill)
12. *The Temple*, A. Edersheim (Eerdman's)
13. *Eerdman's Handbook to the World's Religions*, (Eerdman's)
14. *The Land and the Book*, W.M. Thompson (Harper & Brothers)

Bible Dictionaries:

1. *The New Bible Dictionary*, M.C. Tenney (Zondervan)
2. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, (Moody)
3. *Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, M.C. Tenney (Zondervan)
4. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (Eerdman's)
5. *Bible Dictionary*, Smith (Holt, Rinehart, Winston)

Biblical Interpretation:

1. *Interpreting the Scriptures*, Conner & Malmin (Bible Temple Press)
2. *Biblical Hermeneutics*, Terry (Zondervan)
3. *The Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, Ramm (Baker)

THE GEOGRAPHICAL GAP:

1. *The Oxford Bible Atlas*, (Oxford Press)
2. *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*, Pfeiffer & Vos (Moody)
3. *All the Animals of the Bible Lands*, G. Cunsdale (Zondervan)
4. *Geography of the Bible*, D. Baly (Harper & Brothers)
5. *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*, (MacMillan)

THE HISTORICAL GAP:

1. *New Testament History*, F.F. Bruce (Anchor)
2. *Survey of Israel's History*, L. Wood (Zondervan)
3. *New Testament Times*, Tenney (Eerdman's)
4. *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*, Jeremias (Fortress)
5. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, A. Edersheim (Eerdman's)
6. *Old Testament Bible History*, A. Edersheim (Eerdman's)
7. *The Archaeology of Cities on Western Asia Minor*, Yamauchi (Baker)

8. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, Unger (Zondervan)
9. *The Archaeology of the New Testament*, Unger (Zondervan)
10. *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, (Kregel)
11. *Bible Archaeology*, G.E. Wright (Westminster Press)
12. *General Bible Introduction*, H.S. Miller (Word Bearer Press)
13. *Bible Survey*, Wm Hendriksen (Baker)
14. *The Books & The Parchments*, F.F. Bruce (Pickering & Inglis)
15. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, E.J. Young (Eerdman's)
16. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, Unger (Zondervan)
17. *Introduction to the New Testament*, Thiesen (Eerdman's)
18. *Introduction to the New Testament*, Vols., Zahn (Kregel)
19. *New Testament Survey*, Tenney (Eerdman's)
20. *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, Bernard (Pickering & Inglis)

Note: The above resource list was extracted from *Bible Research*, by Ken Malmin and Team, pg. 19-20.

Lesson 6

Foundations for Biblical Study

I. What are some of the things that will help to lay a foundation for deeper biblical study?

Before you can understand the parts of the Bible, you must have a good handle on the whole. As you approach the idea of deeper Bible study there are some important foundations to lay in your own experience of the Bible (Note: The following points taken from unpublished notes by Lanny Hubbard entitled *Committed to the Study of God's Word*).

A. A general working knowledge of the Bible.

The first thing a student needs prior to more serious study the scripture is a good base of general Bible knowledge. This would include the knowledge of events, people, and culturally relevant issues. This information can be acquired by continually reading the scriptures to familiarize one with the details of stories and ideas. Study Bibles are helpful in this area by providing a significant amount of background material as you read through. When you have a good overall view of the Bible it will help you to evaluate new material that you may come across in later studies. In other words, don't start from the Book of Revelation and work back.

Sources for further study:

School of Ministry courses:

Old Testament Survey Course, Bill Scheidler

New Testament Survey Course, Bill Scheidler

B. An understanding of the chronology and main events of the Bible.

The student also needs a good working understanding of the chronology and history of the Bible. This information does not have to be exhaustive, but when the student reads a story he or she should be able to mentally place the event into a biblical timeline. This timeline should include the approximate timing of major events, people, transitions, and the writing of the books of the Bible.

Sources for further study:

Chronological Charts of the Old Testament, John Walton

Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament, Wayne House

C. An understanding of the basic themes of the Bible.

The student should familiarize him or herself with the major themes that are referred to throughout the whole Bible (The Seed of the Woman, the Messiah, Covenants). These themes are the key elements to the major doctrines of

Scripture. It is important to follow the development of these themes as they move through the different sections of the Old and New Testament. They will act as the connective links between the two testaments.

Sources for further study:

New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words, Lawrence Richards

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown

New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, Willem Van Gemren

D. An understanding of basic doctrine.

A last area of general importance is a good understanding of theology. The student should be familiar with the major doctrines of the Bible. There is doctrinal material scattered throughout every book of the Bible. Each book helps to build the totality of each doctrine of the Bible.

Sources for further study:

School of Ministry courses:

Basic Doctrine I

Basic Doctrine II

The Holy Spirit

The Local Church.

II. What are some of the principles of interpretation that will help me to rightly divide the word of God?

There are a few simple guidelines that can help us not to get off track in the area of biblical interpretation.

A. Let scripture interpret scripture (Acts 17:11).

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

What else does the Bible say about this subject? By studying cross references you can find out what the rest of the Bible says on a subject. Do not approach a verse with the intent of proving your doctrine. Approach the verse in an attempt to understand its doctrine. The summation of a doctrine is everything the Bible has to say about a particular subject.

B. Interpret individual passages of scripture in the light of other scriptures.

Since the Bible is inspired by God, it does not contradict itself. Therefore, never interpret scripture in such a way that it clearly contradicts other scriptures. If a passage can be legitimately interpreted in more than one way, choose the interpretation that doesn't contradict other scriptures.

Go back our previous example in Mark 12:31 where Jesus said we were to "Love your neighbor as yourself." We must interpret this passage in harmony with Jesus' other teachings as well as that of the rest of the Bible.

Jesus never promoted self-love. In fact, He repeatedly said we would have to die to ourselves. Paul spoke of dying daily. On a number of occasions he presumes that we all do love ourselves already (Eph. 5:29).

C. Interpret the text literally unless something in the text suggests that it cannot be taken literally.

Someone has said it this way, "If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense or you could end up with complete nonsense."

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

—David L. Cooper

The Bible should be understood to communicate literal and historical fact whenever and wherever possible. Take every word in its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and self-evident and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.

When it seems obvious that the literal meaning cannot be the true meaning the interpreter should look for other factors that might be present including: figures of speech, idioms, symbolism, etc.

The following methods for distinguishing determining whether or not a passage is to be taken literally or figuratively are offered by John Mulholland in *Principles for the Eschatological Interpretation of the Apocalypse* (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1959, pp. 222-235).

1. Always use the literal sense unless there is some good reason for departure (Example: Revelation 7:1-8).
2. Use the figurative sense when the passage is stated to be figurative (Example: Zechariah 12:6).

In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place--Jerusalem.

3. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves impossibility (Examples: Jeremiah 1:18).

For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land...

4. Use the figurative sense if the literal commands immoral action (Example: John 6:53).

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you."

5. Use the figurative sense if the expression fits into one of the classes of the figures of speech (Example: Zechariah 12:2).

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem...

6. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves a contradiction with other clear parallel passages.

7. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves a contradiction in doctrine.

8. We could add one more and that is, use the figurative sense if the literal sense in any way violates what we understand about the character and nature of God.

The above example is also a classic example here. You can look all you want to but you will not find any other verses that confirm your doctrine of self-love. The Bible says in the mouth of two or three witness let every word be established (II Cor. 13:1).

Any true doctrine of God will be found in many places in the Bible. The Mormons base their doctrine of baptisms for the dead on only one verse in the Bible (I Cor. 15:29).

Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?

Nowhere else in the Bible is this practice even mentioned. If you cannot find other places in the Bible that teach the doctrine this should alert you to a problem. If the supposed doctrine is only found in one place you should seek to find out why. In every case you will discover that what is being taught is not a biblical doctrine at all.

Paul in making this statement was not teaching a doctrine. He was using the practice of some pagan religions of baptizing for the dead as an illustration of the universal belief in life after death.

D. Interpret the unclear passage in light of the clear passages.

Every major, essential truth is taught clearly and repeatedly. Never build a doctrine on an unclear passage.

E. Pay careful attention to the context of the verse.

A text out of context is a pretext.

Often you hear people quote the verse found in Romans 8:28. When something negative happens they say, “Well, you know what the Bible says, ‘All things work together for good.’”

The Bible does indeed say this, but if you read the rest of the verse it finishes with the very important phrase, “to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

We will come back to this when we look at the Context Principle in Lesson 7.

F. Look for specific features of the text that will help bring out meaning.

(Note: The following points adapted from unpublished notes by Lanny Hubbard entitled *Committed to the Study of God’s Word* and *Grasping God’s Word*, Duvall and Hays).

1. Repetition of Words.

Look for words and phrases that repeat. Key words will help you understand the main thrust of the passage (e.g. I Corinthians 13, love; I Corinthians 14; edify).

2. Contrasts.

Look for ideas, individuals, and/or items that are contrasted with each other. In Galatians 5 the works of the flesh are contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26).

3. Comparisons.

Look for ideas, individuals, and/or items that are compared with each other. Look also for similarities.

4. Lists. Note where the text mentions more than two items.

5. Cause and effect.

Look for the cause for certain effects or the effects brought on by various causes. There may be more than one effect from a single cause mentioned in the text.

6. Conjunctions. Notice terms that join units including “and,” “but,” “for.”

7. Verbs.

Determine the action involved and whether a verb is active or passive. Pay special attention to imperatives.

8. Pronouns. Be sure to identify the proper antecedent for each pronoun.

9. Tone of the Author.

Is the author giving an admonition, exhortation, warning, promise, encouragement or judgment?

10. Questions.

The word of God poses many thought provoking questions. As we meditate on the question we better understand what is being intended in the text (I Cor. 1:13, Gal. 3:1-5, Rom. 6:1).

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I Corinthians 1:13

G. Look for divine principles that apply to any age, any people, anywhere.

III. What are some practical guidelines to ensure that you get the most out of your study?

(Note: The following points adapted from unpublished notes by Lanny Hubbard entitled *Committed to the Study of God's Word*).

A. Always start a study project with prayer.

Ask God for help to open up the passage to you.

B. Read the passage several times.

Read it in several translations to get different perspectives.

C. Establish the boundaries of the passage.

Determine which verses before the passage and after it are necessary to understand it.

D. Research background material related to the passage.

1. Who is the author of the passage?

2. To whom was the passage written?

3. When was the passage written?

E. Discover the content of the passage.

1. What are the key or repeated words of the passage?
2. Are any unique words used in the passage?
3. Who is speaking in the passage?
4. Who is being spoken to?
5. Are there any cultural, ceremonial, geographic, or historical issues in the passage?
6. What persons are mentioned in the passage?
7. What are places mentioned in the passage?
8. What events are mentioned in the passage?
9. What objects are mentioned in the passage?
10. What symbols are used in the passage?
11. Does the author give any advice to the readers?
12. Does the author give reasons for his advice?
13. Are any contrasts or comparisons made in the passage?
14. Are any lists given?
15. Are there any summary statements given in the passage?
16. What is the author's tone of the passage?

F. Evaluate the passage:

1. What is the purpose of the passage?
2. What is the main point of the passage?
3. How does the passage relate to the rest of the book?
4. How does the passage relate to the other books of the testament?
5. How does the passage relate to the rest of the Bible?

Appendix Lesson 6, Putting this into practice

The following example is adapted from an unpublished article by Lanny Hubbard titled *Committed to the Study of God's Word*.

Example: Ephesians 5:4

I. Pray and ask for God's help.

II. Read the passage in at least two translations

...neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. –NKJV

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. –NIV

Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes--these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. –NLT

III. What are the boundaries of the passage?

The immediate paragraph seems to be 5: 3-5. These verses include a list of different behavior that should not be part of the Christian's life. The conclusion is that people who live this way do not inherit the Kingdom of Christ (v.5). The idea of acceptable and non-acceptable behavior goes back to Eph 4:1. Here verses 1-16 talks about the lifestyle that should accompany the saints. They should live in a way that is worthy of their calling. The result of this godly lifestyle is that it produces unity in the bond of peace in the church (v.3), and that every member is contributing to the success of the whole group. Verses 17-19 describe the life that should no longer be practiced by a believer. The end of that lifestyle is selfishness and greed. These are the very things that will tear apart the church. Verses 20 –24 shows how each believer was to replace their old way of living with a new one. They could not continue to live like they did before they came to Christ. In verses 25-32 there are some practical examples given of how this transformation should look. In the list of examples given is the issue of how people talk to each other (v. 29). In context, inappropriate conversation between members of the church resulted in grieving the Holy Spirit. Appropriate conversation would please Him because it produced the desired results. Chapter 5 begins with the admonition for the saints to imitate God. As His children they should reflect the way He relates to others in His love. Living this way may mean a sacrifice for them, but Jesus was their example to follow. In the end, they should reflect His life.

IV. What is the background for this material?

A. Who is the author? Paul

B. To whom was the passage written? To the church in the city of Ephesus.

C. When was the passage written?

It was written about A.D. 58-60 during Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Paul himself was already paying the price to be a follower of Jesus.

D. What is the literary form of the passage?

It is an epistle. The epistles were designed to communicate the doctrine of the Church and to trouble shoot specific problem in different churches.

V. **What is the content of the passage?**

A. What are the key or repeated words in the passage?

The key word in this passage is "thanks." This is contrasted to the other forms of unacceptable talk.

B. Are there any unique words?

There are four unique words in this passage.

1. *Aiskrotes* – This word literally means *ugliness*; figuratively *indecent*; indecent behavior, to act in defiance of social and moral standards, with resulting disgrace, embarrassment.
2. *Morologia* – This word means "foolish talk, idle talk, useless or silly speech, talk which is both foolish and stupid."
3. *Eutrapelia* – This word means vulgar speech, (1) in a good sense *pleasantry, wittiness, urbanity*; (2) in a bad sense *coarse joking, clowning around, vulgar talk*.
4. *Aneeko* – This word means *it is fitting or right; what is proper, one's duty*.

C. What are the cultural, geographic, or historical issues in the passage?

Ephesus was an important port town in Asia Minor. The city experienced a tremendous amount of traffic from merchants, traveling business people, and athletes because of the trade industry. These travelers came from all over the world, and during the stay at Ephesus they would indulge themselves in the city life of that place. Because of the immoral nature of many of these activities, and the highly competitive nature of the industry, the language of the people became very coarse. Ephesus became known around that part of the world for its city talk. Those people who grew up in that environment developed a manner of speak that was vulgar, and full of personal put-downs. Many of them continued talking this way, even after they got saved and entered the Church. That competitive spirit which was designed to beat or discredit others did not work in the church where the believers were to encourage each other on to greater success. The tactics of the world didn't fit in the church. As a result, the believers needed to learn how to talk a new way.

D. Does the author give any advice to the readers?

Yes. In regard to the issue of speech and immoral actions he says the following.

1. Certain things should not even be spoken about by saints (vs.3).
2. There is a distinct behavior that is proper and fitting of saints (vs.3-4).
3. Christians are not to let themselves be deceived about these things (vs.6).

E. Does the author give a reason for his advice? Yes.

1. People who do these things do not inherit the Kingdom of Christ (vs.5).
2. These forms of conduct will bring the wrath of God (vs.6).

F. Are there any contrasts made in the passage? Yes.

All the forms of wrong speech mentioned in verse 4 are contrasted to “giving thanks.” This implies that the wrong speech focuses on the speaker and what he or she desires. Correct speech focuses on others and reflects a mindfulness of all the blessings that have been provided for the believers.

G. What is the tone of the passage?

The author is not harsh or condemning, but he is straightforward and practical. The language does not present the material as a casual suggestion or personal option.

VI. Evaluation of the passage.

A. What is the purpose of the passage?

It is to clearly define what behavior should be part of the believer’s life. The culture of Ephesus had produced a lifestyle that did not honor God or reflect His nature. The inappropriate aspects of their lifestyle needed to be exposed and then new acceptable forms of behavior were to replace them. This is the embodiment of the “putting off” and “putting on” process mentioned in the wider context of this verse.

B. What is the main point of the passage?

There is a life style that fits people who have the truth. This implies that there is also a lifestyle that is not compatible to people who know and believe the truth. To believe one way and live another does not demonstrate the sincere, integral life that characterizes both God and the Christian.

C. How does the passage relate to the rest of the book?

The following are all passages in Ephesians that deal with mouth and speech issues: Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29, 31; 5:6, 12, 19, 32; 6:19-20.

D. How does the passage relate to other books in the same testament?

The following passages all speak about people's conversations: I Timothy 4:6, 12; 6:3-4; II Timothy 2:14, 17. Paul wrote all these verses and they were written to Timothy who was in Ephesus at that time. This reinforces how much the issue of speech was affecting that church. Paul refers in Titus 2:1 to speaking things that are *fitting* of sound doctrine. In Colossians 3:17 also says that whatever is done in word or deed should be done in thanksgiving to the Lord.

E. How does this passage relate to the whole Bible?

In the New Testament, James 3 is one of the clearest passages about the power of the tongue. In the Old Testament the book of Proverbs has much to say about speech: Proverbs 4:24; 6:16-19; 8:13; 10:8, 11, 19, 31, 32; 12: 5, 6, 13, 15; 17:27; 18:8, 21, 23; 21:23; 29:20. It is very apparent that the Scripture has much to say about the wrong use of the tongue.

F. How can we apply this verse?

Paul was writing to a city that had a very sinful culture. This really showed up in the way people talked to each other. The influence of their entertainment, athletics, and business, created a style of talk that was immoral course, nonsensical, and full of off-colored humor. The people of the city gained a reputation for their type of speech. When some of them got saved, they came into the church, but they still retained their old way of talking. Paul states that this type of communication is very wrong and actually is counterproductive to what God wanted to happen in the Church.

Today we live in a culture that is very affected by our entertainment, the influence of professional athletics and the business world. As people get saved today, they come into the churches with a manner of speech that they used in the world. Often the old way of speaking is retained by these people, but more interesting is that more preachers are using this style of speech from the pulpit. Some say they do it to be relevant to our culture, but are we supposed to copy the culture of imitate God as Ephesians 5:1 says. The church in Ephesus was being negatively affected by culture. God wanted the culture to be positively affected by the church. When Paul wrote to Timothy, the pastor of the Church at Ephesus, he told him to be an example in how he talked. A leader should reflect the nature of God not the culture around them. The world may despise us for how we act, but that should not distract us from having a life consistent with the God we serve.

Lesson 7

The Context Principle

The real estate maxim is, “Location, location, location!” Where your property is situated is its most valuable asset. In biblical interpretation the most important maxim is “Context, context, context!” The most common misuse of the Scripture is ignoring the context of a passage.

The most important rule of biblical interpretation is the “Context Principle.” The context is the single most important kind of evidence in the interpretation of a passage.

I. What does the term “context” mean?

- A. The term “context” comes from a combination of two Latin words and literally means to “weave together.”
- B. In the medium of writing it refers to the relationship of a particular passage to the rest of the text that surrounds it. Every individual text is woven together with other portions to make up a greater tapestry of words and thoughts.
- C. In the broadest sense the actual context may go well beyond the written text to include the surrounding aspects that were present when the material was written. This could include the historical or cultural context in addition to the actual textual context.

Webster says that “context” is “the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage that can throw light on its meaning.”

The principle here is that the “part” can only be fully understood in relation to the “whole.”

A verse taken out of its context can often be interpreted to mean something completely different from the intention of passage. This method focuses on the importance of looking at the context of a verse in its chapter, book and entire biblical context.

This is not just true of the Bible it is true in all of life.

Example: Abraham Lincoln misquoted

President Lincoln was once misquoted as saying that he would rather live in Russia than in America. What President would make such a remark? Was this really said by the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln? He did say it but he was being quoted out of context. He actually said, “I shall prefer immigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty--to Russia, for instance.” Lincoln wrote these words while expressing regret about a dangerous trend he saw in America. He feared that many wanted to change “all men are created equal” to “all men are created equal, except non-whites.” If that were to happen, Lincoln suggested, he would be more comfortable in a land where the government didn’t pretend to stand for liberty. The context makes all the difference, for it tells us exactly what Lincoln meant to say.

II. What categories apply to context as it relates to biblical texts?

There are four primary categories of context as it relates to the biblical text.

A. There is the Scripture context.

There are four categories relative to the Scripture context.

1. The Entire Bible, both Old and New Testament

This means that the Bible must be seen as a complete entity. The New Testament cannot be separated from the Old Testament and vice versa. We already alluded to this in a previous session. You cannot understand one without the other.

2. The Old or New Testament

Even though we understand that the Bible is an entire book, yet we also understand that for the most part they represent different covenants established on either side of the cross. In light of that, verses in the New Testament are interpreted differently from those in the Old Testament. The writers of the New Testament are seen as the infallible interpreters of the Old Testament.

3. The Book of the Bible

Each book of the Bible was written into an historical context to a specific people with a specific purpose. The more that this can be taken into account the better understanding you will have in relation to the specific text under review.

4. The Passage Containing the Text

This is the relationship of a passage to the text in which it is located. Any verse of the Bible is immediately surrounded by other verses. Even though many books of the Bible flow from topic to topic or exhortation to exhortation, the verse in question is linked to a particular aspect of dialogue in that book. It is impossible to understand the meaning of the particular verse without taking into account the immediate context.

Bible ⇔ Testament ⇔ Book ⇔ Passage ⇔ Text ⇔ Words

A general guideline is never view a passage in isolation from its surroundings.

“I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest may fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf....Pause at every verse of Scripture and shake, as it were, every bough of it, that if possible some fruit at least may drop down.” –Martin Luther

B. There is the historical context.

This is the relationship of a passage to the historical setting in which it was written. What was the date for the writing of the book and what events were happening at that time? At that time in history, what was the nature of the original reader's relationship to God? Who was the author? The historical setting provides the backdrop for the text. Knowledge of what was taking place back then often gives clues to why the author expresses things the way he does.

A rule of thumb that is used in hermeneutics is that a passage cannot mean something it did not mean to its original readers (Although there may be some exceptions when it comes to certain elements of prophecy) (I Pet. 1:10-12).

C. There is the cultural context.

Every verse of the Bible was written in a certain cultural context. The time and the place of writing had a great deal to do with cultural practices that would vary from place to place and from generation to generation. Discovering the cultural context is discovering what the passage meant to that people, at that time, in that place and in that cultural setting.

The cultural context includes things like the political, religious, economic, legal, agricultural, architectural, dietary, and other social issues.

The history and culture surrounding the authors is important to understand to aid in interpretation. For instance, understanding the Jewish sects at the time of Christ (Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots, etc.) and the government that ruled Palestine in New Testament times increases understanding of Scripture. And, understanding the connotations of positions such as the High Priest and that of the tax collector helps us know what others may have thought of the people holding these positions.

Consider some of the following:

1. Why did Moses give the strange command, "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk" (Ex. 23:19; 34:36; Deut.14:21)? Would it help you if you knew that this was part of a Canaanite ritual?
2. Why did God bring on Egypt the specific ten plagues that He did? Why those plagues rather than others? Would it help you to know that all of the plagues were aimed at specific gods of the Egyptians?
3. Why did Elijah challenge the 450 Baal prophets with the issue of "calling down fire" on Mount Carmel? Would it help you to know that Baal was the god of lightning and fire?
4. Why did the closest relative give his sandal to Boaz (Ruth 4:8)? Would it help you to know that this was the customary practice to release the buyer to walk land when the deal was sealed (Nuzi Tablets, JBL 1937, p. 53-56)?

5. What was so unusual about Samuel calling on the Lord for rain at the time of the wheat harvest in I Samuel 12:17? Would it help you to know that from April to October there was normally no rain at all? This would be like calling for snow in Johannesburg in December or in Los Angeles in July.
6. Why did Job say, “Why did the knees receive me?” (Job 3:12)? Would it help you to know that it was customary in the culture to place a newborn child on the father’s knees or lap to demonstrate that the child was his child?

D. There is the literary context.

The literary context refers to the literary style or genre of the book or section in which a passage is located. Scholars identify over six different styles used in the Bible but the overarching theme is that each genre of Scripture has a different set of rules that apply to it.

The most common styles used are narratives, histories, prophecies, letters, poetry and apocalyptic writings. Each one of these styles is structured a little differently. Understanding their differences helps the student to identify and interpret things unique to that particular style. Objects in a narrative and history are often to be interpreted literally. Objects in poetry and apocalyptic writings often are used in a figurative or allegorical manner. Some styles are meant to inform the mind. Some styles are meant to confront the heart.

III. What are some questions to ask when using the context principle?

The following is adapted from an unpublished article by Lanny Hubbard titled *Committed to the Study of God’s Word*.

When studying any specific text, ask questions regarding each of the following areas:

1. The Verse
 - a. What do the words mean that are used in the verse?
2. The Passage
 - a. How does the text relate to the surrounding verses?
 - b. Which verses before and after make up the immediate context?
 - c. How do the surrounding verses help me understand my text?
 - d. Does the verse begin, develop or end a section?
3. The Book
 - a. What is the purpose and message of the book?
 - b. How does the passage fit into the outline and development of the book?
 - c. Is the meaning I am giving to the verse consistent with the rest of the message of the book?
 - d. Does it make sense?

4. The Testament

- Are there other passages in other books that are similar in message or structure?
- Is the meaning I am giving the passage consistent with or contradictory to things said in other books in that testament?

5. Whole Bible

- Is the meaning I am giving to a passage consistent with or contrary with the rest of Scripture?
- How does the passage relate to the rest of Scripture? Is it similar or dissimilar?

IV. What are some examples of the misuse of the context principle?

Misinterpreting Scripture and wrenching things out of the text that were never there go on all the time. It is not difficult to pull a Scripture out of its context and give it a completely different meaning. Often people do this when they are trying to find a proof text for something that they want the Scripture to say.

Let's look at some examples. Some of these are ridiculous and some closer to home.

A. I Corinthians 15:32

First let's look at a ridiculous example. The Bible says, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

Someone might try to use such a verse to justify a continued lifestyle of partying all night long.

Does the Bible indeed say this? Yes it does. Is it even a complete verse? No it is not.

Without considering the context of this phrase and quoted by itself, it would appear to be saying that Paul was teaching a person is to live a carefree life, getting all of the "gusto" out of it that they can.

A look at the context of this statement shows that Paul was teaching quite the opposite. The statement is a reference to worldly philosophy that proposes a life lived only for the moment with no sense of future consequence or accountability. Paul was instructing the Corinthians that there is certainly life after death. After death man will be judged and held accountable for his deeds. The point Paul was making is that if there is no resurrection of the dead then there was no real reason to live a righteous life. In verse 34, Paul rebuked the Corinthians for the way they were living. They were living as if there was not going to be a resurrection and this was to their shame! So we see that the context of a verse is very important and absolutely necessary for understanding or interpreting the verse.

The wider context of the New Testament also teaches something very different (I Pet. 4:3-4).

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles-- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

You might say, but no one would ever do this? Actually this means of interpreting Scripture is no different to what people do all of the time. Let me give you a few more relevant examples.

B. John 12:32

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. –NKJV

Usually this verse is quoted from the King James Version which says,

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Most of the time that you hear this verse used in a public setting it is used in the context of worship. Whoever is exhorting will say that if we exalt Jesus, He will draw sinners to Himself. The conclusion is that our job is merely exalt Jesus and everything else will flow. While exalting Jesus is important and can be established from other verses, this interpretation of this verse can end up being a copout in the area of personal evangelism.

When you read the entire passage you realize that Jesus was not referring to worship or modern preaching, He was referring to His crucifixion when He would be lifted up on the cross. The whole passage reads as follows:

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die. The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” John 12:32-34

“And when I am lifted up on the cross, I will draw everyone to myself.” He said this to indicate how he was going to die. “Die?” asked the crowd. “We understood from Scripture that the Messiah would live forever. Why are you saying the Son of Man will die? Who is this Son of Man you are talking about?”
–NLT

As you can see, the crowds who heard Jesus understood exactly what He was saying.

C. Proverbs 23:7

You often hear the verse quoted, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” It is always amazing to me how people rather despise the old King James Version of the Bible unless the wording in it agrees with their doctrine.

Often you have heard Proverbs 23:7 (or at least the first half) to support the idea of having a positive self-image. If you think bad thoughts or inaccurate thoughts about yourself you will become what you believe yourself to be and seal your own destiny. The thought here may be accurate, but is this the text that one would use to prove it?

A red flag should go up every time you see one half of one verse being cited as the proof text. We saw this when we looked at the phrase “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This is even more dramatic in this passage.

If you look at this passage carefully you will notice that the verse preceding this does not close with a period. Also, if you examine the full context (even though the context of most proverbs is small) you will see that both the verse in front of it and the verse behind it compose one complete thought.

In addition, if you read this passage in anything but the King James Version you do not get the same meaning. Even New King James could be misinterpreted but a close reading will indicate that the meaning here is that “you cannot be sure that the words people say to you are a true reflection of what is in their heart.”

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. “Eat and drink!” he says to you, but his heart is not with you. –NKJV

Now let us expand the context and read Proverbs 23:6-8 from a couple of other translations.

Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. “Eat and drink,” he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments. –NIV

Don’t eat with people who are stingy; don’t desire their delicacies. ‘Eat and drink,’ they say, but they don’t mean it. They are always thinking about how much it costs. You will vomit up the delicious food they serve, and you will have to take back your words of appreciation for their “kindness.” –NLT

D. II Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...

People have used this verse to teach on things like binding and loosing, warring in the heavenlies, commanding the spirits of darkness or dealing with territorial spirits. That is not the subject matter of these verses.

This passage indicates that even though we are natural men and women we do not fight our spiritual battles according to the flesh or with material weapons. We have been given a strong arsenal by God to defeat the enemies of our walk as believers. With these weapons we are able to pull down strongholds. What are these strongholds? Some have suggested that these are demonic powers that bind people to deeply rooted habits or practices.

The strongholds that Paul talks about here are related to belief systems, philosophies and ways of thinking that are not subject to that which is revealed to us by Christ. In essence a “stronghold” is any way of looking at things that is not consistent with the exaltation of Christ and the affirmation of his Lordship.

The Greek word here for “stronghold” is “*okuroma*” (3794) which occurs only this once in the New Testament. It is a military term that literally means “a castle” or “a fortified place” but figuratively speaks of arguments that are fortified in our minds. In the Old Testament God is usually seen as a fortress (Ps. 30:3; 70:3). On the other hand, the tower of Babel was such a structure and represents man’s determination to defy the clearly declared purpose of God.

The specific context of this passage has to do with things that have been said by others to destroy Paul’s reputation or weaken his influence among them in Corinth. It is in the context of Paul trying to reinforce his authority as an apostolic ministry to the church of Corinth. It really has nothing to do with binding and loosing, commanding the spirits of darkness or dealing with territorial or any other kind of spirits.

Paul is talking about arguments or reasonings. The word here is *logismos* (3053) from which we get the word “logic.” This word is used twice in the New Testament, here and in Romans 2:15 where it is translated “thoughts”. This is Satan’s battlefield, the thought-life of the believer.

The challenge for the believer in this passage is to take authority over these non-biblical thoughts and cast or pull them down. The word that is used here is the same in both cases, “*kathaireo*” (2506). It simply means that the arguments, reasonings and the unredeemed “logic” of men are seeking the top place in our minds and we must take authority over them and bring them into subjection to Christ and His Word.

E. Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This verse indicates that the battle for the Christian is not in the earthly realm with a physical opponent. The opponent of the Christian is the “wiles” of the devil (vs. 11). The word “wiles” is the Greek word “*methodeia*” (3180) from which we get the “method”. It literally means “schemes or trickery”. It is used only here and in Ephesians 4:14 where it speaks of deception.

The warfare against the spiritual forces is a warfare that takes place in our mind where the demonic forces are attempting to deceive believers into believing a lie. It is the same method that Satan used against Adam and Eve forcing them to choose between what God said and what they said. It is the same method Satan used on Jesus when he was tempted of the devil in conjunction with His 40 days of fasting.

The passage goes on to tell us how we defeat these unseen forces. It is by being “strong in the Lord”, by standing and by putting “on the whole armor of God.” Our armor and weaponry include such things as truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, the helmet of salvation (to protect our mind), the Word of God, prayer, watchfulness and perseverance (vs. 13-18). We are to stand in the truth as revealed by Jesus and not allow Satan and his henchmen to move us from it by their lies and deceptions.

There is nothing in this passage that speaks of casting demons out or attacking demonic forces. It speaks of standing your ground in Christ.

F. Ephesians 4:27

...nor give place to the devil.

...and do not give the devil a foothold. –NIV

Often times this verse is used to speak of the devil getting a foothold in our lives or even establishing a “demonic attachment” in our spirit or soul realm. This, however, is not the plain sense from the actual context of this verse. This passage is talking about what happens when we do not quickly resolve relational conflicts in our life. When we harbor anger against anyone, we give the devil “an opportunity” to work in us and in that situation. The purposes of God require the unity of the saints. When we do anything that jeopardizes this unity, it gives the devil an opportunity.

The Greek word used here for “place” is *topos* (#5117). This is a word that can refer to a geographical place, but when it is not referring to a specific place, it usually refers to an “opportunity, power or occasion for acting”. It is used this way in Acts 25:16 where Paul is given an opportunity to speak, Romans 12:19 where we are instructed to give no place to wrath and Hebrews 12:17 where Judas found no place for repentance.

Lesson 8

The Comparative Mention Principle

I. What is the Comparative Mention Principle of biblical hermeneutics?

The Comparative Mention Principle “is that principle by which a certain verse or group of verses may be interpreted by comparing and/or contrasting it with another verse or group of verses” (Conner/Malmin pg. 59).

When studying the Word, the interpreter must take into consideration other parallel Scriptural passages that shed light on the particular verse in question.

Two key words in this definition are “compare” and “contrast.”

Comparing involves examining other like passages (sometimes referred to as parallel passages) to find additional light relating to your passage.

Contrasting involves examining other passages which deal with the same subject but from an opposing viewpoint.

A. Within the comparative principle is the idea of using the Scripture to interpret Scripture.

This principle is based on the awareness that the first interpreter of the Scripture should be the Scripture itself.

As the great Puritan Thomas Watson writer once wisely stated, “Nothing can cut the diamond but the diamond; nothing can interpret Scripture but Scripture.”

“Scripture is its own expositor.” –Martin Luther

The Puritan writer William Gurnall exhorted believers to “Compare Scripture with Scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves.”

The Westminster Confession states that “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself and, therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture... it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”

This principle directs the student to use scripture to help interpret itself. If a passage is difficult to understand, often there is another passage in the Bible that can be used to understanding the difficult or the obscure one. Different passages that share similar ideas and language are compared to each other. Information gained from one is often helpful in understanding the other.

The beauty of using Scripture to interpret Scripture is that when the Bible answers its own questions, then we know the answer is correct.

B. Within the comparative principle is the idea of interpreting the unclear from the clear.

We want to be sure that whatever doctrinal convictions that we have are based on clear verses that can be supported by other verses. We never want to base a conviction on an obscure passage of Scripture.

Let's look at an example when it comes to the Early Church and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There are four places in the New Testament where people received this experience, Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19.

In three of these instances we see that those who received this baptism all "spoke in tongues."

1. The initial outpouring on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4).

"And began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
Acts 2:4

2. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48).

For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Acts 10:46

3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the men of Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6).

And they spoke with tongues, and prophesied. Acts 19:6

In the fourth instance, it is not clear what supernatural sign was present even though it is clear that something dramatic happened. In this instance, it was the Samaritans who were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-21).

"And when Simon saw that through the laying on of hands the Holy Spirit was given..." Acts 8:18

There is no specific mention of "speaking in tongues" in this passage. However, one has to wonder what Simon saw. Whatever it was, Simon the magician was so impressed that he offered Peter money for the power to do whatever was done.

After Peter rebuked Simon for a wrong heart, he explained to Simon that he had "neither part nor portion in this matter" (Acts 8:21). The word that is used for "matter" here is the Greek word *logos* which usually means "utterance or speech."

By using the comparative mention principle and the guideline of interpreting the unclear by the clear you have to conclude that the thing that Simon saw was the same thing that was present in the other clear passages, that is, the evidence of "speaking in tongues."

Actually, natural laws of evidence would suggest the same conclusion.

C. Within the comparative principle is the idea of two or three witnesses forming the basis for a doctrine (II Cor. 13:1).

We indicated in a previous class that the Mormons justify the baptism for the dead from a verse in the New Testament (I Cor. 15:29). Although studying the context of this passage will shed great light on the subject, the fact that no other verse in the Bible suggests that this was the practice of the Early Church should be sufficient to throw up a red flag.

Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?

Is Paul indeed advocating that people who have died can be helped by a believer standing in for them and being baptized in their place?

1. This cannot be the case because there is only “one witness” or one verse for this teaching.

So where are the two or three witnesses? I like to think that when it comes to the practice of official rites in the church, the three witnesses should be the following:

- a. The command of Jesus in the Gospels.
- b. The practice of the Early Church in the Book of Acts.
- c. The theological understanding unfolded in the Epistles.

If we apply this to the practice of communion and water baptism it is easy to find the two or three witnesses. However, if we apply this to other things such as “foot washing” or “baptism for the dead” we will not find our witnesses (See chart below).

Rite	Commanded	Practiced	Unfolded
Water Baptism	Matthew 28: 19	Acts 2:38, 41	Colossians 2:12
Communion	Luke 22:19	Acts 2:42	I Corinthians 11:23
Foot-washing	John 13	None	None
Baptism for Dead	None	I Corinthians 15:29 Mentioned Only	None

2. This cannot be the case because this contradicts other clear doctrines of the Bible.

Actually the Bible teaches that nothing can be done to benefit the dead once they are dead.

- a. The Scripture teaches that death is final (Heb. 9:27).

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...

- b. The Scripture teaches that there are no second chances after death (Luke 16:19-31; Eccl. 11:3; Ezek.18:19-32).
 - c. The Scripture teaches that our eternal destiny is determined on the basis of what we do in and with this life (I Cor. 3:10-15).
 - d. The Scripture teaches that heaven and hell are eternal states (Rev. 20:10; 22:5).
3. This cannot be the case because a careful reading of the passage will show that Paul is not talking about his own practice or the practice of other people.

In several passages of Scripture it is important to follow Paul's train of thought and determine about whom he is indeed talking. One such passage is I Thessalonians 5:1-11, a passage that has often been put forth to support a pre-tribulation rapture. It is important to watch the pronouns in this passage. Otherwise it seems that Paul contradicts himself in this short passage.

Let's read it.

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when **they** say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon **them**, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And **they** shall not escape. 4 **But you**, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake **you** as a thief. 5 **You** are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let **us** not sleep, as **others** do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For **those** who sleep, sleep at night, and **those** who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let **us** who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint **us** to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for **us**, that whether **we** wake or sleep, **we** should live together with Him. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*

In this passage Paul distinguished between two end time scenarios. One of them has to do with "them" and one of them has to do with "us."

"They" are going to be saying "Peace and safety," they are spiritually asleep, they will experience sudden and unexpected destruction and they will not escape.

However, "we" are the children of light, the day will not overtake us as a thief and we are not appointed to wrath.

So how does this apply to baptism for the dead? When you read this passage with the context, Paul is continuing a line of argument that he began in verse 12 where he mentions that some suggest that there is no resurrection of the dead. There were pagan religions of the day who taught such things as well as

some “Christian” heretical movements such as Marcionism. Some of the people in Corinth, who had difficulty at times separating from their former religious beliefs, may have carried over some of these things into their Christian experience.

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? I Corinthians 15:12

He talks about how important the doctrine of the resurrection is and that even people from other pagan religions demonstrate a belief in the resurrection of the dead when “they” (not we) baptize for the dead.

Paul goes on in verse 30 to say, “and why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?” Notice that he says “we” as opposed to “they.” We are willing to jeopardize ourselves for the Gospel because we know that there is a resurrection and eternal life after this life.

- D. Within the comparative principle is the idea that Scripture does not contradict scripture.

As we said in a previous session, if we think there is a contradiction, it is only because there is something that we do not yet understand.

II. What is an example of comparing verses of Scripture?

As we indicated before, comparing involves examining other like passages (sometimes referred to as parallel passages) to find additional light relating to your passage.

The Brazen Serpent

- A. It was made by Moses for the healing of the Israelites (Num. 21:9).

So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

- B. It was later worshiped by Israelites and became idolatry (II Kgs. 18:3-4).

And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

- C. In the New Testament it became a symbol of Christ (John 3:14-15).

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

D. In the New Testament it became a symbol of Christ on the cross (John 12:32).

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

III. What is an example of contrasting verses of Scripture?

As we indicated before, contrasting involves examining other passages which deal with the same subject but from an opposing viewpoint. The following examples are easy because they occur in the same context, but they will still serve as good examples.

The Tree of Faith

Jeremiah 17:5-6

Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited.”

Jeremiah 17:7-8

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.”

Compare also with Psalm 1

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

Psalm 1:4-6

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

IV. What is an example of comparison and contrast?

The Two Builders

When you examine these two accounts of Jesus’ story given on two different occasions, you can see both similarities and differences.

Matthew 7:24-27

Luke 6:46-49

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.

A. These passages contain many similarities.

1. Both passages point out the same characteristics of the wise and foolish man.
2. Both passages refer to the floods.
3. Both passages end up with the house of the wise man standing and the house of the foolish man being destroyed.

B. These passages contain some notable differences.

Matthew	Luke
No mention of digging	The wise builder “dug deep”
Rain, Flood, Winds	Flood, Stream
The foolish man “built on sand”	The foolish man “build on earth”
No specific mention of foundation.	The foolish man built without a foundation.
No mention of intensity of storm.	The stream beat vehemently
No use of a similar term.	Immediately it fell

The more that we can compare Scripture with Scripture; the more likely we are to render an accurate interpretation of the verses and themes of the Scripture.

Lesson 9

The Progressive Mention Principle

In this lesson we will take a brief look at what is referred to as “the first mention principle,” but we will be focusing primarily on “the progressive mention principle.

I. What is the first mention principle?

We will not be spending a great deal of time on what is sometimes called “the first mention principle,” but I mention it here because it has a relationship to our discussion of the progressive mention principle.

The first mention principle is not consistent enough to be applied to the whole of Scripture and, therefore, cannot be seen as a hermeneutical law. However, it must be said that there is some value in looking at the first use of any word or concept in the Bible. Most “first mentions” or origins are to be found in the first book of the Bible, Genesis—the Book of Beginning.

Even in the text for this course (Conner/Malmin) this principle is not seen as absolute. The way it is stated in the text is as follows:

“The First Mention Principle is that principle by which the interpretation of any verse is aided by considering the first time its subject appears in Scripture” (pg. 55).

The text goes on to say that, “the first time a thing is mentioned in Scripture it carries with it a meaning which will be consistent throughout the entire Bible” (pg. 55).

In the text, the first mention principle is seen in the following ways.

- It is seen as an aid to interpretation (pg. 55).
 - It is seen as an “in general” guideline (pg. 55).
 - It is seen as a principle that does not operate alone, but in tandem with the other principles (Pg. 56).
 - It is seen as a principle that should not be overemphasized, rather kept in its proper perspective (pg. 56).
- A. The first mention principle is discussed here because it has a definite link to the progressive mention principle. As Conner/Malmin put it (pg.55)...

The first mention can be seen as:

1. A *key* which unlocks the door into full truth.
2. A *gateway* into the path of truth.
3. A *guide* to discovering the truth in its progressive unfolding.
4. The *first link* in a long chain of revelation.

5. A *seed* which has within it the full truth that is to be developed in all subsequent mentions.
- B. The first mention principle can be applied to words, concepts, symbols, persons, places and themes.

Let's just look at one example. Let us look at the very first subject in the Bible, "God" (Gen. 1:1).

The first verse of the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

This first mention of God indicates many things about God that will later be unfolded throughout the pages of the Bible.

1. In this verse, God tells us much about Himself that is critical to our understanding. What does this first verse reveal to us about God?

- a. God is infinite.

This means that God is not limited by space and time (Ps. 90:1-2).

LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

- b. God is eternal.

This means that God has no beginning and will have no ending. He always was and He always will be (Is. 44:6).

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God."

- c. God is omnipotent.

Creation is the greatest miracle of all time. God is all powerful. He is able to call things into existence by simply speaking them into being (Heb. 11:3; Ps. 33:6-9). If God is able to create, He is able to do anything.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. Hebrews 11:3

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. Psalm 33:6-9

d. God is a compound unity.

This is seen in the very first word used for “God.” It is the word *Elohim*. This name for God occurs in the Bible over 2500 times. It is a very unique word in many ways.

- This word is a noun in the plural form.
- This word though plural is always accompanied by a verb in the singular.
- This word may be a hidden reference to the triune nature of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We know that all three persons of the Godhead were involved in creation.

2. In this verse, God refutes many of the philosophies of man.

a. Atheism

Atheism teaches that there is no god and, therefore, no higher power or authority. However, God’s word declares that God not only exists but that He is the author of all life. It should be noted that a denial of this fact does not change this fact (Ps. 14:1; Rom. 1:28).

The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” Psalm 14:1a

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge...

Romans 1:28

It has also been said that “an atheist cannot find God for the same reason that a thief cannot find a policeman.”

b. Pantheism

Pantheism teaches that nature is god, that is, god is in nature and nature is in God. However, God’s word declares that God and nature are separate. In fact, God created nature. Pantheism makes nature God and misses the God of nature. It inspires the worship of the creation rather than the creator.

Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it. Isaiah 42:5

c. Polytheism

Polytheism teaches that there are many gods. However, God’s word declares that there is one God (Deut. 6:4; Is. 43:10-11; 44:6). “In the beginning God” not “gods.”

“You are My witnesses,” says the LORD, “And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior.” Isaiah 43:10-11

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.”
Isaiah 44:6

d. Fatalism (Evolution)

Fatalism or the religion of evolution teaches that matter is eternal and that everything that we see occurred by chance. However, God’s word declares that matter is not eternal and that chance had nothing to do with it. Creation was a deliberate act of God. God willed it, He designed it and He gave it life.

e. First Cause (Prime Mover)

This philosophy teaches the same as the above but it gives place to a form of god called “the first cause”. This is an attempt to answer the “cause and effect” argument when it comes to creation. In this philosophy, evolution is the process, but it must provide some form of impersonal force to start the “evolutionary ball” rolling. However, God’s word declares that God is an intelligent being Who created the world with purpose and design.

II. What is the progressive mention principle?

The Progressive Mention Principle as stated in the text is “that principle by which the interpretation of any verse is aided by a consideration of the progressive mentions of its subject in Scripture” (pg. 65).

A. The progressive mention principle presupposes that the Bible is one book and, therefore must be approached in that light.

Both the first mention principle and the progressive mention principle are based on this same conviction.

The Bible is one book with one author—God. Even though it is impossible for human beings to write such a book, it is possible with God because He knows the end from the beginning (Is. 46:9-11).

Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,” Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God--I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me. Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. I will call a swift bird of prey from the east--a leader from a distant land who will come and do my bidding. I have said I would do it, and I will. –NLT

B. The progressive mention principle acknowledges God’s method of teaching or revelation (Is. 28:13).

But the word of the LORD was to them, “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little...”

In other words, God has revealed truth to man a little at a time. God is not bound by time. He is not in a hurry. He realizes that human beings learn slowly.

C. The progressive mention principle accepts that God has revealed truth to man by means of a progressive, unfolding of the individual themes of the Bible.

This means that most themes of the Bible begin with a seed. Genesis is sometimes referred to as the seed plot of the Bible. The seed of truth planted in the early books of the Bible gradually grows as you move through the Old Testament and on into the New Testament. The seed is germinated, it sprouts and it grows until it becomes a mighty tree with full foliage and ultimately full fruit.

As you study a theme through the Bible it’s as if you are building a house or a doctrine. You begin with the foundation and as you continue the process you add to the foundation that you have laid. At each level more and more is added until the house (or the doctrine) takes its intended shape.

Most themes in the Bible begin in Genesis and end up being consummated in the Book of Revelation. Themes that begin in Genesis are developed in the rest of the Bible only to end up in the Book of Revelation. Note the following:

Contrasts between Genesis and Revelation	
Genesis	Revelation
First Paradise Closed (3:23)	New Paradise Opened (21:25)
Dispossessed thru Sin (3:24)	Repossessed thru Grace (21:24)
Curse Imposed (3:17)	Cursed Lifted (22:3)
Tree of Life Lost (3:24)	Tree of Life Regained (22:14)
Beginning of Sorrow and Death (3:16)	End of Sorrow and Death (21:4)
A Garden where defilement entered (3:6-7)	A city where nothing defiled can enter (21:27)
Dominion Forfeited in Adam (3:19)	Dominion Restored in Christ (22:5)
Evil Triumphs in Serpent (3:13)	Lamb Triumphs over Serpent (20:10)

1. The Seed of the Woman becomes Christ and His Church (Gal. 3:16, 19, 29).

2. The garden or paradise of God gives way to the foursquare city of God, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-21).
3. The creation of the first heavens and earth give way to the creation of the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21:1).
4. The rivers in the garden become the river of life for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:1-2).
5. The tree of life gives way to the ultimate tree of life (Rev. 22:2, 14).
6. The serpent introduced in Genesis is ultimately cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:2-3).

D. The progressive mention principle carries with it an intrinsic caution.

The progressive mention principle by its very nature cautions that the themes of Scripture cannot be fully understood from a single reference or even from a limited number of references. In this sense, the progressive mention principle must function in tandem with “the complete mention principle” which will be discussed in Lesson 10.

III. What are some examples of the application of this principle?

- A. The first example has to do with the struggle between the Seed of the Woman and the seed of the serpent.

This is perhaps the most important theme in the Bible. The first mention of the seed of the woman is in Genesis 3:15. In fact, this verse could be said to be the key verse of the entire Bible.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

From the fall of Adam and Eve into sin and the promise given to them by God of the Seed of the Woman Who would crush the seed of the serpent, there was a continuing struggle between the two seeds right up to the coming of Messiah. This struggle continues in relation to the Church right up until the Second Coming of Christ when Satan will be dealt with permanently. In the Book of Genesis, this struggle is seen in the following ways:

1. The struggle was foretold by God Himself (Gen. 3:15).
2. Satan seeks to destroy the first offspring of Eve by entering the heart of Cain who kills his brother Abel (Gen. 4).
3. Eve brings forth another son named Seth (appointed) who becomes the promise bearer (Gen. 4:25-26).

*She bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed **another seed** for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”*

4. The line of Cain produces an anti-Christ progeny.
5. The line of Seth produces a godly line leading to Noah.
6. Satan seeks to corrupt the whole human race seen in the ungodliness of Noah’s day (Gen. 6:1-7).
7. God destroys the seed of the serpent in the flood and preserves the godly seed through Noah (Gen. 6:8-9).
8. Noah gets off of the ark with his family including three sons—Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen. 9:18-19).
9. Ham sins against his father and becomes an instrument of Satan to perpetuate the seed of the serpent (father of anti-Christ nations), culminating in Nimrod—the father of Babylon (Gen. 10:8-10).
10. God thwarts Satan’s design by judging Nimrod’s kingdom and confounding the languages at Babel (Gen. 11:4-9).
11. The seed line of Shem continues through to Abram who God called out to be His covenant partner in the earth (Gen. 11:10-32; 12:1-3).
12. Abraham now becomes the channel through the Messiah is to come. Notice the promises to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:5-6; 17:4-8; 22:15-18).

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:1-3

13. The promises given to Abraham extend to Isaac and his seed (Gen. 24:60; 26:2-4).
14. Isaac has two sons, Jacob and Esau. Esau is the firstborn and rightful heir to the promise, but because he despised his birthright the promises passed to Jacob (Gen. 25:29-34; 28:13-14).
15. From Jacob the promise of the Seed of the Woman extended to his son Judah (Gen. 49:8-10; 38:8-9).

We could follow this theme through the rest of the Bible including Pharaoh’s treatment of the Children of Israel, but suffice it to say the Seed of the Woman culminates in Christ and ultimately in the Church (Rom. 1:3; 4:13; 9:8; Gal. 3:16, 19, 29). The final struggle between the Seed of the Woman and the seed of the serpent comes at the end of the age and the revelation of the antichrist whose

mission it is to destroy the Seed of the Woman—the Church. Fortunately the Church ultimately prevails and Satan’s head is crushed (Mt. 16:18; Rom. 16:20).

B. The second example has to do with the progressive mention of “Zion” in the Bible.

While a study of the complete mention of Zion in the Bible would involve looking at over 130 verses, we will highlight some key ones in the unfolding of this theme.

In the development of this theme, it will become clear that while the first references to Zion are purely speaking of a natural location, as the revelation unfolds, Zion will prophetically become a spiritual entity.

This example is taken from the text (Conner/Malmin, pg. 68-69).

1. The stronghold of Zion is reclaimed by David and becomes the City of David (II Sam. 5:6-9).
2. The Ark of the Covenant is brought into the Tabernacle of David in Zion, the City of David (II Sam. 6:12-19).
3. Zion is spoken of prophetically as God’s holy mountain where He sets His King, referring to Jesus the Son of God (Ps. 2:6).
4. Mount Zion is spoken of prophetically as the city of our God, the city of the great King and the joy of the whole earth (Ps. 48:1-2).

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

5. Zion is seen as the perfection of beauty from which God will shine (Ps. 50:2).

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.

6. God proclaimed His special love for Zion (Ps. 87:2-3).

The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!

7. Isaiah prophesied that Zion would be a place from which the word of the Lord would go forth and nations would be reached (Is. 2:2-3).

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

8. Isaiah prophesied that God would lay a foundation stone in Zion (Is. 28:16).

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily."

9. Zechariah prophesied that God would dwell in the midst of Zion (Zech. 2:10).

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the LORD.

10. The King Jesus comes to Zion as a fulfillment of prophecy (Mt. 21:4-5).

All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

11. Jesus is the foundation stone and rock of offence that is laid in Zion (Rom. 9:33; I Pet. 2:6-8).

12. Mount Zion is seen as in conjunction with the Church of the Firstborn and Heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24).

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

13. Ultimately the Lamb stands with the redeemed on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1).

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

Lesson 10

The Complete Mention Principle

I. What is the complete mention principle?

The complete mention principle is defined as “that principle by which the interpretation of any verse is determined upon a consideration of the complete mention of its subject in Scripture” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 71).

There are different ways of saying this:

- A true Bible doctrine consists of everything that the Bible says about a particular topic.
- You do not have a full grasp of God’s mind on a subject until you have listened to everything that He has to say about it.

When studying a particular idea, object, event, or person, studying every passage in the Bible that refers to that subject should be investigated. The results of this kind of study provide a good foundation that accurately reflects the whole Bible doctrine.

“No single verse relevant to any specific subject can be left out in formulating the doctrinal teaching on that subject. Each relevant verse is an integral part of the whole, supplementing, adding to, clarifying and illuminating the others” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 72).

II. Why is the complete mention principle so important?

The complete mention principle is important for at least three reasons.

- A. The complete mention principle is important because of the fact of progressive revelation.

You need to think of God’s revelation to man on a time line. It has a start and it has a finish. In many cases the start to finish revelation took place over a period of 4000 years (From Job to John on Patmos). Whenever you deal with a verse of Scripture you are, in fact, intersecting that timeline at a particular point.

Unless you see what came before and what comes after together with what you are looking at, you will not have a full understanding of God’s revelation.

- B. The complete mention principle is important because the rest of what the Bible says often brings balance to the particular passage being studied.

If the only verse that you read about God indicates that God is a consuming fire, you might have one attitude toward God (Heb. 12:29).

However, if upon further study you realized that God is also love, light and spirit, it will balance out your concept and give you a more proper understanding of God.

Let me illustrate this in relation to Jesus and His personality. Jesus is the example of perfect balance in ministry (John 1:14). Note: For those of you who took our Pastoral Ministry course, you will remember this example.

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

This verse indicates that Jesus was full of grace and truth. That is, He was filled fully with grace, but, at the same time, He was filled fully with truth.

As you study any particular scripture verse you may lean one way or another in your view of Jesus. However, after you look at the broader picture, you can develop a true biblical viewpoint.

1. Jesus exemplified grace, that is, He was the kind, compassionate, forgiving minister of mercy.

a. Jesus reached out to the untouchable (Mark 1:40-41).

Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."

b. Jesus extended forgiveness to an adulteress (John 8:10-11).

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

c. Jesus was moved by compassion for a bereaved widow (Luke 7:12-15).

And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

d. Jesus freely ministered to the demon possessed (Mark 5:1-19).

e. Jesus disregarded His personal need and touched the sick (Mt. 14:12-14).

When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot

from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

This was right after Jesus found out about the death of John the Baptist. If there was ever a time that Jesus would have been justified in sending the crowds away, this was such a time.

- f. Jesus showed genuine concern for the natural needs of people (Mt. 15:32).

Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

- g. Jesus was moved by the need for shepherding a fainting and weak people (Mt 9:36).

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

2. At the same time Jesus exemplified truth, that is, He was the rebuking, correcting and cleansing minister of justice (Luke 17:3).

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

- a. Jesus rebuked cities and villages (Mt. 11:20-24).

Next Jesus let fly on the cities where he had worked the hardest but whose people had responded the least, shrugging their shoulders and going their own way. "Doom to you, Chorazin! Doom, Bethsaida! If Tyre and Sidon had seen half of the powerful miracles you have seen, they would have been on their knees in a minute. At Judgment Day they'll get off easy compared to you. And Capernaum! With all your peacock strutting, you are going to end up in the abyss. If the people of Sodom had had your chances, the city would still be around. At Judgment Day they'll get off easy compared to you." –Msg

It should be noted that there is literally no one living in these places today!

- b. Jesus rebuked Pharisees (John 8:43-44; Mt. 15:7; 23:13-33).

Why can't you understand one word I say? Here's why: You can't handle it. You're from your father, the Devil, and all you want to do is please him. He was a killer from the very start. He couldn't stand the truth because there wasn't a shred of truth in him. When the Liar speaks, he makes it up out of his lying nature and fills the world with lies. John 8:43-44, Msg

- c. Jesus drove out the money changers from the temple (John 2:13-17; Luke 19:45-46).

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

John 2:13-17

d. Jesus corrected His own disciples (Mark 8:33; Luke 9:51-56; 24:25; Mark 16:14).

i. He rebuked Peter right in front of the rest of the disciples.

But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Mark 8:33

ii. He called some skeptical followers "O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25).

iii. He rebuked His disciples after his resurrection for their hardness of heart and unbelief (Mark 16:14).

e. Jesus rebuked entire local churches (Rev. 2:4-5; 2:14-16; 2:20-23; 3:1-3; 3:14-22).

C. The complete mention principle is important because it help you to emphasize what God emphasizes.

Someone has once said that we are to "major on the majors and minor on the minors." The complete mention principle will help you to know the difference.

There are many people who major on small issues and miss much more important issues. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were like this. Jesus said that they were those who "strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel" (Mt. 23:24).

As an example there are literally hundreds of verses on prayer. It is not difficult to understand why the Early Church continued steadfast in prayer (Acts 2:42) and the early leaders gave themselves to prayer (Acts 6:4).

However, there are those who will take a very minor point of doctrine and make it a basis for fellowship with other Christians.

III. What are some of the hurdles to overcome relative to the complete mention principle?

Perhaps the most significant hurdle is being willing to do the work that is involved in looking at all of the verses. On some themes this is an easy task because there may

only be few references. Unfortunately, there are many themes that are represented by a few hundred verses.

Topics like prayer, the kingdom of God, holiness (syn. righteousness, purity, etc.), sin wickedness and repentance are vast.

Other topics like minstrels, frankincense, conscience, foot washing, etc. may only have a small number of specific verses associated with them.

IV. What is the process for applying the complete mention principle?

A. Discover the other verses that relate to your topic.

For this you will use cross references, concordances, topical Bibles and Bible Dictionaries.

B. Look up the verse and ask yourself questions relative to each new verse.

1. What does this verse add to an understanding of this concept?
2. What facet of this concept does this verse emphasize?
3. Does this verse adjust my overall perspective on this subject?

V. What are some examples of the complete mention principle?

A. Contentment (Greek #714, 841-842)

For the sake of time we will just focus on the New Testament here.

1. There are two main words that are rendered “content” or “contentment” in the New Testament.
 - a. The Greek word *arkew* (#714) which literally means “to ward off, to avail or to be satisfactory.” It is translated “be content, be enough, suffice and be sufficient.”
 - b. Two related Greek words *autarkeia* (#841) and *autarkes* (#842) come from the above word and literally mean “self-satisfied, contented and content.” These words are translated “contentment, sufficiency, content.”
2. There are eleven verses in the New Testament that use these words.

Let us look at them in order and see what each verse adds to our understanding of this concept.

Matthew 25:7-9

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” But the wise

answered, saying, “No, lest there should not **be enough** for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.”

Luke 3:12-14

*Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.” Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?” So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and **be content** with your wages.”*

Contentment has to do with the very practical issues of life.

John 6:5-7

*Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not **sufficient** for them, that every one of them may have a little.”*

When the needs outnumber the resources, Jesus is able to make up for that which is not sufficient by virtue of His supernatural involvement in our lives.

John 14:7-9

*“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is **sufficient** for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”*

Sometimes the thing that we want is staring us in the face if we would but open our eyes to it.

II Corinthians 9:6-8

*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all **sufficiency** in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*

We will never be able to minister or give from an abundance unless we come to a place where we can be content with what we have. We will always be able spend more. Coming to a place where we can limit our lifestyle gives us the abundance that we need to minister to others.

II Corinthians 12:8-10

*Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is **sufficient** for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take*

pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Sometimes God keeps us in a place of dependency so that more of Him can be seen in us. The grace of God operating in our lives will give us the ability to be content even when we are not totally satisfied with how God has made us or the lot that He has dealt us in life.

Philippians 4:10-13

*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to **be content**: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Everything does not have to be perfect for us to have contentment. It is a state of the mind not our circumstances that control personal contentment. I can go through seasons of poverty, hunger and need and still be content. I can go through seasons of blessing, plenty and abundance and I can be content. I can do all of these things because I have Christ strengthening me to do so.

Note: Verse 13 is a verse that is often quoted out of context and applied to just about everything but what it is actually talking about.

I Timothy 6:6-10

*Now godliness with **contentment** is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall **be content**. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

The attitude of contentment is a real plus in our life. It keeps us free from being vulnerable to serious problems particularly as it relates to money. So often we make bad judgments out of a covetous desire to have more and more. When we are content, we don't take the bait as easily as when we are discontent. This verse reminds us that when our lives are compared to what we actually brought into the world and what we actually leave with, we have much for which to be thankful.

Hebrews 13:5

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; **be content** with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

Sometimes we live without contentment because we focus on what we do not have rather than on what we have. Those who constantly dwell on what they do not have are most likely not giving thanks for what they do have. They are not counting their blessings. Real contentment is not dependent upon poverty or wealth but on an inner attitude of the spirit. A man who is not content with little will not be content with much.

Actually if we understand what we have as believers, we would see that we are indeed prosperous.

If someone is prosperous and successful it means many things including the following:

- Having godly offspring (Gen. 32:12).
- Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:11-13).
- Meeting godly goals in life (Ezra 6:14; Ps. 20:4).
- Experiencing rest from personal enemies (II Chr. 14:7b).
- Having favor and high esteem before God and man (Pro. 3:3-4).
- Having good friendships (Eccl. 4:7-12).
- Being free from bondages that enslave (Rom. 8:21; Gal. 5:1).
- Knowing a deep inner peace and rest in the spirit (Pro. 3:2; 17:1; Ps. 29:11).
- Having physical health and strength (III John 2).
- Having an abundance of material goods (Deut. 28:1-14).
- Having respect from those who know you (Pro. 11:16 NIV).
- Having a long, enjoyable and satisfying life (Ps. 91:14-16; Pro. 10:27).
- Having personal security for the future (I John 2:16-17).

Furthermore, having contentment frees us from covetousness and fear of the future. If we have a proper relationship with the Lord, we have all that we need. This verse also challenges us to keep the eternal perspective in mind. What is the worst that man can do to us? Kill us? So what, we will forever be with the Lord.

III John 1:9-10

*I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not **content** with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.*

Discontentment can test the true motives of people. When you have not accepted your role in God's plan for your life, you find it necessary to find fault with others who are in prominent places of ministry.

B. For other examples please refer to the text, *Interpreting the Scriptures* by Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin.

Lesson 11

The Covenantal Principle

I. What is the covenantal principle of biblical interpretation?

The covenantal principle of biblical interpretation is “that principle by which the interpretation of a verse or group of verses is determined by a consideration of its covenantal setting” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 77).

- A. A covenant is a formal, solemn and binding agreement or contract, usually under seal, between two (or more) parties.
- B. The word “covenant” in the Hebrew literally means a “cutting” and refers to the process of formalizing an agreement by the principal parties passing between pieces of flesh (Gen. 15:17; Jer. 34:18-19).

And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...” Genesis 15:17-18

And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it—the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf... Jeremiah 34:18-19

- C. The word “covenant” in the Greek means a disposition or arrangement of any sort which one wishes to be valid.
 - 1. It can refer to a testament or will which deals with the last disposition which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death.
 - 2. It can refer to a binding compact, agreement or covenant (Ezek. 20:37).

I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant...

- D. God Himself has entered into many covenants with man.

II. What are the kinds of covenants that God has made with man?

There are two principle types of covenants that God has made with man.

A. There are conditional covenants.

A conditional covenant is a covenant that has conditions attached to it. It is a covenant that can be broken by either party when the conditions attached to the covenant are not met by the other party.

A conditional covenant as it relates to God is a “covenant in which God obligates Himself to fulfill the promises of the covenant only upon man’s obedience to the conditions set forth by God. A covenant whose fulfillment is dependent upon man’s fulfilling certain conditions” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 78).

The operative words in a conditional covenant are “If you will...then I will” (Ex. 19:5-6; Ex. 15:26 with Deut. 28:58-62).

Example 1

*“ Now therefore, **if you will** indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **then you shall** be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” Exodus 19:5-6*

Israel as a nation did not fulfill the conditions associated with this promise and so the promise was extended to another (Mt. 21:43; I Pet. 2:9).

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. Matthew 21:43

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

I Peter 2:9-10

Example 2

*...and said, “**If you** diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, **I will** put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.” Exodus 15:26*

Compare Deuteronomy 28:

*“**If you** do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, **THE LORD YOUR GOD**, 59 **then** the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues--great and prolonged plagues--and serious and prolonged sicknesses. 60 Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. 61 Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. 62 You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.” Deuteronomy 28:58-62*

B. There are unconditional covenants.

An unconditional covenant is a covenant that has no conditions attached to it (“no if, ands or buts). It is a covenant where the principal party involved makes promises that are not dependent on anything but the integrity of the person making those promises (Tit. 1:2).

...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began...

An unconditional covenant as it relates to God is a “covenant in which God obligates Himself to fulfill the promises of the covenant regardless of man’s response; a covenant whose fulfillment is not dependent upon man’s fulfilling certain conditions” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 77).

The operative words in an unconditional covenant are “I will” (Gen. 9:8-16; 12:2-3).

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: 9 “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. 11 Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” 12 And God said: “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. 14 It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; 15 and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” Genesis 9:8-16

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 12:2-3

Why is this so important? It is important because as you interpret the Bible, especially the Old Testament, you must deal with a conditional covenant differently than you do an unconditional covenant.

III. What are the principle covenants that God has made with man?

There are nine principle covenants that God has made with man. These will not be treated in this course. However, the course titled, “Covenants” will go into detail on each of them. I can also recommend the book titled *Covenants* by Kevin Conner.

- A. The Everlasting Covenant (Heb. 13:20-21)
- B. The Edenic Covenant (Gen. 1:26-30)
- C. The Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3:1-24)
- D. The Noahic Covenant (Gen. 8-9)
- E. The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:-3; 15; 17; 22)
- F. The Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 20-40)
- G. The Palestinian Covenant (Deut. 27-30)
- H. The Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:4-29; Ps. 89)
- I. The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Mt. 26:26-29; Heb. 8-9)

Why are these distinctions so important? In order to interpret the passage properly it is important to be aware of the covenant that is in play in the passage.

IV. What are the principle elements of divine covenants?

All of God’s covenants have three to five common elements that parallel the marriage covenant (See Chart).

God’s Covenants	Marriage Covenants	Description of Elements of Covenants
Promises	Vows	This is where commitments are made that form the basis of the covenant.
Sacrifice	Death to Self	A symbolic death must take place to ratify the covenant between parties.
Seal or Sign	The Ring	An enduring seal is used to reflect the enduring nature of the covenant.
Feast	Feasting	A time of rejoicing to celebrate the new relationship that is formed.
Sanctuary	The Home	A place of relationship where the promises of the covenant are fulfilled.

- A. Example 1: The Noahic Covenant (Gen. 8-9)
 - 1. Promises – “I will never again destroy the earth” (Gen. 9:1-11).
 - 2. Sacrifice or Blood – Noah offered a sacrifice (Gen. 8:20-21).
 - 3. Sign or Seal – God set the rainbow in the clouds (Gen. 9:12-17).
 - 4. Feast – Not specifically mentioned (perhaps the eating of meat for the first time, Genesis 9:3).

5. Sanctuary – The cleansed (new) earth would be the place where the covenant would be fulfilled.

B. Example 2: The New Covenant

1. Promises – “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you” (Ezek. 36:26; Jer. 31:31-34; John 7:37-37; 14:15-17; 16:5-15).
2. Sacrifice or Blood – Christ’s blood was shed to ratify the covenant (Luke 22:20).

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”

3. Sign or Seal – The Holy Spirit within (John 14:17; Eph. 1:13-14).

...in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13b-14

4. Feast – The celebration of communion (I Cor. 11:23-26).
5. Sanctuary – The Church, the temple of the living God (Eph. 2:20-22; Heb. 3:6).

V. **How does one use the covenantal principle in interpretation?**

When studying a passage in scripture, it is important to know the covenant format of the Bible. Which covenant was in affect at a certain time? How did that covenant affect the lives of the people? How do these covenants relate to each other? This is a key to unlocking many passages.

A. Determine if the passage has covenantal language.

Not all passages will qualify here. Where there is no covenantal language this principle of interpretation does not apply.

B. Determine which covenant or covenants are involved.

There are few occasions where more than one covenant is referenced in a passage. The interpreter must be careful to sort out which material belongs to which covenant (Ezek. 16:59-62; Rom. 9-11; Gal. 3:1-29).

C. Determine whether or not the covenant is conditional or unconditional.

D. Determine whether this covenant is fulfilled in the New Covenant.

For instance, the promises of the Davidic Covenant are fulfilled in Christ and the Church (II Sam. 7:14-17; Is. 9:7; Jer. 33:17; Luke 1:32).

E. Interpret the covenant from the perspective of the cross of Christ and the New Covenant.

All of the covenants have a symbolic aspect to them. Most of the elements of each covenant point to and are fulfilled in the elements of the New Covenant. For instance, the blood of the covenants invariably point to Christ and his sacrificial shedding of blood on Calvary.

VI. What are some examples of the application of the covenantal principle?

The following examples are taken from the text, *Interpreting the Scriptures*, pages 81-82.

A. The Edenic Covenant

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. Revelation 2:7b

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Revelation 22:14

In order to arrive at a proper interpretation of these verses, the Edenic Covenant must be referred to because it is under this covenant that the tree of life is first mentioned. Adam and Eve forfeited their right to eat of the tree of life when they failed to fulfill the condition of the Edenic Covenant by eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Thus they did not “overcome” because they did not “do His commandments” and lost the “right to the tree of life” (Genesis 2:8-17; 3:22-24). As the purpose of God comes full circle, the overcomers will once again have access to that which was lost.

B. The Adamic Covenant

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Romans 16:20

In order to understand the full implication of this verse it must be considered in the light of the Adamic Covenant. After the entrance of sin into the human race, God said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15). The verse in Romans points toward the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic word of the Adamic Covenant. Thus, this verse draws its significance from the fact that it is a reiteration of the first Messianic promise of redemption.

C. The Noahic Covenant

And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Revelation 4:3

This verse must be interpreted in connection with the Noahic Covenant. The first rainbow was placed in the heavens to be a reminder to God and man that God would never again destroy the whole earth with a flood (Gen. 9:8-17). The rainbow around the throne in Revelation shows that God is keeping the seal of the Noahic Covenant constantly before Him, proving His faithfulness to His promise.

D. The Abrahamic Covenant

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:29

It is impossible to properly interpret this verse without recognizing what is involved in the Abrahamic Covenant. As previously noted, Abraham was to be the father of two seed lines—natural and spiritual (Gen. 13:16; 15:5). To these two seed lines there were two sets of promises—natural and spiritual. The natural promises pertained to land, seed and possessions (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:16-18). The spiritual promises pertained to the Messiah and His ministry to all the nations of the earth. These promises included justification by faith and the reception of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:8, 14). Thus, this verse is stating that the person who belongs to Christ is Abraham's seed and is in covenant relationship with God, being an heir of the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant through Christ.

E. The Mosaic Covenant

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Colossians 2:16-17

The subject matter of this verse can only be understood by relating it to the Mosaic Covenant. Under this covenant, Israel was commanded to observe Sabbath days, festival months, times of convocation, and Sabbath and Jubilee years (Leviticus 23, 25). In Galatians, Paul is referring back to these observances belonging to the Law Covenant. For the Colossian believers who lived under the New Covenant keeping these observances would have been reverting back to and placing themselves back under the Mosaic Covenant.

F. The Davidic Covenant

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. Luke 1:32-33

This verse must be interpreted with respect to the promise of the Davidic Covenant. This promise is basically four-fold, relating to:

1. A Seed
2. A House
3. A Throne
4. A Kingdom

The verses in Luke prophesied that this four-fold promise would find its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of David.

G. The New Covenant

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

This prophecy can only be understood by linking it with its fulfillment when Messiah established the New Covenant. The days that Jeremiah prophesied of are shown to be days of Messiah, in which He established the New Covenant.

Lesson 12

The Ethnic Division Principle

I. What is the ethnic division principle of biblical interpretation?

The ethnic division principle is “that principle by which the interpretation of any verse or passage of Scripture is determined upon consideration of God’s appointed ethnic divisions” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 85).

“The word ‘ethnic’ has to do with the basic divisions of mankind distinguished by culture” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 85).

II. What are the key ethnic divisions that have a primary influence on biblical interpretation?

A. There are many terms that are used throughout the Bible to refer to groups of people.

1. Peoples (Gen. 28:3; Josh. 4:24; I Kgs. 8:60; John 12:32; Rev. 7:9)

...for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever. Joshua 4:23-24

2. Households (Josh. 7:14)

In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. Joshua 7:14

3. Families (Gen. 10:32; I Chr. 16:28; Ps. 96:7; Jer. 2:4)

Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel. Jeremiah 2:4

4. Tribes (Josh. 11:23; Ps. 78:55)

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war. Joshua 11:23

5. Nations (Gen. 10:32; II Chr. 20:6; Ps. 2:8; 47:8)

These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood. Genesis 10:32

6. Languages (Gen. 10:20; Dan. 7:14; Rev. 7:9)

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands... Revelation 7:9

B. There are three groups or classes of people that have special relevance when interpreting the Scripture (I Cor. 10:32).

The reason these are singled out is that they represent groupings of people as opposed to individuals that God interacted with in specific ways.

Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God...

1. The Gentiles

The term “Gentiles” is used in the Bible to refer to all those who are outside of covenant relationship with God. Some other terms that are used in the Bible to reference this group of people include “the heathen, the lost, the nations, the uncircumcised, foreigners, aliens and strangers.”

A good summary of this ethnic division is found in Ephesians 2:11-12.

- Gentiles in the flesh
- Uncircumcised
- Without Christ
- Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel
- Strangers from the covenants of Promise
- Having no hope
- Without God in the world
- Far off
- Enmity with God

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Ephesians 4:17-19

When you look at the whole plan of God, Cain was the actual progenitor of the initial Gentile community (Gen. 4:16).

So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

2. The Children of Israel

The Children of Israel were a nation that arose out of the natural seed of Abraham. They are sometimes referred to in the Bible as Hebrews (from Hebron, Abraham's root culture), Jews, Judah and Israel. The Children of Israel were chosen by God from among the nations to be His instrument in the earth to mediate His purposes to the world (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 7:6-8).

God's desire for them was to be His representatives on the earth though Whom He would extend His blessing to the rest of the world (Gen. 12:1-2).

The Children of Israel went through different stages throughout the Old Testament Age.

- a. They began as a united nation that came forth out of Egypt (Deut. 4:34).
- b. They continued as a united nation until the death of Solomon (I Kgs. 11:11-13).
- c. After the death of Solomon the nation or kingdom was divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) (I Kgs. 12:20).
- d. Under Jeroboam, Israel (Northern Kingdom) set up an alternate and idolatrous system of worship and was eventually judged by God at the hands of the Assyrians and taken into captivity. Eventually they were scattered abroad and lost their identity as a nation (Deut. 4:27).
- e. Judah (Southern Kingdom) experienced backsliding as well, was eventually judged by God at the hands of the Babylonians and was taken into captivity.
- f. Under Ezra and Nehemiah a remnant of the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and a temple. However, many of them stayed in Babylon or were scattered among the nations of the world.
- g. Eventually this is the people who were in the land when Jesus came to Jerusalem. They were called "Jews" because they were primarily made up of a remnant of the tribe of Judah.

This history is important because many of the prophets who prophesied did so in the context of a particular season or to a particular segment of people. When studying the Old Testament, questions must be asked, "Does the verse to be interpreted refer to..."

- The United Nation of Israel,
- Israel, the Northern Kingdom (10 tribes), or
- Judah, the Southern Kingdom (2 tribes plus Levites).

The thing that can complicate this is that there are times when the term Israel or Jacob is used to apply to any of the above categories (See Appendix, Old Testament Timeline).

Additionally, I would recommend the Old Testament Survey course for those who want to get more background on the development of Israel through the Old Testament.

3. The Church

Even though the term “church” is applied to both Old Testament and New Testament believers (Acts 7:38), its primary application is to New Testament believers who are the “called out ones” of Jesus Christ (Mt. 16:18; I Pet. 2:9).

The Church was founded by Jesus and the Apostles as the culmination of the Old Testament order. Now the Church is composed of both Jew and Gentile who have received Christ as their Lord and Savior (Eph. 2:14-18).

- a. The Church is the New Testament expression of the people of God. As such they are:
 - The “called out ones” of the Lord.
 - Objects of grace rescued by God (Eph. 2:8-10).
 - Called out of bondage (Eph 2:1-3).
 - Delivered by virtue to the application of the blood of the Lamb to the doorposts of their hearts (I Cor. 5:7).
 - To be distinct from the nations in order to be God’s instrument in the earth (John 15:18-19; 17:14-17; I Cor. 4:13; II Cor. 6:14-18).
- b. Both believing Jews and Gentiles together make up the Church which is God’s chosen people, holy nation, priesthood and peculiar people (Ex. 19:1-6; I Pet. 2:4-9).

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame. Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected, has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumbled, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people [KJV, a peculiar people], that you may proclaim the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. I Peter 2:5-10

III. What is the relationship of the Children of Israel to the Church?

A. Both Israel and the Church were chosen by God to be His instruments and channels of His blessing to the rest of the world.

God applied unique descriptions to His unique people. Israel was the natural expression of God's people that God intended to flow into and become the foundation for the spiritual expression of God's people.

Remember God's method of revelation, first the natural, then the spiritual.

God demonstrated this by referring to Israel and the Church in the same ways.

1. Peculiar People

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice, and keep My covenant then you shall be a special [peculiar, KJV] treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. Exodus 19:5-6

The word peculiar here refers to "a special, precious, private possession". It is something that is exclusively individual that is set apart because of its special value from all other things. In the Old Testament, God referred to Israel as a peculiar people (Deut. 14:2, 26:18; Ps. 135:4). In the New Testament this title is used of the Church (I Pet. 2:9).

2. My People

God has only called two groups of people "My People." In Exodus when God saw the children of Israel in cruel bondage and their cry came up to Him He distinguished them as being His unique and private possession by calling them His people. In the New Testament this place of unique possession is ascribed to the Church (Heb. 8:10; I Pet. 2:9-10).

3. The Children of God

God has only called two groups of people the "Children of God." As a Father He has a family that He is in the process of bringing to maturity. This family is made up of children who are peculiar in that they have a different heritage than those around them. Heredity does make a difference. The children of Israel were different because they had a different father—not Abraham but God.

In the Old Testament dispensation it was possible to have Abraham as your natural father and not be considered a child of God (John 8:39, 44). It was also possible not to have Abraham as your natural father and yet be considered a child of God (Mt. 1:5). The qualifications for being God's children in the

Old Testament were not natural but they were spiritual (Heb. 11; Rom. 9:6-8; 11:20).

In the New Testament, the Church is referred to as the “children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The qualifications are the same in both testaments. We all become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Natural heritage is not important, but spiritual heritage is very important. Because of our spiritual heritage we become the “called out,” separated, unique, chosen children of God.

God’s Title Applied	To OT Israel	To the NT Church
My People	Ex. 6:6-7; 3:7; 5:1	I Pet. 2:9-10
Children of God	Is. 63:8	Rom.8:16
Peculiar People	Ex. 19:5-6	I Pet. 2:9

It is critical in our understanding that although we have two groups of people, we do not have two plans or purposes. There is a consistency between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

B. Both Israel and the Church share many of the same names and titles.

Term Used	Old Testament	New Testament
A Chosen People	Deut. 10:15	I Pet. 2:9
A Holy Nation	Ex. 19:6	I Peter 2:9
People of God	Ps. 100:3	II Cor. 6:16
A Priesthood	Ex. 19:6	I Pet. 2:9
God’s Treasure	Ex. 19:5	Mt. 13:44
Bride or Wife	Is. 54:6; 62:5	II Cor. 11:2-3
God’s Vineyard	Is. 5:7	Mt. 20:1; Jn. 15:5
Israel	Is. 44:6	Gal. 6:16
God’s Flock	Jer. 23:3	I Pt. 5:2
A House	Ezek. 18:31	I Tim. 3:15
A Light	Is. 60:1,3	Mt. 5:14
God’s Witness	Is. 43:10	Acts 1:8
A Church	Acts 7:38	Gal. 1:13

IV. Why is the understanding of the relationship of Israel and the Church so important?

Understanding this relationship of Israel to the Church is important for four reasons.

A. If we do not understand this relationship, we will not see the church throughout the entire Bible.

The Old Testament saints looked forward to and had faith in the Christ or the Messiah who was coming. The New Testament saints look back to and exercise faith concerning what Christ did for them at Calvary.

1. Both Old and New Testament saints make up the walls of the new spiritual temple that came together to form a spiritual habitation of God (Eph. 2:19-22).
2. Both Old and New Testament saints are merged together into a spiritual body and have become partakers of the same promise (Eph. 3:6).

Paul described it this way (Eph. 2:14-20):

The former condition of the Gentiles.

- Gentiles in the Flesh
- Uncircumcision
- Without Christ
- Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel
- Strangers from the Covenants of Promise
- Having No Hope
- Without God in the World
- Far Off
- Enmity from God and Man

The present condition of the Gentiles.

But Now...

- In Christ Jesus
- Made Nigh by then Blood of Christ
- At Peace with God and Man
- Made One With the Jew
- Middle Wall of Partition Broken Down
- Enmity Abolished
- One New Man
- Both Reconciled to God in One Body
- Preaching of Peace to Those Which Were Far
- Both Have Access to the Father

The new relationships that results:

- No More Strangers and Foreigners
- Fellow Citizens with the Saints
- Of the Household of God
- Jew and Gentile Joined Together

3. Both Old and New Testament saints anxiously await the Second Coming where old and new will be raised together and for eternity to enjoy the blessings of salvation fulfilling Jesus words in Matthew 8:11, *“Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”*

The Church of Jesus Christ is **not a replacement** for Israel. Israel was the foundation on which the Church was built. It was the believing Jews responding to the Gospel preached by Peter who formed the first New Testament Church in Jerusalem. The New Testament Church represents the **fulfillment** or the **continuation** of all that the Old Testament foretold.

B. If we do not understand their relationship, we will not see or understand the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Church (Heb. 12:22-23).

If we are going to find the church in the Old Testament, it will be as we understand this—that prophecies concerning restoration before the end of the age, the establishing of Zion and rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David, etc. apply to the church and not a national system, a natural temple or animal sacrifice (Is. 2:1-4; 4:2-6; 62). The writer to the Hebrews understood that when you come to the Church you come to Mt. Zion, the City of the Living God, the New Jerusalem, the General Assembly and the Church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12:18, 22-24).

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest...22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Jesus became the transition point in history when all that is natural gave place to the spiritual. To go back to the natural after experiencing the spiritual is to reject the truth.

C. If we do not understand their relationship, we will put all of our energies into building the natural and neglect the spiritual or the real.

So many Christians today do not understand that God is not into natural temples made with hands. As great as the Temple of Solomon was, even Solomon recognized when he dedicated the temple that God cannot be confined to a stone structure no matter how ornate it is (I Kgs. 8:27; Acts 7:48; 17:24).

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”

I Kings 8:27

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Acts 17:24

The temple that God is building is a spiritual house. If you are a believer and you are walking in obedience to the Lord, you are a living stone in that house. Moses had a natural house or tabernacle, David had a tabernacle and Solomon had a temple, but all of them pointed to the spiritual temple that Jesus is building. It is Jesus’ house (Heb. 3:1-6).

If we want to build what God is building, we must put our energies, our finances and our gifts, talents and abilities to good use. We must invest them in the local church and become that living stone that contributes to the success of the whole.

For more information on this theme consult the course Walking in Present Truth, Lesson 8-9.

V. **What did Paul say about the relationship between Jews, Gentiles and the Church?**

Romans 11:15-24

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

In this section Paul tries to help us understand what happened from a spiritual point of view by using the illustration of two trees. In a sense all of the history of mankind can be summarized with the illustration of these trees. All mankind finds themselves as a branch on one of these trees.

A. There is one tree of faith.

There is but one tree of faith that is composed of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. That tree of faith is the true Church that God sees when He looks down from above.

B. There is also a tree of non-faith or could we say a tree of unbelief.

There is one wild olive tree that is composed of both unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles. Everyone in the wild olive tree is to be seen as a potential transplant into the tree of faith through evangelism.

When you apply this illustration to what took place with the Jewish people it looks like this. Prior to Christ's coming the faithful Israelites represented the tree of faith. It was a tree that was comprised of the devout Jews and those from other nations who had followed the prescribed plan for being adopted into this nation. Not every natural Israelite was represented as a branch in this tree, because it was and always will be a tree of faith.

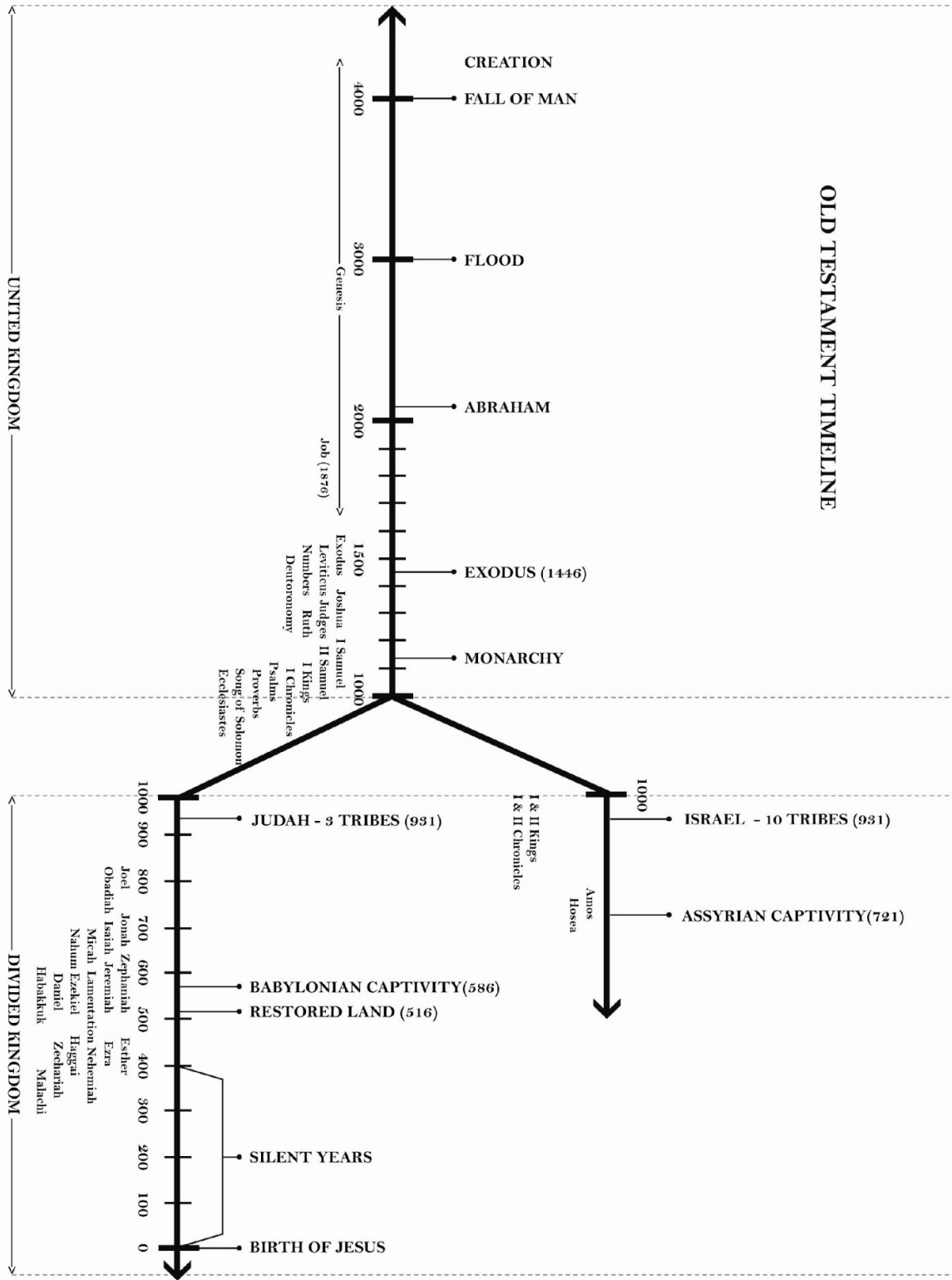
When Christ came and made His claims as the Messiah, those Jewish people who were branches in the tree of faith and who accepted Christ as their Messiah stayed where they were. That is, they remained in the tree of faith with its root system going down to the great patriarchs of old (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob).

However, those Jewish people who were branches in the tree of faith who rejected Christ as their Messiah thereby rejecting the heavenly Father were taken out of the tree of faith. Once they were out of the tree of faith they automatically became part of the other tree, the tree of unbelief.

When it came to the Gentiles you have a similar thing occurring. While we know historically that many Gentiles had identified in faith with the children of Israel, for the most part, the Gentile people were part of the unbelieving world that is represented by the wild olive tree. Most Gentiles were branches in the wild olive tree or the tree of unbelief.

When Christ came and made His claims and the early apostles preached Christ in the Gentile areas those hearing the message had a choice to make. Those who chose to receive the message and respond in faith and obedience were cut out of the wild olive tree and grafted into the tree of faith right alongside of other believers, both Jewish and Gentile. Those unbelieving Gentiles who rejected Christ stayed in the wild olive tree where they were.

Lesson 12 Appendix, Old Testament Timeline



Lesson 13

The Chronometrical Principle

I. What is the chronometrical principle of biblical interpretation?

The chronometrical principle of biblical interpretation is “that principle by which the interpretation of a verse or passage is determined upon a consideration of the chronometrical setting” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 93).

This word “chronometrical” is an English word that is built from two Greek words meaning “time” and “measure.”

This principle is sometimes referred to as the dispensation principle and it acknowledges that during different periods of time, God has chosen to deal in a particular way with man in respect to sin and man’s responsibility to God.

II. What are the various words used that reflect issues of time?

There are many biblical words that express natural elements of time.

Such as:

- Time (s)
- Season (s)
- Day (s)
- Night (s)
- Week (s)
- Month (s)
- Year (s)
- Age (s)

A. Sometimes these words are literal in their meaning (i.e. a day equals twenty-four hours).

Great debates have been held to determine whether the Days of Creation in Genesis 1 are literal twenty-four hour days or whether the days are symbolic periods of time.

In Daniel’s seventy-weeks prophecy, each week represented seven years so that the total time of the prophecy was 490 years (Dan. 9:20-27).

B. Sometimes these words are used in a more symbolic sense.

1. Note the phrases that simply use the word “day” to refer to a season of time as opposed to a literal day:

- The day of calamity (II Sam. 22:19; Ps. 18:8)

- The day of your fast (Is. 58:3)
- The day or time of trouble (Job 38:23; Ps. 20:1; 59:16)
- The day of adversity (Pro. 24:10; Eccl. 7:14)
- The day of affliction (Jer. 16:19)
- The day of doom (Job 21:30; Pro. 16:4; Jer. 17:17)
- The day of trial (Ps. 95:8-11; Heb. 3:8)

*“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the **day of trial** in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Hebrews 3:8*

In this passage, the day of trial was about 40 years.

- The day of vengeance (Pro. 6:34)
- The day of punishment (Is. 10:3)
- The day of rebuke (Hos. 5:9)
- The day of grief and desperate sorrow (Is. 17:11)
- The day of distress (Obad. 1:14)
- The day of salvation (Is. 49:8; II Cor. 6:2)
- The day of prosperity (Eccl. 7:14)

2. Other words associated with the passing of time are used in much the same way.

- Appointed seasons (Ezek. 45:17)
- The time of trouble (Neh. 9:27; Job 38:23; Ps. 37:39)
- The time of singing (Song 12:2)
- The time of punishment (Jer. 8:12)
- The time of the promise (Acts 7:17)
- The time of healing (Jer. 14:19)

*Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at **this time** restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know **times or seasons** which the Father has put in His own authority.”*

Acts 1:6-7

*But concerning the **times** and the **seasons**, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the **day** of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that **this Day** should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the **day**. We are not of the **night** nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at **night**, and those who get drunk are drunk at **night**. 8 But let us who are of the **day** be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. I Thessalonians 5:1-11

C. Sometimes these words suggest spiritual and prophetic aspects of time.

1. Note the phrases that simply use the word “day”:

- The day of the Lord (Is. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Joel 2:1; I Th. 5:2)
- The appointed day (Hos. 9:5)
- The last days (Gen. 49:1; Acts 2:17; II Tim. 3:1; II Pet. 3:3)
- The day of His manifestation (Luke 1:80)
- The day of the Lord’s sacrifice (Zeph. 1:8)
- The day of His wrath (Job 20:28; Ps. 110:5; Pro. 11:4; Rom. 5:2)
- The day of the Lord’s vengeance (Is. 34:8; 61:2)
- The day of His fierce anger (Is. 13:13; Lam. 1:12)
- The day of judgment (Mt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36)
- The day of redemption (Eph. 4:30)
- The day of visitation (Luke 19:44; I Pet. 2:12)
- The day of His coming (Mal. 3:2)
- The day of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:8; 5:5; II Cor. 1:14)
- The day of His power (Ps. 110:3)

2. Note other words associated with the passing of time are used in much the same way.

- The time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7)
- The times of the Gentiles (Ezek. 30:3; Luke 21:24)
- The time of the latter rain (Zech. 10:1)
- The time of harvest (Mt. 13:30)
- The time of reformation (Heb. 9:10)
- The times of restoration (Acts 13:21)
- The time of the end (Dan. 8:17; 11:35; 12:4)
- The end of the ages (I Cor. 10:11; Heb. 9:26)
- The time of the dead (Rev. 11:18)

Part of the challenge of interpreting is to determine whether the use of these time related words is to be literal, symbolic or prophetic. Most of the time, the context of the passage will help you to decide the correct interpretation. In some cases the nature of the book itself will help you to decide the correct interpretation.

III. What are the dispensations of time that are relevant to the biblical interpretation?

There are a couple of different ways to look at the dispensations of time. The word dispensation means “an administrative system or management.” When this word is applied to God’s interaction with man, it has to do with the ordered way in which God has interacted with man throughout human history.

These dispensations cannot be fully understood without an understanding of God's Eternal Purpose (See SOM course Local Church, Lesson 1). All of the dispensations are a gradual outworking of that purpose among mankind.

A. God's interaction with man can be seen from a purely chronological point of view (See Conner/Malmin, pg. 97).

Biblical chronological ages include the following:

1. The Eternal Past (Deut. 33:27; Ps. 90:1-2; Rev. 1:8)

LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. Psalm 90:1-2

2. The Age of Creation (Gen. 1-3; Is. 40:28; Col. 1:16-17)

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Colossians 1:17

3. The Pre-Flood (Antediluvian) Age (Gen. 4-8; II Pet. 3:6-7)

This period of time extended from the fall of Adam and Eve into sin up to the destruction of the world that had been corrupted by sin. The flood definitely marked a new beginning in time and a separation from "the world that then was" and the present world.

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. II Peter 3:6-7

4. The Age of the Patriarchs (Gen. 8-50; Acts 7:12)

From Noah to the twelve sons of Jacob God used the patriarchs or the fathers of the godly line to administrate the purposes of God.

5. The Age of the Law (Hos. 11:1)

Moses definitely ushered in a new order when God used him to bring the twelve tribes of Israel out from Egypt. Through Moses and Joshua God separated his people geographically and by means of the law from all of the other nations to be His instrument in the earth. The law was given to preserve the godly seed up to the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:23-25).

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring

us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

6. The Messianic Age (Heb. 1:1-2; 9:26)

Christ ushered in a new age of the Spirit and an age of grace. This is sometimes also called the Church Age. The Old Testament refers to this age as the last days (Compare Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:16-17). These last days extend from the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus up to the Second Coming of Christ.

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

I Corinthians 10:11

7. The Ages to Come and/or the Eternal Future (Mark 10:30; Luke 20:34-36; Eph. 1:21; 2:7; 3:21).

Some would see these as one and the same age; while others would separate them into two ages. Those who teach a future millennial kingdom would see two ages and not just one age consisting of the eternal future. In either case at the coming of the Lord there will be a new order with new heavens and a new earth—an earth that has been renovated with fire.

So He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.” Luke 18:29-30

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

B. God’s interaction with man can be seen from a covenantal point of view.

In other words, there are dispensations of time that overlay God’s covenants with man.

“God’s plan of redemption is one, but through the ages His method of dealing with man in regard to his sin has varied. These various dispensations or arrangements cannot be separated from the covenants. They, in fact, find their very basis in the covenants. Each of these redemptive covenants was a particular arrangement between God and man, having its own distinctive emphasis” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 99).

These include the following:

Dispensation	Related Covenant
Dispensation of Innocence	Edenic Covenant
Dispensation of Conscience	Adamic Covenant
Dispensation of Human Government	Noahic Covenant
Dispensation of Promise	Abrahamic Covenant
Dispensation of Law	Mosaic Covenant
Dispensation of Grace	New Covenant
Dispensation of the Kingdom	Everlasting Covenant

IV. How does the interpreter use the chronometrical principle in biblical interpretation?

The interpreter should determine the following in order to make proper application of the passage in question:

- A. Determine whether or not the passage has a time element ascribed to it.

Does the passage contain any of the key words that are associated with an element of time (See previous list)?

- B. Determine whether the time element used is to be interpreted literally, symbolically or prophetically.

- C. Determine the dispensation that relates specifically to the passage under consideration.

There actually might be more than one dispensation involved in a particular passage. The passage might involve the dispensation at the time of the writing and possible other dispensations being addressed either in the past or the future. Especially in the prophetic writings, watch for the verb tenses that are used to determine whether the author is speaking of the past, present or future.

- D. Recognize that different rules apply to different dispensations.

You cannot necessarily take the rules from one dispensation and automatically apply them to another dispensation.

1. You cannot apply the rules of the Adamic Covenant to the Noahic covenant.
 - a. Under the Adamic Covenant man was not allowed to eat meat, but under the Noahic covenant they could (Gen. 1:30; 9:3).
 - b. Under the Adamic Covenant man was not allowed to execute murderers, but under the Noahic Covenant they could (Gen. 9:6).

2. You cannot take the rules from the Mosaic Covenant and apply them to the New Covenant.
 - a. Under the Mosaic Covenant man was required to keep certain feasts that were prophetic of what would come in Christ. In the New Covenant or Church Age these do not apply (Col. 3:16-17).

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.
 - b. Under the Mosaic Covenant man was to offer animal sacrifice to deal with his sin issues. These sacrifices are unacceptable under the New Covenant in the Church Age (Heb. 10:1-10).

3. You cannot take the rules from the Church Age and apply them to the Ages to Come.
 - a. In this present age or the Church Age we live lives according to the laws of nature which include marrying, eating and drinking. These laws will not apply to the Eternal Age (Mt. 22:30).
 - b. In this present age or Church Age we are bound by certain human limitation that will not carry over into the Age to Come, including sickness and death (Rev. 21:3-4).

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

There will be no need to "Call for the elders of the church..." to pray the prayer of faith.

- E. Determine to what degree the passage applies to the present time or dispensation in which we live.

Lesson 14

The Breach Principle

I. What is the breach principle of biblical interpretation?

The breach principle of biblical interpretation is that principle by which a certain verse or passage in Scripture is aided by a consideration of certain breaches, either breaches of promise or breaches of time (Conner/Malmin, pg. 103).

After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. Numbers 14:34, KJV

In the definition of this principle, there are two elements: breaches of promise and breaches of time. We will look at both of these separately in a later point.

II. What are some of the words that help us to understand the concept of “breach”?

There are some words that will help us to define what is meant by “breach” in this context.

Note: All English definitions are taken from *Funk & Wagnall’s Standard Dictionary*.

A. Breach

1. The act of breaking; infraction; infringement.
2. Violation of duty, right or legal obligation.
3. A gap or break as in a wall, dike, etc.
4. A rupture of amicable relations.

B. Gap

A break in continuity; an interruption; a period in chronology or a range of phenomena about which nothing is known.

C. Interruption

To interrupt is:

1. To cause a delay or break in.
2. To break the continuity, course or the sameness of.

D. Delay

1. To put off to a future time; postpone; defer.
2. To cause to be late; detain.
3. A temporary stoppage or stay.

E. Interval

1. An open space between two objects; distance between points.
2. The time that intervenes between two events or periods.

F. Intermission

A temporary cessation; interruption.

G. Hiatus

A gap or opening; break, with a part missing (like the link of a chain).

H. Pause

1. The temporary cessation of action or speech.
2. A calculated measure of silence.

III. How can we illustrate this general principle from the Bible?

The breach of Uzzah is a good illustration of a breach principle (II Sam. 6:8; I Chr. 13:11; 15:13).

A. Purpose Attempted (II Sam. 6:1-2; II Chr. 13:1-4)

Shortly after David took authority as king over all of the tribes of Israel he consulted with his leaders concerning bringing the Ark of the Covenant from obscurity to the City of David. He did this because he wanted to be able to inquire of the Lord continually during his administration.

“...and let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul.” Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. I Chronicles 13:3-4

B. Purpose Breached

David and his designated leaders assembled 30,000 people; they went to get the Ark from the house of Abinadab; they put it on a new cart being driven by Uzzah and Ahio and they proceeded on to Jerusalem. While in route, the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out his hand to try to steady the ark. As soon as he touched the Ark, he was struck dead (II Sam. 6:6-8; I Chr. 13:9-11).

And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perezuzza [the breach of Uzzah] to this day. I Chronicles 13:9-11, KJV

This breach ended up producing a delay, a temporary stoppage, a break in the continuity and an interruption in the plan of David.

C. Purpose Accomplished

David had done the wise thing to stop what he was doing and try to figure out why God showed apparent disfavor concerning his declared purpose. As he sought the Lord he realized that he was trying to do a good thing in a wrong way. He was patterning his moving of the Ark after the Philistines (I Sam. 6:7-9) rather than according to the divine plan (Num. 4:15; Josh. 3:3, 8-13; I Chr. 15:15).

And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.

Numbers 4:15

David declared the reason for the breach or stoppage (I Chr. 15:12-15).

He said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order." So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD. I Chronicles 15:12-15

This interlude or breach in the original plan lasted three months. After David adjusted his plan to align with the ordinances of the Lord, he experience full success (II Sam. 6:12-15; I Chr. 15:16-28).

As we look at breaches that have a bearing on God's declared purposes, the thing that they will all have in common is that God's breach of promise has always been based on man's failure to perform according to the conditions of God's word or promise.

IV. **Where are some of the places in Scripture where we see the breach of promise in operation?**

"Breach of promise" is defined in the dictionary as "failure to fulfill a promise, especially a promise to marry."

The following illustrations are drawn from the text, *Interpreting the Scriptures* (pages 104-105).

As we look at the idea of "breach of promise" as it relates to God, we must keep in mind that God is a covenant keeping God who is faithful to His promises (Heb.6:13-

20). It must be kept in mind that whatever breaches exist relative to His promises, they are all caused by unbelief, disobedience and failure on the part of man.

A. The breach concerning entering the Promised Land (Num. 13:34).

After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. Numbers 14:34, KJV

1. Land Promised (Gen. 15:13-21; 22:16-18; 28:13-15; Ex. 3:15-17; 13:5; Ps. 105:8-12; Deut. 1:8)

God had promised the land to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendents. There came a point in time where God was prepared to deliver on the promise. There was a time for Israel as a nation to enter into the promised possession.

The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: "You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers--to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--to give to them and their descendants after them." Deuteronomy 1:6-8

2. Man's Failure (Num. 13:31-33; 14:1-10)

Because the spies that were sent into the land focused on the size of the giants rather than on the power of their God who delivered them from the Egyptians, they gave a bad report that robbed the people of faith. As a result they rebelled against God's command to "go."

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Numbers 13:31-33

3. God's Breach of Promise (Num. 14:22-23, 31-34)

Because of their unbelief God wanted to kill them. However, after Moses pleaded for their lives God declared that His promise would remain, but that generation that rebelled against His purpose would not enter in. He declared a 40 years delay, interruption, pause or gap in the fulfillment of His original promise. This 40 year period was "the breach period."

...because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

Numbers 14:22-23

But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.

Numbers 14:31-34

*After the number of the days in which you spied out the land [of Canaan], even forty days, for each day a year shall you bear and suffer for your iniquities, even for forty years, and you shall know My displeasure [**the revoking of My promise and My estrangement**].* Numbers 14:34, Amp

4. Land Entered (Josh. 3:17)

The next generation responded to the Lord's challenge to go and successfully entered the land under the leadership of Joshua (Josh. 3:17).

Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

B. The breach concerning dominion in the land

1. Dominion Promised (Gen. 15:18-21; 22:16-18; 24:60).

God promised the descendants of Abraham that they would have dominion over the Canaanites. However, when they went into the land they were not to make any concessions to these enemies or worship their gods (Deut. 28:14; 30:1-20; Josh. 23:11-13).

Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations--these that remain among you--and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. Joshua 23:11-13

2. Man's Failure (Josh. 9:14-15; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12-13; Judg. 2:11-19).

Upon the death of Joshua a new generation arose that did not follow the challenge that had been given them by God. As a result they went into

seasons where they were actually oppressed by the nations that they had previously conquered.

When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. 11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed. Judges 2:10-15

3. God's Breach of Promise

The ultimate expression of God's breach is that the children of Israel forfeited the land altogether (II Chr. 36:15-16). Again, this was based on their disobedience to God's commands (Jer. 25:1-14). They did not fulfill the conditions for keeping the land (Deut. 28:1-68).

Deuteronomy 28 gives all of the conditions for staying under the blessing of God and staying in the land. Unfortunately, Israel as a nation did not keep the conditions and the closing verses of this chapter indicate what God said He would do.

And it shall be, that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. 64 Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known--wood and stone. 65 And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. 66 Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. 67 In the morning you shall say, "Oh, that it were evening!" And at evening you shall say, "Oh, that it were morning!" because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. 68 And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, "You shall never see it again." And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you. Deuteronomy 28:63-68

4. End Result

Under Ezra and Nehemiah a remnant returned to the land. Even though they were under the domination of other world powers they had a certain amount of autonomy. The most important thing is that as a nation they were cured from idolatry. After the temple was rebuilt, there is no evidence that the Jews in Palestine ever practice idolatry again.

Note: Please consult the text for other examples of the breach of promise.

V. Where are some of the places in Scripture where we see the breach of time in operation?

When we defined the breach principle earlier, we said that it was that principle by which a certain verse or passage in Scripture is aided by a consideration of certain breaches, either breaches of promise or breaches of time (Conner/Malmin, pg. 103).

We have looked at a couple of examples of breach of promise, now we want to take a look at the breach of time.

The breach of time aspect of the breach principle comes into play primarily as it relates to prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy.

In this sense, perhaps a better word for this principle would be the gap principle. When it comes to the prophecies of the Old Testament it seems that God either ignores certain periods of time or leaps over them without comment.

It is important to understand the distinction between ‘breaches of promise’ and the ‘breaches of time’. The “breaches of promise” are caused by man’s unbelief and disobedience. The “breaches of time” are caused by God’s outworking of His plan and purpose as revealed to and through the prophets.

God Himself is the great I AM (Ex. 3:14-15). In God’s view, all of time including past, time present and time future are one eternal present. God is not bound by our concept of time, but He does work in relation to time. Time is simply a fragment of eternity in which God is working out His purposes in creation and redemption. Man is, however, a creature of time and bound by its obvious limitations.

When God revealed His purposes to and through the prophets, they were caught up in what has been spoken of as “the prophetic perspective.” They would see things from God’s perspective or point of view. As a result of this, they would sometimes group together certain passages of Scripture, prophetic events, and include the past, the present and the future as one. They were viewing things from God’s eternal present.

“The Old Testament prophets did not always understand their own utterances concerning the coming of Christ. They searched what was meant by their prophecies. They tried to discover the time of fulfillment of the Spirit’s utterances through them when He spoke of the “sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” It was revealed to them that their prophetic words were not just for their generation but also for future generations (I Pet.1:10-12).

“Various passages in the prophetic books view mountain peaks of events as being all together with no valleys between. Their historical fulfillment has proven that there is a “time gap” or breach of time involved in their fulfillment. This is especially true concerning events pertaining to the first and second comings of Christ. This area of “time element” is what makes the interpretation of prophecy so difficult” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 110).

A. Isaiah 61:1-2

Note: This example is taken from the text, *Interpreting the Scriptures*, pages 111-112).

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God...

Jesus read this verse in the synagogue shortly after His baptism at the Jordan. It was more or less His inauguration speech relative to His ministry.

And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:17-21

Notice that Jesus indicated that this moment was the fulfillment of the word given by Micah hundreds of years earlier. However, when you look at the way Jesus quoted Micah, He actually stopped in mid-verse and did not finish the Micah prophecy. Micah’s prophecy had been about both the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. Jesus mentioned the acceptable year, but not the day of vengeance.

That is because Micah was prophesying in God’s eternal present and saw no gap between the two days. In the outworking of Micah’s prophecy there are actually two time zones being referenced—the first coming which is referred to as the acceptable year and the second coming which will be more associated with the day of vengeance.

This is something that is common among the prophets and we will demonstrate this further in Lesson 23 when we talk about interpreting prophecy. Many of the prophets seem to have seen the First Coming of Christ and the Second Coming of Christ clearly, but some of them did not see the Church Age in between.

B. The Two Resurrections

Note: This example is taken from the text, *Interpreting the Scriptures*, pages 111-112).

1. When you read most of the Scripture verses about the resurrection of the dead they seem to imply two events taking place at the same time—the resurrection of the just and the unjust (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. John 5:28-29

I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. Acts 24:15

2. However, in the Book of Revelation where more detail is given there seems to be a breach, gap or space of time between the two events (Rev. 20:4-6). Therefore, one is called the first resurrection and the other one is called the second resurrection.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

VI. How is the breach or gap principle to be applied?

The following five points are offered by Conner/Malmin:

- A. Determine whether the verse of passage under consideration is in any way related to a breach.
- B. If a breach is intimated, discern the true nature of the breach as well as its cause and boundaries.
- C. Make a distinction between a breach of promise and a breach of time.

Remember that breaches of promise are caused by unbelief, while breaches of time are the result of the prophet's viewing separated events as one.

- D. Due to the limited relevance of this principle to most passages of Scripture, the interpreter must not apply it unless the context demands it.
- E. This principle must be used in harmony with all of the other principles.

Lesson 15

The Christocentric Principle

I. What is the Christocentric principle of biblical interpretation?

The Christocentric principle of biblical interpretation is that principle by which the interpretation of a certain verse or passage in Scripture is aided by an underlying awareness that the central theme of the entire Old and the New Testament is Christ—the Messiah.

This principle is sometimes called the Messianic Principle

- A. The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is His-Story (History). He is the unifying theme of the whole Bible.
- B. The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is an unfolding of the plan of redemption. The first two chapters of Genesis and the last two chapters of Revelation are history before sin and after sin with everything in between covering God’s plan for the redemption of man.
- C. The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, relates the unfolding struggle between the two seeds—the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15).

The Seed of the Woman	The Seed of the Serpent
Children of Light	Children of Darkness
Mystery of Godliness	Mystery of Iniquity
Spirit of Truth	Spirit of Error
Children of Promise	Children of the Flesh
Kingdom of God	Kingdom of Satan
Life	Death
Godly Seed or Line	Ungodly Seed or Line
Christ	Antichrist

- D. The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, could be labeled the *Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

II. What is the biblical basis for this principle?

- A. The biblical basis for this principle is the testimony of Philip (John 1:45).

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

- B. The biblical basis for this principle is the testimony of Peter (Acts 10:43).

“He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”—NLT

C. The biblical basis for this principle is the testimony of Jesus.

1. This is seen by Jesus' prophetic declaration (Ps. 40: 7; Heb. 10:7).

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come--In the volume of the book it is written of Me--to do Your will, O God.'"

Hebrews 10:5-7

Then I said, "Look, I have come to do your will, O God--just as it is written about me in the Scriptures." Hebrews 10:7, NLT

2. This is seen by Jesus' personal implications.

There are several occasions where Jesus implied that he was connected to the patriarchs of old.

- a. Abraham (John 8:56-58)

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

- b. Moses (John 5:45-47)

"Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

- c. David (Mt. 22:45)

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He? They said to Him, "The Son of David." 43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 44 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool''? 45 If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

Matthew 22:41-46

3. This is seen by Jesus' literal statements (Luke 24:44).

Christ claimed on several occasions that He was the central theme of the Old Testament (Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39).

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. John 5:39

You search the Scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! –NLT

Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.
Luke 24:25-27

Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.
Luke 24:45-46

Here Jesus mentioned that the three main sections of the Bible all speak of Him. Jesus said that we cannot comprehend or understand the Scriptures unless we see Him in them.

D. The biblical basis for this principle is the testimony of the Gospel writers.

Jesus was constantly affirmed by the Gospel writers as the fulfillment of that which was foretold in the Old Testament.

1. Christ indicated that He came to fulfill the law (Mt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44).

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Matthew 5:17-18

2. The Gospel writers referred often to Jesus’ fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah who was to come.

The phrase, “that it might be fulfilled” occurs about thirty-three times in the New Testament particularly as it relates to Christ.

The following are just a few of the prophetic words which were fulfilled in relation to Jesus final week before His crucifixion.

The Old Testament Prophets

- Jesus would come on a donkey (Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:5; John 12:15).
- There would be plots to kill Jesus (Ps. 2:2; Mt. 21:38).

- Jesus would reestablish the temple as a house of prayer (Is. 56:7; Mt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).
- Jesus would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; Mt. 26:15).
- Jesus would be smitten and His followers would scatter (Zech. 13:7; Mt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).
- Jesus would be silent in the face of accusation (Is. 53:7; Mt. 26:63; 27:14; Mark 15:28).
- Jesus would be hit with the palm of their hands (Is. 50:6; Mt. 26:67; Luke 22:64).
- Jesus would be beaten severely (Is. 53:5; Mt. 27:26).
- Jesus would be spit upon and have His beard plucked (Is. 50:6; Mt. 26:67-68; 27:30).
- Jesus would be numbered among transgressors (Is. 53:12; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37).
- Jesus would intercede for those who crucified Him (Is. 53:12; Luke 23:34).
- Judas would regret his actions and the pieces of silver would be thrown in the sanctuary (Zech. 11:13; Mt. 27:5).
- The betrayal money would buy a potter's field (Zech. 11:13; Mt. 27:7).
- There would be darkness over the whole land (Amos 8:9; Mt. 27:45; Mark 15:33).
- Jesus would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Is. 53:9; Mt. 27:57-60).
- Jesus' side would be pierced (Zech. 12:10; John 19:34).

The Book of the Psalms

- The people would sing hosannas (Ps. 118:25-26; Mt. 21:9; Mark 11:7-11; Luke 19:38; John 12:13).
- The children would proclaim praise (Ps. 8:2; Mt. 21:16).
- Jesus would be betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14; Mt. 26:49-50; John 13:18).
- Jesus would be condemned by false witnesses (Ps. 35:11; 109:2-3; Mt. 26:59-60; Mark 14:57-58).

- Jesus would be hated without a cause (Ps. 35:19; John 15:24-25).
- Jesus would be mocked (Ps. 22:7-8; Mt. 27:31; Luke 23:35).
- Jesus would thirst on the cross (Ps. 69:21; John 19:28).
- Jesus would be offered gall and vinegar to drink (Ps. 69:21; Mt. 27:34; Mark 15:36; John 19:29).
- Jesus' garments would be divided by the casting of lots (Ps. 22:18; Mt. 27:35; John 19:24).
- Jesus would be stared at on the cross by His enemies (Ps. 22:11-13; Mt. 27:36).
- Jesus would be looked up by His relatives from afar (Ps. 38:11; Luke 23:49).
- Jesus would be reviled (Ps. 22:7-8; Mt. 27:39).
- People would wag their heads at Jesus (Ps. 22:7-8; 109:25; Mt. 27:39).
- Jesus would be indicted for trusting in God (Ps. 22:8; Mt. 27:43).
- Jesus would be pierced in His hands and feet (Ps. 22:16; Zech. 13:6; John 20:25).
- Jesus would cry out because of His forsakenness (Ps. 22:1; Mt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).
- Jesus would commit His spirit to the Father (Ps. 31:5; Mark 23:46).
- Jesus' bones would not be broken (Ex. 12:46; Psalm 34:20; John 19:32-36).

III. How is Christ seen in the Scriptures?

A. Christ is seen as the subject of the book of Genesis.

In Genesis Christ is seen in the following:

1. The Tree of Life (Gen. 2:9; John 6:54)

When you partake of Him you will live forever.

Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:54

2. Adam (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15:45; II Cor. 5:17)

Christ was the new Adam and the head of a new race called the New Creation in Christ Jesus. We are all born in Adam. We are reborn in Christ. All people find themselves in either Adam (old creation) or in Christ (new creation).

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Romans 5:14

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. II Corinthians 5:17

3. The Seed of the Woman (Mt. 1:22-23; Luke 1:35)

Christ fulfilled the prophecy of the Seed of the Woman when He was born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit.

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Matthew 1:22-23

4. The Coats of Skin (Gen. 3:21; Rom. 5:12-21)

Jesus and His shed blood became our covering so that we could stand before God clothed in His righteousness and escape judgment.

5. The Curse Bearer (Gen. 3:14-19; Gal. 3:13-14).

As a result of sin, a curse came on the earth. Jesus became a curse for us and in effect reversed the curse.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Galatians 3:13-14

Notice the following:

The Curse	Christ's Relationship to the Curse
Ground Cursed	Christ became a curse (Gal. 3:13)
Eat in Sorrow	Christ was a man of sorrows (Is. 53:3)
Thorns & Thistles	Christ was crowned with thorns (Jn. 18:8)
Sweat	Christ sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44)
Return to Dust	Christ brought to dust of death (Ps. 22:15)
Flaming Sword	Christ was pierced with a sword (Zech. 13:7)
Man to Die	Christ tasted death for every man (John 18:14)
Cut off from Tree of Life	Christ is the tree of Life (John 6:47-58; 14:6)

6. Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19; John 3:16; I John 4:9)

Isaac was the only begotten son of the Old Testament who was symbolically offered up by the exalted father as a sacrifice to God and symbolically raised again to life.

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son." Romans 9:6-9

7. The Lamb in the Thicket (Gen. 22:13).

When the son of Abraham was slated to die, a ram (male lamb) caught in the thicket was found to take his place. When we as the children of Abraham were destined to die for our sins, the Lamb of God, crowned with thorns, stepped in to take our place.

Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided." Genesis 22:13

8. Jacob's Ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51)

Jacob's ladder formed a bridge or a point of access from heaven to earth. Jesus is our bridge and point of access to the Father.

And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

9. Joseph

Joseph is perhaps the fullest type of Christ in the Old Testament. A complete study will find over 100 comparisons between Joseph and Christ from being the beloved son of the father (Gen. 37:3; Mt. 3:17); to his rejection by his brethren and being sold out for silver (Gen. 37:4, 27-28; John 15:24; Mt. 27:9), to his being exalted in power to become the savior of the world.

B. Christ is seen in the rest of the Pentateuch.

1. He is our deliverer, mediator and lawgiver as seen in the life of Moses.
2. He is the fulfillment of the Aaronic priesthood.
3. He is the fulfillment of the Tabernacle types.
4. He is the fulfillment of the five Levitical offerings.
5. He is the Smitten Rock

6. He is the Manna from Heaven
7. He is the fulfillment of the feasts of Israel.
8. He is the embodiment of the law of God.

C. Christ is seen in the Historical Books.

1. He is our Joshua.
2. He is the Captain of the Lord's Hosts.
3. He is our Judge/Deliverer.
4. He is the Angel of the Lord.
5. He is our Boaz/Near Kinsman.
6. He is our King.
7. He is our Shepherd.
8. He is our Nehemiah/Restorer.

D. Christ is seen in the Psalms.

E. Christ is seen in the Prophets.

F. Christ is seen in the Gospels.

G. Christ is seen in the Book of Acts.

H. Christ is seen in the Epistles.

I. Christ is seen in the Book of Revelation.

IV. How is the Christo-centric principle of biblical interpretation to be applied?

There are several steps in the process of applying this principle.

A. Decide if there are any Christo-centric aspects to the verses in question.

Every single verse of the Bible cannot be directly linked to Christ. However, there are many portions that can. It is important not try to make something fit when it does not really fit.

B. Look for the specific features in the text that seem to point to Christ.

1. If you are in the Old Testament, is there a clear reference to the one who was to come—the Messiah (Deut. 18:15; Is. 9:6-7; Zech. 3:8).

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

2. If you are in the Old Testament, is there a New Testament reference that applies this to Christ—the Messiah (I Cor. 10:4).

...and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

3. If you are in the Old Testament is there a New Testament reference that confirms the symbolic application to Christ (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15:45).

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Romans 5:14

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. I Corinthians 15:45

4. If you are in the New Testament, does it state that an event is the fulfillment of something from the Old Testament (Mt. 2:14-15; Hos. 11:1).

When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." Matthew 2:14-15

If you read this only in Hosea, you might never apply it to the Messiah.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.
Hosea 11:1

Remember that the New Testament writers become the infallible interpreters of the Old Testament prophets.

- C. Be careful not to extend parallels beyond the clear meaning of the rest of the Scripture.

We will talk about this more in Lesson 17-20 when we talk about interpreting the symbols and types.

Lesson 16

The Moral Principle

I. What is the moral principle of biblical interpretation?

The moral principle of biblical interpretation is that principle of interpretation that assists the interpreter in extracting timeless truths from the passage under consideration and applying them to our contemporary world.

This principle is implied in several New Testament Scriptures:

A. I Corinthians 10:5-11

But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Not everything that occurred in the Old Testament era has been preserved for us in the Bible. In fact, there are no complete accounts of anyone's life. God has chosen to record for us the incidents that He has because of His higher purpose. That purpose is to help us to enter into His full plan for our lives and to prepare us to be ready when Christ returns. He expects us to learn timeless principles of faith that will guide us into the future.

B. John 21:24-25

This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Not everything that Jesus did in His life on earth is recorded for us in the New Testament. However, that which has been given to us is for the purpose of teaching us in the way of salvation. As we examine the accounts of Jesus' life that are recorded we can draw timeless principles that will guide us in our walk with Him.

C. Romans 15:4

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

D. II Timothy 3:14-17

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible has been given to us to make us wise, inspire faith, teach us how to live and equip us for our life's work and ministry. We receive this from the word as we extract the timeless truths that are contained in the various accounts recorded for us.

II. What is a moral truth or principle?

- A. The dictionaries define "moral" in several ways.
1. A lesson or principle contained in or taught by a fable, a story or an event.
 2. A message conveyed or a lesson to be learned from a story or event.
 3. A concisely expressed precept or general truth; a maxim.
 4. A moral is an ethical principle that is drawn from a story or incident.
- B. The dictionary defines "moralize" as to derive a moral from something, to make moral reflections concerning something or to explain something in a moral sense.

Much of the responsibility of the interpreter is to open up people's understanding to help them to draw spiritual lessons from the biblical material as it is presented. For instance, one can look at the life of David, Elijah or Moses and extract timeless principles relating to our own relationship with God.

III. Why do we need to apply the moral principle to the Scripture?

We need to apply the moral principle because not all of the timeless truths presented in the word of God are clearly outlined (Pro. 25:2).

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

Many things the Bible tells us are presented in clear statements of truth, concise instructions and unmistakable language.

However, much of what is presented is cloaked in a certain amount of mystery and must be discovered from the application of the moral principle.

Can anything be learned from a study of the various judges in the Bible? Or the many kings who ruled in Israel and Judah? What about lessons learned from the life of Job, the Book of Ruth and Esther? What can we learn from the life and death of Saul, the first king of Israel?

So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse. I Chronicles 10:13-14

In many cases the truths extracted will be drawn from how they lived, reacted to circumstance in their lives and interacted with others.

As the text states, “Behind each historical event in the Scripture lies a moral—a spiritual lesson—which is designed to teach” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 121).

IV. How is the moral principle of biblical interpretation applied?

A. The moral principle can be applied to nearly every passage of the Bible.

The most common area to apply it is in the narrative portions of the Scripture. This would include the historical sections as well as many of the miracles and parables of Jesus.

B. The moral principle can be overlaid on top of all of the other principles.

While most of the other principles focus on gaining an exact interpretation of the passage and its literal meaning, the moral principle focuses on timeless truths that are extracted from the correct understanding of that passage.

C. The moral principle can be flexible to the degree that more than one moral principle can be drawn from the same passage.

D. The moral principle must never violate or come into conflict with the application of the other hermeneutical principles and clear biblical theology.

One of the ways to assist the interpreter in coming to an understanding of possible moral principles is to utilize the list of character qualities in the appendix to this lesson. When you are reading a passage you can ask the questions, “Does this passage teach us anything relating to alertness, or attentiveness or availability, etc.?”

As you go through the list of character qualities you will see them in operation in many stories recorded in the Bible (See appendix).

V. What is an example of the application of the moral principle of biblical interpretation?

If you study the early life of David, you find some great lessons for leaders. Note the following chart that utilizes the moral principle to extract principles of leadership from the life of David.

The following information was extracted from *The Making of a Leader*, by Frank Damazio, page 161.

Reference	David's Experience	Leader's Experience
I Samuel 17:34-36	David applied his past experience of killing the lion and the bear to his present problem of Goliath.	Leaders must also learn to apply what they have learned from their own experiences to their present challenges and dilemmas.
I Samuel 17:38-39	David did not trust in Saul's armor to bring him the victory over Goliath.	Leaders must not trust in the ability of the flesh or a religious system, but in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring victories in their lives.
I Samuel 17:40	David used a weapon he had used effectively in the past to kill Goliath (a sling with five smooth stones).	Leaders must trust God to use and trust the training they already have in their ministry.
I Samuel 17:45	David came to Goliath in the name of the Lord.	Leaders must make use of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ against the power of the devil.
I Samuel 17:46	David confessed confidence that he would defeat Goliath.	Leaders must make the positive confession of spiritual victory, through the finished work of Jesus Christ.
I Samuel 18:25-27	David doubled the required dowry of 100 Philistine foreskins to marry the princess Michal.	Leaders must strive to do more than the Lord requires of them.
I Samuel 19:2, 8-10	David remained faithful to his charge of commanding Saul's army, even in the midst of Saul seeking to kill him.	Leaders must remain faithful to the call and ministry which God has given them, even in the face of trials and tribulations.
I Samuel 19:18	David kept company with godly people like Samuel.	Leaders must fellowship often with godly Christians and good spiritual leaders in the Body of Christ.
I Samuel 20:42	David kept the Lord his God in the midst of his relationships.	Leaders must keep Jesus Christ in the center of all their friendships and associations
I Samuel 22:2	David did not show respect of persons in whom he allowed to become a part of his army in the cave of Adullam.	Leaders must treat all people equally in the sight of God, and not favor the rich or educated over the poor or uneducated.
I Samuel 30:6	David took courage in the Lord when his followers wanted to kill him.	Leaders must gain their strength and joy directly from the Lord at all times. Otherwise he will become discouraged when a different source of strength and joy is taken away from him.

Appendix, Lesson 16, The Moral Principle

The Virtues of Christ

compiled from Bill Gothard

Character	Definition	Opposite
Alertness Mark 14:38	Ability to anticipate right responses to that which is taking place around me	Unawareness
Attentiveness Heb. 2:1	Showing the worth of a person by giving sincere attention to his words	Unconcern
Availability Phil. 2:20-21	Making my own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I am serving	Self-centeredness
Boldness Acts 4:29	Confidence that what I have to say or do will result in lasting benefit	Fearfulness
Cautiousness Pro. 19:2	Knowing how important right timing is in accomplishing right actions	Rashness
Compassion I Th. 3:17	Investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others	Indifference
Contentment I Tim. 6:8	Realizing God has provided everything I need for my present happiness	Covetousness
Creativity Rom. 12:2	Approaching a need, a task, an idea from a new perspective	Under-Achievement
Decisiveness James 1:5	The ability to finalize difficult decisions based on the will and ways of God	Double-Mindedness
Dependability Psalm 15:4	Fulfilling what I consented to do even if it means unexpected sacrifice	Inconsistency
Determination II Tim. 4:7-8	Purposing to accomplish God's goals in God's time regardless of the opposition	Faint-Heartedness
Diligence Col. 3:23	Visualizing each task as a special assignment from the Lord and using all my energies to accomplish it	Slothfulness
Discernment I Sam. 16:7	Seeing through a surface problem to root causes	Judgment
Discretion Pro. 22:3	The ability to avoid words, actions and attitudes which could result in undesirable consequences	Simple Mindedness
Endurance Gal. 6:9	The inward strength to withstand stress to accomplish God's best	Giving Up
Enthusiasm I Th. 5:16, 19	Expressing with my spirit the joy of my soul	Apathy

Fairness Luke 6:31	Looking at a decision from the viewpoint of each person involved	Partiality
Faith Heb. 11:1	Visualizing what God intends to do in a given situation and acting in harmony with it	Presumption
Flexibility Col. 3:2	Not setting my affections on ideas or plans which may be changed by others	Resistance
Generosity II Cor. 9:6	Realizing that all I have belongs to God and using it for His purposes	Stinginess
Gentleness I Th. 2:7	Expressing personal care appropriate to another's emotion need	Harshness
Gratefulness I Cor. 4:7	Making known to God and others in what ways they have benefited my life	Unthankfulness
Hospitality Heb. 13:2	Cheerfully sharing food, shelter, and spiritual refreshment with those God brings into my life	Loneliness
Humility James 4:6	Recognizing that God and others are actually responsible for the achievements in my life	Pride
Initiative Rom. 12:21	Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before I am asked to do it	Unresponsiveness
Joyfulness Pro. 15:13	The exultation of my inward being that results from genuine harmony with God and with others	Self-Pity
Love I Cor. 13:3	Giving to other's basic needs without having as my motive personal reward	Selfishness
Loyalty John 15:13	Using adversity to confirm my commitment to those God has called me to serve	Unfaithfulness
Meekness Psalm 62:5	Yielding my personal rights and expectations to God	Anger
Obedience II Cor. 10:5	Freedom to be creative under the protection of divinely appointed authority	Willfulness
Orderliness I Cor. 14:40	Preparing myself and my surroundings so that I will achieve the greatest efficiency	Disorganization
Patience Rom. 5:3-4	Accepting a difficult situation from God without giving Him a deadline to remove it	Restlessness
Persuasiveness II Tim. 2:24	Guiding vital truths around another's mental road blocks	Contentiousness
Punctuality Eccl. 3:1	Showing high esteem for other people and their time	Tardiness
Resourcefulness	Wise use of that which others would normally overlook or	Wastefulness

Luke 16:10	discard	
Responsibility Rom. 14:12	Knowing and doing what both God and others are expecting from me	Irresponsibility
Reverence Pro. 23:17-18	Awareness of how God is working through the people and events in my life to produce the character of Christ in me	Disrespect
Security John 6:27	Structuring my life around what is eternal and cannot be destroyed or taken away	Anxiety
Self-Control Gal. 5:24-25	Instant obedience to the initial promptings of God's Spirit	Self-Indulgence
Sensitivity Rom. 12:15	Exercising my senses so that I can perceive the true spirit and emotions of those around me	Callousness
Sincerity I Pet. 1:22	Eagerness to do what is right with transparent motives	Hypocrisy
Thoroughness Pro. 18:15	Knowing what factors will diminish the effectiveness of my work or words if neglected	Incompleteness
Thriftiness Luke 16:11	Not letting myself or others spend that which is not necessary	Extravagance
Tolerance Phil. 2:2	Acceptance of others as unique expressions of specific character qualities in varying degrees of maturity	Prejudice
Truthfulness Eph. 4:25	Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts	Deception
Virtue II Pet. 1:5	The moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiates from my life as I obey God's Word	Impurity
Wisdom Pro. 9:10	Seeing and responding to life situations from God's frame of reference	Natural inclinations

Lesson 17

Identifying Figures of Speech

I. What is a figure of speech?

- A. “A figure of speech is a use of a word that diverges from its normal meaning, or a phrase with a specialized meaning not based on the literal meaning of the words in it.” –Wikipedia
- B. “A figure is simply a word or sentence thrown into a particular form, different from its original or simplest meaning or use” (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*).
- C. Figure of speech is the term used to describe the various uses of language that depart from customary construction, order or significance.

Every person from every culture uses figures of speech when speaking or writing. In fact, it is virtually impossible to carry on a day to day conversation without using some form of figure of speech.

Here are some examples of figures of speech:

- “It was raining cats and dogs.”
- “I am going to give that man a piece of my mind.”
- “When I got up to speak, I had butterflies in my stomach.”

In each of these examples of figures of speech, there is a literal meaning of the words, which a listener would normally reject as absurd or inappropriate.

II. Why are figures of speech used in communication?

Figures of speech are used in language for several reasons:

- A. To add color to the communication.
- B. To say something in a fresh way.
- C. To bring clarity to the communication.
- D. To add emphasis to a point being made.

Figures of speech are common in every language. Some figures of speech are almost universal in application (e.g. hard heart). Some figures of speech are unique to a certain language or culture. Unless you recognize when an idiom is being used you can easily misunderstand the meaning of a text

It is because of this that figures of speech have to be identified and interpreted in the Bible.

III. How does one identify a figure of speech?

A. Figures of speech can be identified when the literal sense does not make sense?

The literal interpretation of “raining cats and dogs” is that literal animals are falling from the sky. Not only has that phenomenon never occurred in history, the statement makes no sense at all.

B. Figures of speech can be identified when the context makes it clear?

If someone was talking about how nervous they are when they get up to speak and then added that they get “butterflies in their stomach,” you would know that a figure of speech is in play. Having the context of the usage is part of the way that a figure of speech is identified.

IV. What are some of the most common figures of speech used in the Bible?

While a complete listing of all of the different figures of speech used in language would number over a hundred, there are some figures of speech that are used more often than others.

Let’s examine a few of the most common ones used in the Bible. For a more thorough listing of figures of speech in the Bible you can consult an exhaustive work by E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* (all 1000 plus pages).

A. Simile

A simile is a word or phrase that suggests a comparison between two things. It is usually accompanied by the words “like” or “as.” The use of simile suggests that the things being compared have something in common or they resemble each other.

*For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face **like** a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.* Isaiah 50:7

The above verse suggests that there is something about a flint that resembles a face that is set on God. Flint is a very hard rock that does not bend or waver. It speaks of a person who is hardened against all opposition to his service of God. It is to be resolute and undaunted.

*He shall be **like** a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are **like** the chaff which the wind drives away.*

Psalm 1:3-4

Notice that the limitations of the comparison are usually found in the context.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Matthew 23:27

Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Luke 10:3

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters... Revelation 1:14-15

B. Metaphor

A metaphor is a word or phrase that normally means one thing but is applied to another thing in order to suggest a likeness. It is fundamentally the same as a simile but it does not use the words “like” or “as.”

*For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory...
Psalm 84:11a*

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the **heart of stone** out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26*

*You are the **salt of the earth**; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the **light of the world**. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:13-14*

C. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is the use of an exaggerated statement that is used to reinforce a point. It is used for effect and is not meant to be taken literally.

Jesus often used this figure of speech for the sake of emphasis and even reaction. A very well-known hyperbole is when Jesus talked about rich people entering the Kingdom of God.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Matthew 19:23-24

The comparison here is used with one of the largest animals in their experience going through one of the smallest openings in their experience. It is an exaggerated point that carries with it the idea that this is something that is almost impossible.

Jesus also talked about a man with a plank in his eye.

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me remove the

speck from your eye”; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. Matthew 7:3-5

The actual word for “plank” here refers to a beam that holds up a structure. Did Jesus believe that it was possible for such a large beam to be in a man’s eye? Absolutely not! He was making a ridiculous exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis.

When examining a hyperbole it is important to try to get the meaning behind what is being said.

Jesus was very fond of hyperbole, and used it frequently in His teaching. The following are some other examples:

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Matthew 5:29-30

Jesus was discussing the issue of sexual sins and used this statement as to how to deal with such temptations. Was He really advocating gouging out our eye or cutting off our arm? No! He was saying that when dealing with such sins we have to take what appear to be drastic measures.

Here is another example:

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:26

In this context Jesus was talking about being His disciple. Was He really suggesting that we are to hate our parents? Absolutely not! That would be a clear violation of other portions of Scripture (Mark 7:9-13).

Jesus was using exaggeration to make a point. If you are going to be His disciple your love and commitment to Him must be so much higher than any other relationship that every other relationship seems like hatred.

Other Examples:

*Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, “The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and **fortified up to heaven**; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.”*

Deuteronomy 1:28

This verse uses exaggeration to emphasize how well fortified the inhabitants of Canaan were.

Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

Judges 20:16, NIV

This verse uses exaggeration to explain how proficient these soldiers were with their slings.

I am weary with my groaning; all night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears. Psalm 6:6

Did David literally swim in his bed because his tears filled his bed with such a volume of water? No! David exaggerated to let us know how deep his groaning was.

D. Personification

Personification is a poetic device which represents inanimate objects as if they were human. It ascribes human qualities to things such as the parts of the human body, animals, produce of the earth, kingdoms, countries, cities or any other inanimate object.

And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." Genesis 4:10

All my bones shall say, "LORD, who is like You, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?" Psalm 35:10

Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God. Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; Oh, sing praises to the Lord, Selah.

Psalm 68:31-32

Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed... Isaiah 24:23a

Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits.

Isaiah 42:11a

For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Isaiah 55:12

E. Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is the ascribing of human characteristics or actions to God. We know that God is Spirit and does not have a human body, but the Scripture is written in terms that man can understand. As a result there are verses that will speak of God's arm, fingers, face, mouth, eyes, heart, voice, feelings and actions as though He were human.

Examples:

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. Psalm 33:6

*Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications...
Psalm 130:2*

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars,
which You have ordained... Psalm 8:3*

*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show
Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.
II Chronicles 16:9a*

*The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the
ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Isaiah 52:10*

*Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in
heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.
Matthew 18:10*

F. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure of speech that involves a transfer or the substituting of a part for the whole or the whole for the part.

1. Substituting of a whole for the part.

- a. A passage may at times refer to all, when it means the “greater part.”

*So the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt
died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died.
Exodus 9:6*

The context of this passage reveals that this could not be meant to include every single animal included in God’s description (Ex. 9:3) because in the later plague there are still animals around to get boils (Ex. 9:10).

In this case it all clearly means “the greater part” or “all kinds of livestock.”

*And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the
LORD. Jeremiah 26:9*

The context of this passage reveals that “all of the people” does not mean every single person but most of the people. When you read further in the chapter there were those who stuck up for Jeremiah (Jer. 26:16).

- b. A passage may at times refer to all or every as types or kinds and not individuals.

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh... Joel 2:28

The “all flesh” here does not mean every single person, but it most likely means all kinds of people.

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.
John 12:32

This verse does not mean that every single person will be saved if Jesus would go to the cross. It means that all sorts of people from all sorts of conditions, nations and language groups. What Jesus did on the cross was not simply for the Jewish nation, it was for all people.

- c. A passage may at times use a universal negative or positive as a generalization that requires clarification.

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. Luke 2:1

This census was not done in every single country of the world. It is to be clarified as that part of the world over which Rome had authority.

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions... I Timothy 6:3-4

Obviously the man in question here does not know “nothing.” He most likely still remembers his name and some other interesting things. The thought requires clarification by the context. This man “knows nothing” as it pertains to that which he is purporting to teach. He is not to be taken seriously.

For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. I Corinthians 4:17

Obviously Paul did not preach in every church and every city in the world. However, in every church and city that he did preach in he taught the same things.

- d. A passage may substitute a broader term for a narrower meaning.

So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. Genesis 6:12

The word “flesh” here is a broad term but is most likely a reference to the narrower term “mankind.”

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Mark 16:15

The word “every creature” is not meant to include the animals for which there is no salvation, but it is most likely a reference limited to “all people.”

2. Substituting of a part for the whole.

In this case the opposite is true. The following are a couple of examples.

a. “Many” is often substituted for “all.”

Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:12

Other clear passages indicate that Christ died for all (II Cor. 5:14-15).

b. “Men” is often meant to mean both men and women.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful... Psalm 1:1

c. “Bread” is often used to mean “food.”

To break bread really means to have a common meal together even though things other than bread might be eaten.

G. Euphemism

A euphemism is the substitution of a cultured, less offensive or a milder term for a more harsh or direct one.

The Bible contains many similar expressions, particularly with regards to subjects dealing with death, bodily functions and reproduction.

1. The Bible speaks of sexual relations as “lying with a woman” (Gen. 4:1).
2. The Bible speaks of death as “falling asleep” or “going to our fathers in peace” (Gen. 15:15; John 11:11; Acts 7:60).
3. The Bible speaks of someone taking care of his bodily function as “relieving himself” or “covering his feet” (Judg. 3:24; I Sam. 24:3).

H. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech related to sarcasm when what is said is in fact the opposite of what is meant.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil." Genesis 3:22a

God was actually being a bit sarcastic here. Satan had tempted man with the idea of being like God. Now after man sins God affirms that man has become like God when in reality man has become a sinner and has come to ruin.

Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress. Judges 10:13-14

In this passage, God is not really advocating that the people serve other God's. He is sarcastically suggesting that if they are not going to serve Him, then let the other gods that they serve come to their rescue the next time they are in trouble.

Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" II Samuel 6:20

In this passage Michael was not really commending David nor did she think he was "glorious." She said those words, but she meant just the opposite.

And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." I Kings 18:27

In this case Elijah was ridiculing the prophets of Baal. Even though Elijah did not believe that Baal was a god, he sarcastically referred to him that way.

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! I Corinthians 4:9-10

Recognizing and properly interpreting all of these figures of speech will help us to understand the true meaning of any given passage.

Lesson 18

Interpreting Symbols

One of the most diverse areas of biblical study is that which deals with the interpretation of symbolic or typical language. Even though the word “symbol” does not occur in most translations of the Bible, symbols are a vital part of biblical language. The interpretation of symbols is in some ways related to the previous lesson on figures of speech.

I. Why is it so important to have strict guidelines for the interpretation of symbols?

There is perhaps no other area that has generated so many wild and strange doctrines as that of the interpretation of symbols. The Bible is a book of symbols, but symbols must be interpreted in the light of all of the other principles of biblical interpretation. Types and symbols must never be seen as the source of doctrine, they should only be used to confirm and support the clear teaching of the Bible.

The misuse of symbols and types often allows a person to make the Bible say anything that he or she may want it to say. The misinterpretations of or the overemphasis on symbols is the primary thing that has generated so many wide and varied interpretations of prophetic and end-time literature.

II. What is a symbol and how does it relate to biblical study?

Symbols are commonly used in all cultures. In the modern world symbols are used for the purpose of communicating between cultures (e.g. handicapped zones, toilet facilities, directional signs, etc.).

- A. There are several definitions of “symbol” that help us to understand the meaning.

“A symbol is something such as an object, picture, written word, sound, or particular mark that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention.” –Wikipedia

“Something chosen to stand for or represent something else, usually because of a resemblance in qualities or characteristics.” –Funk & Wagnalls

“An object used to typify a quality, abstract idea, etc. (The oak is a symbol of strength).” –Funk & Wagnalls

- B. The interpretation of symbols plays a significant part in biblical study.

God often used the language of the symbol to help impart divine truth. The Bible actually implies that God created much of what we see to be symbolic of things that He wanted us to learn and to understand (Rom. 1:19-20).

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Romans 1:18-21

Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that these creations of God were somewhat random and that their adoption as a symbol to communicate divine truth is somewhat coincidental. The truth is that God had His divine plan and purpose in mind when he created all things. He actually created things with the qualities that they possess to confirm His eternal truth.

- C. The proper interpretation of any passage of Scripture is only possible when the symbolic language contained in that verse is decoded.

Not all Bible verses contain symbolic language. However, when symbolic language does occur, it must be interpreted in order to understand the full meaning or intent of the passage.

III. What are the primary categories of symbols that are used in the Bible?

Note: The following categories are taken from *Interpreting the Scriptures* by Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin.

There are seven primary categories of symbols that are used in the Bible—symbolic objects, creatures, actions, numbers, names, colors and places.

A. Symbolic Objects

In the Scripture, God often used inanimate objects (whether God-created or man created) as symbols.

Examples:

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 18:2

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Proverbs 18:10

Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.

Hosea 7:8

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I Corinthians 5:6-8

B. Symbolic Creatures

In the Scripture, God often used living creatures, whether plants or animals as symbols.

Examples:

Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense... Hosea 7:11

And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.'" Luke 13:32

All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away... I Peter 1:24

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"
Matthew 3:7

C. Symbolic Actions

In the Scripture, God often used, prescribed or recorded actions that were meant to be symbolic in nature.

Examples:

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. Joshua 1:3

Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Psalm 141:2

God asked Ezekiel to do many symbolic acts in this section of Scripture that had prophetic significance in relation to the people of God such as laying on his left side, then his right side for over a year (Ezekiel 4:4-13).

When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" Acts 21:11

D. Symbolic Numbers

In the Scripture, God often attributed symbolic significance to certain numbers. God gave ten commandments. Jesus chose twelve disciples which correspond to twelve tribes, twelve thrones and twelve foundation stones in the eternal city.

“Some numbers seem to suggest certain concepts because they are frequently used in association with the concept (e.g., six is often associated with evil, Rev. 13:18; Dan. 3:1; seven is often associated with perfection, Gen. 2:2-3; Rev. 1:12; 4:5; 5:1; 8:1; 15:1; 16:1; forty is often associated with testing as in Moses’ forty years in Midian, Israel’s forty years in the wilderness, Jesus’ forty days of temptation). However, this kind of association is no basis for making the numbers mean something other than their normal, literal meaning. Though the length of Jesus’ temptation is associated with the concept of testing, He was tempted for forty literal days.” –Dr. Stephen R. Lewis, *Hermeneutics*, pg. 110

Examples:

Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” Matthew 18:21-22

So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Matthew 19:28

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. Revelation 13:18

E. Symbolic Names

In the Scripture, God often used names to be symbolic of individuals or nations. In Scripture a name is often significant of the nature, character, experience or function of a person.

Examples:

And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. Genesis 25:25-26

The name “Jacob” literally means “supplanter” or “heel grabber.”

Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. I Samuel 4:21

The name “Ichabod” literally means “unglorious.”

Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him! I Samuel 25:25

In this passage Abigail pleaded with David for her husband “Nabal” whose name literally means “fool.”

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

Matthew 16:18

The name “Peter” comes from “petros” which means “a rock, a piece of a rock or a pebble.” The characteristic of a pebble is that it can be moved or picked up for the purpose of throwing. The rock on which the church is built is “petra” which means “a large, massive rock, a cliff or a ledge.” The rest of the New Testament tells us that the “petra” is Christ (I Cor. 10:4). The characteristic of this “rock” is that it is firm, solid and immovable.

F. Symbolic Colors

In the Scripture, God often attributed symbolic significance to colors.

Examples:

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Isaiah 1:18

And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck Him with their hands. John 19:2-3

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Revelation 3:4-5

G. Symbolic Places

In the Scripture, God often attributed symbolic significance to places. Most of the time these places were actual localities, but they came to mean something well beyond the natural locality.

Examples:

Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. Genesis 11:9

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels... Hebrew 12:22

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. Revelation 17:4-6

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God... Revelation 21:10

For a fuller development of these symbols refer to *Interpreting Symbols and Types* by Kevin J. Conner.

IV. What are some important guidelines to remember when interpreting symbols?

A symbol is a tool that utilizes a visible, concrete object to represent something that is more intangible and abstract.

When dealing with symbols follow these guidelines.

- A. Be sure that the passage or word in question warrants a symbolic interpretation.

The literal sense should always be understood to be the right sense unless...

1. Another verse of Scripture clearly interprets the sense symbolically.
2. The literal sense makes no sense at all.

- B. Acknowledge the three fundamental elements of symbolism (Conner/Malmin, pg. 126-127).

1. The significance of the symbol is based upon the literal nature and characteristics of that which is being used as a symbol.
2. A symbol is meant to represent something essentially different from itself.
3. The link between that which is used as a symbol and that which it symbolizes is the characteristic common to both.

- C. Separate the three parts of the symbolic reference.

1. The object or the actual symbol employed

2. The subject or that to which the symbol refers
3. The meaning, the connection, the resemblance or the common characteristics of the two

Example:

- The lamb is the object or symbol.
- Christ is the subject or the one to which the lamb refers (John 1:29).
- Christ became our Passover lamb who freed us from the tyranny of sin (I Cor. 5:7). Christ was God's selection of the sacrifice that would be sufficient to cleanse the sins of mankind.

D. Determine the boundaries of the symbolic comparison.

As a rule the Scripture will interpret itself (Rev. 1:20).

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Be sure to understand the limitations of the symbol based on other verses that confirm the comparison. The Holy Spirit is symbolized as a dove (Luke 3:21-22). However, that does not mean that the Holy Spirit has feathers and two legs. The comparison is limited to a primary quality of gentleness as it relates to the dove nature (Mt. 10:16).

E. Be sure that the interpretation of the symbol is consistent with the other principles of interpretation especially the context principle.

F. Keep in mind that some symbols are used of more than one thing.

For instance Jesus is referred to as a lamb because He was God's choice sacrifice. The emphasis on Jesus as the lamb is that of being of like nature to us and that He was the sacrificial one without blemish.

Human beings are also referred to as sheep. However, the characteristic of sheep that specifically applies to man is that of man's tendency to go astray (Is. 53:6; I Pet. 2:25).

Jesus is seen as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5), speaking of His kingly nature and rightful inheritor of the throne of David. However, Satan is also spoken of as a roaring lion because of his fierce, prowling nature (I Pet. 5:8).

The Holy Spirit is likened to a dove in the positive sense of the word, but Ephraim is called a "silly dove without sense" highlighting the flighty nature or negative aspects of the dove (Hos. 7:11).

Lesson 19-20 Interpreting Types

I. Why is it so important to have hermeneutical guidelines for the interpretation and application of types?

When it comes to the study of types in the Bible it is critical that the interpreter follow careful guidelines. The study of types is similar in this respect to the realm of symbols in that there is a certain subjective aspect to interpretation that can lead to an over emphasis on the type or the manipulation of the type to confirm a spurious doctrine.

It is critical that types are not seen as a source of doctrine but are seen as that which confirms or supports doctrines that are clearly taught in the rest of Scripture.

It is also critical that the application of types be confined to the limitations found in the rest of Scripture. For this reason it is important that the study of types be done in the full light of all of the other principles of interpretation covered in this study.

II. What does the word “type” mean and how is it used relative to the field of biblical interpretation?

A. There are various definitions of the word “type” as it relates to the field of biblical study and interpretation.

1. “Typology...is a Christian form of biblical interpretation that proceeds on the assumption that God placed anticipations of Christ in the laws, events, and people of the Old Testament.” –George P. Landow, *Biblical Typology*
2. “A type, in its primary and literal meaning, simply denotes a rough draft or less accurate model from which a more perfect image is made; but in the sacred or theological sense of the term, a type may be defined to be a symbol of something future and distant, or an example prepared and evidently designed by God to prefigure that future thing. What is thus prefigured is called the ‘antitype.’”

–Thomas Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*

3. “A type is a shadow cast on the pages of Old Testament history by a truth whose full embodiment or antitype is found in the New Testament revelation.”
–Wick Broomall
4. “A type is a person or thing in the Bible which in the foreknowledge of God was designed to represent or prefigure some person, thing, or event that should appear in the future.”

–Carl Harwood, *Handbook of Bible Types and Symbols*, pg. 7

5. “A type is a real, exalted happening in history which was divinely ordained by the omniscient God to be a prophetic picture of the good things which He purposed to bring to fruition in Christ Jesus.” –Wayne Jackson
6. A type is a biblical person, thing, action, event, ceremony, object or structure that prefigures an “antitype” of the same in the New Testament.

In some ways a type is like an extended metaphor.

B. The Bible gives its own definition of the word “type.”

1. The English word “type” comes from the Greek word “*tupos*.”

This Greek word can mean some of the following depending on the context.

- The mark of a stroke or blow, print
- A figure formed by a blow or impression
- The impress of a seal
- The stamp made by a die
- A figure, form, image or mold
- An example to be imitated
- A pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made
- A counterpart
- A person or thing prefiguring a future person or thing (Messiah).

2. The Greek word occurs sixteen times in the New Testament.
 - a. It is used of the nail prints in Jesus hands (John 20:25).
 - b. It is used of images of false gods (Acts 7:43).
 - c. It is used of the pattern found in the Tabernacle of Moses (Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5).
 - d. It is used of Adam as a prefiguring of Christ (Rom. 5:14).
 - e. It is used of the experiences of the Children of Israel serving as an example to us (I Cor. 10:6, 11).
 - f. It is used of people providing a pattern or example for others to follow (Phil. 3:17; I Th. 1:7; II Th. 3:9; I Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7; I Pet. 5:3).

III. What does the word “antitype” mean and how does it relate to the interpretation of types?

A. There are various definitions of the word “antitype” as it relates to the field of biblical study and interpretation.

1. “One that is foreshadowed by or identified with an earlier symbol or type, such as a figure in the New Testament who has a counterpart in the Old Testament.” –Wikipedia
2. “The person or thing represented or foreshadowed by an earlier type or symbol.” –Webster

B. The Bible gives its own definition of the word “antitype.”

1. The English word “antitype” comes from the Greek word “*antitupon*.”

This word can mean some of the following depending on the context.

- A thing formed after some pattern
 - Something in the Messianic times which answers to the type
 - A thing resembling another, its counterpart
2. The Greek word occurs twice in the New Testament.
 - a. It is used of Old Testament rituals and sacrifices which are figures of the true (Heb. 9:24).
 - b. It is used of the rite of Christian baptism as a parallel of that which occurred in relation to the Old Testament flood of Noah (I Pet. 3:21).

C. There is a close correlation between the type and the antitype.

1. The antitype and the type are dependent upon each other (you cannot have one without the other).
2. The type is a prefiguring and comes before the antitype.
3. The type is the historical reality that foreshadows a future reality (antitype).
4. The type is an Old Testament shadow of a New Testament reality (antitype).
5. The antitype is always the fulfillment of the type.
6. The antitype is always greater or superior to the type.
7. A type in the Old Testament never points to another symbol in the New Testament.
8. There is normally a graduation from type to antitype of the lesser to the greater, of the material to the spiritual and of the earthly to the heavenly.

Note the following chart giving examples of type and antitype:

Type	Antitype
Rock Moses Struck (Ex. 17:1-6)	Christ (I Cor. 10:4)
Adam (Gen. 1-3)	Christ (Rom. 5:14)
Aaronic Priesthood	Christ's Priesthood (Heb. 7-8)
The Sabbath	Rest in Christ (Col. 2:16-17)
Noah's Ark (Gen. 6-8)	Baptism (I Pet. 3:20-21)
The Passover Lamb (Ex. 12)	Christ (I Cor. 5:7)

IV. Why is the study of types sometimes devalued in biblical interpretation?

Even though the study of types is one of the most fascinating areas of biblical study, as field of study it is sometimes devalued or even dismissed all together. There are two primary reasons for this attitude toward typology.

- A. Many people who use typology use it dangerously to the point where they see types in everything.
- B. Many modern scholars have arisen from a liberal biblical theology that has a low view of the inspiration of Scripture.

Many modern theologians tend to dismiss the supernatural elements of the Scriptures. Since typology relates to prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy they tend to negate its importance. All types are prophetic in nature because all types are representations of something that will come at future time. In addition, the whole premise behind the study of types is that the Bible is one book written by one author (God) with a central theme which moves from Genesis right through to Revelation.

V. What are the three main categories into which biblical types can be organized?

There are three primary categories into which biblical types fall (various scholars may categorize them differently).

A. Historical

Types that fall into the category of historical types can be divided into four subcategories.

1. Events

In this case an actual historical event from the Old Testament Age is used to prefigure some experience in the New Testament Age.

Examples:

- a. Abraham's sacrifice of his only begotten son Isaac prefigured the Heavenly Father's offering or smiting of His Only Begotten Son at Calvary (Gen. 22:2; Heb. 11:17-18).
- b. Moses and the Children of Israel crossing the Red Sea (I Cor. 10:1-11) prefigured the experience of the New Testament believer coming out of the world system.
- c. The lifting up of the serpent on a pole to bring healing from the snake bite prefigured the lifting up of Christ on the cross as the embodiment of sin so that mankind could be healed from the bite of the serpent, the devil (Num. 21:9; John 3:14).

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:14-15

- d. The experience of Jonah in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights prefigured Christ's death, burial and resurrection experience (Jon. 1:17; Mt. 12:40).

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12:40

2. Persons

In this case an historical figure from the Old Testament Age is used to prefigure something or someone in the New Testament Age. The antitype in this case is usually Christ and the Church or Satan and the Antichrist.

Examples:

- a. The first man Adam is seen as a type of Christ who is the last Adam and the federal head of a new race (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15:45-49).
- b. Isaac the only begotten son of the Old Testament is a type of Christ who is the Only Begotten Son in the New Testament.

Others: Melchizedek, Joseph, Joshua, David

- c. Nimrod who was the father of several antichristal nations can be seen as a type of antichrist (Gen. 10:8-11).

Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh...

Nimrod	Antichrist
His name means “rebel”	He is called the “lawless one” (II Th. 2:8)
He exalted his will against God	He will do the same (Dan. 11:36-38)
He is called “mighty” four times	He will come with signs and wonders (II. Th. 2:9).
He was a hunter of the godly.	He is called a bloody and deceitful man (Ps. 5:6).
Nimrod was a king with a kingdom	He will have his kingdom as well (Dan. 11:36)
His headquarters was in Babylon	His is in spiritual Babylon (Is. 14:4; Rev. 17:3-5)
Nimrod was lifted up in pride	He will be lifted up (II Th. 2:4).
Nimrod had a united kingdom	He will as well (Rev.17:1-6)

Note: For more on Nimrod refer to the material in the course Genesis, Lesson 12.

3. Places

In this case an historical place from the Old Testament Age is used to prefigure something in the New Testament Age. Several prominent places emphasized in the Old Testament appear to have a typical significance in the New Testament.

Examples:

- a. Egypt represents a state of bondage such as holds the sinner prior to his conversion (Rom. 6:17; I Cor. 10:1-11; Rev. 11:8).
- b. Jerusalem or Zion typifies the church and ultimately heaven (Gal. 4:21-27; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2).
- c. Babylon, which held God’s people captive in the Old Testament, pictures the condition of an apostate church that has departed from the simplicity of the New Testament pattern (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2-8).

4. Times

In this case an historical time or season from the Old Testament Age is used to prefigure a time or season in the New Testament Age.

Example:

The days of Noah (Mt. 24:37) and the days of Lot (Luke 17:28) are typical and prophetic of the days preceding the Second coming of Christ.

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:37-39

Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Luke 17:28-30

B. Ceremonial

In this case a legal or religious practice, rite, covenant or ceremony from the Old Testament Age is used to prefigure something or someone in the New Testament Age.

Types that fall into the category of ceremonial types fall into at least six subcategories.

1. Temples or Tabernacles and their Furnishings

The veil of the temple is a type of Christ's flesh both of which were torn at the death of Christ (Mt. 27:51; Heb. 10:19-20).

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh... Hebrews 10:19-20

2. Priestly Functions

High priestly functions of the Old Testament can be seen as prophetic of Christ's function as our Great High Priest (Heb. 9:6-12).

Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:6-12

3. Sacrifices and Offerings

The sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament can be seen as prophetic of Christ's once and for all sacrifice on Calvary (Heb. 10:11-14).

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

4. Feasts

The feast days and holy days can be seen to be prophetic of the experience of Christ and the Church. There were three primary feasting seasons in Israel, the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles (I Cor. 5:7-8).

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

5. Sabbaths, Festivals and New Moons

The Sabbaths and new moons can be seen to be prophetic of what was to be our experience in Christ (Col. 2:16-17).

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

6. Covenants

The covenants established in the Old Testament can be seen to be prophetic of the New Covenant and the Everlasting Covenant that would be established on the basis of the shedding of Christ's blood (Heb. 10:9, 29).

C. Official

In this case a legal or religious office from the Old Testament Age is used to prefigure something or someone in the New Testament Age.

The three relevant offices in the Old Testament were priest, prophet and king all of which were typical and prophetic of Christ and the Church who would enter into the spiritual reality of those anointed offices.

V. What are some guidelines that should govern the interpretation of types?

There are several principles that should govern the interpretation of types.

A. Be reasonably sure that the portion under consideration is meant to have typical significance.

1. One way to know this is when the Scripture makes a direct statement regarding the comparison.

The best example of this, of course, is when Paul stated directly that Adam is a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14). The Scripture is still the best and most accurate interpreter of Scripture.

2. Another way to know is when the Scripture provides a pattern or “example-type” of interpretation that can be easily duplicated.

For instance in Ephesians 5:23-24, God implied that “Adam and Eve are to be viewed as types of Christ and His bride. This becomes a sample-type by which we may interpret other Old Testament brides as types of the bride of Christ, such as Rebekah, Rachael, Ruth and Esther” (Conner/Malmin, pg. 137).

- B. Be reasonably sure that God intended for or designed the type to be a prophetic preview of what was to come in the New Testament Age.

Types by their very nature are prophetic. Many times God instructed His people to do things that would be prophetic of what He would do much later in relation to Christ and the Church (Abraham/Isaac).

- C. Seek to discover the literal and historical figure that will be later seen as a type.

All types are grounded in real history including real people, real places and real events. God deliberately chose these events to be recorded for us in the way that He did to prepare us for the entering into of His purpose in the last days (I Cor. 10:11). Not all of the events that actually occurred in a person’s life are recorded, but that ones that are recorded usually have special meaning.

- D. Seek to discover what elements of the type have application to the antitype.

In this step all of the other tools of biblical interpretation will come into play especially the context principle. When the Bible refers to something or someone as a type of something or someone else, it usually does so within a specific context that will limit the application of the type to a very specific aspect. In most cases there is one primary parallel that is being emphasized in the type that applies to the antitype.

- E. Seek to discover the limitations of the type and antitype relationship.

There is no such thing as a perfect type. All comparisons eventually break down at some point. The very nature of types suggests that we are working from the inferior to the superior and from the imperfect to the perfect. Because of this, no type or shadow can do justice to the antitype or the real.

VI. What are some biblical examples of the interpretation of types?

A. Types of Christ

When we say that someone is a type of Christ, we are saying that a person in the Old Testament behaves in a way that corresponds to Jesus' character or actions in the New Testament. When we say that something is "typical" of Christ, we are saying that an object or event in the Old Testament can be viewed as representative of some quality of Jesus.

1. Adam

The New Testament is clear that Adam was a type of Christ and that the marriage of the man and the woman is a type of Christ and the church (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15:46-47; Eph. 5:24-32). Adam was the federal head of the first creation of man, while Christ is the federal head of a new race of man called the new creation. Everyone born into the world is born in Adam. Everyone who is born of water and the Spirit is born in Christ. See the following chart for comparisons.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Romans 5:14

The following chart summarizes the truth contained in this type.

Adam	Christ
First Adam	Last Adam
First Man	Second Man
A Living Soul	A Life-giving Spirit
Of the Earth, Earthly	Lord from Heaven
Made in the Image of God	The Express Image of His Person
Not Complete without Bride	Not Complete without Bride
Bride came out of Deep Sleep	Bride Came out of Death
Side Opened to Provide Bride	Side Opened to Provide Bride
Paid for Bride with Blood	Paid for Bride with Blood
Eve to Rule and Reign with Adam	Bride to Rule and Reign with Christ

2. Manna

"Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."... And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." John 6:31-33, 35

Just as the Children of Israel lived off of the bread from heaven provided to them by the Father, we as believers live off of the bread that descended down from above—Jesus.

Bread in most cultures of the day was considered to be the “staff of life.” Along with water it was considered essential for one’s daily existence (Gen. 21:14; Ezek. 4:16-17).

Manna is discussed in Exodus 16. Note the comparisons between manna and Jesus—the Bread from Heaven.

Comparison	Manna	Jesus
Both were supernatural gifts from heaven	Ex. 16:4	John 6:31-33
Both referred to as “the glory of the Lord”	Ex. 16:7	Is. 40:5
Both came to where the people were	Ex. 16:13-14	John 1:11
Both were for all people	Ex. 16:16	John 3:16
Both were to be eaten or partaken of	John 6:31	John 6:48-58
Both were sufficient to meet the needs	Ex. 16:18	Ps. 23:1
Both were despised by mixed multitude	Num. 11:4-6	Is. 53:3

3. Isaac

Comparison	Isaac	Jesus
Birth Experiences		
Born in an appointed time	Gen. 18:14	Gal. 4:4-5
A child of promise	Gen. 17:15-16	Is. 7:14
Named before birth	Gen. 17:19	Mt. 1:21
Required a miracle birth	Rom. 4:19	Luke 1:35
Three mysterious visitors	Gen. 18:1	Mt. 2:1
Called only begotten son	Heb. 11:17-19	John 1:14,18
The Sacrifice		
Between the father and the son	Gen. 22:5-6	John 16:32
Took donkey to place of sacrifice	Gen. 22:3	Mt. 21:2-7
Performed by the father	Gen. 22:3	Is. 53:10
Involved a three days’ journey	Gen. 22:4	I Cor. 15:3-4
Carried the wood for sacrifice	Gen. 22:6	John 19:17-18
Carried out on a mountain or hill	Gen. 22:2	Mt. 21:10
Fully yielded to will of the father	Gen. 22:6	Is.53:7
Freely laid down his life	Gen. 22:6	John 10:17-18
Bound to the altar	Gen. 22:9	John 20:25
Resurrection foretold	Gen. 22:5	Luke 18:32-33
Sacrifice attested by two witnesses	Gen. 22:3	Luke 24:3-5
Sacrifice was foundation for temple	II Chr. 3:1	I Cor. 3:11
Result multiplication of seed	Gen. 22:17)	John 12:24

4. Joseph (See Appendix)

B. Types of Christ and the Church

Adam and Eve,
Isaac and Rebekah
Ruth and Boaz (See Old Testament Survey, Lesson 9)

VII. What are some additional cautions in relation to the interpretation of types?

One must be very cautious in the study of Bible types. Types have been used to support many doctrines that are simply not supported by the clear teaching of the Bible.

A. Avoid extremes when confronting the types of the Bible.

There are three main extremes.

1. There is the extreme of discounting all types and shadows in biblical interpretation.

It is clear from the New Testament that types not only do exist but that they are given to us by God for our learning.

2. There is the extreme of turning everything in to a type or shadow of something else down to the minutest detail.
3. There is also the extreme of purporting that only the types that are specifically mentioned as types in the New Testament can be studied as types.

In this line of thinking, Adam can be studied as a type of Christ, but Isaac and Joseph cannot.

If this line of reasoning were applied to the Messianic prophecies, one would conclude that the only valid prophecies are those that are actually cited in the New Testament as such.

When Jesus indicated that He was the central subject of the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets, He was giving us reason to believe that we can find Him in every book of the Bible.

B. Be sure never to use types as a single source or basis for determining doctrine.

Types should be confirming voices adding to the weight of a doctrine. Types are also able to add color and visual illustration to clear doctrines that occur elsewhere in the Bible. In this sense types can also affirm God's continued involvement throughout the history of mankind.

Appendix, Lesson 19-20, Joseph, A Type of Christ

The Life of Christ as Seen in the Life of Joseph	
Joseph	Jesus
1. Joseph means “increasing”.	1. Jesus increased. Luke 2:52
2. Born by and through a God-ordained miracle. His mother was barren. Gen. 28:31	2. Born by and through a God-ordained miracle.
3. Firstborn of his mother. Gen. 30:22-23	3. Firstborn of His mother. Mt. 1:25
4. Well-beloved of the father. Gen 37:2-3	4. Well-beloved of the Father. Col. 1:13
5. Lived in Hebron, the place of fellowship, with his father before he was sent to his brethren.	5. Lived in heaven, the place of fellowship with His Father before coming to earth. John 17:5
6. He was a son of his father’s old age. Gen. 37:3	6. He was the Son of Eternity. John 1:1-3; 17:5; Ps. 90:2.
7. He was a shepherd by occupation.	7. He was the Good Shepherd. John 10
8. He was given a coat of many colors signifying his noble birth. Gen. 37:3	8. He was anointed by the Spirit at Jordon signifying His noble birth. Mt. 3:16
9. Joseph hated evil. Gen. 37:2	9. Jesus hated sin. Heb. 1:9
10. He bore witness of evil. Gen. 37:2	10. Jesus testified against evil. John 7:7, 15:17
11. His brethren hated him without a cause. Gen. 37:4-5	11. They hated Him without a cause. Luke 4:28-39; John 15:25
12. They hated him the more because of his words. Gen. 37:8	12. They hated Jesus because of His words about Himself. John 5:18; 6:41; 8:40; 10:30-31
13. Dreams foretold a remarkable future. Gen. 37:5-11	13. Dreams foretold a remarkable future. Luke 1:31-33.
14. Joseph foretold a dual sovereignty involving the field and heavens. Gen. 37:5-11	14. Jesus foretold his earthly and heavenly dominion. Mt. 26:64; 28:18.
15. Joseph was envied by his brethren. Gen. 37:11	15. Jesus was envied by His brethren. Mark 15:10
16. He was sent forth by his father. Gen. 37:13	16. He was sent forth by His Father. John 3:16
17. He was perfectly willing. Gen. 37:13	17. He was willing. Phil. 2:5-7; Heb. 10:7
18. He was sent to seek the welfare of his brethren. Gen. 37:14	18. He was sent to seek the welfare of His brethren. Rom. 15:8
19. He was sent forth from the vale (peace) of Hebron (fellowship). Gen. 37:14	19. He was sent forth from the peace of fellowship with the Father.
20. Joseph sent to Shechem (shoulder) which implies a place of burden – bearing, service and subjection. It is also seen in connection with sin, sorrow, evil passion and blood shed. Gen. 37:14; 34:25-30.	20. Jesus was sent into the world, a place of sin and sickness. For Him it was to be a place of burden-bearing, service and subjection. Phil. 2:6-7; Gal. 4:4.
21. He became a wanderer in the field (world). Gen. 37:15	21. Jesus was merely a wanderer in this world. Luke 9:58; John 7:53-8:1.
22. He seeks until he finds. Gen 37:16-17	22. Jesus seeks the lost. Matt. 15:24; Lk. 19:10
23. He was conspired against. Gen. 37:18-20	23. Jesus also. Luke 19:46-47; 20:13-14; Mt. 12:14
24. His brethren believed not his sayings. Gen. 37:19-20	24. His brethren believed Him not. Mt. 27
25. They stripped off his garments. Gen. 37:23	25. Likewise. John 19:23-24; Mt. 27:28,35
26. He was put in a pit, empty and no water. Gen. 37:27 See: Zech. 9:11	26. Was in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights. Mt. 12:40
27. They sat down to wait and watch. Gen. 37:25	27. Sitting down they watched Him there. Mt. 27:36
28. He was taken out of the pit alive (glimpse of the resurrection). Gen. 37:28	28. Jesus was seen alive. Luke 24:23
29. Sold for 20 pieces of silver. Gen. 37:28	29. Sold for 30 pieces of silver. Mt. 26:14
30. His brothers didn’t want to be responsible for shedding blood themselves. Gen. 37:26	30. They wanted the Roman government to shed the blood of this man. John 18:28,31
31. He was sold by Judah, one of the twelve. Gen.	31. He was sold by Judas (anglicized form of Gk.

37:26-28	equivalent), one of the 12. Mt. 26:14-16
32. The empty pit was inspected. Gen. 37:29	32. Empty tomb was inspected. Luke 24:24
33. Joseph's blood sprinkled coat is presented to his father. Gen. 37:31-32	33. The blood of Jesus Christ was presented to the Father.
34. Sold into Egypt as a slaved servant. Ps. 105:17; Gen. 39	34. Took upon Himself the form of a servant. Ex. 21:5-6; Is. 52:13; Phil. 2:7-8
35. The Lord was with him. Gen. 39:2; Acts 7:9	35. God was with Jesus. Acts 10:38; John 3:2
36. Joseph was a prosperous servant. Gen. 39:2	36. Jesus also. Ps. 1; Is. 52:13; 53:10
37. Joseph's master was well-pleased with him. Gen. 39:4	37. Jesus was pleasing to His Master. John 8:29
38. Because of his obedience he was given authority. Gen. 39:5	38. Jesus was given authority because of His obedience. John 5:30
39. The Egyptian house was blessed for Joseph's sake. Gen. 39:5	39. The world was blessed for Jesus sake.
40. Joseph was a goodly person (no sin is ever recorded in his life). Gen. 39:6	40. Jesus was a goodly person. He did no sin.
41. Tempted, but did not yield to sin. Gen 39. 7-10	41. Tempted in all points as we are, yet, without sin. Heb. 4:15; Mt. 4:1-11
42. He was falsely accused. Gen. 39:16-19	42. Likewise. Mt. 26:59-65
43. He attempted no defense. Gen. 39:20	43. Likewise. Is. 53:7
44. Put in prison to suffer with prisoners and transgressors. Gen. 39:20	44. In 'prison', the time of trial, numbered with the transgressors. Is. 52:12; Mt. 26
45. His feet were put in fetters. Ps. 105:18	45. His feet were pierced on the cross. Ps. 22:16
46. Joseph suffered at the hands of the Gentiles also.	46. Jesus also. Acts 4:26:27
47. Joseph, the innocent one, suffered many afflictions. Acts 7:9-10	47. Jesus as innocent and suffered much.
48. The Word of the Lord tried him until set time of fulfillment. Ps. 105:19	48. Word of the Father upheld Jesus until the set time. Heb. 10:12-13
49. Put in a place of death with two malefactors. Gen. 39:20; 40:1-4	49. Put in a place of death between two malefactors. Mark 15:27-28
50. One went to life, one went to death. Gen. 40:21-22	50. Likewise. Luke 23:39-43
51. Joseph won the respect of the jailor. Gen. 39:21	51. Jesus won the respect of the centurion. Luke 23:47
52. Joseph gave the credit for his accuracy to God. Gen. 40:8	52. Jesus likewise. John 12:49
53. Joseph desired to be remembered. Gen. 40:14	53. Jesus also. Luke 22:19
54. Taken up alive out of prison, King sent and loosed him, changed his raiment. Gen. 41:14; Ps. 105:20	54. Taken from prison and judgment, loosed from pains of death, his raiment in tomb. Is. 53:8; Acts 2:27-28; John 20:6-7
55. Joseph delivered by God. Gen. 45:7-9	55. Jesus also. Acts 2:24,32; 10:40
56. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream by Word of Wisdom. Gen. 41:17-36	56. Jesus perfectly interprets the Word of the Father. Mt. 7:29; John 8:28
57. Joseph exalted at place of power. Gen. 41:39-40	57. Jesus exalted also. I Pet. 3:22
58. Joseph seen as a revealer of things to come. Gen. 41: 17-36	58. Jesus was the revealer of things to come. John 8:28; Rev. 1:1
59. Sits and rides in second chariot next to Pharaoh. Gen. 41:43	59. Will come in the chariots of His Father. Ps. 110:1; 104:3; Mt. 24:30
60. All were to bow the knee before the exalted Joseph. Gen. 41:44	60. At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Phil. 2:10-11
61. Pharaoh turns all authority and power over all people to Joseph. Gen. 41:44	61. All power over principalities and all flesh is His. John 17:2; Mt. 28:18; I Pet. 3:22
62. He sat down in the throne of another. Gen.	62. Jesus likewise. Rev. 3:21

41:39-40	
63. Joseph given a new name. Gen 41:45	63. Jesus also. Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:9-10
64. Joseph seen as Wonderful Counselor.	64. Jesus was a Wonderful Counselor. Col. 2:3
65. They were astounded at his wisdom. Gen. 41:37-39	65. Many were astounded at what Jesus said. Mt. 7:28-29; 13:54; John 7:46
66. After his exaltation, he took a Gentile bride to share his glory. Gen. 41:45	66. Even so Christ took the Church. Eph. 5:23
67. The marriage was arranged by Pharaoh. Gen. 41:45	67. The marriage was arranged by the Father. Mt. 22:2
68. He was 30 years old as he begins his life work. Gen. 41:46	68. He began His ministry at age 30. Luke 3:23
69. Joseph went out on his mission out from the presence. Gen. 41:46	69. Christ also. Luke 3:22
70. Joseph's ministry involved wandering. Gen. 41:46	70. Christ also. Mt. 4:23; 9:35
71. Famine strikes. Joseph opens storehouses, full, prepared for all. Gen. 41:56	71. Natural and Spiritual famine to come. Jesus has all fullness of bread ready and prepared. Amos 8:11; Rev. 6:5-6; Mt. 24:7; Col. 2:9
72. Joseph is seen dispensing bread to a perishing world. Gen. 41:55	72. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." John 6
73. All must get their bread from Joseph. Gen. 41:55,57	73. Jesus is the only way. Acts 4:12; John 14:6
74. Joseph had an unlimited supply to meet the needs of all. Gen. 41:49	74. Christ is sufficient to meet every need. Eph. 2:7; 3:8
75. His 10 brethren come to Egypt for bread (1 st visit). Gen. 42:3-5	75. Christ's brethren will have to come to Him or die. John 14:6
76. Joseph was unknown and unrecognized by his brethren. Gen 42:6,8	76. Jesus was rejected by His brethren the 1 st time. John 1:11
77. Joseph saw and knew his brethren. Gen. 42:7	77. Christ also. Jer. 18:17; Hos. 5:3
78. He knew the past history of his brethren. Gen. 42:33	78. He knew what was in man. John 2:24
79. Joseph made known to them a way of deliverance through substitution. Gen. 42:24	79. Jesus provided a way through substitution.
80. His brethren visit Egypt the second time. Gen. 43:1,2,10; Acts 7:13	80. The second time Jesus is made known to His re-gathered brethren. Is. 11:11-13
81. Time of weeping, reconciliation. Gen. 45:14-15	81. All families mourn apart for rejected son. Zech. 12:10-14; Rev. 1:7
82. When his brethren humbled themselves before him, and threw themselves on his mercy, he freely forgave. Gen. 44-45	82. Christ likewise. I John 1:9
83. Joseph is revealed as a Man of compassion.	83. Jesus was "moved with compassion".
84. He was acknowledged to be the savior and ruler of the people. Gen. 47:25	84. Jesus is both Lord and Savior. Phil. 2:10-11
85. That which was meant for evil, God meant for good. Gen. 50:20	85. All things work together for good, after His counsel. Acts 2:23-24; Rom. 8:28
86. His brethren ask forgiveness. Gen. 50:15-18	86. Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Zech. 13:1; Jer. 31:34
87. Joseph's brethren go forth to declare his glory. Gen. 45:9, 13	87. Christ's also. Is. 66:19
88. Joseph's brethren bow down before him as a representative of God. Gen. 50:18-19	88. Christ's also. Rev. 5:14
89. Gives all honor into hands of the King.	89. He turns all back to the Father. I Cor. 15:24

Lesson 21

Interpreting Parables

I. What is a parable?

- A. A parable is a short, simple story from which a moral lesson can be drawn.
1. A parable is usually a fictitious story that could be true.
 2. A parable draws from images and events that would be familiar to the listener.
 3. A parable is constructed of symbolism that must be interpreted to be understood.
 4. A parable is aimed at communicating a spiritual truth (usually one primary truth).

Some have said, “It is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

B. The concept and use of parables is found in both the Old and the New Testament.

1. The Hebrew word that is often translated parable in the Old Testament is *mashal* (4912).

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. Psalm 78:1-3

- a. This word literally means a parable, similitude, proverb, song or poem.

The word parable is usually used of an extended story with a moral, while a proverb is a sentence, opinion or saying containing ethical wisdom. In both cases they are often extended similes.

- b. This word is translated “parable, proverb, oracle or saying.”
- c. This word is used most often in connection with the Book of Proverbs.

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of short, pithy statements that are intended to teach practical principles of living.

- d. Most of the other times that it is used it is speaking of an incident in someone’s life becoming a proverb (II Chr. 7:19-22).

But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, “Why has the LORD done thus to this land and this house?”

Then they will answer, "Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this calamity on them."

In this case it is a true story that is meant to be told to others in the future that will teach a life principle.

2. The Greek word that is often translated parable in the New Testament is *parabole* (3850).
 - a. This word literally means "a placing of one thing by the side of another."

It is used in the Bible both literally and metaphorically to refer to the following (Thayer's):

- A comparison of one thing with another, likeness or similitude
- An example by which a doctrine or precept is illustrated
- A narrative, fictitious but agreeable to the laws and usages of human life, by which either the duties of men or the things of God, particularly the nature and history of God's kingdom are figuratively portrayed
- An earthly story with a heavenly meaning
- A pithy and instructive saying, involving some likeness or comparison and having perceptive or admonitory force

- b. This word is translated figure, symbol, parable or proverb.

C. Parables were perfected in the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

II. Why did Jesus speak in parables?

A. Jesus switched from clear, well-outlined teaching to teaching in parables.

1. When Jesus began His teaching He was simple, clear and direct (See: Matthew 5-7).

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. Matthew 5:38-42

2. In the latter half of His ministry, Jesus' teaching became veiled in symbolism that required interpretation (Mt. 13:34-35).

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

- a. The disciples of Jesus immediately picked up on the switch in style (Mt. 13:10).

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

- b. The disciples themselves needed interpretation to understand this new style (Mt. 13:36b).

And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

B. Jesus made the change for specific reasons.

1. Jesus spoke in parables to conceal truth from those who were closed to the truth.

- a. The religious leaders had just accused Jesus for the second time of being inspired by the devil (Mt. 12:24, Also: Mt. 9:34; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15).

Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." 25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Matthew 12:22-28

- b. Jesus had just warned the leaders that they were verging on blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:31-32).

Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

- He warned them not to stand against God (Mt. 12:28, 30).

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. Matthew 12:30

- He warned them to change their hearts (Mt. 12:33-35).

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

- He warned them about impending judgment for the careless words that they were speaking (Mt. 12:36-37).

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

- c. Jesus decided that He was not going to cast pearls before swine (Mt. 7:6).

Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

Don't give what is holy to unholy people. Don't give pearls to swine! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you. –NLT

- d. Jesus would turn from those who were closed and focus on those who were open to His message.

Paul and Barnabas had a similar experience on their first missionary journey (See: Acts 13:44-46).

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."

2. Jesus spoke in parables to reserve truth for those we were open to the truth.

Notice Jesus' explanation as to why He was now teaching in parables (Mt. 13:10-17).

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to

you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Jesus spoke in parables because:

- a. The religious leaders and those who followed them had demonstrated that they had dull hearts and that they were spiritually hard of hearing.
- b. He wanted to reserve His teaching for those who were sincere about learning from Him.

A good way to translate verse 12 is as follows:

For whoever has [an open and responsive heart], to him more [truth and understanding] will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have [an open and responsive heart], even what [opportunity] he has will be taken away from him.

To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But to those who are not listening, even what they have will be taken away from them. –NLT

3. Jesus taught publicly to the multitudes in parables, but He called His disciples to Him privately to explain the parables (Mt. 13:36).

Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

III. What are some of the keys to interpreting the parables?

Since by definition a parable is a statement or story that has a deeper meaning, all parables must be interpreted. But it is important to follow specific guidelines in the interpreting of parables.

- A. Parables must be identified as such by the interpreter.

Most parables are clearly designated as such, but some are not as clearly designated. One way to identify a parable is watching for the word “like” in a passage just before a story is told. The best example of this is the parables of the kingdom found in Matthew 13. These parables all begin with the statement, “The kingdom of heaven is like...” Remember that most parables are simply extended similes.

B. Parables must be understood based on the context of when it was spoken.

1. This includes the passage context.

The context of the passage will help to determine the original intent and usages of the parable. This original intent will often provide assistance with the main thrust of the parable and the specific application of the parable.

2. This includes the cultural context.

Many of Jesus parables contain elements of culture that need to be interpreted, including such things as a mustard seed, measures of meal, leaven, sowing of seed, etc. In order to fully understand the parable the interpreter will have to learn more about these elements of the parable.

C. Parables must be understood as an overall unit without too much emphasis on the particulars.

That is, you cannot take the analogy further than its primary intended meaning by trying to capture a hidden meaning in every single word. Most parables are meant to have one primary application.

D. Parables must be interpreted with the application of other hermeneutical principles including the context principle, the symbolic principle and the moral principle.

E. Parables must not be used as a source of doctrinal formulation.

There may actually be hypothetical aspects to a parable that are not consistent with reality or sound doctrine. To formulate a doctrine of heaven and hell from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus or the wise and foolish virgins would lead one astray. Doctrine can be confirmed in parables, but parables should never be the primary source of doctrinal theology.

IV. What are some examples of the application of these principles of interpretation?

For the purpose of application, we will focus on the parables of Jesus.

A. The following is a partial listing of Jesus’ parables:

1. The two debtors (Luke 7:41-50)
2. Sewing a new patch on old garment (Mt. 9:16).
3. Putting new wine into old wineskins (Mt. 9:9:17).

4. Sower of seeds in the field (Mt. 13:3-23).
5. The wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43)
6. The mustard seed (Mt. 13:31-32)
7. Leaven (Mt. 13:33)
8. The treasure hidden in the field (Mt. 13:44).
9. The pearl of great price (Mt. 13:45-46)
10. The dragnet (Mt. 13:47-50)
11. The instructed scribe (Mt. 13:52)
12. The good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)
13. The rich fool (Luke 12:16-21)
14. The barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9)
15. The great supper (Luke 14:15-24)
16. Building a tower (Luke 14:28-30)
17. Going to war (Luke 14:31-33)
18. The lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7; Mt. 18:10-14)
19. The lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)
20. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)
21. The unjust steward (Luke 16:1-8)
22. The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
23. The unprofitable servants (Luke 17:7-10)
24. The persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8)
25. The Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:10-14)
26. The unforgiving servant (Mt. 18:23-35)
27. The householder (Mt. 20:1-16)
28. The two sons (Mt. 21:28-31)
29. The vineyard (Mt. 21:33-44)
30. The marriage supper (Mt. 22:2-14)
31. The faithful and wise servant (Mt. 24:45-51)
32. The wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1-12)
33. The talents (Mt. 25:14-30)

B. Many of Jesus parables were given as general instruction concerning principles of the Kingdom of God.

1. The parables of building a tower and going to war teach us that we need to count the cost before we engage in a project or a conflict (Luke 14:28-33). This can be applied to many avenues of life particularly that of following the Lord and answering His call to discipleship.

Note the context of this parable:

Multitudes were following Jesus and He wanted them to know the cost of following Him to be sure that they were willing to pay the price (Luke 14:25-27).

Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Moral: Before you set out on any endeavor be sure to count the cost so that you can finish what you start.

2. The parable of the two debtors teaches us that the greater sense of personal unworthiness or need that we have the greater our appreciation will be for what God has indeed done for us (Luke 7:41-50).

“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” Luke 7:41-43

Note the context of this parable:

A sinful woman who had been forgiven by Jesus washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. When the Pharisee who had invited Him to dinner showed contempt for this, Jesus explained why she was so appreciative.

Moral: Those who are forgiven much love much.

3. The parable of the unforgiving servant teaches us that we must be agents of God’s mercy in the same way that He has demonstrated His mercy toward us and that we should be anxious to forgive others no matter how big we perceive their offense toward us to be (Mt. 18:23-35).

Note the context of this parable:

Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

Matthew 18:21-22

Moral: Forgive others the same way that you want God to forgive you.

4. The parable of the rich fool teaches us that the possessions that we have are not merely for the purpose of lavishing greater and greater luxury on ourselves, but we are to use them to glorify God and to help others (Luke 12:16-21).

Note the context of this parable:

Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” Luke 12:13-15

Moral: Use your money wisely while you are alive because it will not help you after you are dead.

5. The parable of the talents teaches us that God has given every one of us something that we can use for Him or invest in the kingdom of God. He not only expects us to use what He has given us, He expects a return on what He has given to us (Mt. 25:14-30).

Moral: Use it or lose it.

C. Many of Jesus' parables were given as an indictment of the religious leaders of the day.

1. The parable of sewing a new patch on old garment (Mt. 9:16) and putting new wine into old wineskins (Mt. 9:9:17) teach that you cannot take Jesus New Covenant teachings and just add them to the laws and traditions under the Old Covenant.
2. The parable of the barren fig tree teaches that when Jesus came to the nation of Israel He expected to find a certain type of fruit, but He did not find it (Luke 13:6-9). He searched for three years in His ministry yet did not find it.

He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'"

John the Baptist was the first to warn the leaders of their lack of fruitfulness (Mt. 3:8-10).

Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Later on in Jesus ministry He cursed a fig tree that was all leaves but bore no fruit (Mt. 21:18-19).

Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away. Matthew 21:18-19

3. The parable of the great supper teaches us that the Jews and the religious leaders who were the first ones invited to the supper made every excuse not to come. Eventually the invitation went out to "whosoever will may come"

(Luke 14:15-24). Ultimately the original invitees who made excuses never tasted of the prepared meal.

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper." Luke 14:21-24

4. The parable of the two sons again represents the religious leaders and the publicans, sinners and rebellious (Mt. 21:28-32).

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' 29 He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. 30 Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him."

- a. The first son represents those who were rebellious at first but later repented and responded in obedience.
- b. The second son represents the religious leaders of the day who "say and do not" (Mt. 23:3). They make a good profession, but they do not follow through.

When they heard this, all the people, including the unjust tax collectors, agreed that God's plan was right, for they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in religious law had rejected God's plan for them, for they had refused John's baptism. Luke 7:29-30, NLT

5. The parable of the vineyard is one of the clearest parables that Jesus told relating to the religious leaders of the day and they did not miss His intent (Mt. 21:33-46).

"Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 34 Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. 35 And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. 37 Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the vinedressers saw the son,

they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" 41 They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." 45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

There are several things that Jesus revealed in this parable.

- a. Those who work the vineyard are not the actual landowners; they are merely stewards who will have to give an account.
- b. God expected there to be fruit from His vineyard.
- c. Those in charge of the vineyard mistreated the servants (prophets) sent by the owner.
- d. The religious leaders of the day knew that Jesus was the Son of God and rightful heir. They did not kill Him out of ignorance, but out of jealousy.
- e. Because of their rejection of the Son, the vineyard would be put into the hands of another nation that would bring forth the desired fruit (I Pet. 2:8-9).
- f. The foundation of this new order would be personal brokenness and a right relationship to the Stone that the builders (religious leaders) had rejected.

Lesson 22

Interpreting Narratives

I. What is meant by “narratives”?

When we speak of the narrative portions of the Scripture, we are referring primarily to the historical portions of the Scripture. Approximately thirty-five percent of the Bible is narrative. This would include a large portion of the Old Testament (especially the historical books—Genesis to Esther) and the first five books of the New Testament.

In addition, there are a few narrative portions in some of the prophetic books especially the Major Prophets including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Two of the minor prophets, Jonah and Haggai, are also more narrative in nature.

The word “narrative” is preferred over the term “story” because “story” often carries the idea of something being fictional or not based in reality. We must never think of the stories of the Bible as a collection of fairy tales, myths, legends, and fables. They are none of these. They are the inspired words of God handed down to us through the hands of His chosen writers.

“One of the primary faith confessions of both Christianity and Judaism is that God has chosen to reveal Himself in extraordinary ways in human history, yet in the ordinary events and circumstances in which human beings live and work. Those extraordinary encounters with God within ordinary human history are the heart of the Biblical witness to God.” –Dennis Bratcher

II. What makes narratives unique when it comes to biblical interpretation?

A. Narratives are records of significant historical events. This includes:

1. Significant world events.
 - a. Creation
 - b. Flood
 - c. World Conquests
 - d. Birth and Life of Christ
2. Significant events in God’s dealings with His people.
 - a. Fall of Man
 - b. Establishing of Covenants
 - c. The Exodus
 - d. History of Israel
 - e. Birth of the Church
3. Significant events in the life of key individuals.
 - a. Adam and Eve

- b. Noah
- c. Abraham
- d. Jacob
- e. Joseph
- f. Moses
- g. David
- h. Elijah
- i. Jesus
- j. Paul

- B. Narratives of the Bible are records of what took place, not necessary what should have taken place.

This is one of the things that distinguishes the Bible from most other religious literature. The Bible makes no attempt to hide the weakness and sins of its principle characters.

1. The Bible records Abraham's lies or half truths told to Abimelech without comment (Gen. 20:2; See also Gen. 26:2).
2. The Bible records David and Solomon's polygamy without commenting on it or condoning it.

It is because of this fact that narratives at times can be instructive from either a positive viewpoint (what to do) or a negative viewpoint (what not to do). This means that the interpreter will be required to make a judgment on that which is taking place in the passage based on the other clear teachings of the Bible.

- C. Narratives are usually incomplete or limited in that they do not contain anyone's full story (including Jesus) nor do they cover any event in its entirety.

In this sense any narrative may not answer all of the questions generated by the portion of the narrative that is recorded for us. Often times there are big gaps between people like Adam and Noah. Noah and Abraham or Joseph and Moses. Many of these gaps can inspire questions that cannot be fully answered.

Rather than becoming frustrated, we have to believe that God has given us enough to lead us to a correct understanding of Him and His purposes for our lives (II Pet. 1:2-4).

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. –Vs. 3, CEV

D. Narratives do not teach doctrine directly.

Whatever truths that are extracted from them will come in the form of inference and illustration. Because of this the narrative portions cannot be studied the same way you would study the doctrinal and theological portions of the Scripture. Every word or phrase does not have a deep and hidden meaning. In most cases, “What you see is what you get.”

The fact that narratives teach indirectly does not mean, however, that the narratives should be taken lightly or that they should be seen to be any “less-inspired” than the rest of the Scriptures. The truth is that they are just as authoritative as any other part of the Scripture. They are also part of the “all Scripture” that is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and equipping (II Tim. 3:16).

The narratives are a great way to illustrate doctrinal truths that are covered in other parts of the Bible. One can look at the life of Joseph to see the truth of “flee sexual immorality” (I Cor. 6:18 with Gen. 39:7-12). One can look at the three Hebrew children in the book of Daniel to see the truth of “you shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3).

E. Narratives of the Bible are preserved for us to teach us about how God relates to man, how man is to relate to God and how man can better enter into and fulfill the ultimate purpose of God.

“Biblical narratives tell us about things that happened—but not just any things. Their purpose is to show God at work in his creation and among his people. The narratives glorify him, help us to understand and appreciate him, and give us a picture of his providence and protection. At the same time they also provide illustrations of many other lessons important to our lives” (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 79).

One of the most significant things that the narratives teach us about God has to do with God’s providential hand in the lives of his people. Most of us cannot see the big picture of our lives. We do not always see God at work day by day. However, as we examine the lives of others as recorded in the pages of the Bible we can see how God works over a lifetime not just in a moment.

F. Narratives of the Bible are history, but they are more than history.

There is no question that the writers whom God chose to record the narratives of the Bible wrote from a biblical world view. As a result they would naturally have interpreted the events of history from God’s perspective rather than from that of a natural historian.

III. What is the value or purpose of narrative?

The narratives of Scripture can serve the believer in many ways.

- A. The narratives provide an account of God's redemptive plan for man worked out in history.
- B. The narratives help us to see history through God's eyes. Ultimately, the purpose of this is to help us to see the way that God sees.
- C. The narratives provide examples to us of other men and women of faith from whom we can draw strength (Heb. 11:2).

There can be an impartation of faith by just reading about the lives of great heroes of faith (Daniel).

- D. The narratives provide visual illustrations of divine truth.

People often learn more readily when they have varied experiences with the truth. Narratives provide the visual outworking of much of the declared truth found in the Bible.

- E. The narratives assist New Testament believer in learning from the positive example or the mistakes of others.

The narratives allow the readers to put themselves into the lives of others and gain understanding for application to their own lives.

- F. The narratives can be a great tool to help people remember important spiritual lessons. Children, as well as adult, can benefit from narratives in this way.

IV. What process is involved in interpreting the narratives?

- A. Seek to understand the natural setting of the narrative.

- 1. This includes understanding the historical setting of the narrative.

This includes such things as:

- Specific places
- Geography
- Objects
- Activities
- Customs
- Social Values
- Politics
- World Events
- Etc.

2. This includes understanding the various characters involved in the narrative.
3. This includes the plot line and how this narrative fits into God's plan of the ages.

B. Seek to understand the plot of the narrative in question.

To do this you will have to read the account in its entirety including that which comes before, that which follows and any other parallel accounts of the same event. As you read you will be asking certain questions that will help you to better understand what is actually happening.

1. Who are the principle characters?
2. How are they related to each other?
3. What is the flow of action?
4. Who is acting and upon whom is the action being made?
5. What is the point of conflict or tension?
6. How does the story come to a place of resolve?
7. How does this event relate to what has gone before? To what follows?
8. Is there anything in the recording of this event that reflects God's attitude toward the person or the action?
9. Are there any other verses that shed light on this passage?

In the Old Testament we learn that Moses was placed in the river by his mother. The New Testament tells us that Moses' mother did this by faith or at the instruction of the Lord (Ex. 2:3; Heb. 11:23).

C. Seek to discover what issues (personal, religious, social, political, economic) are at play in the narrative.

"As part of our engagement with the story and part of our response to it, we need to ask how the narrative engages human needs, wants, longings, sins, failures, ambitions, emotions, all of those things that are a part of human existence." –Dennis Bratcher

D. Seek to understand any key or unique words that are used by the writer to record this event.

While it is true that not every word in a narrative will have special significance, sometimes the word choices of the writer do have some significance. Certain words can have different shades of meaning that may shed light on the meaning of the event.

E. Seek to find God in the narrative.

Remember that God is still the central subject of the Bible and every portion of Scripture should communicate to us something about God and His redemptive interaction with mankind. God is the hero of all biblical

narratives. Even in the book of Esther where God's is never specifically mentioned, God is the hero behind the scenes.

- F. Seek to determine what part of the narrative has meaning for us today.

Each individual episode within a particular narrative does not necessarily have a moral all its own. Its primary meaning may come from the wider context from which this narrative is extracted.

V. What are some cautions when it comes to interpreting the narratives?

There are some cautions that the interpreter must be aware of when interpreting the narrative portions of the Scripture.

- A. Do not seek a symbolic interpretation of a natural event unless the Bible itself instructs to do so (I Cor. 10:1-11).
- B. Understand that most, but not all, narrative material is presented in a chronological or sequential way.

The events of Genesis 1-3 are not necessarily presented in sequence. Many of the events in the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospels are not necessarily in chronological order. All of the events recorded occurred in His life, but not necessarily in the exact order in which they are presented.

- C. Focus on what the narrative says, not on what you want the narrative to say.

In other words make sure that you apply all of the biblical principles of interpretation to the narratives as well.

Lesson 23

Interpreting Prophecy

I. What is prophecy?

A. The definition of the word prophecy.

Prophecy is the supernatural ability to receive a message initiated by God and the grace to speak it forth.

1. Prophecy is to be initiated by God (Jer. 23:16-22; Ezek. 13:1-3).

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the LORD!'" Thus says the Lord GOD: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!" Ezekiel 13:1-3

2. Prophecy is God speaking to His people through a person (Ex. 4:15-16; 6:28-7:2).

God defined prophecy by using Moses' relationship to Aaron. God puts His words in the mouth of His prophets the same way Moses put his words in the mouth of Aaron. The prophet speaks the words given by God, just as Aaron spoke the words that were given him by Moses.

Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. Exodus 4:15-16

So the LORD said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land." Exodus 7:1-2

B. The two main types of prophecy

1. Forth-telling (Heb. 1:1-2a). Forth-telling is speaking forth a declarative message from God that does not involve prediction.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...

2. Foretelling (Amos 3:7-8). Foretelling is speaking a predictive word from God dealing with the future.

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

It should be noted that the predictive element, and particularly the end times element, is actually a rather small portion of what prophecy was, as actually practiced in Biblical times.

II. Why is it so important to study the prophets?

- A. The Old Testament prophets were God’s vehicle through which to speak to His people (Heb. 1:1-2a; II Kgs. 17:13).

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son... Hebrews 1:1 -2a

*In many separate revelations—each of which set forth a portion of the Truth—and in different ways God spoke of old to [our] forefathers in and by the prophets...
—Amp*

Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets. II Kings 17:13

- B. The Old Testament prophets prophesied concerning Christ and the Church.

1. Jesus declared that the entire Old Testament was about Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-49; Matt. 5:17-18).
2. The Early Church recognized that the main message of the prophets was Jesus (Acts 7:51-53).
3. Paul was aware of the fact that the prophets spoke of Christ and the Church (Rom. 1:1-3; Rom.16:25-27).

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. Romans 16:25-27

- C. The New Testament writers made extensive use of the Old Testament prophets.

- D. The Books of the Prophets make up over one-fourth of the Bible.

III. What are some of the names and titles of prophets in the Old Testament?

There are various names ascribed to the prophets in the Old Testament. The various names often signify something about the way in which they ministered or received their revelation.

A. Man of God (I Sam. 9:6; I Kgs. 12:22; 13:1; II Kgs. 5:8).

Even though there were female prophets as well, this title emphasized the separation of these individuals unto God and their upright lifestyles.

B. Seers (I Sam. 9:9; II Sam. 24:11; II Kgs. 17:13; I Chr. 26:28; 29:29; II Chr. 16:7, 10; 33:18; Is. 29:10; 30:10; Amos 7:12).

This title indicates that these individuals saw into the ways of God, had foresight into the workings of God and had vision in regard to the plan of God.

*8And the servant answered Saul again and said, "Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God, to tell us our way."
9(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: "Come, let us go to the seer," for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.) I Samuel 9:8-9*

C. Messengers of the Lord (II Chr. 36:15-16; Is. 42:19; Mal. 3:1).

This title highlights the fact that these individuals were ambassadors and official representatives of God entrusted with a message from God to be delivered to His people.

And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. II Chronicles 36:15-16

D. Servants (II Kgs. 9:7; 17:13, 23; 21:10; Ezra 9:11; Jer. 7:25; 25:4; 29:29; 44:4; Ezek. 38:17; Dan. 9:6, 10).

This title reflects the nature of all of God's ministers who are love-slaves to the Lord and servants to the people of God.

Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. Jeremiah 7:25-26

E. Prophets (Ex. 4:15-16; 7:1-2; Jer. 15:19; II Pet. 1:21).

The prophet was to be a mouthpiece for the Lord. God would give His word to them and they would speak it to the people.

Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. Exodus 4:15-16

So the LORD said to Moses: “See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. Exodus 7:1-2

IV. What is the background and development of the ministry of the prophet in the Old Testament?

A. The concept of the prophetic ministry has its roots in the patriarchs.

1. In early times a spirit of prophecy came upon godly men such as Enoch and Noah (Jude 14-15; Gen. 9:25-27).

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” Jude 14-15

2. Abraham was the first man in the Old Testament to be called a prophet (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:9-15). He functioned as a prophet when he interceded for sinners.
3. Isaac and Jacob were also used by God relative to prophecy (Gen. 27, 48-49; Heb. 11:20-21).
4. Joseph was also anointed to prophesy in relation to his sons (Gen. 50:24; Heb. 11:22).

In this period of the patriarchs, many godly men who lived by faith functioned in the realm of prophecy as the Spirit of the Lord came upon them. However, it only occurred sporadically and was not a mature expression of the ministry of the prophet that would come later.

B. The prophetic office was established and defined by two main figures in the Old Testament—Moses and Samuel.

1. Moses laid the foundation for this ministry in the Old Testament.
 - a. He provided the definition of a prophet and the criteria for testing this ministry (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:19-22).
 - b. He provided a mature example of the prophetic ministry (Num. 12:6; Deut. 18:15-18; 34:10-12).

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his

servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:10-12

2. Samuel developed this ministry to a place of prominence in Israel.
 - a. He functioned on a high level of prophetic ministry (I Sam. 3:19-21).

So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD. Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

- b. He became the first of a new order of prophets (Acts 3:24; 13:20). This order continued until John the Baptist (Mt. 11:13).

Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. Acts 3:24

- c. He established schools of the prophets where the prophetic gifts would be cultivated and developed (I Sam. 10:5, 10; 19:20).
 - d. He laid the foundation for the prophet's ministry to kings and governmental leaders (I Sam. 10:1; 16:13).
- C. The prophetic office remained strong through Malachi. Even though the words of the prophets were often disregarded, they served as a conscience to the nation.
- D. The period of the Old Testament ends with no strong prophetic voice and what is referred to as the 400 "silent years." The silence is broken with the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Mark 1:3).

III. What are the differences in expression among the various prophets in the Old Testament?

- A. There were prophets of guidance.

Many of the prophets could be classified as prophets of guidance. Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha would fall into this category. These prophets operated primarily in realms of guidance, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, miracles and declaring God's word and His will to His people. These were people who were in close relationship to God and were, as a result, consulted in areas of guidance and direction. Some of these were prophets of Scripture, but most of them were only oral prophets.

- B. There were prophets of vision.

Some of the prophets in the Old Testament could be classified as prophets of vision. Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah are the main examples of this type. These prophets are characterized as those who “saw” the Word of the Lord. God gave them visions and they recorded what they saw. In most cases what they saw had to do with the future of people and nations. The Revelation of John reflects this same type of prophetic ministry.

C. There were prophets of testimony.

A few prophets were prophetic in an unusual way. The lives of these prophets became a testimony and the principle message that they carried. Jonah’s principle prophecy was his three days and three nights’ experience in the belly of the whale (Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32). Although Hosea would also fall into other categories because of his prophetic words, he also lived a life of prophetic actions that were to speak to the nation (Hosea 1).

D. There were prophets of Scripture.

The prophets of Scripture are the ones with which we are the most familiar because of their writings that have come down to us. These prophets did no miracles; they simply spoke the Word of the Lord. These prophets include two categories, the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. The classification of these prophets has nothing to do with the importance of their message. The classification is only given based on the volume of the prophecies that we have from them.

1. The Major Prophets

The Major Prophets (or former prophets, as they are sometimes called) include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

2. The Minor Prophets

The Minor Prophets (or latter prophets, as they are sometimes called) include all of the rest of the prophetic books from Hosea to Malachi.

IV. What are some important guidelines in understanding prophecy?

A. It is important to understand the historical context of the prophecy. We can do this by asking some of these questions.

1. When was the prophecy given?
2. Who was the prophet?
3. What is the historical context into which it was spoken?
4. For whom was the prophecy intended?
5. What meaning did it have for those who first heard it?
6. What was God’s purpose in giving the prophecy?
7. What is the result that God was trying to produce with this prophecy?

The answer to these questions will help you understand how to apply the prophecy appropriately.

- B. It is important to discern if the prophecy is declarative or predictive in nature.

Much of the material found in the prophetic books of the Bible came in the form of a message from God to a people who needed adjustment, encouragement or rebuke. In this case the significance of the passage is not in its application to some future event but in its instructive nature about God and His expectations of His people.

Other portions are clearly predictive and have to do with the future. This look into the future can be for the purpose of promise, warning, blessing or judgment.

- C. It is important to discern if the prophecy is conditional or unconditional in nature.

Many of the prophetic utterances that were given were of a conditional nature. In this case God spoke to His people in the form of warning or promise of blessing. In the case of warning, He told them that if they did not do certain things, God would bring some kind of judgment. God told His people through men like Jeremiah that if they did not repent, God would remove them from the land (Jer. 18:7-10).

The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

God did something similar in relation to Nineveh. God had decreed their destruction based on their sin, but their response in repentance altered the outcome of the prophetic word. The word was conditional in that its outcome depended on the response of those receiving the word.

In the case of the promise of blessing, the word of the Lord came with conditions. The blessings of God would come to the people of God if certain conditions were met. If those conditions were not met, the promise would not come to pass.

“So here we are explicitly told that God’s intent is to change the way people behave, and if they do, he will change what it is that he was planning to do.

“How does this relate to the test of a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:21-22? Here is where Christians have generally gotten the idea that every prediction must, in fact, come true, despite Jeremiah’s statement to the contrary. Yet Deuteronomy states that the prophecy must take place or prove true. Thus, when we look at the prophecy, we must ask whether God accomplished his intention with the prediction, and not simply at whether the event predicted took place.

“Let’s compare this to a parent dealing with a child. The parent promises the child an ice cream cone if he behaves well. The child does not behave well, and when the time comes, the parent fails to buy the ice cream cone. The child is angry! The parent has broken a promise! Yet the condition was there. In parenting, we even have the situation of an unstated condition. If a child asks to go somewhere special, the parent might say yes. Nonetheless, if the child's behavior changes, even though the condition was not explicitly stated, permission might be withdrawn as punishment. A promise can be conditional even when that is not stated.” –Henry Neufeld

- D. It is important to discern if the prophecy is to be taken literally or figuratively.

The bulk of the prophetic material in the Bible is meant to be interpreted literally. However, there are portions that are obviously very figurative and symbolic. The prophets of vision are particularly figurative in their language. They use the language of the symbol and therefore must be interpreted with the guidelines discussed under Lesson 17 and 18.

- E. It is important to understand that prophets are noted for speaking in hyperbole or exaggerated terminology for the purpose of a radical effect.

The language of the prophet is the language of heightened emotion. As a result there is a tendency to use hyperbole for the sake of emphasis. If one is not aware of this speaking style the passage might appear to be a falsehood and one might come to the conclusion that the prophet is lying.

We use this speaking style often. After a hurricane went through an area an eyewitness made the comment that “everywhere you looked there was total destruction.” There are two hyperboles in this sentence that are contained in the words “everywhere you looked” and “total destruction.” If you analyzed these phrases in a literal sense you would say that they were falsehoods. But if you take them as hyperbole, you understand what is being said based on the intended impressions that are left by those statements.

An example of this would be Jeremiah 4:23-27 where Jeremiah predicts the destruction of Judah by the hands of the Babylonians.

I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. 24 I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. 25 I beheld, and indeed there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled. 26 I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the LORD, by His fierce anger. 27 For thus says the LORD: “The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end.”

The first verses in this passage are quite hyperbolic (no light, no man and no birds). No doubt this is what the prophet saw, but verse 27 makes it clear that even though destruction would be severe, God would not make a complete or full end of things.

F. It is important to discern whether or not the prophecy has multiple applications.

1. Many of the prophetic words of the Bible have more than one application.

The words of the prophets meant one thing to those who first heard the words (and it is important for us to search for that meaning), but those same words may have had a different meaning or application to Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament or to us in our day.

a. The historical application.

Does this prophecy have a literal and historical meaning and application to the times in which the prophet spoke?

b. The prophetic application.

Does this prophecy have further meaning and application relative to the First Coming of Christ and the Church? Does the prophecy have to do with the future of nations and people groups?

c. The ultimate application

Does this prophecy have an ultimate meaning and application for those living in the last days prior to the Second Coming of Christ?

2. A good example of multiple applications is the prophecy of Joel found in Joel 2:28:32.

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. 29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 32 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

a. The historical or local application.

When Joel gave this prophecy it was intended to mean something in his literal and historical setting to the people to whom he spoke. The people of Judah were going to experience a natural judgment for their sins (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31: 3:14).

b. The prophetic application.

When Joel gave this prophecy he also directed their attention to a season of outpouring and visitation that would come to them in connection with

the coming of the Messiah (Joel 2:28-32). In fact the apostles in the Book of Acts applied the verses in Joel to the experience that they had on the Day of Pentecost when God poured out His Spirit and visited His people in such a dramatic way (Acts 2:17-21).

c. The ultimate application

When Joel gave this prophecy he also directed their attention to the days immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ and the Day of the Lord. When you read this passage carefully, not everything in this passage applies to what transpired on the Day of Pentecost. The prophecy included many natural signs that in other portions of the Scripture are associated with the end times (e.g. wonders in heaven, signs in the earth, sun turned to darkness, moon to blood).

The ultimate application is that portion of the prophetic that has particular significance to us today as we anticipate the next great events on God's prophetic clock—a major outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the end-of-the-age harvest and the great and awesome Day of the Lord.

- G. It is important to recognize the non-systematic nature of most prophetic utterances.

Prophecy as a rule is a different kind of literature than history or narrative. It is more poetic in nature and therefore does not always follow the rules of logic. Prophecy is more “feeling-orientated” or subjective. This is manifested in a couple of ways.

1. Prophets did not always prophesy in a logical progression of thought.

The prophecies of any given prophet may be a compilation of bits of fragmentary revelation.

2. Prophets did not always prophesy events in chronological order.

The prophecies of any given prophet may refer to future events in random order. The prophets often live in God's dimension of the “eternal present” and, therefore, they see from a unique perspective.

- H. It is important to determine how to view the predictive aspects of the prophecy.

The following is quoted from *Interpreting the Scriptures* by Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin pages 157-158.

“In dealing with predictive prophecy the interpreter must ultimately come to grips with the problem of fulfillment. He must answer the questions: ‘Who or what was the prophet actually speaking of?’ and ‘When is the prophecy actually fulfilled?’ The following are some suggestions in applying this guideline:

1. If the prophecy has been fulfilled, it should be studied in connection with materials that clearly indicate its fulfillment.
2. If the prophecy has been partially fulfilled, the interpreter should search for the reason.

Could it be that the hearers were only partially obedient? Or could it be that the prophecy, though having only one sense, may have more than one fulfillment?

3. If the prophecy is yet unfulfilled, the interpreter must proceed with caution in determining its eschatological significance.
To begin with, he should look for interpretive clues based on the clear teaching of the rest of Scripture. Then he should determine the time element by using the questions given in the Chronometrical Principle.
- I. It is important to remember that Scripture does not contradict itself.

If another passage of scripture appears to contradict your interpretation of a prophecy one of two things must be done.

1. You must explain why that passage does not contradict your interpretation of the prophecy.
 2. You must re-evaluate your interpretation of this passage in light of other clear passages of Scripture.
- J. It is important to apply the other hermeneutical principles to the passage under consideration (See Conner/Malmin pages 154-157).

This would be particularly true of the breach principle, the covenantal principle, the ethnic division principle, the chronometrical principle and the symbolic principle.

Lesson 24

The Application of Hermeneutics

I. How can we apply the principles of hermeneutics to verses of the Scripture?

Let's take a passage as an example and apply what we have learned to it. Remember, every hermeneutical principle will not apply to every verse or passage under consideration. However, every principle needs to be taken into consideration to achieve an accurate interpretation of the passage.

Matthew 24:40

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

Other translations:

Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. –NLT

Two men will be in the same field, but only one will be taken. The other will be left. –CEV

A. The Context Principle

1. The Verse

- a. Who is speaking in this verse?

Jesus is clearly the speaker in this verse (See verse 4).

- b. To whom is this verse addressed?

Jesus was speaking directly to His disciples as an answer to a direct question (See verse 3).

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

- c. What does the verse literally say?

The verse simply says that one out of two men in a field will be taken and one out of two men will be left. It does not say where, why, when or how they will be taken. The verse does not specifically define the field as belonging to someone or as being in a particular place.

- d. What are the key or repeated words of the passage?

There are no repeated words in the verse, but in the wider context two words recur—"taken" and "left."

The primary meaning of the word “taken” (Strong’s #3880) is “to take to, to take with one’s self, to join to one’s self” (Thayer’s Lexicon).

The primary meaning of the word “left” (Strong’s #863) is “to let go, to send away, to leave, to leave remaining” (Thayer’s Lexicon)

- e. Are any unique words used in the passage?

There are no unique words in this passage. A unique word is an unexpected word, a word that is used outside of its normal context or a word that is rarely used in biblical literature.

- f. What persons are mentioned in the passage?

No specific people are mentioned only two unidentified men.

- g. What are the places mentioned in the passage?

No specific city or place is mentioned in this verse, only a field that is being planted, cultivated or harvested.

- h. What events are mentioned in the passage?

No specific event or place is mentioned in this verse; however, in the context this incident has some relationship to the flood of Noah (See verses 36-39).

- i. What objects are mentioned in the passage?

There are no objects mentioned in this verse.

- j. Are there any cultural, ceremonial, geographic or historical issues in the passage?

There may be some historical and cultural practices alluded to in this verse. In the Roman domination of the world, people were familiar with the idea of some taken and others left. It was Rome’s custom that when it conquered or disciplined a people they would take some people and leave some people. They would often take the rebellious, the educated and the powerful into captivity, slavery or death. They would leave much of the population in the land and establish Roman rule over them within their own natural borders.

2. The Passage

- a. How does the text relate to the surrounding verses?

This verse is inseparably tied to the surrounding verses and cannot be understood without them.

- b. Which verses before and after make up the immediate context?

The immediate context of this verse is verse 36-44 of the same chapter.

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

- c. What is the wider context of this verse?

The wider context of this verse goes all the way back to verse 1 of the same chapter where Jesus leaves the temple area in disgust and indicates prophetically that the temple will be destroyed (verse 1-2). The context actually extends through all of chapter 25. All of these verses are part of the same dialogue.

On the basis of Jesus’ comment, the disciples asked Jesus three questions (vs. 3).

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

In this verse they asked about three things:

- When will these things be (Most likely a reference to the destruction of the temple)?
- What will be the signs associated with the Second Coming?
- What will be the signs or marks of the end times or the end of the age?

The rest of this chapter together with the subsequent chapter is Jesus’ answer to these questions. Jesus focused on the signs of His coming and the end of the age. Therefore we could say that this material is eschatological in nature. In this chapter...

- He indicated that the end times would be times of great deception through a proliferation of false ministries, doctrines and signs and wonders (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 23-24).

- He indicated that there will be wars and rumors of war with nations rising up against nations (Mt. 24:6-7).
- He indicated that there will be natural disasters including famines, earthquakes, widespread and unusual diseases (Mt. 24:7).
- He indicated that there will be a general and widespread persecution against Christians leading to the torture, death and even the apostasy of some (Mt. 24:9-10).
- He indicated that the spiritual world climate will be negative with lawlessness abounding and the love of many growing cold (Mt. 24:12-13).
- He indicated that the spiritual climate among the people of God would be positive in that the Gospel would go forth powerfully (Mt. 24:14).
- He indicated certain things about the time of His return. The time would be cut short (Mt. 24:22); when He came He would come quickly (Mt. 24:27); and when He came it would catch people by surprise (Mt. 24:36-44, 50).
- He indicated that when He came back there would be signs in the heavens (Mt. 24:29), He would return in the clouds with power and great glory (Mt. 24:30) and He would return at the sound of a trumpet (Mt. 24:31).
- He indicated that His return would be mourned by those who rejected Him (Mt. 24:30).
- He indicated that there would be a gathering together of the elect and a judgment on the wicked (Mt. 24:31; 50-51).
- He indicated how people must anticipate His return, that they should guard against deception (Mt. 24:4), be ready at all times (Mt. 24:44) and be watchful in prayer (Mt. 24:42).

d. How do the surrounding verses help me understand my text?

The surrounding verses make it clear that Jesus is using this statement to increase our personal readiness relative to His return.

3. The Book

a. Who is the author of the book?

This book was written by Matthew, one of the twelve disciples. He was a tax collector when Jesus called him and would have been considered a Roman collaborator.

- b. When was this book written?

While the date of the writing is not certain, most scholars place the date of the book somewhere between 50-69 A.D. It is clear that he wrote this book before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

- c. What is the purpose and message of the book?

The Gospel of Matthew was clearly written for the Jewish reader. The purpose of the Gospel of Matthew seems to be to substantiate the fact that Jesus was indeed the Messiah for whom the Jews were waiting. He seeks to show that the coming Messiah was coming to reign over a spiritual kingdom and not a natural kingdom.

- d. How does the passage fit into the outline and development of the book?

This passage is toward the end of Matthew's Gospel after Jesus has experienced much rejection by those to whom He came. His crucifixion was imminent and so was His ascension into heaven. As Jesus approached the end of His ministry he seemed to focus on the things that would prepare His disciples for His departure and His subsequent return at the end of the age.

B. The Comparative Mention Principle

1. Are there other parallel passages in other books that are similar in message or structure?

Yes. There is another passage in Luke that reflects directly on this passage. Luke 17:22-37 deals with the same general theme (the Second Coming) and uses a similar illustration.

Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. 24 For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31 In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose

it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 34 I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35 Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36 Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.” 37 And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

2. Is the meaning I am giving the passage consistent with or contradictory to things said in other books in that testament?

C. The Progressive Mention and Complete Mention Principle

Are there other references in both Old and New Testament that relate to this verse? Yes!

1. There are other cross references from the Old Testament that assist in understanding.
 - Genesis 6-9 – The Days of Noah
 - Genesis 18-19 – The Days of Lot
2. There are Second Coming passages in the New Testament that assist in understanding.

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. I Thessalonians 4:13-18

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. II Peter 3:10-13

D. The Covenantal Principle

Since Jesus is dealing with the time of the end, the primary covenant in play is the New Covenant.

E. The Ethnic Division Principle

Jesus is speaking to the Jewish people; however, the context makes it clear that all people on the earth are represented in His comments.

F. The Chronometrical Principle

The passage in which this verse is found is eschatological in nature. The key chronometrical language in the passage is found in the questions asked by the disciples regarding the future particularly the end times. In addition, all of Jesus' answers reflect events that will take place in the future, most of which will immediately precede His Second Coming.

G. The Breach Principle

The breach principle does not come into play in this passage.

H. The Christocentric Principle

Christ is the central theme of this portion of Scripture because it deals with His purpose, His return and His ultimate judgment of mankind.

I. The Moral Principle

The focus of the moral principle would be the application to the present. In this case the emphasis would be on what it takes to be ready for the return of Christ so that you can be on the correct side of the one taken or the one left.

A careful study of the context and the parallel verses tell us that in order to be on the positive side of this experience the believer needs to be prepared. The believer is prepared in the following ways.

1. The believer must watch out for deception (Mt. 24:4).
 - a. The believer must not go after those who say "Christ is in the desert" (Mt. 24:23-26).
 - b. The believer must not be misled by signs and wonders (Mt. 24:11, 24 Compare: Mt. 7:15).
 - c. The believer must be sober and alert and avoid spiritual drowsiness (I Th. 5:3-8).

For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We

are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

2. The believer must not allow fear to come in when natural signs begin to unfold (Mt. 24:6; Luke 21:26-28).

And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Matthew 24:6

3. The believer must keep his or her behavior excellent among the heathen as a testimony (I Pet. 2:11-12).

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

J. Symbolic Language

There is no question that Jesus is simply using a natural illustration of two individuals who are just going on with the normal affairs of their work life. This is confirmed by the other illustration of two women grinding at the mill. As such the passage needs to be taken literally.

K. Figures of Speech

There are no figures of speech in this passage.

L. Conclusions

What do I conclude about the passage?

1. The two people represent two classes of people that will be living on the earth when Jesus comes back.
 - a. There will be those who are unprepared for Christ's coming.
 - They are living their lives oblivious to spiritual things (Mt. 38-39).
 - They are evil servants who live for themselves and inflict injury on others (Mt. 24:48-51).
 - They are foolish ones who are asleep spiritually (Mt. 25:1-13).
 - They are unfaithful and unjust in the stewardship (Mt. 35:14-30).
 - b. There will be those who are prepared for Christ's coming (Refer to the Moral Principle above).
2. The person that was "taken" in Jesus story is most likely the unprepared one.

- a. Who was taken in relationship to the days of Noah? Was it not the people that were eating and drinking?

So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive. Genesis 7:23

- b. Who was taken in the days of Lot? Was it not the people of Sodom including some of Lot's household that were living in sin?

In Jesus parable of the sower, the tares were bundled together and burned before the wheat was harvested (Mt. 13:24-30).

3. The person that was "left" in Jesus story is most likely the prepared one.
 - a. Who was left or remained alive on the earth after the flood of Noah?
 - b. Who was left after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?
4. This verse has often been used to support the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture. After this careful study, one has to ask the question, "Does it really support the idea of the righteous being taken out while the unrighteous remain?"

Some holding a pre-tribulation view see the one taken in the rapture, while the other is left behind.

The post-tribulation view does not equate these verses with the rapture, but with the separation of believers and unbelievers at the time of the judgment. In this view God takes the wicked in judgment leaving the righteous to enjoy the eternal kingdom or the 1000 year millennium.

II. How do we apply the truths found in the Scriptures to our lives?

Every single verse in the Bible has been given to us by God for our learning and every verse is, therefore "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible is not to be seen as a textbook, but a guidebook to lead us to a greater knowledge of God and to keep us true to the call that has been set before us.

As we study the Bible we will often be able to apply what we discover in a variety of ways. Here are four principle ways that we can apply the truth of God's Word to our lives.

A. The Word of God can be applied literally.

Much of the Bible needs little or no interpretation. Much of Jesus teaching on loving our neighbor, serving others and forsaking all to follow the Lord is very clear and can be immediately applied to our life. The same is true of the Epistles and much of the rest of the Bible. The key here is to have a heart of obedience to the Lord. If we do not, we will use hermeneutics to try to reason our way out of clearly revealed truth.

God's word is practical and applicable to our lives as soon as we read it. This means we must be hearers and doers of the Word.

B. The Word of God can be applied in principle.

Some Scriptures are very tied to the historical issues of culture, geography and customs of biblical times. Many of these Scriptures cannot be applied directly, but must be studied to determine the divine principle that is in play. We may not promote the hair styles alluded to by Paul to the Corinthians, but it is essential that we understand what he meant in his culture and take the eternal principle from our study and apply it to our lives.

C. The Word of God can be applied prophetically.

Paul seems to imply that all of that which has been recorded has a special prophetic significance to those who are living in the end times (I Cor. 10:11). Looking at the Scripture prophetically is looking at it in light of God's Eternal Purpose and how we fit into it in our day. This is especially true of the prophetic books of the Bible. Jesus is coming after a prepared bride who has made herself ready by taking the admonitions of the Word of God and understanding the times and seasons of the Lord.

D. The Word of God can be applied devotionally.

The Bible is a living book. While it is important that we operate within the context of proper principles of interpretation, God will often speak to you in ways from the Word of God that will stretch that interpretation. This is not the type of application that is preached to others, but it is application based on how God has spoken to you as an individual from His Word. This application of the Word cannot be seen as interpretation. True interpretation of the Word will apply to all people of all time. However, this is a very legitimate way to read the word for personal growth and enrichment.