

# **A HEART TO KNOW THE WORD**

**HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE BEYOND THE BASICS**

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DO NOT WRITE IN THIS BOOK!**



# **A HEART TO KNOW THE WORD**

**HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE BEYOND THE BASICS**

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# INFORMATION FOR USING THIS BOOK AS A COURSE

## INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL TOOLS AND RESEARCH

This text has been set up as an introduction to the study of the Bible, biblical tools, and research methods. It is designed to take you beyond the basics and to introduce you to the proper reading, interpreting, and studying of the Bible so that you may know God clearly through His Word. This course is inductive so you will begin to interpret and present your findings. You will be introduced to the tools and terms which are normally the private domain of Biblical scholars.

### Objectives of the Course

- To know God better through an in-depth reading of His Word.
- To learn the Greek & Hebrew alphabets in order to use Biblical language tools. These languages will be used extensively throughout many classes in this program.
- To learn to use Greek and Hebrew dictionaries, lexicons, concordances, and more.
- To learn to use Bible software programs (at select institutes)

### Required Texts

- Bible (New American Standard or New King James Version)
- *A Heart to Know the Word Workbook*
- *Englishman's Greek Concordance*
- *Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*

### Recommended Resources

- *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (or a Bible dictionary of your choice)
- *Strong's Concordance* (or a Bible concordance of your choice)
- Laptop computer (preferably MacBook or MacBook Pro) if in USA (optional)
- Computer software (if assigned), such as On-Line Bible (optional)  
(if using On-Line Bible download from: <http://www.onlinebible.net>)

### Grading

Grades will be based on your timely submission of written work and verse memorization.

### Abbreviations

You will need to know the following abbreviations in order to complete your assignments:

<i>cf.</i>	<i>compare or confer (e.g. "cf. John 3:16" means see that reference)</i>
E	Englishmen's Concordance (Greek or Hebrew)
<i>e.g.</i>	<i>for example</i>
<i>ff</i>	<i>follow to the finish (e.g. "Read John 1:1ff." means read John 1 to the end)</i>
<i>i.e.</i>	<i>that is</i>
OLB	On-Line Bible (the computer software program)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
N.T.	New Testament
O.T.	Old Testament
N.B.	<i>Nota Bene means a good or important note.</i>

## INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL TOOLS AND RESEARCH

### Assignment Schedule

Many parts of your assignments are only found listed here and not in the body of the text. However, refer to each assigned section for further details and instructions. You must refer to the *Assignment Schedule* section to complete all that is required. Check off each assignment as it is completed. (This may need to be hand copied first in some locations. See Proctor for details.)

### SECTION 1      *Language, Terminology & Tools*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 1

#### Assignments Due

- Introduction
- OLB – On-Line Bible basics (or other Bible software if applicable)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 2      *Topic: Greek New Testament*

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Memorize the books of the Bible.
- ☐ Memorize the Greek alphabet.
- ☐ Practice Reading Greek
- ☐ Greek concordance study
- ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least 10 times a day for five days)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 3      *Topic: Hebrew Old Testament*

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Memorize the Hebrew alphabet.
  - ☐ Practice Reading Hebrew
  - ☐ Hebrew concordance study
  - ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least 10 times a day for five days)
  - ☐ Memorize *II Timothy 2:7: Consider what I say, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things.*
- 

### SECTION 2      *How to Study the Old Testament*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 4

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the Old Testament: Introduction, Unit 1, & A Study of Genesis 1 and 2*
- ☐ Word Study – Study the Hebrew and Greek word for *glory* using OLB, E, or Strong's to find the Hebrew and Greek roots and compare the different translations. Submit a brief reflection on your findings.
- ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day for five days).
- ☐ Memorize *John 5:39-40: You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are the ones witnessing of Me.*



## INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL TOOLS AND RESEARCH

### Assignment Schedule

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 5

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the Old Testament: Unit 2 & A Study of Psalm 40*
- ☐ Word Study – Study the word *oil* using E (Hebrew). Find the word, שמן (shamen), and its page number by looking it up in the back of E. You will then find 3 entries and שמנה (shemonah), which is the number 8 but also comes from this word. How does this affect your understanding of the meaning of the common Hebrew root for both these words? How does this affect your understanding of the Hebrew mindset? Submit a brief reflection.
- ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day for five days).
- ☐ Memorize any three verses out of *Psalm 40*.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 6

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the Old Testament: Unit 3 & A Study of Proverbs 5*
- ☐ Word Study – Find *Lucifer* in E (Hebrew) on p. 1576. On the same page find the words listed for *mad* (insane). Note that they are the same root word. What do you conclude? Submit a brief reflection.
- ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day...).
- ☐ Memorize *Acts 17:2-3*, which is literally: *As was Paul's custom, he went in to them and was reasoning with them out of the Scriptures . . . opening and inserting [παράτιθημι] Christ. . .*
- ☐ Memorize *Luke 24:27*: *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He [Jesus] expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 7

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the Old Testament: Unit 4*
- ☐ Word Study – Study the word for *goat*, אֵז (az), in E. Note the three entries of this word and its translations. In the Old Testament all sin offerings are goats. How does the word's meanings and the issue of sin come together to provide insight into sin/goat offerings? Submit a brief reflection.
- ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day...).
- ☐ Memorize *II Peter 3:15-16*: *And think of the long-suffering (delaying His coming) of our Lord as salvation (as our beloved brother Paul also has written to you according to the wisdom given to him (16) as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable pervert, as also they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction).*

## INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL TOOLS AND RESEARCH

### Assignment Schedule

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 8

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the Old Testament: A Study of Haggai*
  - ☐ Word Study – Study the word, לָבַב (lavav) in E on p. 630. What does the heart do? What describes it? What is in it? Submit a brief reflection.
  - ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day for five days).
  - ☐ Memorize the thirteen names of the tribes of Israel.
- 

### SECTION 3      *How to Study the New Testament*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 9

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the New Testament: Introduction & Chapter 1*
- ☐ Word Study – Study the word, βρεφός (brephos), in E on p. 111. Look up *II Timothy* 3:15 and explain when Timothy began to be taught the scriptures.
- ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least 5 times a day for five days).
- ☐ Memorize the names of the Apostles.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 10

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the New Testament: Chapter 2*
- ☐ Word Study – Study the word, παραβολή (parabolee), in E and define it using the verses listed.
- ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least once a day for five days).
- ☐ Memorize *Luke* 6:46.
- ☐ Memorize *Acts* 1:8.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 11

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the New Testament: Chapter 3*
- ☐ Word Study – Study the word, ποιμήν (poimeen), in E on p. 640. Note the four words with the root ποιμ\_\_\_\_. Read them and define what a shepherd does.
- ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least once a day...).
- ☐ Memorize *Matthew* 22:29.
- ☐ Memorize *Romans* 3:19-20.

## INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL TOOLS AND RESEARCH

### Assignment Schedule

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 12

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read and complete the written work for *How to Study the New Testament: Chapter 4*.
  - ☐ Word Study – Study the word, παντακρατωρ (pantakratōr), which often refers to God. It comes from two words: παν (pan) meaning *all* and κρατεω (krateō). After looking at the listings for κρατεω (krateō) in E (p. 431-432) do your best to define παντακρατωρ (pantakratōr).
  - ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least once a day for five days).
  - ☐ Memorize three verses of your own choosing.
- 

## SECTION 4      *Putting It All Together (3 Studies)*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 13      *Study 1: Discipline That Heals*

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read *Matthew 18, I Corinthians 5, I Timothy 5, Titus 3*.
- ☐ Memorize *Luke 6:46, Romans 3:19-20, I Timothy 5:19-20*.
- ☐ Complete the written work for *Study 1*.
- ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day...).
- ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least once a day...).

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 14      *Study 2: Jonah*

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read *Jonah*.
- ☐ Memorize three verses that stand out to you in the book of *Jonah*.
- ☐ Complete the written work for *Study 2*.
- ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day...).
- ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least once a day...).

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Week 15      *Study 3: A View of the Virgin Birth & Strong Drink*

#### Assignments Due

- ☐ Read what is necessary to complete the written work for the *Study of the Virgin Birth*.
- ☐ Read what is necessary to complete the written work for the *Study of the Strong Drink*.
- ☐ Write out the Hebrew alphabet (at least once a day...).
- ☐ Write out the Greek alphabet (at least once a day...).
- ☐ Memorize *Isaiah 7:14*.
- ☐ Memorize *Ezra 7:10*.
- ☐ Return *A Heart to Know the Word* to the Proctor.



# **SECTION 1**

## **Language, Tools, & Terminology**

In this section, you will learn the Greek and Hebrew alphabets. This will enable you to begin using the tools required for a sharper reading and interpretation of the scriptures. Upon completion of this section, you will be able to use Greek and Hebrew concordances, dictionaries, and lexicons. You will also do basic Greek and Hebrew word studies.



# ASSIGNMENT 1

## NEW TESTAMENT GREEK

In this assignment, you will learn the Greek alphabet and how to pronounce Greek words. Do not panic. This is all the Greek you are required to learn. Knowing the Greek and Hebrew alphabets will be very helpful to you in many of the classes used in this program and in your own personal Bible study. You may want to make flashcards of the alphabet and the sounds each letter makes, so that you can work on learning them throughout the week.

- 1. Memorize the Names of the Books of the Old and New Testament in order.**  
Use the table of contents in your Bible.
- 2. Memorize the Greek Alphabet**  
Sample practice sheets are provided for writing the alphabet. While you cannot write on them, use them as a guide for the format of your homework. Be sure that you say the name of each letter aloud as you write them. By the end of the week, you should be able to recite the order of the Greek alphabet as fast as you can your own alphabet. This will help you find words faster in lexicons or concordances, such as *Englishman's*.
- 3. Practice Reading the Greek**  
*John* 1:1-15 from the Greek New Testament is provided for you to practice reading.
- 4. Begin Using *Englishman's Greek Concordance***  
Practice your new skills by using them to do basic word studies.

## 2. THE GREEK ALPHABET

Most of the work you will be doing will require only the lower case letters, not the upper case; however, note (not memorize) the basic differences between lower and upper case letters. Be sure to pronounce the words in the *English Equivalents* column<sup>1</sup> of the chart below.

LETTER NAME	LOWER CASE	UPPER CASE	TRANSLIT -ERATION	PRONUNCIATION	ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS
Alpha	α	A	a	ă as in f <u>a</u> ther	αλλ — all
Beta	β	B	b	b as in <u>b</u> eg	βαλλ — ball
Gamma	γ	Γ	g *	g as in <u>g</u> et	γ <u>e</u> τ — get
Delta	δ	Δ	d	d as in <u>d</u> og	δ <u>e</u> ν — den
Epsilōn	ε	E	e	ě as in <u>b</u> et	ε <u>s</u> εν <u>ς</u> — essence
Zeta	ζ	Z	z	z or ds as in lea <u>ds</u>	ζ <u>υ</u> — zoo
Eta	η	H	ey	ā or e as in the <u>y</u>	η <u>τ</u> — ate
Theta	θ	Θ	th	th as in <u>th</u> rew	θ <u>i</u> ν <u>κ</u> — think
Iōta	ι	I	i	ē or i as in mach <u>i</u> ne	σ <u>i</u> ν — seen
Kappa	κ	K	k	k as in <u>k</u> it	κ <u>i</u> π — keep
Lambda	λ	Λ	l	l as in <u>l</u> ook	λ <u>η</u> τ — late
Mu	μ	M	m	m as in <u>m</u> an	μ <u>υ</u> — moo
Nu	ν	N	n	n as in <u>n</u> ow	ν <u>υ</u> — new
Xi	ξ	Ξ	x	x or ks as in break <u>s</u>	ξ <u>σ</u> ι <u>δ</u> — exceed
Ōmicrōn	ο	O	o	ō as in h <u>o</u> t	ο <u>τ</u> — ought
Pi	π	Π	p	p as in <u>p</u> in	π <u>αι</u> — pie**
Rhō	ρ	P	r	r as in <u>r</u> un	ρ <u>ω</u> — row
Sigma	σ (final ς)***	Σ	s	s as in <u>s</u> it	σ <u>i</u> τ <u>ς</u> — seats
Tau	τ	T	t	t as in <u>t</u> op	τ <u>ω</u> — tow
Upsilōn	υ	Υ	u	ū as in t <u>u</u> tu	υ <u>ψ</u> — oops
Phi	φ	Φ	ph	ph as in <u>ph</u> one	φ <u>λ</u> υ <u>τ</u> — flute
Chi	χ	X	ch	ch as in <u>k</u> it	χ <u>ω</u> ρ <u>υ</u> ς — chorus
Psi	ψ	Ψ	ps	ps as in l <u>ip</u> s	ψ <u>τ</u> — psst
Ōmega	ω	Ω	oh	ō as in g <u>o</u>	ω β <u>ο</u> i — oh boy**

\* Two gammas (“γγ”) create a “ng” sound as in angel.

\*\* See the *Diphthong* section in the *Pronunciation Guide* on the following page.

\*\*\* In the middle of the word a “σ” is used. At the end, a final “ς” is used (e.g. αποστολος).

<sup>1</sup> The *English Equivalents* column does not contain Greek words, just English words spelled with Greek letters to aid in pronunciation.



## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Just like English, Greek has vowels and consonants, as you've already seen with the alphabet. The following charts and guidelines will help you become fluent in speaking Greek aloud.

### BEYOND BASIC VOWELS—DIPHTHONGS

Like many English vowels, Greek vowels have different sounds when they are put together. These are called *diphthongs*.

DIPHTHONG	SOUNDS LIKE...
αι (alpha + iota)	<u>a</u> isle
αυ (alpha + upsilon)	<u>a</u> utomobile
ει (epsilon + iota)	<u>e</u> ight
ευ (epsilon + upsilon)	<u>n</u> euter
ηυ (eta + upsilon)	<u>n</u> euter
οι (omicron + iota)	<u>o</u> il
υι (upsilon + iota)	<u>s</u> uite
ου (omicron + upsilon)	<u>s</u> oup

### PUNCTUATION

Greek pronunciation is slightly different from what you're used to in English. The comma (,) and period (.) are the same. You'll find that the colon or semi-colon, (: or ;), however, is a point above the line in Greek (˙). The question mark in Greek is the English semi-colon (;).

Keep in mind these punctuation marks are not original Greek.

Originally, there was no punctuation, no line breaks, and more often than not, no spacing between words. Punctuation, line breaks, chapters, verse numberings, etcetera, were all added later by editors throughout the years to allow for ease of reading and understanding.

This is important to remember when looking at translations. You may find you don't agree with where a comma is placed and see a phrase or verse in a different light.

ENGLISH	GREEK
,	,
.	.
: or ;	˙
?	;

### BREATHING MARKS

There are two types of breathing marks in Greek: *rough* (ϱ) and *smooth* (ρ). Typically, these marks occur over Greek words that start with a vowel.

The rough breathing mark essentially adds an “h” sound to the beginning of the word.

Breathing marks can change the meaning of a word, too.

In the above chart, the roughly pronounced ἔν is the preposition which usually means *in*, and the smoothly pronounced ἐν is a form of the word εἶς, which means *one*.

ROUGH	SMOOTH
ἔν (hĕn)	ἐν (ĕn)

Breathing marks usually mark vowels, but there is one exception. The rho consonant (ρ) also has an “h” sound added to it when it occurs at the beginning of a word (e.g. ῥομφαία = *rhōmphaia*).

## HOW TO WRITE GREEK LETTERS

Use the diagrams below as a guide for writing your own letters using the sample pages as a guide. The numbers mark the suggested order of your strokes (if there is more than one). If it is too difficult, trace the shape of each letter first.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

### 3. READING GREEK USING *JOHN 1:1-15*

#### TRANSLITERATION

Below is the transliteration of *John 1:1-15* from the Greek text into Roman characters. This will help you pronounce the Greek text correctly. Pretend the transliteration is made of English words, and do your best to pronounce them. Read looking back and forth between the transliteration and the original Greek. Continue this procedure until you can pronounce the Greek text without referring to the transliteration.

1. En arkey eyn ho logos, kai ho logos eyn pros ton theon, kai theos eyn ho logos.
2. houtos eyn en arke pros ton theon.
3. panta di autou egeneto, kai kohris aurou egeneto oude en. ho gegonen
4. en autoh zohey eyn, kai hey zohey eyn to phohs tohn anthropohn.
5. kai to phohs en tey skotia phainey, kai hey skotia auto ou katelaben.
6. Egeneto anthropos, apostalmenos para theou, onoma autoh Yohanneys.
7. houtos eylthen eys marturian hina martureysey peri tou phohtos, hina pantes pisteusohsin di autou.
8. ouk eyn ekeynos to phohs all hina martureysey peri tou phohtos.
9. Eyn to phohs to aleythinon, ho phohtizey panta anthropon, erkomenon eys ton kosmon.
10. en toh kosmoh eyn kai ho kosmos di autou egeneto kai ho kosmos auton ouk egnoh.
11. eys ta idia eylthen kai hoi idioi auton ou parelabon.
12. hosoi de elabon auton edohken autois exousian tekna theou genesthai, tois pisteuousin eys to onoma autou.
13. hoi ouk ex haimatohn oude ek theleymatos sarkos oude ek theleymatos andros all ek theou egeneytheysan.
14. kai ho logos sarx egeneto kai eskeynohsen en heymen kai etheasametha teyn doxan autou doxan hohs monogenous para patros, pleyreys karitos kai aleytheyas.
15. Yohanneys marturey peri autou kai kekragen legohn houtos eyn hon eypon Ho opisoh mou erkomenos emprosthen mou gegonen hoti prohtos mou eyn

## GREEK TEXT

Below is the Greek text of *John* 1:1-15. Practice reading these verses until you are reading at a comfortable pace. Don't worry if you are still struggling a little. This takes more than a week's time to completely master. Feel free to refer back to this page or the *Greek Alphabet* chart as needed.

1. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λογος, και ὁ λογος ἦν προς τον θεον, και θεος ἦν ὁ λογος.
2. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ προς τον θεον.
3. παντα δι αὐτου ἐγενετο, και χωρις αὐτου ἐγενετο οὐδε ἐν. ὁ γεγονεν
4. ἐν αὐτῳ ζωη ἦν, και ἡ ζωη ἦν το φως των ανθρωπων·
5. και το φως ἐν τη σκοτια φαινει, και ἡ σκοτια αὐτο οὐ κατελαβεν.
6. Ἐγενετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμενος παρα θεου, ὄνομα αὐτῳ Ἰωαννης·
7. οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυριαν ἵνα μαρτυρησῃ περι του φωτος, ἵνα παντες πιστευσωσιν δι αὐτου.
8. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεινος το φως, ἀλλ ἵνα μαρτυρησῃ περι του φωτος.
9. Ἦν το φως το ἀληθινον, ὁ φωτιζει παντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχομενον εἰς τον κοσμον.
10. ἐν τῳ κοσμῳ ἦν, και ὁ κοσμος δι αὐτου ἐγενετο, και ὁ κοσμος αὐτον οὐκ ἐγνω.
11. εἰς τα ἴδια ἦλθεν, και οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτον οὐ παρελαβον.
12. ὅσοι δε ἐλαβον αὐτον ἐδωκεν αὐτοις ἐξουσιαν τεκνα θεου γενεσθαι, τοις πιστευουσιν εἰς το ὄνομα αὐτου,
13. οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδε ἐκ θεληματος σαρκος οὐδε ἐκ θεληματος ἀνδρος ἀλλ ἐκ θεου ἐγεννηθησαν.
14. Και ὁ λογος σαρξ ἐγενετο και ἐσκηνωσεν ἐν ἡμιν και ἐθεασαμεθα την δοξαν αὐτου, δοξαν ὡς μονογενους παρα πατρος, πληρης χαριτος και αληθειας.
15. Ἰωαννης μαρτυρει περι αὐτου και κεκραγεν λεγων, Οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον, Ὁ ὀπισω μου ἐρχομενος ἐμπροσθεν μου γεγονεν, ὅτι πρωτος μου ἦν.

#### 4. USE *ENGLISHMAN'S GREEK CONCORDANCE*

*Englishman's Greek Concordance* is fairly easy to use; you simply look up the Greek word in the same way you would use a dictionary. The listings are in Greek alphabetical order. Since it only lists the basic word, variant forms will not appear. In the back of the book, beginning on p. 873, you can look up an English word and at once see every Greek word that is translated into the English term.

Do a word study reading the different contexts provided in *Englishman's Concordance* for the following words. Make any notes you think are significant.

διαβολος Using *Englishman's Concordance* (p. 143) read through the listing.

List the ways it is translated.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is the primary characteristic of a devil?

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αγγελος Using *Englishman's Concordance* (p. 5-6) read through the listing.

List the ways it is translated.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Combining the meanings, what is an angel, or what does an angel do?

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χαρις

List the ways that *Englishman's* (p. 749) records for the common word *grace*.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Putting these together, what describes a man/woman who is experiencing the grace of God?

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### **Get familiar with Bible software (optional)**

If this is assigned in your area, choose either *On-Line Bible* (OLB) or other Bible software and spend some time this week just using your Bible software to get familiar with it. Look up several passages and words to see what you can find on your own.

## Going Further with Greek

This section is not an assignment. It is just for fun to show you some gems that may whet your appetite to continue studying the language.

### *Worship*

The common word for *worship* in the New Testament is προσκυνεω (proskuneō). The word literally means *to posture as a dog*. The following is from *Matthew 15:22-25*:

- 22 And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."  
23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us."  
24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."  
25 But she came and began to bow down [προσκυνεω, worship] before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"  
26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."  
27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."  
28 Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

The Canaanite woman called Jesus *Son of David*, a title that has specific promises attached to it for the Jews. In verse 25, she *worshiped* or postured herself as a dog. Jesus says that the children's food is not given to a dog, or that that posture (of a dog) will not get her anything.

She would have to stop using the term *Son of David*, with its promises that do not apply to her. When she simply asked for mercy she got a response.

### *Temple*

There are two distinct words used for *temple* in the New Testament:

1. Ναός (naos) describes the main structure that we call the holy place and the holy of holies. Only the priests went into here.
2. Ἱερόν (heeron) describes the temple complex, that is, all the surrounding buildings. Jesus taught in the Ἱερόν, but never once approached the ναός. Remember that He was not of the tribe of the Levites or of the family of Aaron. He was, in fact, not qualified to enter; however, Judas, who betrayed Jesus, did go into the ναός and threw the 30 pieces of silver inside. Judas was also not qualified to enter.



# ASSIGNMENT 2

## OLD TESTAMENT HEBREW

In this assignment, you will learn the Hebrew alphabet and how to pronounce Hebrew words. It is a bit difficult but you will get through it. This is all the Hebrew you will need to learn in this course, which will serve you well in many of the other courses you will be taking in this program.

### 1. Memorize the Hebrew Alphabet

Sample practice sheets are provided for writing the alphabet. While you cannot write on them, use them as a guide for the format of your homework. You must create your own practice sheet for the vowel system. Be sure that you say the name of each letter aloud as you write them. By the end of the week, you should be able to recite the order of the Hebrew alphabet as fast as you can your own alphabet. This will help you find words faster in lexicons or concordances, such as *Englishman's*.

### 2. Practicing Reading the Hebrew

*Psalm 111 & 112* from the Hebrew Old Testament are provided for you to practice reading.

### 3. Begin Using *Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*

Practice your new skills by using them to do basic word studies.

### 4. Memorize *II Timothy 2:7*

*Consider what I say, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things.*

## 1. THE HEBREW ALPHABET

Below are the Hebrew consonants. Note that there is only one case (rather than a separate upper and lower case) and some letters have final forms, which operate just like the Greek alphabet's sigma (σ, ς). Keep in mind, however, that Hebrew reads from right to left, so the end of the word is on the far left. Be sure to pronounce the words in the *English Equivalents* column\*\*.

LETTER NAME	LOWER CASE	TRANSLITERATION	PRONUNCIATION	ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS
Aleph	א	none	no sound (use the vowel)	אֵןא — none (like the silent “e”)
Beth	ב	b or v*	b as in <u>b</u> oy (sometimes v as in <u>v</u> an)	בֵּגב — beg בֶּגב — veggie
Gimel	ג	g*	g as in <u>g</u> oat	גֵּבג — gab
Daleth	ד	d*	d as in <u>d</u> ay	דֵּי — day
He (Hā)	ה	h	h as in <u>h</u> elp	הֵד — had
Vav	ו	v	v as in <u>v</u> alley	וֵל — veil
Zayin (Za-yin)	ז	z	z as in <u>z</u> ebra	זֵבֶרז — zebra
Het (Hāt)	ח	ch	ch as in <u>l</u> ock	לֶח — lock
Tet (Tāth)	ט	t	t as in <u>t</u> ip	תֵּפ — top
Yod (Yōd)	י	y	y as in <u>y</u> es	יֵל — yell
Kaf (Kaph)	כ (final ך)	k*	k as in <u>k</u> it	כֵּךכ — kick
Lamed	ל	l	l as in <u>l</u> ad	לֶל — law
Mem (Mām)	מ (final ם)	m	m as in <u>m</u> an	מֵם — mom
Nun (Nūn)	נ (final ן)	n	n as in <u>n</u> ow	נֵן — noon
Samek	ס	s	s as in <u>s</u> ay	סֵן — soon
Ayin (A-yin)	ע	none	no sound (use the vowel)	עֵנע — done (like the silent “e”)
Pe (Pā)	פ (final ף)	f*	f or ph as in <u>p</u> hone	פֵּן — phone
Sade (Tsadā)	צ (final ץ)	ts	ts as in <u>l</u> ots	לֶץ — lets
Qof (Kōph)	ק	k	k as in <u>k</u> it	קֵן — kin
Res (Rāsh)	ר	r	r as in <u>r</u> un	רֵן — rain
Sin (Sēn)	ש	s	s as in <u>s</u> in	שֵּן — sin
Shin (Shēn)	שׁ	sh	sh as in <u>sh</u> e	שֵׁן — ship
Tof (Tav)	ת	th*	th as in <u>th</u> rew	תֵּןת — think

\* See the footnote in the *Transliteration* section (p.18) which fully explains this letter's transliteration or pronunciation.

\*\* The *English Equivalents* column does not contain Hebrew words, just English words spelled with Hebrew letters to aid in pronunciation.

## THE “HEBREW” VOWELS

There are no vowels in Hebrew. Aramaic vowels were added years after the Jews had stopped speaking Hebrew to help new generations pronounce Hebrew. This section will aid in your pronunciation, but keep in mind that many dictionaries do not include these in their entries.

From the chart below, learn and memorize the sounds of the vowel points. The letter מ (mem) is provided for you to see what they look like with text. Aramaic vowels are more difficult to learn than Greek vowels simply due to the sheer number of choices and the variety of locations. Vowels are placed above, below, and between consonants.

### BASIC VOWELS

VOWEL CLASS	VOWEL NAME	VOWEL POINT	מ + VOWEL POINT	TRANSLITERATION	PRONUNCIATION
A	Qamets	ֿ	מֿ	a	ă as in f <u>a</u> ther
	Patach	ֿ	מֿ		
E	Tsere	ֿ	מֿ	ey	ā or e as in the <u>y</u>
	Segol	ֿ	מֿ	e	ě as in b <u>e</u> g
I	Hireq	ֿ	מֿ	i	i as in k <u>i</u> t
O	Holem	ֿ	מֿ	o	ō as in mo <u>o</u> n
U	Qibbūts	ֿ	מֿ	u	ū as in fl <u>u</u> te
	Sheva *	ֿ	מֿ	‘	uh as in <u>u</u> h <u>u</u> h

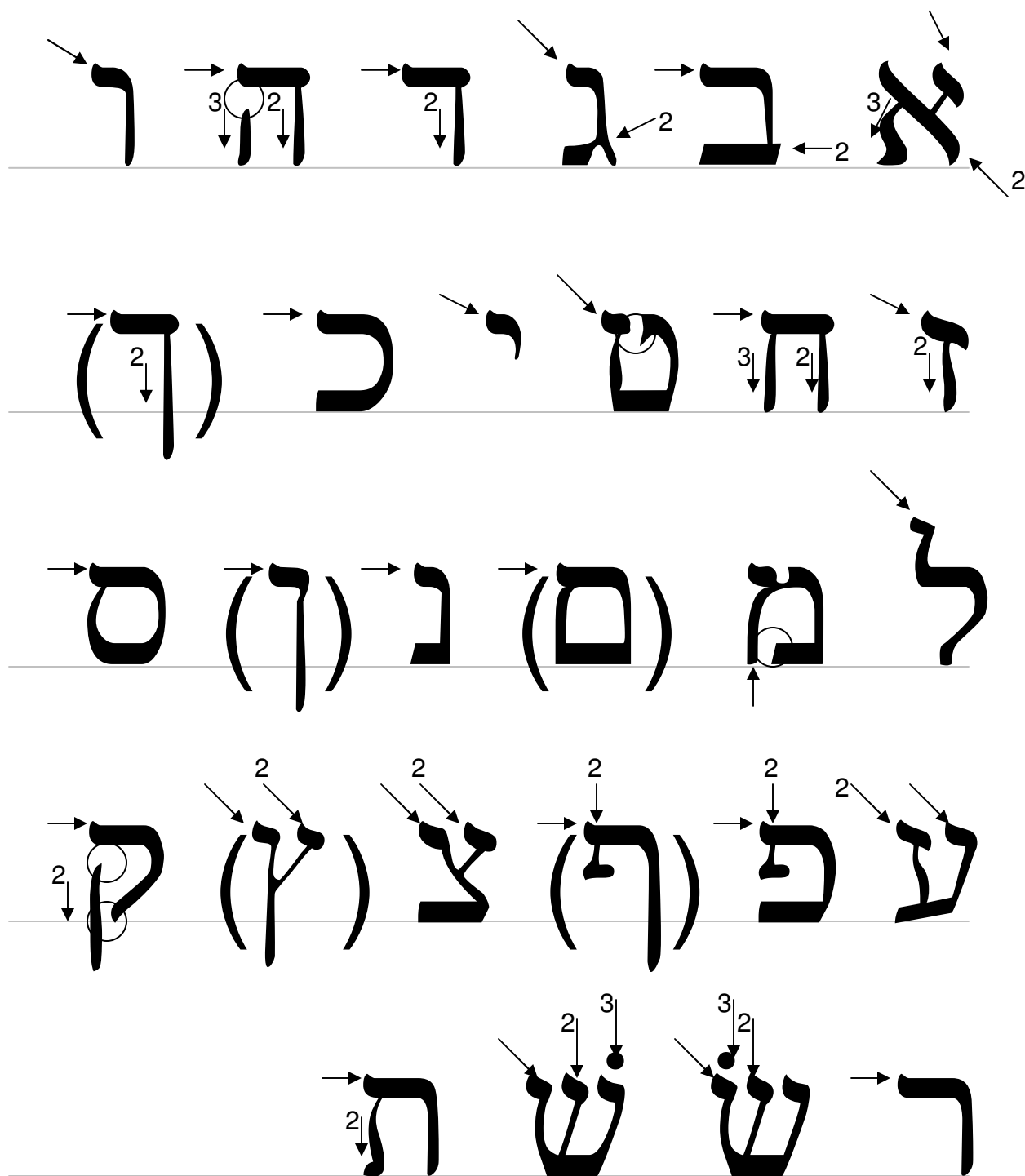
\*Sheva (ֿ) has special characteristics. It is a half-vowel and is often paired with other vowels (ie. ֿֿ, ֿֿֿ, ֿֿֿֿ). Sheva is the dominant vowel, however, so whenever you see sheva, whether it’s paired with another vowel or alone, it always makes an “uh” like sound.

The consonant that the vowel is paired with always comes first (ie. מֿ\* = ma) except in the case of yod (י) and vav (ו). These two consonants have a special relationship with a few vowels by becoming silent and make the vowel long.

VOWEL NAME	י OR ו + VOWEL POINT	TRANSLITERATION	PRONUNCIATION
Tsere-yod	יֿ	ey	ā or e as in the <u>y</u>
Hireq-yod	יֿ	ee	ē or i as in mach <u>i</u> ne
Holem-vav	וֿ	o	ō as in mo <u>o</u> n
Shureq	וֿ	u	ū as in fl <u>u</u> te

## HOW TO WRITE HEBREW LETTERS

Use the diagrams below as a guide for writing the Hebrew alphabet using the sample practice page as a guide. The numbers mark the suggested order of your strokes (if there is more than one). If it is too difficult, trace the shape of each letter first. The circled areas are important spaces that should be left open.



tav	shin	sin	resh	koph	tsade	pe	ayin	samek	nun	mem	lamed	kaph	yod	teth	cheth	zayin	vav	he	daleth	gimil	beth	aleph
ת	ש	שׁ	ר	ק	צ(ץ)	פ(ף)	ע	ס	נ(ן)	מ(ם)	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## 2. READING HEBREW USING *PSALM 111 & 112*

### TRANSLITERATION

Below is the transliteration of *Psalm 111* and *112* from the Hebrew text into Roman characters. This will help you pronounce the Hebrew text correctly. Pretend the transliteration is made of English words, and do your best to pronounce them. Read looking back and forth between the transliteration and the original Hebrew. Continue this procedure until you can pronounce (at a slow, comfortable pace) the Hebrew text without referring to the transliteration.

#### PSALM 112

- 1a** hal'lu yah  
**b** ash'rey\_eesh yarey eth\_y'hvah  
**c** b'mits'othaiv chapheyts m'od.  
**2a** gibor ba-arets yih'yeh zar'o  
**b** dor y'shareem y'vorak  
**3a** hon\_va-osher b'veytho  
**b** v'tsid'katho omedeth la-ad.  
**4a** zarach bachoshek or lai'shareem  
**b** chanun v'rachum v'tsadeek.  
**5a** tov\_eesh choneyn umal'veh  
**b** y'kal'keyl d'varaiv b'mish'pat.  
**6a** kee\_l'olam lo\_yimot  
**b** l'zeyker olam yih'yeh tsadeek.  
**7a** mish'muah ra-ah lo yeera  
**b** nakon libo batucha baihvah  
**8a** samuk libo lo yeera  
**b** ad 'sher\_yir'eh v'tsaraiv.  
**9a** pizar nathan la-ev'yoneem  
**b** tsid'katho omedeth la-ad  
**c** kar'no tarum b'kavod.  
**10a** rasha yir'eh v'ka'as  
**b** shinaiv yach'rok v'namas  
**c** ta'vath r'sha-eem toveyd

#### PSALM 111

- 1a** hal'lu yah  
**b** odeh y'hvah b'kal\_levav\*  
**c** b'sod y'shareem v'eydah.  
**2a** g'doleem ma'ashey y'hvah  
**b** d'rusheem l'kal\_cheph'tseyhem.  
**3a** hod\_v'hadar pa'lo  
**b** v'tsid'katho omedeth la-ad.  
**4a** zeyker asah l'niph'l'othaiv  
**b** chanun v'rachum y'hvah.  
**5a** tereph nathan leereyaiv  
**b** yiz'kor l'olam b'reetho.  
**6a** kocha ma'asaiv higeed l'amo  
**b** latheyth lahem nach'lath goyim.  
**7a** ma'sey yadaiv 'meth umish'pat  
**b** ne'maneem kal\_pikudaiv  
**8a** s'mukeem la-ad l'olam  
**b** 'suyim be'meth v'yashar  
**9a** p'duth shalach l'amo  
**b** tsiuah\_l'olam b'reetho  
**c** kadosh v'nora sh'mo.  
**10a** reysheeth chak'mah yir'ath y'hvah  
**b** seykel tov l'kal\_oseyhem  
**c** t'hilatho omedeth la-ad.

\* If you notice a discrepancy in the transliteration or pronunciation of the following six Hebrew letters: בגדכפת (which can be memorized with the mnemonic BeGad-KeFaT), this is due to a dot (the *dagesh-lene*) that changes the hardness of the pronunciation (ie. בּ = ph, ב = p). This only effects pronunciation and does not change the meaning of the words. The transliterations provided in the *Hebrew Alphabet* chart (p.14) are the most commonly used forms.

## HEBREW TEXT

Below is the Hebrew text of *Psalms* 111 and 112\*\*. Practice reading these verses until you are reading at a comfortable pace. Don't worry if you are still struggling a little. This takes more than a week's time to completely master. Feel free to refer back to this page or the *Hebrew Alphabet* chart as needed. Also, don't forget that Hebrew reads right to left.

PSALM 112	
הִלְלוּ יְהוָה	1a
אֲשֶׁר־אֵישׁ יִירָא אֶת־יְהוָה	b
בְּמַצּוֹתָיו חָפֵץ מְאֹד:	c
גִּבּוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוָה זִרְעוֹ	2a
דּוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְרָךְ:	b
הוֹן־וְעֹשֶׁר בְּבֵיתוֹ	3a
וְצִדְקָתוֹ עֲמֻדַת לְעַד:	b
זָרַח בַּחֲשֶׁךְ אֹר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	4a
חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם וְצַדִּיק:	b
טוֹב־אֵישׁ חֲנוּן וּמְלֹא	5a
יִכְלֹל דְּבָרָיו בְּמִשְׁפָּט:	b
כִּי־לְעוֹלָם לֹא־יִמּוּט	6a
לְזָכַר עוֹלָם יְהוָה צַדִּיק:	b
מִשְׁמוּעָה רָעָה לֹא יִירָא	7a
נָכוֹן לִבּוֹ בְּטַח בִּיהוָה:	b
סָמוּךְ לִבּוֹ לֹא יִירָא	8a
עַד אֲשֶׁר־יִרְאֶה בְּצָרָיו:	b
פָּזַר נָתַן לְאֲבִיּוֹנִים	9a
צִדְקָתוֹ עֲמֻדַת לְעַד	b
קָרְנוֹ תְרוּם בְּכַבֹּד:	c
רָשָׁע יִרְאֶה וְקִעַס	10a
שָׁנִיו יִחְרַק וְנָמַס	b
תֵּאֱבֹת רָשָׁעִים תֵּאֱבֹד:	c

PSALM 111	
הִלְלוּ יְהוָה	1a
אוֹדָה יְהוָה בְּכָל־לֵב	b
בְּסוֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַד:	c
גִּדְלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה	2a
דְּרוֹשִׁים לְכָל־חַפְצֵיהֶם:	b
הוֹדִיָּהּ דָּר פָּעִל	3a
וְצִדְקָתוֹ עֲמֻדַת לְעַד:	b
זָכַר עֲשֵׂה לְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו	4a
חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה:	b
טָרַף נָתַן לִירְאָיו	5a
יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ:	b
כַּחַּ מַּעֲשָׂיו הַגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ	6a
לָתֵת לָהֶם נִחְלַת גּוֹיִם:	b
מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט	7a
נֶאֱמָנִים כָּל־פְּקוּדָיו:	b
סְמוּכִים לְעַד לְעוֹלָם	8a
עֲשׂוּיִם בָּאֱמֶת וַיִּשָּׁר:	b
פְּדוּת שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ	9a
צִוְה־לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ	b
קְדוֹשׁ וְנוֹרָא שְׁמוֹ:	c
רֹאשִׁית חֲכָמָה יִרְאֵת יְהוָה	10a
שֶׁכֶל טוֹב לְכָל־עֲשִׂיהֶם	b
תִּהְיֶה לָהֶם עֲמֻדַת לְעַד:	c

\*\* Note that the lines (starting in 1b) are in the order of the Hebrew alphabet (א - ת). (שׁ and שׂ are usually treated as the same letter.) From the time that they were written, these psalms may have helped young Hebrews to learn their alphabet, as well as give everyone, then and since, a means to articulate thanks and praise to God!

### 3. USE *ENGLISHMAN'S HEBREW CONCORDANCE*

A concordance lists words in alphabetical order, so that you can find any and every place that a word occurs. Once you know the Hebrew alphabet, you can do the same with *Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*. However, unlike English, you must first find the root word since all occurrences are actually listed by roots.

In the back of *Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*, beginning on p. 1459, you will see an *English and Hebrew Index*. You can begin with the English word and go directly to the root of the Hebrew word (the page number is provided next to the word). Then you can go to the Concordance section.

Look up the Hebrew word *father* in the back of *Englishman's* (p. 1528). What is the Hebrew word and what page is given?

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Now using *Englishman's*, find the four entries listed as different words but with the same spelling. They all follow each other, so it is not that difficult. What are the translations? (Read only 3 or 4 lines of the first entry.)

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

Do you think these definitions are related in origin? \_\_\_\_\_

Try and define the word's source. What do you think the basic root idea is?

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#### **On-Line Bible (OLB) (optional)**

If assigned, spend some more time this week using OLB to familiarize yourself with some O.T. words.



## Going Further With Hebrew

When considering the Biblical use of numbers, the Hebrew words and their roots display and provide plenty of meaning. The Hebrew numbering system links the numbers 1-10, e.g. when we speak of 14, the Hebrew is always ten and four—*not* 2 sevens as some (wrongly) think. Note the root meanings listed below from simply using the Strong's Lexicon in the back of the concordance.

Below is the word, its root, and its root idea.

**Number 7** – oath to complete, full with nothing remaining, an oath or curse for not completing, whole, complete, full, etc.

07651. שבע (sheba) – primitive cardinal number; seven (as the sacred full one); also (adverbially) seven times; by implication, a week.

07650. שבע (shaba) – to be complete, to seven oneself, i.e. swear (as if by repeating a declaration seven times)—adjure, charge (by an oath, with an oath), feed to the full, take an oath, (cause to, make to) swear.

07649. שבע (sabea) – satiated (in a pleasant or disagreeable sense)—full (of), satisfied (with).

07648. שבע (soba) – satisfaction (of food or [figuratively] joy)—fill, full(-ness), satisfying, be satisfied.

07647. שבע (saba) – copiousness—abundance, plenteous(-ness, -ly).

07646. שבע (saba) or שבץ (sabea) – fill to satisfaction (literally or figuratively)—have enough, fill (full, self, with), be (to the) full (of), have plenty of, be satiate, satisfy (with), suffice, be weary of.

07620. שבווע (shabuwa) or שבץ (shabua) also (feminine) שבצה – literal, sevened, i.e. a week (specifically, of years)—seven, week.

07621. שבוועה (shebuwah) – properly, something sworn, i.e. an oath—curse, oath, sworn.

**Number 8** – fat, rich, etc.

08083. שמנה (shem-o-neh); or שמונה (shem-o-neh); feminine שמנה (shem-o-naw); or שמונה (shem-o-naw) – apparently from 08082 through the idea of plumpness; a cardinal number, eight (as if a surplus above the "perfect" seven); also (as ordinal) eighth.

08080. שמן (shaman) – to shine, i.e. (by analogy) be (causatively, make) oily or gross—become (make, wax) fat.

08081. שמן (shemen); from 08080 – grease, especially liquid (as from the olive, often perfumed); figuratively, richness—anoointing, fat (things), fruitful, oil(-ed), ointment, olive, + pine.

08082. שמן (shamen) – greasy, i.e. gross; figuratively, rich—fat, lusty, plenteous.

**Number 9 – searching**

08672. תשע (tesha) or (masculine) תשצה (tish'ah) – perhaps from the idea of a turn to the next or full number ten; nine.

08159. שעה (sha'ah) – a primitive root; to gaze at or about (properly, for help); by implication, to inspect, consider, compassionate, be nonplussed (as looking around in amazement) or bewildered—depart, be dim, be dismayed, look (away), regard, have respect, spare, turn.

**Number 10 – tithe, representative**

06235. עשר (eser); masculine of term עשרה (asarah) – ten (as an accumulation to the extent of the digits)—ten.

06237. עשר (asar) – to accumulate; to tithe, i.e. to take or give a tenth, give (take) the tenth, (have, take) tithe(-ing, -s).

06238. עשר (ashar) – to accumulate; chiefly (specifically) to grow (causatively, make) rich—be(-come, en-, make, make self, wax) rich, make [*I Kings* 22:48 marg].

06239. עשר (osher) – wealth, far [richer], riches.

Our wealth is in giving to God that which expresses—that all we have is a blessing from Him.

# **SECTION 2**

## **A HEART TO KNOW THE WORD How to Study the Old Testament**

In Section 2, you will learn to read the Old Testament. It is different from reading the New Testament. You will continue to do weekly word studies (see *Assignments & Schedule*) to improve your skills.



# UNIT 1

## UNDERSTANDING OLD TESTAMENT HISTORICAL-NARRATIVE LITERATURE



### FIRST STEPS IN OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Now we are ready to get down to work. The easiest Old Testament literature to work with is historical or narrative material, such as *Genesis*, *Joshua*, and *Ruth*. Let's learn some basic procedures for interpreting and applying these portions of the Old Testament. Do not be discouraged if you do not fully understand some of what follows. The questions in the study sections are designed to clarify and give you experience in using this material. The following are the suggested steps:

#### 1. SELECT A UNIT OF STUDY

The first phase of Bible study is to establish a unit of thought. The best place to begin is with the existing chapter divisions, but be alert to elements of an account that extend into the next chapter or precede the chapter that you have chosen. The chapter divisions are very ancient, being originally placed in the text for liturgical purposes to denote synagogue readings; thus, they may not always occur at the proper place from a purely literary standpoint. The chapter breaks, however, are a good place to begin an analysis of a text.

In some portions of the Old Testament, such as the Book of *Proverbs*, the chapter divisions are not at all helpful. Here the unit of thought may be a paragraph or even one verse. The important thing to note, however, is that initially we have to identify and isolate what we believe is a complete unit of thought.

#### 2. READ AND RE-READ THE SELECTED UNIT

This is certainly the most strategic step in the process and where most of us fall short. We simply do not read the text enough times to observe what is really there. There are no shortcuts to accurate observation. It comes through patient re-reading of the words of Scripture. The more times you read the selected passage the more you will notice. Each reading produces a sharper image of the details of the text. Therefore, read and re-read the unit (preferably aloud) five to ten times. As someone has said, "If something is good, more is better, and too much is just right!"

Jesus frequently questioned the Jews, "*Have you never read the Scriptures?*" (e.g. *Matthew* 21:42). Of course they had, but in their reading they failed to see what was really there. Have you ever noticed that Jesus in His controversy with the Sadducees based His entire argument for the resurrection (a fact that the Sadducees denied) on the grammatical structure of a sentence in the Old Testament (*Matthew* 22:32). Jesus had an eye for details. He knew how to *read* the Scriptures. Do you?

## THE STUDENT, THE FISH, AND AGASSIZ

You may have heard of Alexander Agassiz, the great naturalist and teacher. The following excerpt is a good example of the process of observation:

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz, and told him I had enrolled my name in the scientific school as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that, while I wished to be well-grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself specifically to insects.

“When do you wish to begin?” he asked. “Now,” I replied.

This seemed to please him, and with an energetic “Very well,” he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol.

“Take this fish,” said he, “and look at it; we call it a *Haemulon*; by and by I will ask you what you have seen.”

In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor, who had, however, left the museum. Nothing was to be done but return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around, looked at it in the face – ghastly; from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters view – just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour I concluded that lunch was necessary; so with an infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly, I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and that fish; it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me — I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.

“That is right,” said he; “a pencil is one of the best eyes.”

With these encouraging words, he added,

“Well, what is it like?”

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me; the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips, and lid-less eyes; the lateral line, the sponous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body. When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with the air of disappointment:

“You have not looked very carefully. Why,” he continued, more earnestly, “you haven’t seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plain as the fish itself. Look again, look again!” And he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor's criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly, and when, toward its close, the professor inquired,

"Do you see it yet?"

"No," I replied. "I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before."

"That is next best," said he earnestly, "but I won't hear from you now; put away your fish and go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you before you look at the fish."

This was disconcerting; not only must I think of my fish all night, studying, without the object before me, what this unknown but most visible feature might be, but also, without reviewing my new discoveries, I must give an exact account of them the next day. I had a bad memory; so I walked home in a distracted state, with my two perplexities.

The cordial greeting from the professor the next morning was reassuring; here was a man who seemed to be quite as anxious as I that I should see for myself what he saw.

"Do you perhaps mean," I asked, "that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?"

His thoroughly pleased, "of course, of course!" repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically – as he always did upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next.

"Oh, look at your fish!" he said, and left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned and heard my new catalogue.

"That is good; that is good!" he repeated, "But that is not all; go on."

And so for three long days, he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid.

"Look; look," was his repeated instruction.

This was the best entomological lesson I ever had – a lesson whose influence has extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the professor has left to me, as he left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.

*From Appendix American Poems*  
Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1880

As you read ask the Lord to open your eyes in order that you may behold wonderful things out of His law (*Psalms* 119:18). Not all perception, of course, comes merely from reading and pondering the text. God must open the *eyes of our heart* to see the true intent of His words. If there is a method of Bible study suggested in the Scriptures it is found in *II Timothy* 2:7: “Consider (Greek: *keep putting your mind to*) what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.” Bible study, then, is a two-part process—our part is to *think*—His is to grant *understanding*. God always rewards diligent, mental spadework. One further suggestion – always have paper and pen handy to jot down your observations, or you may wish to note your observations in your Bible as you read.

### 3. CLARIFY CONFUSING OR UNKNOWN ELEMENTS

This is the point at which we clear up problems caused by differences of time and culture. Your best tool for clarification is a good Bible dictionary. It should be complete and up-to-date. This reference book, apart from the Bible itself, is your most helpful resource. It will involve some expense but constitutes an investment that becomes increasingly valuable with use. A good dictionary (with maps) will define unknown words, locate geographical notations, explain obscure customs, and in general orient you to the time, place, and culture of the unit of the Old Testament you are reading. It is an invaluable addition to your reference library.

### 4. OBSERVE THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF THE SELECTED UNIT

The next major step is to place the passage in its proper context in the book in which it is found. Read the *paragraphs* immediately before and after the unit you are studying. You should then expand the setting by reading the *chapters* that precede and follow the unit. You can then further enlarge the context if that is necessary. In some cases it may be essential to read the entire book or the major section of the book in which your unit of study is located. However, for practical reasons it is usually sufficient to include only the immediate context. Note particularly any conjunctions (such as *therefore* or *but*) or any other grammatical devices that indicate the relationship of your text to that which precedes it. Also note any connection between the passage you are studying and the following context. Conjunctions which introduce the next paragraph often supply interpretive material necessary to adequately understand the unit you are observing.

For example, *II Chronicles* 20:1 reads, “Now it came about after this that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat.” It is apparent, therefore, that the events of Chapter 20 are related in time to what occurred in Chapter 19. The invasion described in Chapter 20 is *after this*. We ought to ask ourselves, “What is *this*? What event or events preceded this invasion?” The answer, of course, will be gained by reading the preceding chapter(s). The same procedure should be followed with regard to the paragraphs that follow the unit you are studying.

The purpose of establishing the literary context of any passage is to keep you from interpreting the passage in a vacuum. Scripture, in general, is presented as a reasoned argument, not as a collection of isolated facts. It is essential, therefore, to see the argument as a whole and not merely in its parts.

### 5. OBSERVE THE HISTORICAL/CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE SELECTED UNIT

Many passages will make explicit historical or cultural references. Note these and use them to fill in the background. For example, the book of *Ruth* begins in this way, “Now it came about in the days when the judges governed that there was a famine in the land.” And from that point on, the delightful story of Ruth and Boaz begins to unfold. The important fact to note is that this story develops against the tragic and dark era of idolatry, immorality and anarchy described in the book of *Judges*. It is essential, then, to know something of that period of Israel’s history in order to adequately appreciate and interpret the book of *Ruth*. Other books are dated precisely for us. Most of the prophets designate the kings of Judah and Israel who ruled contemporaneously with their ministries. By reading the accounts of their reigns in the historical books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* we can better understand the political, social, and religious climate of their times and more fully appreciate the substance of their messages.



## 6. ANALYZE THE LANGUAGE OF THE PASSAGE

One of the first things you ought to know is the *value* of the structure of language. God has revealed Himself to us in conventional language. In other words, God did not use angel-talk as the medium of revelation. Neither is the sense of Scripture to be derived by reading every other word or upside down or diagonally across the page from right to left. God has, in one sense, accommodated Himself to human modes of communication. The fundamental structure of the language of the Bible is essentially no different from the language of any human document. God has chosen to speak in man's language. He uses verbs, nouns, prepositions, and follows the normal laws of grammar and syntax (that most of us learned in elementary school but unfortunately have long ago forgotten)<sup>2</sup>. Language is predictable. There are identifiable patterns and characteristics that we use every day in interpreting the newspapers and books we read, the letters we receive, and every other form of verbal communication that we carry on. We cannot make words mean anything we want them to mean. We are mostly subject to the laws that govern that language.

When someone says to me, "I am going to the store," automatically and unconsciously I analyze that sentence as follows: "*I*" (the subject – the one speaking) "*am going*" (present tense verb – so the action is taking place now) "*to the store*" (*the* store – he has in mind a particular store) and, oh yes, "*store*" (a noun denoting a place or thing identified by name). Thus, he has communicated to me. I do not mystically construe his words. I understand that he is not assigning an arbitrary meaning to his words but using them in a conventional way. Language is only useful because it is predictable, and we have laws of grammar to keep it that way. These same laws apply to our interpretation of Scripture.

Here are some ways to make language work for you:

### (1) **Observe Words**

Define any terms you have not already clarified. You may want to compare your version with another in order to catch shades of meaning behind the translation. Note the *order* and *sequence* of words. The order of words in a sentence, particularly words that are arranged in series, can be significant. Look for *repeated* words. Repetition of a term or idea often gives you a clue to the theme of a passage, since the style of ancient writers was to emphasize by repetition.

### (2) **Observe Grammar and Syntax**

Now do not panic! You need only a rudimentary knowledge of grammar. The English Grammar Review in Appendix 4 may refresh your thinking.

## 7. INTERPRET THE PASSAGE

In other words, determine what the passage means—first in terms of the *author's* day and then *ours*. Always begin by considering the intent of the passage for the author's immediate audience before you relocate it in time. We must know what it *meant* before we can know what it *means*. Scripture is eternally relevant (witness the frequent New Testament introductory formula "the prophet says" with the verb not in the past, as one would expect, but in the present). We need to understand it in its *initial* setting before we can fully understand it in ours.

Here are two basic principles that will guide you in interpreting the Old Testament.

### (1) **Assume the normal, socially accepted meaning of words.**

God has spoken to us in conventional language. Therefore, interpret the Bible as you would interpret any piece of literature. Without question, the Bible is a unique document. It is text and cannot be regarded as we would regard any other piece of literature. However, God chose to convey truth through the medium of human language and, as we have already indicated, all languages are subject to laws and are not arbitrarily understood. Therefore, interpret Scripture according to the way language is conventionally understood. Interpret history as history, poetry as poetry, figures of speech, allegories, metaphors, and other symbolic

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 4 for an English Grammar Review.

language as you would normally expect those literary forms to be used. The safest course is to assume a literal meaning for Scripture unless the context or the manner in which the words are used clearly indicates that they have symbolic values. Your decision on what is literal and what is figurative must be based on the grammar, history, culture, context, and literary style of the original author. Do not automatically assume that a term has symbolic meaning merely because initially it appears to be used figuratively. *Assume that it is literal unless you can demonstrate a symbolic meaning.* The literal meaning—the customary and socially acknowledged meaning—must become the base for figurative meanings. Determine how the author uses the term elsewhere in the book. What meaning does he attach to it? What meanings do other writers in the Bible give it? If you decide that an expression is symbolic you should be able to give sound reasons for that conclusion. If you are a careful and thorough interpreter you will assign literal and figurative meanings to terms because the passage demands these procedures.

(2) **Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture.**

Bring all of Scripture to bear on the passage you are studying. Other passages in the same book may be helpful. Other material by the same author may interpret a passage for you. Since the Bible is a harmonious whole, any passage has to fit into the overall teaching of Scripture. The Reformers called this principle the *Analogy of Faith*. By that they meant that truth in one portion of the Bible must correspond (be analogous) to truth in other portions. In other words, the Bible agrees with itself. There are no internal contradictions. Check cross-references for parallel passages. They are indicated in the margin of most Bibles. Compare your unit of study with analogous teaching elsewhere in the Word. Discard any interpretation that clearly contradicts the uniform teaching of Scripture.

That is enough for now. As we attempt to understand other types of Old Testament literature we will suggest more specialized interpretive principles. Now for the final step:

## **8. APPLY THE TRUTH**

This is the necessary conclusion of all Bible study. We have placed it last because logically it follows Biblical interpretation. Chronologically it should occur at every stage of the process. God's Word is not good advice or one possible option for life but a revelation to which we must respond. Therefore, Bible study is not the end of the process, but merely the means by which we discover God's will. The end of the matter is to submit our hearts to that will. The primary aim of Bible study is not to master the Scriptures, but to be mastered by them!

Our task is to learn to understand or interpret the Bible so we can live by it. And the task is crucial because our relationship to Christ is linked to our understanding of the Word. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (*Romans* 10:17).

Therefore, there are many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so 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).

Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed" (*II Chronicles* 20:20).

Do not confuse the process of Bible study with the product. Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (*John* 5:39, 40). The purpose of all Bible study is to *direct us to Christ and His power for living a new life*. Paul writes, "the goal of our instruction is love" (*I Timothy* 1:5), which is derived from the indwelling life of Christ, not mere facts or knowledge of the Bible. Note well Paul's words to Timothy about those who *wrangle about words* (i.e. make the investigation process the end) (*II Timothy* 2:14-26). A mere preoccupation with Bible study itself is useless and ruinous (vs.14), and produces quarrels (vs. 23). To approach Bible study in this way is to be a workman who ought to be ashamed. On the other hand, God's approved workman handles the Word accurately. (Greek cuts straight to the goal.) He uses the Word to teach, reprove, correct, and train (himself and others) in order that God's man may be an adequate instrument, ready to cope with any demand (*II Timothy* 3:16).

“Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow up in respect to salvation” (*I Peter* 2:2). That is Peter’s exhortation and our desire—to long for the Word as a newborn baby longs for milk. But notice the preceding verse: “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word...” Unhealthy infants lose their appetites. Likewise, malice, guile and hypocrisy take away our appetite for the milk of the Word. However, if we are willing to let the Word sit in judgment of us and instruct us in deliverance, our hunger will return and increase.

The scriptures are designed to reveal Christ and His will. It is obvious, therefore, that an open heart is a primary requisite to productive Bible study. Methods alone will never open the Word. Bible study is not merely an intellectual process. It is ultimately a spiritual matter. God only reveals truth to those who are prepared to obey it. Jesus’ instruction to His disciples was, “Don’t cast pearls before swine” (*Matthew* 7:6). That is a strong metaphor and its meaning is crystal clear. Truth is a precious thing and God will not allow it to be trodden underfoot or profaned in any way. The consistent witness of Scripture is that God withdraws light from those who spurn it (*e.g. Isaiah* 6:9, 10; 8:16, 17; *Matthew* 13:10-17). But He lavishes truth on those who are hungry and willing to abide in it. Are you ready to listen?

The major problem in Old Testament application is knowing which portions are binding on us as Christians and which are cancelled out in this era. It is clear that some parts of the Old Testament contain specialized regulations for the worship, morality, and social life of the nation of Israel. The Jews were a unique people existing in an Eastern environment, and these regulations were never intended for other people or times. How, then, can we know what is for us, and what is specifically for Israel? The answer is actually quite simple, (although, the matter can get a bit complex).

*The New Testament makes inspired application of the Old Testament for the Church.* In other words, Jesus and the Apostles have told us which statutes in the Old Testament are still in force and which have been rescinded now that Christ has come. For example, note *Colossians* 2:16-17:

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

Do you see what Paul is saying? Certain aspects of the Law, regulations concerning food, drink, festivals, etc., being merely shadows or pictures, are no longer issues for the Church. Christ has fulfilled those shadows, being Himself the substance which they depict. However, as Paul continues in *Colossians* 3:5-14, there are weightier matters concerning righteousness and justice that are still in force:

Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

You will recognize that these commands occur in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament and therefore are enduring expressions of God’s will for His people at all times.

We have vastly oversimplified this but it is important to have the fundamental principle in mind as we apply Old Testament passages to our times and circumstances. The New Testament establishes the pattern for us:

- (a) Some Old Testament injunctions are cancelled out in Christ. The New Testament tells us this is so.
- (b) Some are still in effect. We know this is the case because they are restated and applied to the Church by our Lord and His Apostles. We’ll see how this principle works in the studies that follow.

Now we are ready to think in terms of application. As you are reading and thinking your way through the Old Testament, ask yourself: Is there a promise to claim? A sin to avoid? A fact to believe? A warning to heed? A command to obey? A truth to ponder?

Make your application personal. Think in terms of your needs and circumstances before you apply the truth to others. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to see blind spots in your own life where you have failed to heed the Word of God. Pray as David prayed:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way

*Psalm 139:23-24*

Finally, determine what specific steps you will take in response to the Word. Application is more than an admission that we need to obey. We have not applied the Word until we have acted upon it. As James puts it:

But prove yourselves *doers* of the word, and not merely *hearers* who delude themselves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

*James 1:22-25*

## ONE FINAL NOTE

The English language contains six interrogatives: *WHO*, *WHAT*, *WHEN*, *WHERE*, *WHY*, and *HOW*. These are linguistic tools with which you can digest any text. The questions that follow are based on these elements and are designed to be pattern exegetical questions. They are not exhaustive, only suggestive of the kind of inquiry that we ought to be making into any Biblical text. They are based on the procedures just outlined and are intended to give you practice in applying those steps.

Now, let's go to work.

Find a quiet place and time where you can study without being interrupted. Get your tools together:

- (a) A Bible (preferably a New American Standard Bible, since the questions are based on that version)
- (b) A Bible dictionary

# INTRODUCTION

## THE ANGLE OF APPROACH

Most Bible studies are *deductive* in their approach. In one sense, that means that we are given the results and conclusions of someone else's study in the Scriptures. That approach is valid, of course. Gifted teachers *are* given to the body of Christ to equip its members for the work of the ministry (*Eph.* 4:11-13). Therefore we should receive their teaching, assuming, of course, that it is aligned with the Scriptures.

However, to exist *entirely* on another's teaching is a mark of spiritual immaturity. At least to do so for extended periods of time indicates that we are not yet mature in Christ. There comes a time when all of us ought to be able to independently derive nourishment from the Word. The author of *Hebrews* has this to say about those who are unduly dependent on others' teaching: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and have come to need milk and not solid food" (*Hebrews* 5:1). That situation, he concludes, is a mark of immaturity.

It is this thought that brought about this series of studies. We want you to know the *joy of discovery*. Our approach, therefore, will mainly be *inductive* rather than *deductive*. Our goal is to lead you through selected portions of Scripture and teach you en-route how to derive truth from them and form your own conclusions. In other words, we want you to be able to interpret the Word without being unduly influenced by commentaries and other secondary aids and to construct your own Biblical theology. In this way, you will develop a Biblical framework which will be uniquely yours, based on your own first-hand contact with the Biblical text.

Of course, no one is ever completely independent in Bible study or, for that matter, in any aspect of the Christian life. We need each other! No one has all the truth. It takes all the saints working together to know every aspect of the knowledge of God that can be known (*Eph.* 3:18, 19). However, we can be virtually self-sustaining in Bible study – at least as self-reliant as any of us really want to be. Interpreting the Bible is not easy. Even the best Biblical scholars *gang aft a-gley* (i.e. are often led astray). We only know *in part* (*I Corinthians* 13:9). The study of God's Word is not the special province of a few highly skilled theologians and exegetes. Interpreting the Bible does require certain attitudes and skills. It is our belief that this study will provide these elements – at least in an initial way – and you can begin to interpret and apply God's Word in spiritually productive ways. All Scripture is intended to be understood and obeyed for our profit in order for us to be equipped to cope with life (*II Timothy* 3:16,17). It is our hope that these studies will lead you into that process.

This is a study, then, for people who are tired of being told what to believe! It is for those who want to learn for themselves from their own investigation of the Biblical text. We hope you will find it helpful not only in tackling the topic at hand but also in establishing a lifetime habit of personal Bible study.

Our purpose in this particular study is to introduce you to a method of approach that we think will help you acquire a greater appreciation for the Old Testament, that portion of the Scriptures which is, unfortunately, the neglected part of the Word – the *clean* portion of most Bibles. That neglect, we believe, deprives God's people of the full measure of *life* and *peace* (*vitality* and *well-being*) that God has promised to those that know Him.

Reflect for a moment on the exalted place that the Old Testament had in the thinking of Jesus and his Apostles. It was, in fact, the only Bible they had. They relied entirely on these books for their formulation of the Gospel and it was the basis of their belief and conduct. They had no other source of authority. The Old Testament was, for them, the Word of God.

The Old Testament is the “*Scripture*” of which Paul speaks in *II Timothy* 3:16, which is designed to equip men and women to cope with life. These books are the “sacred writings” (*II Timothy* 3:15) that are able to make us “wise unto salvation.” It comprises the bulk of our revelation from God and is the foundation on which the New Testament rests. We ignore it, then, at great personal loss.

There are, however, some reasons why people find the Old Testament difficult. It is helpful, I believe, to face the problems squarely.

1. **AN ANCIENT BOOK**

The oldest portions of the Old Testament are well over 3,000 years old and that, by any standard, makes them ancient documents. Most of us, unless we are students of Ancient Near Eastern literature, have simply never read anything quite that old and therein lies the first problem—separation in time. Modern man is 3,000 years removed from Biblical man and that temporal separation makes his literature seem at best quaint and at times downright obscure.

2. **AN EASTERN CULTURE**

Separation in time is actually only half the problem. We also have to come to terms with a vast *cultural* separation between Biblical man and modern man. Those coming from Western Civilization have a western orientation on life and things. The authors and actors of the Old Testament were *eastern* representatives of an oriental culture that is fundamentally different. It was not wrong, mind you—just different, and one simply has to accept that difference. As Rudyard Kipling put it:

*Oh, East is East and West is West,  
And never the twain shall meet:  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently,  
At God's great judgment seat.*

From “The Ballad of East and West,” 1895

Eastern man is, quite literally, a world apart from the western man. The Eastern mind has an entirely different perspective on reality, and any Bible interpreter has to understand that such difference exists. It is our conviction that there are ways to bridge the temporal and cultural gaps so as to help us understand their times and ways. That is a major emphasis in this series of Old Testament studies, but the problem is not in itself insurmountable. However, there is another issue for some Christians which is far more critical.

3. **AN ERRONEOUS CONCEPT**

Essentially the problem is theological. We simply do not understand the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. For many of us, the first 39 books are *nothing more* than books of law, containing only introductory matters to the Gospel. It is true, of course, that the law had such a function. It was, as Paul clearly states, a *tutor* until the time of Christ (*Galatians* 3:24). The problem comes in thinking of the Old Testament *exclusively* in this way, so that we falsely equate law and the Old Testament. That really is the crux of the issue. By making the Old Testament synonymous with law, the two Testaments stand in almost total discontinuity with each other. Law and grace are seen as *opposing* principles. To someone with this viewpoint, the Old Testament is law; the New Testament is grace. Thus, the Old Testament has no practical function now that we live under grace—apart from its contrasting portrayal of law. In other words, the Old Testament is useful today only to the extent that it shows us how hard man had it under the law, and, thus, we learn to appreciate grace. Reading the Old Testament, then, is like hitting yourself over the head with a hammer. It feels so good when you quit!

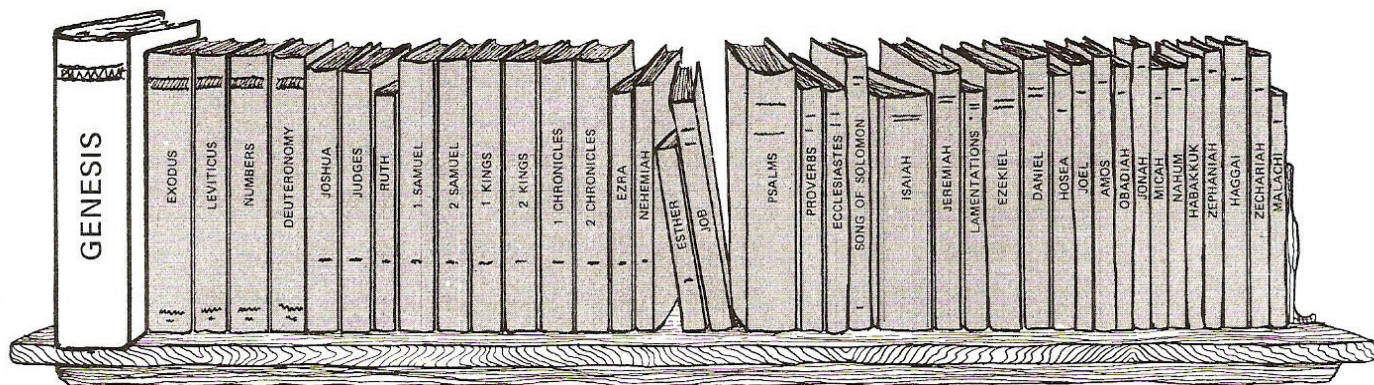
If the Old Testament is accorded only this function of preparing men's minds for the Gospel, then it raises an interesting question... Who needs it? Now that grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ, why not devote all our time and energy to the New Testament revelation of Him? The question probably has already been answered on a practical level. (Think for a moment: How many of the fifty or so Sunday morning messages you have heard this past year have been on the Old Testament? How many books of the Old Testament have you read this past year?) Can it be that our misunderstanding of the relationships of the two Testaments has led us to a drastic devaluation of these older books? We believe that this has indeed occurred. Without fully realizing it, most Christians have relegated the Old Testament to a lesser role in the Biblical scheme of things. It is our hope that these studies will correct this imbalance. We believe that the Old Testament teaches, in concurrence with the New Testament, that God has always dealt with His people in grace, granting power to obey, and extending forgiveness in failure—always pursuing His own with relentless love. We believe you, too, will discover this truth on your own as you explore these books with us.







## A STUDY OF GENESIS 1 AND 2



We will begin our study, appropriately, with the book of *Genesis* because *Genesis*, as the name suggests, is a book that deals with beginnings or origins; or more specifically with the beginning of God's plan to bring salvation to the earth. We must always keep in mind that the Bible is limited in its scope and intent. Its purpose, as the Apostle Paul puts it, is to reveal the "wisdom that leads to salvation" (*II Timothy* 3:15). In other words, the Bible does not tell us everything we always wanted to know about everything! Its purpose is more exclusive. It was written to reveal God's plan to save us—to set us free (as the word *salvation* implies). It is God's intent that we be free men and women—liberated from guilt, fear, and feelings of inadequacy, and equipped to cope with life. The Bible is the revelation of that intention and plan to save us. *Genesis* records the first steps in that process and it is appropriate that we begin with this book.

*Genesis* is very easy to outline. If you read it through at one setting (a practice we advise), you will readily observe that it falls into two main divisions:

- I. *The Pre-Historic Period* (Chapters 1-11)
- II. *The Patriarchal Period* (Chapters 12-50)

In the *Pre-Historical Period*, four great events occur:

- (1) The Creation (Chapters 1-2)
- (2) The Fall (Chapters 3-5)
- (3) The Flood (Chapters 6-9)
- (4) The Dispersion (Chapters 10-11)

In the *Patriarchal Period*, three great men appear:

- (1) Abraham (Chapters 12-20)
- (2) Isaac (Chapters 21-26)
- (3) Jacob (Chapters 27-50)

The closing chapters of Jacob's story (37-50) are concerned primarily with the affairs of his son, Joseph, and the spiritual decline of Jacob's other sons that brought about Israel's subsequent migration to Egypt.

We cannot cover the entire book of *Genesis*. That is not our purpose in this series of studies. Our intent is to teach you how to study the Word independently, not to give you the content of our study. We have chosen, therefore, two crucial passages from the opening chapters of *Genesis* that serve as sample studies of narrative material. This will at least give you a taste of the inductive method and will whet your appetite, we believe, for more of the same!

One further note: The questions are designed to lead you into the text and give you experience at raising good questions. For many of the questions, there is no one proper answer. They are merely there to help you observe carefully and formulate your own conclusions from the text.

We will begin at the beginning — with the Creation Story. Our first unit of study is *Genesis* 1:1-2:3. Read this passage at least five times.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

Write your own descriptive title:

*Genesis* 1:1 – 2:3

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*Genesis* 2:4 – 2:25

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The next step is to place this unit of study in its literary context, which is the parallel creation story in 2:4-25. Read that account at least twice.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐

What relationship does *Genesis* 2:4-25 have to *Genesis* 1:1-2:3? (Some features to observe: Note that the creation of man is the focal point of both. How is man's significance indicated in each account? Note the names of God in each narrative. What is added or omitted in each? What is the emphasis of each? What do you conclude?)

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Now let's return to *Genesis* 1:1-2:3. It would be helpful at this point to determine the *structure* of the passage. Fortunately, it is quite obvious, and is based on the clear paragraph divisions of *days*. Chart the passage and note what creative events occur each day.

Passage	Day	Events
1-5	1	
6-8	2	
9-13	3	
14-19	4	
20-23	5	
24-31	6	
2:1-3	7	

Now look at your chart carefully. Do you see any arrangement other than the obvious sequence of seven consecutive days of creation? Do you observe any correlations between the days? If so, what is the significance of that arrangement?

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Now read through the unit again. Are there any words that you do not understand? If so, define them using a Bible dictionary.

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Read 1:1, 2 again. These two verses are considered a problem in our modern era. However, just read them as if Moses was speaking them for the first time, and you are standing among the hearers. In Genesis 1:1, the Hebrew text uses what is called a "dual" (meaning "two" or "both") for the word "heavens." Literally, it reads, "In the beginning God created the earth and both heavens." In the verses that follow God will create a "third" heaven. (Note that Paul said he was caught up to the third heaven in II Corinthians 12:2. Genesis 1 is the only chapter in the Bible that speaks of three heavens.) "Both heavens and the earth" then sets up the chapter as God explains that they were literally, "created in order to make" (Genesis 2:3). The text then brings us down from the two heavens (the future angelic and starry heavens) to focus upon the seven days of the creation of the earth. So while the heavens and the earth come into existence together, the focus becomes the earth and man. How does verse 2 describe the first state?

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What relationship then, does this verse have to the description of creation that follows (1:3-2:3)? Note the order of creation and the repeated words *divided/separated* (1:6,7,14,18) and *fill* (1:22,28).

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What does the statement regarding the spirit *brooding* (the literal meaning) suggest (1:2)?

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Do you observe repeated words or ideas in this passage? What do you conclude? What is the emphasis of this narrative?

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What do you observe about the creation of man? In what ways is he like the rest of creation? In what ways is he unique?

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It would be good at this point to discover what ancient man believed about the origin and meaning of the universe. This account was originally intended for him. (Remember, we must know what God's word *meant* to him before we know what it *means* to us.) Fortunately, a great deal is known about his beliefs from his abundant literature, especially the legends and creative myths of his time. A Bible dictionary will give you access to this material. (Note the entry under *creation*). How did ancient man view his world? What did he believe about the following:

- (1) The gods \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (2) Man \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (3) Nature \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What were his fears and frustrations?

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What would ancient man have learned from this revelation?

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What does modern man believe about the following:

- (1) God (or the gods) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- (2) Man \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (3) Nature \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do we learn from this account?

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What practical difference will it make in the way we order our lives today? In other words, what will we do in response to this revelation?

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What do you infer from *Genesis* 1:1-2:3 regarding God's intention for the earth and its inhabitants?

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*Genesis* 1:1-2:3 reveals God's purpose and power to bring the creation into existence from nothing. He is uniquely the Savior of the world. He dispelled darkness by creating light, and organized and populated a planet by merely speaking a word. The purpose of it all, as we saw, was to prepare a place for man. Man is the climax of God's creation and the one for whom all creation exists. Chapter 2, as we shall see, is a more complete statement of the dignity and significance of man. In Chapter 1 the significance of man is revealed *chronologically*. He is the end *product* of God's 7-day creation. In Chapter 2 man's dignity is affirmed *logically*. He is the one for whom all things were created. These two chapters, then, are the counterpart to the modern day insistence that man has no real significance in the scheme of things and that man's history has no meaning. In addition, these chapters explain our function in creation and the key to fulfillment as a co-worker with our spouse. This chapter is, in fact, the key to understanding the three most crucial aspects of life: our duties with reference to God, our families, and our vocation, including our uniqueness and our specialized roles in these critical spheres of life.

Let's see what we can *see*! Read *Genesis* 2:4-25 five times at one sitting.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

What is the literary setting of this chapter? Read again *Genesis* 1:1 to 2:4; note especially 2:4. The phrase *the account of the heavens and the earth* properly belongs with 1:1 to 2:3 (note 1:1), but observe the second phrase *in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens*. What divine name is used? Note the order of words here. What do you conclude?

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Now observe the context that follows (Chapter 3). What do you note about the divine name? What other parallels do you observe? What do you conclude?

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Now let's begin to analyze the unit 2:4b-25. Note that in the NASB there are three paragraphs. What is the content of each unit? Entitle each paragraph. (You may want to further subdivide the paragraphs.)

Paragraph	Content	Title
2:4-9		
2:10-17		
2:18-25		

Now look more closely at each paragraph. The first sub-unit is 2:4-9. Are there words here that need to be clarified? If so look them up in a Bible dictionary. (The word *mist* for example in verse 6 means *inundation* or *flood*.) Several questions come to mind. What is *Eden*? (Note that the garden is *in Eden*.) Where is this garden located? *East* of what (vs.8)?

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What relationship does 2:5, 6 have to 2:7-9?

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How is man's creation described (vs. 7)?

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How does this description differ from that of the first account (*cf.* 1:26-31)?

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What does this description reveal about the nature of man?

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How is the garden described (observe carefully) in 8, 9? (Note the three-fold reference to *tree*.)

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What does that description reveal about man? What does it reveal about God?

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Now observe 2:10-17 carefully. Are there words that need to be defined or explained from a dictionary? Do so.

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What is the purpose of this extended description of the rivers and environs of the garden (10-14)? Think about the significance of this description to ancient man.

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What are the elements of God's plan for man (15-17)? What do these verses reveal about man's duties and the significance of those duties?

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What does the presence of one forbidden tree suggest about God's character (*cf.* 2:9)?

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Now read again 2:18-25. Clarify any unknown words or ideas. What relationship does this paragraph have to the preceding unit (2:10-17)? In other words, why was it *not good* for man to be alone (without a helper) in that setting?

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What is a *helper suitable for him*? What does this expression mean?

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List in order the steps that resulted in the making of the woman (2:19-22). (Listing is always a helpful aid to accurate observation.)

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Why did God first form and present the beasts and birds to Adam (19, 20)?

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What is the significance of the *naming* of the animals (19)?

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What is the significance of Adam's sleep (21)?

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What is the significance of the formation of the woman from Adam's rib (actually *side*) (21)?

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Verse 23 is the man's poetic response to God's special creation. What do we learn from this response?

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Note the prepositional phrase *for this cause*. What does it indicate about verses 24, 25?

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Verse 24, then, states the narrator's logical conclusion to the events of this chapter. What does he conclude and what does it mean (be specific)?

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What do we learn about the complementary roles of husband and wife from this passage?

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What is the meaning of verse 25 (*cf.* 3:7)?

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How has this passage changed your attitude toward marriage (and more specifically, your marriage partner)?

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What do you plan to do in response?

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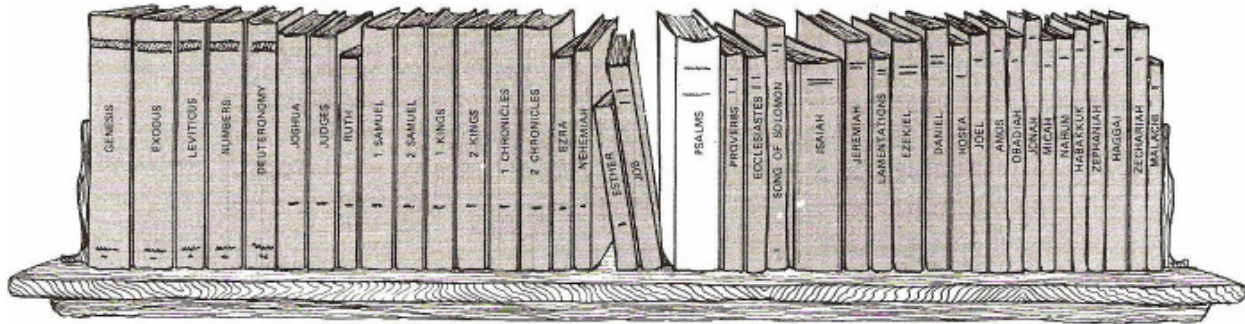
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# UNIT 2

## UNDERSTANDING OLD TESTAMENT HYMN LITERATURE



The hymns in the Old Testament are found mainly in the book of *Psalms*, although they do occur in other books (*II Samuel* 1; *Exodus* 15; *Jonah* 3; etc.). For this study we'll concentrate our efforts on the collection which we call the *Psalms*.

The book of *Psalms* is basically a book of hymns, an anthology of lyric poems collected from ancient times by the Jews for use in their temple worship.

As the titles to the individual psalms indicate, some originated from the personal tragedies or triumphs of the poet. "A psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son", "a psalm of David...in the cave" etc. Others grew out of the collective experience of God's people in times of national distress or deliverance. Whatever the occasion for the original composition, these various expressions of praise and pathos were gathered into an anthology of hymns which became a part of their temple worship.

### THE TITLE

The ancient Jews referred to the collection as, תהלים (*Tehillim*) or "Praises", a suitable title since almost every psalm in the anthology contains some aspect of praise. (*Psalms* 88 is the lone exception.) Even the so-called *lament psalms* contain an element of praise.

Our English title, *Psalms*, is derived from the Septuagint or Greek translation's title, Πσάλμος (*Psalmos*). This, incidentally, was normally the title used by Jesus and the Apostles (see *Luke* 20:42 and *I Corinthians* 14:26). The Greek term, Πσάλμος (*Psalmos*), at least in classical times, meant music accompanied by a stringed instrument. By New Testament times it had come to have the derived sense of a song of praise, a meaning not far removed from the original idea. Therefore, the title, *Psalms*, is suitable if we understand that it means *Songs of Praise*.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PSALTER

It may surprise you to know that the book of *Psalms* is actually composed of a number of books.

Note *Psalms* 1, 42, 73, 90, and 107. What do you see? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

On the basis of your observations, how is *Psalms* organized?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now note 41:13; 72:18, 19; 89:52; and 106:48. What do you observe?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you conclude?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This five-fold arrangement is apparently very old. It is certainly at least as old as the Septuagint (3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C.) since that version contains the doxologies concluding the first four books. It may be much older. No one knows for certain why *Psalms* was arranged in this manner. Traditionally, the Jews have explained it as a conscious reflection of the five books of the Pentateuch. One Rabbi from the early Christian era stated that David has given the five books of *Psalms* to Israel “as Moses gave five books of law to Israel.” There may have been some conscious effort to mirror the Pentateuch. However, no one has been able to convincingly point out respective correspondences between the five books. There may be a better explanation. Note *Psalms* 72:20. What do you observe?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(It is important to know, however, that there are at least 18 other psalms attributed to David in Books 3-5, and at least a dozen in Books 1-2 that are not Davidic!)

Compare *Psalms* 14 (Book 1) and *Psalms* 53 (Book 2), then *Psalms* 70 (Book 2) and *Psalms* 40:13-17 (Book 1). What do you observe?

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Note carefully the name of God used in the two sets of psalms. What do you observe?

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What do you conclude?

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Scan through the psalms in Book 1. Which divine name predominates?

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Scan through Book 2. Which name predominates there?

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(By actual count, LORD is used 272 times and God is used 15 times in Book 1. In Book 2, LORD occurs only 30 times while God is used 164 times.) This differing use of divine names continues in the remaining psalms.

What do you observe about *Psalms* 73-83?

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But note what occurs in the rest of Book 3 (84-89).

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In Books 4 and 5, LORD is used almost without variation (*cf.* 144:9). Are you forming any conclusions?

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Now note these *blocks* of materials. What do you observe about *Psalms* 42-49 (note the titles)?

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*Psalms* 73-83?

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What is the subject matter of *Psalms* 93-100?

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*Psalms* 113-118?

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What designation is given to *Psalms* 120-134?

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What characteristics are in *Psalms* 146-150?

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What can you say about *Psalms* 108-110 and 138-145?

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What conclusions have you formed regarding the structure and arrangement of the *Psalms*?

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One writer, C. F. Barth, has suggested that the collection developed the way a river is formed. “It takes innumerable little springs and streams to feed even a brook, and small rivers must flow into its long meandering course before the full width of the river flows down to the sea.” That analogy is very helpful in understanding the processes by which *Psalms* was formed. I would suggest something along the following lines<sup>3</sup>:

*First stage:* Individual psalms were composed by pious Israelites such as David, Moses, Miriam, Deborah, and Jonah. Some never became part of the anthology of hymns used in the temple (*cf. The Lament of David* in *II Samuel* 1 and the *Song of Moses* in *Deuteronomy* 32). Others, on the other hand, were adopted and stylized for use in worship (*cf. II Samuel* 22:1 and *Psalms* 18; *I Chronicles* 16:7ff and *Psalms* 105:1ff). It seems clear from *I Chronicles* 16:4 that, as early as David’s time, the Levites were arranging individual psalms for the temple.

*Second stage:* Collections of psalms. The editorial note at *Psalms* 72:20, “The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended,” indicates some form of older collections that ended with *Psalms* 72. The notice, as it now stands, is inappropriate since there are several Psalms preceding the notation which are not Davidic and several afterward by David. However, the reference does indicate that at one time *Psalms* 72 concluded a collection of psalms composed by David.

*Third stage:* The individual collections were then formed into the five books we now have in *Psalms*. It has been suggested that the books were arranged along chronological lines. There does appear to be some chronological progression, with most of David’s psalms appearing in the first half and some clearly exilic psalms in Book 5 (*cf. Psalms* 137). However, *Psalms* 138 is Davidic and the fall of Jerusalem is lamented as early as *Psalms* 74. My guess is that the psalms were arranged in roughly chronological order (with some obvious exceptions) because the collections were made and joined together in successive stages. In other words, one individual at one particular point in Israel’s history collected the psalms that were then in use in the temple.

At another time, someone else made another collection and joined it to the first. Apparently, these collections were made and joined to one another in successive stages between David’s time (10<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) and the exile (6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.). This would explain the mixture of order and informality in the arrangement.

*Fourth stage:* The collection appears to have been edited in its final stage. All agree that *Psalms* 1 and 2 (which may originally have been one psalm) are an introduction to the book, and *Psalms* 145-150 constitute a grand finale. The book as we have it bears the marks of one person’s mind giving order to the whole book.

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<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Bruce Waltke for the basic outline.

## THE NATURE OF HEBREW POETRY

Hebrew poetry is similar to English poetry in that both have *rhythm* and a form of *parallelism*. Hebrew rhythm is occasionally discernable even in translation:

The Lord is my *might* and my *salvation*;  
whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the *defense* of my life;  
whom shall I *dread*?

*Psalm 27:1*

Prove me, O Lord, and try me,  
Test my mind and my *heart*.

*Psalm 26:2*

However, this rhythmic structure is normally observed only in Hebrew, and even there is difficult to identify. Hebrew parallelism, on the other hand, is easily identified. It is the one form of poetry where force and beauty is undiminished by translation. Hebrew parallelism, however, is quite different from its English counterpart. English parallelism is normally based on rhyme or assonance:

Jesus, I live in Thee,  
The loveliest and best;  
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,  
In Thy blest love I rest.

Henry Harbaugh, "Jesus, I Live in Thee," 1850

Hebrew parallelism, however, is based not on correspondence of sound but on correspondence of thought. As R. Lowth put it, "A proposition is delivered and a second [is] sub-joined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent to, or contrasted with it." In other words, the Hebrew poet matched one thought with another by stating a point or proposition and then echoing that thought in a following line. For example:

Why are the nations in an uproar,  
and the peoples devising a vain thing?

*Psalm 2:1*

The first line is the primary thought, the second parallel line the shadow or echo of that thought. This is the basic structure of Hebrew poetic style.



## TYPES OF PARALLELISM

Several types of parallelism have been identified in the poetic literature. The matter actually gets very complex but we can distinguish a few types of parallelism:

- (1) *Synonymous*. The second line is almost exactly parallel in thought to the first.

He who sits in the heavens laughs,  
The Lord scoffs at them.

*Psalms 2:4*

- (2) *Contrasting*. The second line contrasts the thought of the first.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked will perish.

*Psalms 1:6*

- (3) *Illustrative*. The second line illuminates or illustrates the first line.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.

*Psalms 23:1*

- (4) *Progressive*. The second line elaborates a thought begun in the first line:

The righteous cry and the Lord hears,  
and delivers them out of all their troubles.

*Psalms 34:17*

- (5) *Climactic*. The second line repeats the first with the exception of the last term:

How long shall the wicked, O Lord,  
How long shall the wicked exult?

*Psalms 94:3*

- (6) *Formal*. Two parallel lines are merely placed together in parallel to give symmetry to the poem.

But as for me, I have installed my king  
upon Zion, my holy mountain.

*Psalms 2:6*

## THE HEADINGS OF THE PSALMS

You will note that many of the psalms have introductory headings or superscriptions. These can be classified as follows:

1. Indication of authorship
  - a. Moses (*Psalms* 90)
  - b. David (seventy-three psalms, mostly in Books 1 and 2)
  - c. Asaph (*Psalms* 50, 73-83)
  - d. Korah (*Psalms* 42, 44-49, 84, 87-88)
  - e. Heman, the Ezrahite (*Psalms* 88)
  - f. Ethan, the Ezrahite (*Psalms* 89)
  - g. Solomon (*Psalms* 72, 127)
2. Technical names to designate the types of psalms
  - a. מזמור (*Mizmore*)—psalm, a song accompanied by a stringed instrument (in fifty-seven psalms)
  - b. שיר (*Sheer*)—song (in twelve psalms)
  - c. משכיל (*Maskil*)—an instructive poem (in thirteen psalms)
  - d. מכתם (*Miktam*)—the root meaning is disputed; the word may mean inscription, epigram, or a poem containing pithy sayings, etc. (in six superscriptions)
  - e. תפלה (*Tephillah*)—a prayer (in four psalm titles and *Habakkuk* 3)
  - f. תהלה (*Tehillah*)—praise (*Psalms* 145)
3. Musical terms
  - a. נצח (*Natsach*)—disputed term, but most construe it to mean *to the choir leader* or *to the chief musician* (in fifty psalms)
  - b. ידוֹתוֹן (*Jeduthun*)—disputed term, perhaps referring to a guild of musicians who rendered these psalms (*Psalms* 39, 62, and 77)
  - c. נגינה (*Neginoth*)—with stringed instruments (*Psalms* 4, 6, 54, 67, 76, and 61)
  - d. שְׁמִינִית (*Alamoth*)—literally *maidens*; may reference a song for sopranos or higher voices (*Psalms* 46)
  - e. שְׁמִינִית (*Sheminith*)—possibly a reference to *eight*, ie. “with an eight-stringed lute,” or an “octave,” or a song for bass or lower voices (*Psalms* 6 and 12)
  - f. נחילה (*Nehilloth*)—obscure term, possibly a flute or wind instrument (*Psalms* 5)
  - g. גִּתִּית (*Gittith*)—literally *wine-press*; disputed term, possibly a wine song or and instrument from Gath (*Psalms* 8, 81, and 84)
  - h. סלה (*Selah*)—literally *lift up*; disputed term, possibly denotes places in the psalm where worshippers were to lift up their voices (not in superscriptions)
4. Melody indicators:
  - a. שֹׁשָׁנִים (*Shoshannim*)—to ascending lilies (*Psalms* 45, 60, 69, and 89)
  - b. מַחֲלָת (*Machalath*)—unknown; may be a liturgical term (*Psalms* 53 and 88)
  - c. אֵילַת הַשָּׁחַר (*Aiyeleth shachar*)—ascending to the hind of the morning (*Psalms* 22)
  - d. יוֹנָתָן רֶחֶקִים (*Jonath elem rechokim*)—according to the silent dove of far-off places (*Psalms* 56)
  - e. אַל תִּשְׁחַת (*Al tashheth*)—“Do not destroy” (*Psalms* 57, 58, 59, and 75; cf. *Deuteronomy* 9:26)
  - f. מוֹת לִבָּן (*Muth labban*)—possibly means *death of the son* (*Psalms* 9)

5. Liturgical indicators:

- a. שבת (*Sabbath*)—to be used on the Sabbath day (*Psalms* 92)
- b. תודה (*Todah*)—means *thanksgiving*, to be used at the time of the offering up of the acknowledgment offering (*Psalms* 100)
- c. להזכיר (*Laha-zakar*)—literally *to bring to remembrance*, intended to bring the lamenter to Yahweh's remembrance (*Psalms* 38 and 70)
- d. *Prayer of the afflicted when he pines away and pours forth his complaint before Yahweh* (*Psalms* 102)
- e. שיר המעלות (*Sheer Ma-aloth*)—literally *a song of ascending*; disputed term, many today prefer to understand the term as *a song for pilgrimages* (*Psalms* 120-134)
- f. *For the dedication of the house* (*Psalms* 30)
- g. שגיון (*Shiggaion*)—obscure, possibly a rambling poem (*Psalms* 7)

6. Historical notices in the life of David (*Psalms* 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, and 142)

## CATEGORIES OF PSALMS

As you study various psalms, you will quickly become aware of certain motifs or dominant features that recur. These have long been recognized and have led to classification of these psalms along these lines:

1. *Lament Psalms*—individual or national expressions of grief or sorrow organized as follows:

- Address (“O Lord”, etc.)
- Lament
- Petition
- Praise despite or during

Example: *Psalms* 44

2. *Thanksgiving Psalms*—offered for *specific* acts of deliverance and organized in this way:

- Proclamation (“Praise the Lord...”, etc.)
- Praise
- Reason for praise (or “because...”)
- Renewed praise

Example: *Psalms* 138

3. *Praise Psalms*—expressions of pure praise for God’s character and work.

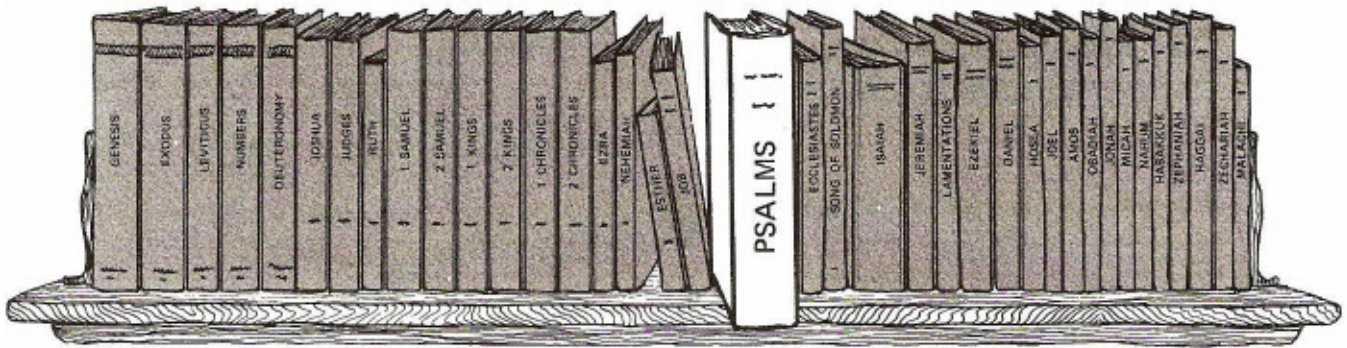
- Call to praise
- Reason for praise
- Renewed call to praise

Example: *Psalms* 117

Though these are the basic forms, the motifs are not *stereotyped*, and the organization of the psalms may vary widely. We have over-simplified these classifications, but this will give you a basic framework for classifying most of the *Psalms*.

There is one other type of psalm of which you should be aware —the so-called *Royal* or *Messianic* Psalm. Namely *Psalms* 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, and 144:1-11.

# A STUDY OF PSALM 40



Let's begin our study of the *Psalms* with *Psalm* 40. Read the psalm at least five times.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

You probably noticed that the psalm divides into two units of thought: verses 1-4 and verses 5-17.

To whom is 1-4 addressed? \_\_\_\_\_

Verses 5-17? \_\_\_\_\_

The psalm, then, has two major divisions.

1. The psalmist makes proclamation to the congregation.
2. The psalmist leads in prayer of God.

What is the content of his proclamation?

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Note the analogy that he uses (a “desolate pit” or cistern and “slippery clay”). What is the reality behind the symbol? (What was an ancient cistern like? Use a Bible dictionary.)

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We do not know David's actual situation at this time. What do you think he was feeling?

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What is the sequence of events in verses 1-4? (Note that it is not necessarily the listed order. David, first, cried out, then the Lord inclined his ear.)

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What was the result of David's deliverance? \_\_\_\_\_

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What relationship does the first line of the psalm have to the rest of David's proclamation (*cf. Hebrews 6:12*)?

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What relationship does verse 4 have to the proclamation? (The verb "*made* the Lord his trust" indicates determination or an act of the will.)

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What is the significance of the explicit contrast in verse 4? (The Hebrew word, גִּבּוֹר, translated *man*, is the word for a strong or heroic man.) The *proud* are the self-sufficient; the *falsehood* is the lie that man is adequate in himself.

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Now, let's observe the second unit of thought (verses 5-17). What is the content of these verses? (What is the first stage of David's prayer?)

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You will note two primary ideas: God's wonders (His miracles) and God's thoughts (His plans or intentions). What do you observe about these two ideas? Why are they significant?

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What relationship does verses 6-8 have to verse 5 (*cf. Romans 12:1, 2*)?

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What do verses 6-8 say about God's ultimate intention for us? (What is God's will?)

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What did this statement mean to David? (Think again about David's circumstances as he describes them in this psalm. Look at verse 2 and 11-17).

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What does it mean to you? (Are you in the *pit* waiting for God's deliverance? What is God's will for you now? Do you delight in it?)

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On what or whom are you depending for deliverance? (Are you turning to the *proud*? Are you waiting patiently for the Lord?)

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The New Testament sees another application of this psalm. Read *Hebrews* 10:5-7. How did that writer view these verses? (The phrase “a body you have prepared for me” is an interpretative translation of the psalm’s “my ears you have opened”. Both are idioms for obedience.)

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Read again verses 9-17. Note two divisions: verses 9 and 10 and verses 11-17. What is the relationship between these two units? (Note the implied contrast between what David has said to the congregation and what he now needs.)

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Observe the conjunction “*for*” that introduces verse 12. Why is David in need of God’s deliverance? What put David in the *pit*?

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What distinction do you see between the *evil* that surrounded David and *his iniquities* that had overtaken him?

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Verses 13-17 are the final portion of David's prayer. For what does he pray?

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What does he state about the Lord? About himself?

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What does this psalm teach us about our perspective while in the *pit*?

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What puts us there? What keeps us there?

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What should our attitude be towards God's delays (*cf. Galatians 6:9* "in due season")?

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# UNIT 3

## UNDERSTANDING OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM LITERATURE



*Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and certain passages in Psalms (1, 37, 49, 73, 78, 91, 128, 133, and 139) make up the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.*

These writings preserve, in one form or another, the observations of generations of Hebrew wise men, who were spiritually perceptive observers of human life and nature. Read the following verses. What do you observe?

*Job 12:7-13* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Job 28:23-28* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Proverbs 2:1-6* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Proverbs 3:13-26* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Proverbs 8:22-31* \_\_\_\_\_

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Wisdom literature was well established in the ancient world. Note these verses. What do you observe?

*Acts 7:22* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*I Kings 4:30* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Isaiah 19:11, 12* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Jeremiah 49:7* \_\_\_\_\_

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Obadiah 8 \_\_\_\_\_

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Job 1:3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 47:10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ezekiel 28:3ff \_\_\_\_\_

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While the Old Testament scorns the idolatry and superstition that debased much of this wisdom (*Isaiah* 47:12, 13) and the pride that inflated it (*Job* 5:13), it does speak of the ancient gentile sages in terms of respect never shown to pagan prophets and priests. It even appears that some of the wisdom material in the Old Testament is adapted from proverbial statements in general circulation in the ancient world, principles that were first enunciated by pagan sages. However, wisdom in the Bible was very selective in using this material, recognizing the presence of truth in the world but discarding its pagan error. Biblical wisdom is based on God's law and, therefore, was free from idolatry and the inhumane elements frequently found in pagan wisdom literature.

The term, חִכְמָה (chokmah), *wisdom*, in the Old Testament originally meant *skill* or *expertise*. Observe how the word is used in these passages.

*Isaiah* 40:20 (translated "skillful") \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Jeremiah* 9:17 ("wailing women" those "skilled in mourning") \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Exodus* 28:3 ("skillful" — wise of heart) \_\_\_\_\_

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The term, *wise*, eventually came to mean *one who is skillful at life* or *one who has learned the art of shrewd and successful living*. The wise man, therefore, was one who had learned to order his affairs and cope with his circumstances. *Proverbs* 1:5 reads, "A *wise* man will hear and increase in learning and a man of understanding will acquire skillful guidance." The expression, "skillful guidance", translates from one Hebrew word that means "steering" or the "art of steering". In other words, the truly wise man was one who could pilot himself through life. He could handle every circumstance with skill and precision. He was, in effect, in control of his affairs, his time, and himself.

One writer, Derek Kidner, points out in his book, *The Proverbs* (Inter Varsity Press), that wisdom deals with character traits too small to be caught in the mesh of the law (13). *Proverbs*, for example, asks, "What is it like to employ or live with that person? Does this good lady talk too much? Is that cheerful soul bearable in the early morning? And what advice should I give my friend who is always dropping in...and for that rather aimless lad?" Wisdom, therefore, gives man practical guidelines for his behavior—teaching him to be at home in nature, ethics, politics, art, and almost every realm of human experience.

Wisdom was based on the fact that, at the bottom of things, there is order. In other words, there are laws at work which can be discerned. Wisdom literature was an attempt to recognize and formulate these truths and put them to their proper use. It was based on observation and analysis of human affairs, and its conclusions were the result of experimentation in life itself. Wisdom was practical knowledge of the principles governing life.

Wisdom literature was not intended to lead men to God. These writings *assumed* the knowledge of God. (“The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of knowledge.” *Proverbs* 1:7). The starting place, as we have already observed, was faith. These truths existed for Israel to teach them how to live in the world as God’s people and function as wholesome, attractive, and productive individuals.

It is important to know that the wisdom writings are general observations about life and the nature of things. They are not attempts to reduce all of life to simple rules and regulations nor are they to be taken as promises or procedures which guarantee success.

For example, what principle does *Proverbs* 10:27 establish? \_\_\_\_\_

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Does that principle hold true in every circumstance? No, of course, it does not. We can all produce an exception to this rule. These are not promises but *MAXIMS*—general observations about life. They are not intended to be understood as unvarying truths. In general, they are true, but there may be exceptions. They are not rules or laws but statements about the nature of things—not promises but *premises*, truths that are generally assumed.

The best example of wisdom literature, and certainly the best known to most of us, is the book of *Proverbs*, which contains the longest title of any book in the Old Testament (1:1-6). In many ways this title is similar to the preface of a modern literary composition, supplying the name and position of the author, as well as the nature, scope, and purposes of the writing. The shorter title is simply *The Proverbs of Solomon*.

The word “proverb” in English indicates a pithy saying or terse maxim. The Hebrew title, מִשְׁלֵי (Mashal), however, comes from a verb meaning “to be like” or “to resemble” and has a much wider range of meaning. Originally, Hebrew proverbs may have been stated as similes, comparing truth in one sphere with truth in another; (“Like the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed.” *Proverbs* 26:14). Eventually, these proverbs assumed other literary forms found in our present Biblical collection. The force of the proverb lies in its concentration of truth in a terse and striking way, so that it catches the listener’s attention and is easy to remember. Its purpose is not to explain a truth, but to pointedly express it in a memorable way. This is done by the use of short incisive statements that associate and contrast certain facts of everyday experience. (“The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he wishes.” *Proverbs* 21:1).

As in Hebrew poetry, parallelism occurs in the proverbs as the main structural feature. Most common is the *contrastive proverb* (sometimes called the antithetic proverb). This particular form emphasizes a truth by setting it in contrast with some other fact. Proverbs of this type almost invariably begin the second line with “but”.

A false balance is an abomination to the Lord,  
But a just weight is His delight.

*Proverbs* 11:1

Then there are proverbs that are *synonymous* in their structure in that the second line of the proverb agrees with the first and may add to it or carry the thought to some further point. These proverbs are also *completive proverbs*.

Commit your works to the Lord,  
And your plans will be established.

*Proverbs* 16:3

Other proverbs are *comparative* or analogous in their structure. Frequently, they will contain the word “like” in one of the lines:

Like a city that is broken into without walls  
Is a man who has no control over his spirit.

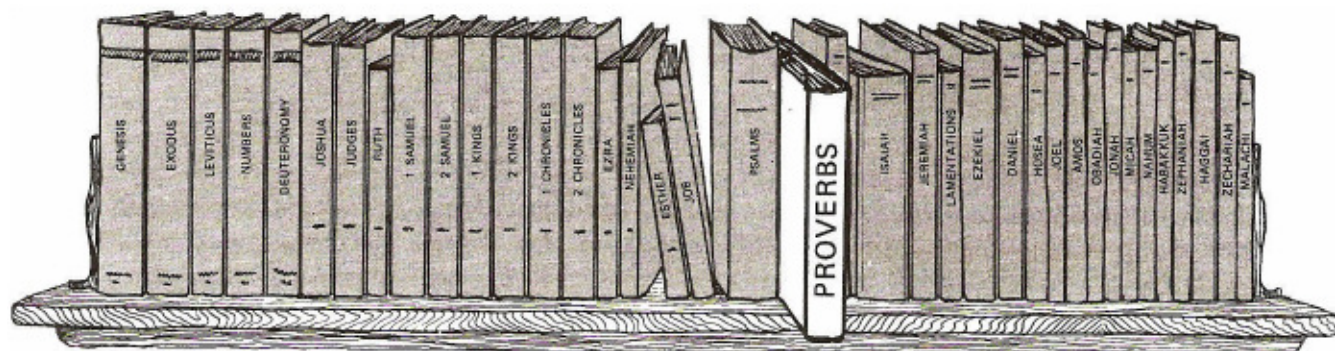
*Proverbs 25:28*

A further type, not found in other poetic books of the Bible (i.e. *Job, Psalm, Ecclesiastes*) is the *parabolic proverb*, in which one or more factual elements are related to a moral principle.

A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,  
and a rod for the back of a fool.

*Proverbs 26:3*

# A STUDY OF PROVERBS 5



Now, with that brief introduction, let's look specifically at the book of *Proverbs*.

The purpose of the book was to furnish instruction for the youth of Israel. In ancient Israel it was customary for young men and women to be taught within the family circle. It appears that these proverbs constituted a sort of handbook of instructions for fathers. ("Hear my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching." *Proverbs* 1:8). In the upper-class families, the young men were given more specific instruction aimed at the development of faith and character in a program based on the book of *Proverbs* and other similar writings of the sages and wise men of Israel (cf. *Jeremiah* 18:18).

There is little doubt that most of the proverbs are from Solomon. The book opens with the words: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel." Chapter 10 also begins "The proverbs of Solomon." Likewise, Chapter 25 begins, "These are the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah transcribed." The book is mainly from Solomon (cf. *1 Kings* 4:32) and was probably arranged in its present form during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah. The section from 22:17 to 24:34 (a collection of the ancient wisdom of Israel attributed to "the wise" and probably not Solomonic), along with the oracles of Agur and Lemuel's mother, were included at the same time.

Read *Proverbs* 5:1-23 at least 5 times.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

What is the theme of this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

Note that there are three major paragraph divisions (1-6; 7-14; 15-23). What is the theme of each paragraph?

1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7-14 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15-23 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In the first verse the son is given two commands. What type of parallelism is employed?

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Note that verse 2 begins with the conjunction “*that*”—signifying result. What should be the result of this instruction (to “reserve knowledge”—to make a resolution)? What do verses 1 and 2 teach us about the decision to avoid immorality?

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Verse 3 begins with the word “*for*”. What does that conjunction indicate about this decision?

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Note the description of the adulteress in 3-6. How is she characterized? (Note the contrast between 3 and 4; the synonymous parallelism throughout and the progressive disenchantment).

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What is her fundamental error (6)?

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Read 7-14 again. Observe the commands. What are they? (Again, note the parallelism.)

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What relationship do verses 9-14 have to verse 8? \_\_\_\_\_

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What does he say about the results of non-compliance? Be specific. What does each statement mean? What would be the present day meaning? Look for progress in his argument.

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Observe now the commands in verses 15-23. What are they? \_\_\_\_\_

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Observe the imagery that he employs in verses 15-23. What symbols are used and how do you interpret them?

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How does he describe his bride? \_\_\_\_\_

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Note the conjunction that introduces verse 20. What relationship does this verse have to the verses that precede it?

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Again, verse 21 and the following verses are introduced by “for”. A further reason for fidelity is brought forward. What is it?

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Review again the commands in 7-23. What is the emphasis of 7-14? of 15-23? \_\_\_\_\_

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How then can one avoid adultery? \_\_\_\_\_

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Compare *1 Thessalonians* 4:1-8 (*vessel*—wife, and “transgress and defraud his brother in this matter”—breaking the 7th commandment). What comparisons and contrasts with *Proverbs* 5 can you see?

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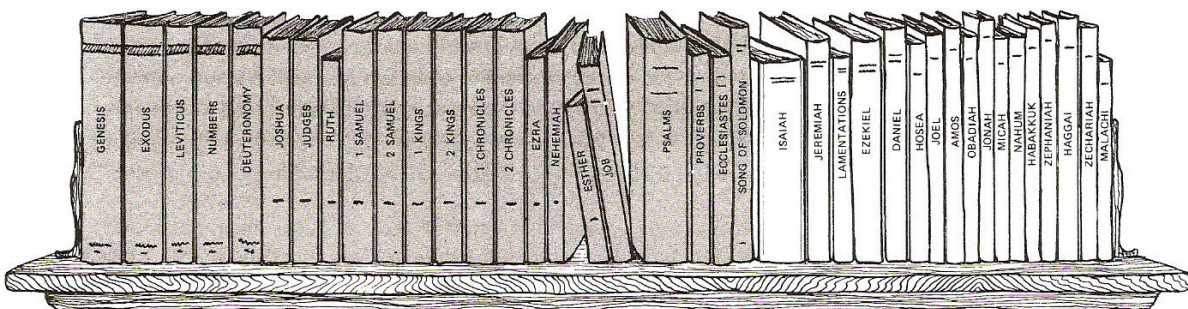
What steps in obedience do you need to make? \_\_\_\_\_

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# UNIT 4

## UNDERSTANDING OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETIC LITERATURE



### THE ROLE OF PROPHECY IN ISRAEL

According to *Hebrews* 1:1, the Old Testament is essentially the product of the prophets. Assuming that these prophets were God's spokesmen, the Old Testament is much more than a *history* of the nation of Israel. It is a revelation from God! The great events of Israel's history—the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the establishment of the Monarchy, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the Exile in Babylon—are essentially God's acts in history through which He has made Himself known. This may explain why the Hebrews referred to the books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings* as the *Former Prophets*. They recognized that the authors of these books were not merely writing history but were speaking prophetically. The books are certainly historical, but the primary purpose of these Old Testament books is not to record history but to reveal the character and purpose of God. Thus, they are fundamentally prophetic in the sense that they are a divine proclamation of God's person and God's plan to bring salvation to the earth.

That fact in itself makes the Old Testament unique. Israel's religion, unlike that of her contemporaries, was not the product of speculation, reason, or divination, but was rather the result of a revelation of God through His acts in history. Note for example *Amos* 9:7. What principle can you draw from this passage of Scripture? State it in your own words.

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Now read *Isaiah* 45:1-7. What further information does this passage give concerning God's purposes in history?

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The prophets uniformly declare that God is sovereignly directing the affairs of history toward one aim—the establishment of His kingdom on this earth (*cf. Zechariah 14:9*). God’s plan, however, is not merely to arbitrarily impose His rule on the earth but to reign in such a way that righteousness and justice is established. In other words, God plans to set everything right—to save the world. The Old Testament is the unfolding of that great plan to bring salvation to the earth through the descendents of Abraham. That purpose can be traced through the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons), through the formation of the nation under Moses, and the monarchy under David, and is brought to completion in the righteous rule of the Messiah, the Son of David. The prophets tell us that God’s ultimate purpose will not be thwarted. All things will be subject to Him. Then salvation will have come to the earth. That is God’s plan revealed by the prophets in both the Old and New Testaments (*cf. Isaiah 49:6 and Acts 13:44-49*).

God’s covenant to effect salvation through Israel is an *unconditional* covenant. In other words, it can never be ultimately frustrated by their disobedience. Theologians call it *monergistic*—a work that God alone does (“He swore by *Himself*.” *Hebrews 6:13ff*). However, God’s promise is related to Israel’s compliance. They could only be a source of blessing to the world when they were subject to the Law, and it is precisely at this point that the function of the prophets comes to light. They were initially called into being to reveal Israel’s destiny. The Law was mediated through the prophet Moses. When the nation turned away from the Law, it was the *prophets* who called them back to the Lord and the Law. “*Return*,” they cried, and that expression forms the essential substance of the prophetic message (*cf. Hosea 6:1; Zechariah 3:1 et al*).

The prophets were essentially *teachers* and *reformers*. They revealed God’s will to this people, reminded them of their unique role in the scheme of things, and then rebuked them when they failed to fulfill that historic purpose. They boldly rebuked vice, political corruption, greed, oppression, and all forms of idolatry and moral perversion. Strictly speaking, they were reformers called out in critical times to reawaken God’s people to their unique role in history and call them to compliance with God’s plan to use them to bring salvation to the world.

It is important to note that their primary role was to *minister* to their *contemporaries*. It is true that numerous predictive utterances are interwoven with their ethical declarations. However, keep in mind that these predictions, though they are timelessly relevant, were primarily intended to stir the people of the prophet’s time to obedience. It is important to determine what significance the people of that time placed on these predictions. In general, we will discover that predictive utterances were both positive and negative inducements to obey the Lord. Dire predictions of judgment are frequently joined to glorious predictions of Israel’s ultimate triumph. This prediction of the future had a two-fold purpose. It served as a warning of discipline if Israel persisted in disobedience (*Acts 13:40*), but it also promised their glory and exalted position based on God’s loyalty to His covenant oath (*cf. Micah 3:9 - 4:8*).

What do you observe about these passages?

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As an example of New Testament use of prediction, observe *II Peter 3:8-18*. Note the two divisions of this passage. (The *therefore* of verse 14 introduces a logical conclusion to the facts given in verses 8-13). How is Peter arguing for obedience?

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How does one *hasten* (verse 12) the coming of the day of God? (Note the commands in verses 14-18.)

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Therefore, Peter is reasoning like the Old Testament prophets. His predictions are given, not merely to *inform* but to *reform* those to whom he is ministering. For example, read again *II Peter* 3:8-18. If you take Peter's words seriously (and I hope you do), what practical difference will his prediction of the Lord's coming make in the way you live today?

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What does it say about your goals in life? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will it do to your system of priorities? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will it do to your attitude toward evil men and the injustice they perpetuate? \_\_\_\_\_

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Note verse 9. Why doesn't God set things right *now* (cf. verse 15)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Now, read *I Peter* 1:10-12. What additional fact do you observe regarding their predictions?

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## TO REVIEW

What was the function of the prophets in Israel? \_\_\_\_\_

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What was the relationship of prediction (fore-telling) to the prophets' proclamation to their contemporaries (forth-telling)?

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## THE ORIGIN OF THE PROPHETIC OFFICE

Higher critical scholarship has always contended that Israel borrowed her religious ideas and institutions from her Near Eastern neighbors—chiefly the Canaanites, who already had established prophetic institutions. The early Hebrew prophets, according to this view, are depicted as being in succession with the prophets of Baal, who were characterized by frenzy and manic behavior and who induced prophetic utterances by narcotics, magic, divination, and self-mutilation (*cf. 1 Kings 18*). Thus, the Old Testament prophets were simply part of a parallel development in the ancient world that gave rise to ecstatic utterances and other prophetic phenomena.

The authors of the Old Testament were aware of such occult prophecy and frequently refer to its existence in all parts of the ancient world (*cf. Exodus 7:11; Ezekiel 21:21, 22; Isaiah 2:6*). It is also a fact that these divining prophets even became entrenched in Israel and, at times, had an all-pervasive influence. However, the mere existence of the practice in the Near East in no way establishes parallel development or proves that Israel borrowed the institution from her neighbors. Indeed, the true Hebrew prophet stands out in bold contrast against the background of these pagan practices. Prophecy in Israel is a separate and unique institution.

Let's look at the evidence. Read *Leviticus* 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27. What do you observe? \_\_\_\_\_

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What observations can you make from the following passages? *Isaiah* 8:19, 20 \_\_\_\_\_

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*Jeremiah* 14:14; 27:9, 10; 29:8, 9 \_\_\_\_\_

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Ezekiel 13:1-16 \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

Zechariah 10:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

What conclusions have you formed from your own observations? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now read *Deuteronomy* 18:9-22. According to these verses, what was the fundamental distinction between a true and false prophet?  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

On what basis would Israel come to know the oracles of God? Compare in this regard the statement in *Numbers* 23:23. (Note: The verse translates literally: *There is no magic in Jacob and no divination in Israel. Now [at the proper time] it will be said to Jacob and Israel what God has done.*)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

According to *Deuteronomy* 18:9-22, what are the marks of an authentic prophet? (Take special note of verses 15 and 22.)  
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\_\_\_\_\_

What does the phrase *from your countrymen* indicate (cf. *Deuteronomy* 17:15 and *Romans* 3:2)?  
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Now read *Deuteronomy* 13:1-5. What further tests of a true prophet are suggested there (*cf. II Thessalonians* 2:9; *Revelation* 13:13-15)?

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The modern day medium, astrologer, and spiritist all have their ancient counterpart in the Near East. Man has always been fascinated by the occult and the idea of acquiring hidden knowledge that will permit him to control his environment and destiny. Such practices, however, are uniformly condemned by both the Old and New Testament prophets (*cf. Acts* 16:16 ff; 19:18-20). In addition, it is also clear that the gift of prophecy in Israel was given at God's initiative and was not the result of a self-induced state brought about by drugs, magic, and occult practices. In other words, the *oracles of God* (*Romans* 3:2) were not the products of man's discoveries but rather God's disclosures (*cf. II Peter* 1:20, 21).

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPHETIC OFFICE

The normal practice in approaching this subject is to divide the history of Hebrew prophets into two periods: (1) Pre-literary Prophets, and (2) Literary Prophets. The literary prophetic period begins in the 9th century B.C. with the ministries of the prophets whose writings are preserved in the Old Testament (*Obadiah, Joel, etc.*). The Pre-literary Prophets are those prophets who left no written records of their utterances.

Let's survey the first period of prophetic ministry. Consider the following verses and make observations as you read:

*Luke* 11:49-51 \_\_\_\_\_

*Jude* 14 \_\_\_\_\_

*Psalms* 105:15 \_\_\_\_\_

*Jeremiah* 7:25 \_\_\_\_\_

*Exodus* 15:20 \_\_\_\_\_

*Judges* 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

*II Samuel* 19:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

*II Samuel* 7:2-17 \_\_\_\_\_

*Acts* 2:29-31 \_\_\_\_\_



*I Kings 11:28-30* \_\_\_\_\_

*I Kings 16:7* \_\_\_\_\_

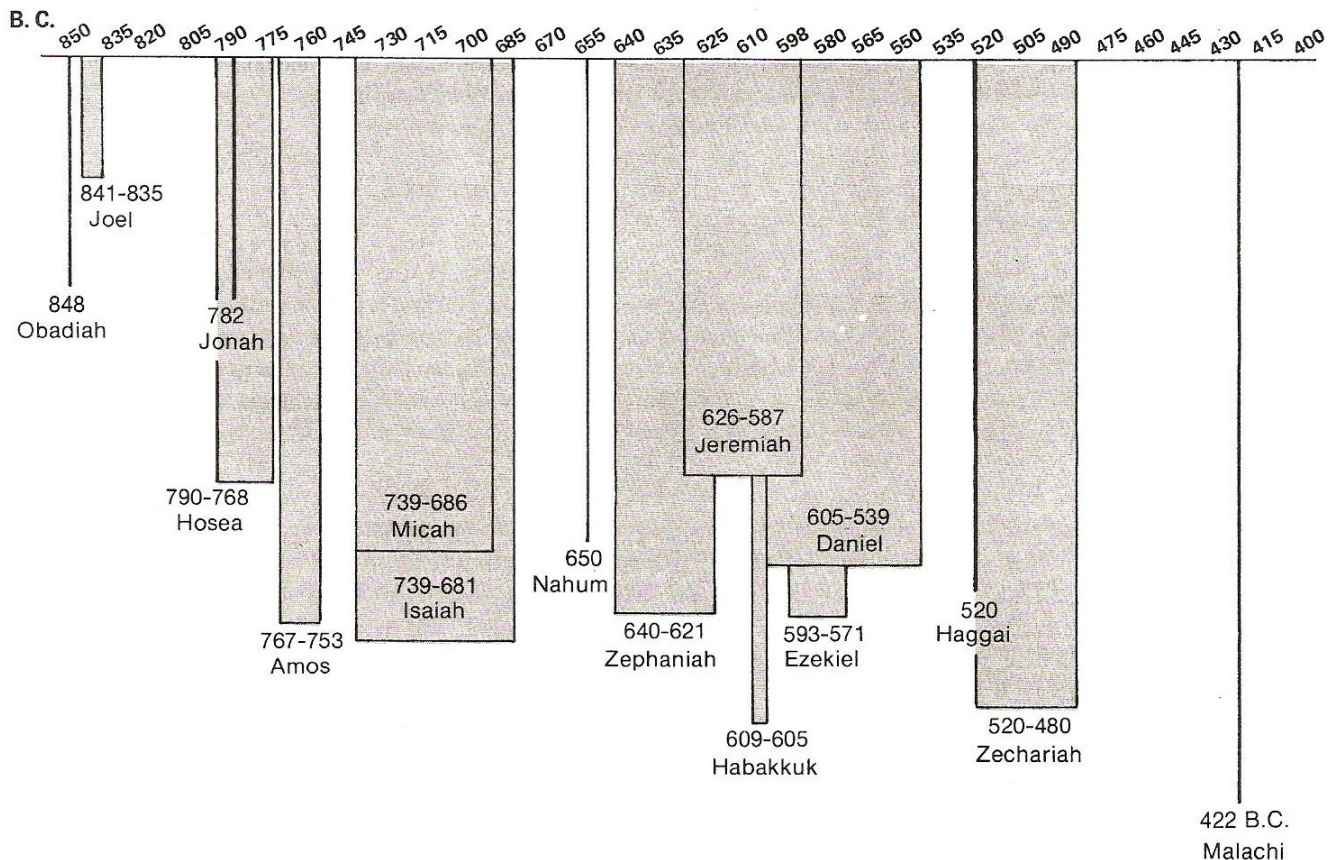
*I Kings 17* \_\_\_\_\_

*I Kings 22* \_\_\_\_\_

*II Kings 2* \_\_\_\_\_

You can readily observe from these verses that there was an unbroken succession of prophets beginning with the Fall and continuing through Israel's early history until the 9th century B.C. (It is worth noting, incidentally, that Elisha, the last non-literary prophet, began his ministry in 852 B.C. and continued to about 796 B.C., thus, overlapping the literary prophets, Obadiah and Joel.)

In the 9th century B.C., the line is taken up again in the Literary (canonical) prophets whose writings are found in Scripture. Although there are some chronological problems, their approximate dates are as follows:



You should be aware that this latter period of prophecy occurred in conjunction with the emergence of Baal worship in the nation. Baalism was introduced into the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Ahab and his infamous Phoenician queen, Jezebel (873-852 B.C.). Subsequently, it found its way into the southern kingdom of

Judah through Jehoram's political marriage with Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (850-835 B.C.). For the first time in the nation's history, Baalism, rather than the worship of Yahweh, became the state religion. The literary prophets were called to oppose this defection. Their protests, essentially attacks against the worship of Baal and other pagan deities, continued until the northern kingdom was overrun by the Assyrians (722 B.C.), and the southern kingdom was taken into Babylonian exile (586 B.C.). The final three prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) ministered after the return from Babylonian captivity. Malachi was regarded by the Jews as the last canonical prophet. For four hundred years after Malachi there was no prophetic voice in Israel (*I Macabees* 4:46; 9:27; 14:41). During this period, religious literature flourished but none of it was ever accepted by the Jews as Scripture.

On the other hand, it was firmly believed that prophecy would be revived in the Messianic age on the basis of the predictions of Joel (2:28, 29) and Malachi (4:5, 6). In addition, Moses had foretold a prophet like himself whom the Lord would send and to whom everyone must give heed or fall under God's judgment (*Deuteronomy* 18:15-19). The way was thus prepared for John the Baptist whom Jesus identified as a prophet (*Matthew* 11:9) and for Jesus Himself of whom Moses had spoken (*Acts* 3:22, 23; 7:37).

## GETTING THE PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVE

The prophetic material in the Bible can be very difficult to interpret, and it may at times defy our best efforts to unravel its mysteries (or *unscrew the inscrutables*, as someone has said). However, a basic knowledge of interpretive principles and sustained effort will, when *united with faith*, yield results. Let's try our hand, but first we need to understand something of the nature or character of prophecy. We call this *prophetic perspective*, a topic we will discuss under a number of different headings.

## PROPHECY AND HISTORY

Prophecy, first of all, is not history. It is rooted in history and deals with history, but it is to be distinguished from it. There are two fundamental errors in relating prophecy to history. The first is the notion that the so-called prophecies are merely history written after the fact. In other words, the prophetic utterances were not prophecies at all but rather history written after the events occurred. People with this viewpoint speak as though prophetic utterances merely had the *appearance* of real prediction. Thus, the authors were frauds (pious frauds, they would say) or, as an alternative, were merely employing a vivid literary style to liven up their narrative.

The real issue here is that—for the radical critics, real prediction is impossible. It simply does not fit their worldview. In a closed naturalistic universe, divine intervention of any sort is out of the question. It is their anti-supernatural bias—not hard negative emphasis from the *Bible* or history—that prompts this choice. It is not my purpose at this point to argue against this position. If this issue troubles you, there are many excellent books on the subject which you can pursue on your own. I am assuming that you are doing this study because you are convinced that God has indeed intervened and spoken in His Word and in His Son. Therefore, we take it that these are real, not *ex post facto* (after the fact), predictions.

Secondly, if we agree that prophecy is not history written after the fact, we should also know that it is not *history* written *before* the fact. History writing in the Bible lacks the enigmatic character of prophecy; it is characterized by treatment of details and their subordination to basic events in some sort of chronological arrangement. In other words, Biblical history deals with the critical details of an event presented in normal time sequence. Historians normally provide some account of the antecedents to an event, of the event itself, and of its consequences. Additionally, there is usually some attempt in all histories to relate an event to a particular period of time (*It happened in the days of . . .*). Therefore, in history you have both many particulars and a specific time frame and sequence. Prophecy, however, has to be seen from an entirely different perspective.

In the first place, time is almost inconsequential. It is true that relative time is established (*In the days of those kings... Daniel* 3:44), but absolute time is generally not given. Recall that Jesus told the disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" (*Acts* 1:7). Absolute time is the great

mystery which God has fixed but not revealed. Furthermore, *sequence* of time is not fully disclosed. Old Testament theologians are fond of saying that history is written *diachronically* (i.e., events are written as they occur in sequence in time). On the other hand, prophecy is written *synchronically* (i.e., events are portrayed simply as an event without reference to time or sequence). Everything is seen at once. Note the prophecy in *Joel* 2:28-3:3. This is the well-known passage which Peter quotes on the Day of Pentecost in defense of the believers' behavior on that holy day (*Acts* 2:17-21). You will see that Peter begins his quote with 2:28 and concludes half-way through verse 32. The passage in *Joel*, however, continues on and 3:1 is obviously connected with the preceding context (2:28-32). It appears that Peter is applying 2:28-32 to his historical time. However, 3:2ff can only be applied to the gathering of nations against Jerusalem shortly before the Second Coming. Apparently Joel has spanned the entire inter-advent period with one statement. Or, to put it another way, he has leaped over 2,000-plus years between 2:32a and 2:32b but he has not informed us of that fact. He did not say so, because he himself did not see that interval. Scripture itself alerts us to that fact (Read *I Peter* 1:10,11). What does that passage indicate about the vantage point of the prophets?

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Secondly, the prophets did not attempt to describe a future event in all of its particulars. Let's take an example. Suppose the X's below represent all the details necessary to present an adequate report of an historical event:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

If prophecy were merely history written before the event we would expect to have all or most of these details present. In prophetic utterances, however, you will find only certain details given. In fact, often the most crucial facts are missing and the picture is very incomplete. It looks something like this:

X X XX X XXX XX

This explains in part the enigmatic character of prophecy. We simply do not have all the facts to form a complete impression.

Let's take an example from Scripture. Read *Isaiah* 9:1, 2. What facts are given in those two verses?

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Now, observe Matthew's explanation of the fulfillment of this prediction in *Matthew* 4:12-16. What details does he supply?

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## PROPHECY IS PROGRESSIVE

Revelation is an expanding, unfolding thing. It is progressive in the sense that later revelation is based upon earlier foundational statements. Looked at another way, the first disclosures of any theme tend to be general and somewhat ambiguous. Later revelation on that theme is more specific and detailed. As *Hebrews* 1:2 puts it, God spoke to the fathers through the prophets in *many* (fragmentary) *portions*, but in these last days has spoken in a Son. In other words, the final message surpasses all previous revelations in magnitude and particularity. Each successive revelation fills out and expands what has gone before so that we have a much more complete picture.

This progressive element is also present in predictive prophecy. Later revelation frequently discloses elements missing from earlier statements. With each successive utterance we have progressively more material to work with until we achieve the sum total of God's revelation on that subject. By tracing a theme from *Genesis* to *Revelation* and noting each stage, we can observe the development of an idea from seed form to maturity. What initially appeared to be a very obscure and enigmatic prophecy may, as new revelation is given, become easier to interpret.

We need to keep in mind, however, that further revelation does not necessarily remove all the enigma from a predictive theme. We may see an idea develop and emerge with greater clarity, but it is the nature of prophecy to remain somewhat obscure. (Recall the foregoing discussion of prophecy and history.) We may never have all the facts and thus the picture may in the end, no matter how many facts we amass, remain unclear in its details. The sum of the matter is that, in the progressive revelation of any prophetic theme, there will always be enigmatic features, and we ought to resist the attempt to know everything and understand everything. Now we see, as the Scripture tells us, an indistinct image (*I Corinthians* 13:12) — the picture is distorted. Full disclosure awaits the Lord's return; there are some matters about which we have to remain ignorant. We know only in part. It is just as dangerous to put more on our *chart* than God put in his Word as it is to deliberately conceal or ignore what He has disclosed. Learn to be content with what is revealed in the Word — nothing more and nothing less. Remember, it was an inspired Apostle who warned us not to be *wise beyond what is revealed*.

## THE LANGUAGE OF PROPHECY

I am using the word *language* in a very broad sense to cover, not only linguistic expressions, but also imagery, customs, and descriptive terminology. The language of the Biblical prophet is always colored by his times and circumstances. He speaks to his contemporaries in their idioms and literary clichés. He uses terminology with which they are familiar. When he refers to transportation, he speaks of horses, mules, camels, chariots, and the ships of his day. When he refers to armament, he uses local contemporary military terminology (spears, bows, arrows, and shields). When he discusses worship, he speaks in terms of Hebrew worship and refers to the temple, its ordinances and the Levitical priesthood. His outlook on the world of his day is determined by Israel's enemies: Philistia, Moab, Edom, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, and the like. In short, the prophet's vocabulary is determined by the terminology of his day. The reason is simple: nothing else would make any sense. Modern military nomenclature would be nonsense to the ancients, as would any references to present day modes of transportation. Since the prophet's first task was to address the people of his day, he had to use language that was meaningful to them, even when referring to events future to their time.

Assuming the principle stated above, how shall we attempt to interpret prophecy, especially those predictions which are yet future to our times? There are three possibilities:

- (1) We may insist upon a *literal fulfillment* of all the *details* of the predictions. If a prophecy mentions horses and chariots, then we can expect the prediction to be fulfilled by means of horses and chariots. If the prophet mentions swords and spears, we can expect the conflict to be waged with those exact weapons. It seems to me, however, that if we insist on literal fulfillment of details, we may lose sight of the perspective of the prophet and the people to whom he ministered. When they thought of transportation or warfare, they thought in terms of the modes of their day, not ours. Had the prophet spoken of anything else, even if God had broadened his perspective and disclosed other kinds of armament and vehicles, it would have been meaningless to the people of his day.

- (2) A second possibility would be to insist on the *symbolic meaning* of the entire *prophecy*. In other words, the details of any prediction are irrelevant; only the general prophetic picture is applicable. Some interpreters follow this course and see the utterances of the prophets as general expressions of mankind's hopes and aspirations for a better life in the future. Others see the Old Testament predictions fulfilled in a general way in the life and mission of the Church. The problem with this approach is that it simply does not take into account the way prophecy has already been fulfilled. Where we can test the fulfillment of prophecy we discover that *details* are *important*. Take the prediction of the place of Christ's birth in *Micah* 5:1. There we are told that the ruler of Israel would be born in Bethlehem, a town too small to be numbered among the clans of Israel (less than a thousand inhabitants). In fulfillment of this prediction Jesus was born in *Bethlehem*, not just any small town in Judah. We could multiply this example many times. Is it enough to say that details are significant?
- (3) A third way of approaching prediction is in terms of *analogy* or *equivalency* — in terms of *correspondence*. We should always ask ourselves: What do the various elements of this prediction mean in terms of their counterparts at the time of fulfillment? What are the corresponding future equivalents? The task of an interpreter is to explain these details in terms of their later equivalents.

## SPECIALIZED INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES

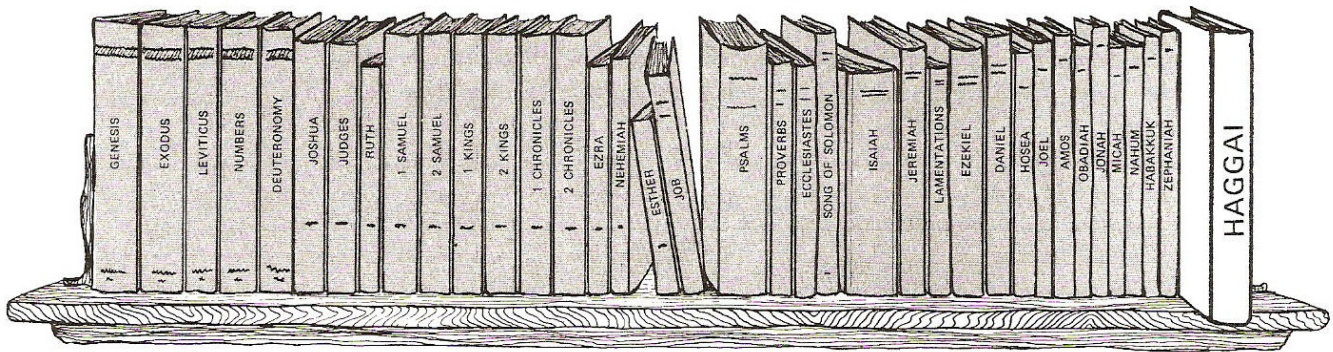
Prophecy calls for some specialized procedures. Here are a few suggestions:

- (1) Note whether the prophecy is *predictive* or *didactic* (teaching). Does the prophet deal with future things or is he primarily concerned with instructing his contemporaries?
- (2) It is helpful to *sharpen* the focus of the prophet's message. We need to see clearly to whom or about what the prophet is speaking. Is the passage addressed to the readers or to someone else? Is the message about the hearers or someone else? (The prophecy of Nahum, for example, is to Judah but it is *about* the city of Ninevah.)
- (3) Where fulfillment of prophecy occurs in the New Testament, distinguish between *direct* and *typological prediction*. *Direct prediction* consists of an Old Testament prediction which has its fulfillment *solely* in New Testament times; it has no prior fulfillment. The Birth of Christ at Bethlehem is an example. This event occurred only once in history with no historical antecedents. *Typical prediction* is an Old Testament predictive statement that refers to something prior to New Testament times but finds its final application in the people, events, and message of the New Testament. The betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver is an example (cf. *Matthew* 27:9,10; *Zechariah* 11:12,13). In Zechariah's prophecy, it is the prophet himself in his shepherding ministry who is evaluated at thirty pieces of silver. Since Zechariah is acting on God's behalf, it represents their evaluation of God Himself. Matthew cites this prophecy and applies it to Christ as a *fulfillment* of that which happened to Zechariah. In other words, this event (the betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver) is historically analogous to the event that occurred in Zechariah's day. In fact, some interpreters refer to such fulfillment as *analogical* fulfillment in contrast to direct fulfillment. Typical prediction is quite common and is extensively distributed throughout the Bible. In order to interpret it properly you must become involved in the Old Testament context and application. You must understand what the prophecy meant to the people of the prophet's day before you try to apply it to a later point in time.
- (4) If the prophecy is predictive we need to observe whether any *conditions* are attached. Jonah, for example, predicted doom for the people of Ninevah but their repentance delayed judgment for 200 years.
- (5) We also need to determine if the prediction is fulfilled or yet unfulfilled. If the prediction was fulfilled, we need to study all the material that illuminates that fulfillment. It is possible that there is yet another *analogous* (see above) fulfillment. Or the prediction may be fulfilled progressively (in stages) and the initial fulfillment may not have exhausted every element of the original prophecy. A third alternative would be multiple fulfillment of the original prediction. An example of this is the language describing the

*little horn* of *Daniel* 8 which refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, but may also accurately characterize the man who sets up the *Abomination of Desolation* referred to by Jesus in *Matthew* 24:15. It may even be that Jesus is applying the language of *Daniel* 8 both to the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in AD. 70 and to the end times when He returns, in which case the prophecy in *Daniel* 8 would have a three-fold multiple fulfillment. (Multiple fulfillment is, I believe, a better term than *double sense*. *Double sense* would imply that a prophecy has two entirely distinct meanings.)

- (6) Again, the words of the prophets should be taken in their usual literal sense, unless the context in which they are fulfilled clearly indicates that they have symbolic value. Do not automatically assume that a term has symbolic meaning merely because it appears in a symbolic setting. Assume a *literal* meaning unless you can demonstrate a *symbolic* meaning. The literal meaning, the customary and socially acknowledged meaning, must become the base for figurative meanings. Determine how the author uses the term elsewhere in the book. What meaning does he attach to it? What meanings do other writers in the *Bible* give it? If you decide that an expression is symbolic, you should be able to give sound reasons for that conclusion. If you are a careful and thorough interpreter, you will assign literal and figurative meanings to terms because the passage you are interpreting *demands* these procedures.

# A STUDY OF HAGGAI



Now let's try our hand in a prophetic study that is designed to help you work through a less predictive (fore-telling) and more declarative (forth-telling) prophecy. Our choice is the message of the prophet Haggai, because this study of an entire book will give you experience in studying larger units in the Old Testament.

Haggai is a momentous document, which is proof again that good things often come in very small packages. Although it covers a period of only slightly more than four months, it puts on record one of the crucial turning points in Israel's history and deals in principle with an issue that all of God's people must face—priorities. Let's take a look...

Read the Book of *Haggai* at least five times through at one sitting (it only has 38 verses).

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

As you read, I am sure you observed a number of chronological references in the book. Note what they are and where they occur.

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The first verse of chapter 1 locates the date of the prophecy, and this becomes the reference point for the remaining dates. The year given is the second year of Darius the King. If you check the entry *Darius* in a Bible dictionary, you will find that he ruled from 522-486 B.C. His second year then would be 520 B.C.

All the dates in the prophecy occur in that year. In fact, all the prophecies of Haggai occurred during our calendar period of August through December (sixth to the ninth month), 520 B.C., so we have a fixed reference point in history with which to work.

Now let's get some historical background. First, we must locate Haggai in the Biblical scheme of things. One way to do so is to note the names of people in the book and where they are referenced elsewhere in Scripture. Again, 1:1 is the key since it introduces the primary figures. List these primary figures.

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Scan through the book again to see if others are mentioned. There are several ways to determine if these men are referred to in other places in the Bible.

(1) Note the marginal references (if they occur in your translation) \_\_\_\_\_

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(2) Look up these names in a concordance \_\_\_\_\_

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(3) Check the appropriate entries in a Bible dictionary \_\_\_\_\_

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Assuming that you have done one or all of the above, you have discovered a cluster of references to these men in the first chapters of the Book of *Ezra*. We need to be familiar with that material because it is the basic historical source for the book of *Haggai*. Now read *Ezra* 1-6. What do you observe about the order of events in *Ezra* 1?

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You will notice immediately that the king mentioned in *Ezra* 1 is not Darius, but Cyrus. We have stepped further back into history to the time of the first King of Persia who ruled from 539-530 B.C. His *first year* (*Ezra* 1:1) would be 539 B.C. Cyrus is a most interesting character. He is mentioned by name in Isaiah's prophecy in the so-called *Cyrus Oracle* (*Isaiah* 44:24-45:13). It is predicted there that Cyrus would be God's servant to set the exiles free and restore Jerusalem (*Isaiah* 45:13).



Cyrus performed that role without even knowing that he was acting in God's will. As a matter of political policy, Cyrus, after he conquered Babylon, returned the subject people of all nations to their homes and assisted them in restoring their temples. Apparently from Cyrus' standpoint, this policy was merely political expedience. It was, however, God's way of turning the heart of the king (*Proverbs* 21:1).

Now look again at *Ezra* 1:1. Observe that Cyrus' proclamation was the fulfillment of a prophecy by Jeremiah. What are the elements of that prophecy (*Jeremiah* 25:12; 29:10-14)?

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Since the captivity began with the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C., what is the fulfillment date of this prediction?

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Now scan through *Ezra* 2. What important events are described there?

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Chapter 2 is a little confusing because it carries the history of Judah well beyond the period of Darius. Verses 6-23 describe events during the reigns of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) (486-465 B.C.) and Artaxerxes (465-424 B.C.). Verse 24, however, brings us back to the second year of Darius, or 520 B.C. Apparently, the author of *Ezra* is simply recounting other instances of opposition that occurred after Darius' time before returning to the narrative. The section: 4:6-23 can be treated as parenthetical. What events are described in Chapter 3?

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(Note that the reconstruction of the temple began in the *second year of their coming*, or 537 B.C.)

Now observe *Ezra* 4:1-5. What events are described there?

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The *enemies* mentioned in 4:1, later called the *people of the land*, were the Samaritans who lived in the province immediately to the north. They represented a mixed population who worshipped both the Lord of Israel and the gods of other lands. (For additional information research *Samaritans* in a Bible dictionary.)

Now see 4:14 for the result of their opposition. The second year of Darius was 520 B.C. Therefore, from 537 B.C. until 520 B.C., no work was done on the house of God.

Now read *Ezra* 5 and 6 and note the important elements of the narrative there.

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According to 6:15, the temple was completed on the 3rd of Adar in the 6th year of Darius or March, 515 B.C. Therefore, the chronology of this period would be as follows:

- 539 B.C. The first return from Exile under Zerubbabel
- 537 B.C. The work on the temple stopped
- 520 B.C. Haggai & Zechariah begin their ministry and the work is resumed
- 515 B.C. The temple completed

It will be helpful to read further in a Bible dictionary under the entries *Exile*, *Haggai*, or other appropriate headings. Note other helpful historical data:

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Now we have a historical framework in which to place the prophecies of Haggai and something of the spiritual and emotional state of the exiles. In summary, the conditions at the beginning of Haggai's ministry were these:

- (1) The temple, the center of Israel's worship, still lay in ruins; only the altar of sacrifice was standing. No real worship was possible, and, for all practical purposes, the priests and Levites, the spiritual leaders in the nation, were non-functional.
- (2) The climate of opposition to the rebuilding of the temple, which had originally disrupted the project, still prevailed (*cf. Ezra 5:3ff.*).
- (3) The 17 years (537-520) that had intervened since the building was stopped, had apparently sapped Israel's strength. They had, in fact, accepted the situation with resignation. The foundations now were filled with debris and overgrown with weeds. In addition, we know from secular history that upon Cyrus' death he was succeeded by Cambyses, his son, whose policies were not nearly as benevolent as his father's. He was infamous for his destruction of Egyptian temples. His reign, in contrast to Cyrus', was characterized by chaos and political upheaval and the Jews apparently lost all monetary and military backing for the temple project, which the Persian government had previously supplied. The Jews now had neither the will nor a way to rebuild. The situation seemed helpless. It is against this background of despair that Haggai begins his ministry.

Think now for a moment! What did the temple represent for Israel?

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What is the spiritual counterpart of the temple today? (*cf. I Corinthians 6:19, 20*)

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Note that they were rebuilding a wasted structure. What additional truth does that fact suggest?

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Let's analyze these prophecies further. Quickly scan again the book of *Haggai*. Note the four chronological references (1:1; 2:1; 2:10 and 2:20). Observe that each one indicates the beginning of a separate oracle or message, introduced by the formula *The Word of the Lord came*.

Observe also that the 3rd and 4th messages were delivered on the same day (24th of 9th month). The book appears like this in outline:

1.	First Message	1 <sup>st</sup> day of 6 <sup>th</sup> month	<i>Haggai</i> 1:1-15
2.	Second Message	21 <sup>st</sup> day of 7 <sup>th</sup> month	<i>Haggai</i> 2:1-9
3.	Third Message	24 <sup>th</sup> day of 9 <sup>th</sup> month	<i>Haggai</i> 2:10-19
4.	Fourth Message	24 <sup>th</sup> day of 9 <sup>th</sup> month	<i>Haggai</i> 2:20-23

Let's analyze the first chapter. In the NASB the translators have divided this chapter into three paragraphs: 1-6; 7-11; 12-15. Let's assume that their analysis is correct. Read each paragraph and entitle each one according to its content. Some things to ponder as you read: Note that the message is contained in verses 1-11. What relationship does the final paragraph (12-15) have to the first two? What is the emphasis of 1:1—6; of 1:7—11?

1:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1:7-11 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1:12-15 \_\_\_\_\_

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What do verses 1-11 reveal about prevailing conditions in Judah?

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What was Haggai's explanation of these conditions? (A play on Hebrew words links *drought* (horeb) with *desolate* (hareb) in 1:4,9. Note also the contrast between *my house* and *his own house* in verse 9.)

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How did they justify their neglect of God's house?

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Their efforts at self-preservation seem justified in view of these extreme conditions. What principle, however, is established in this first message (*cf. Matthew 6:19-34; Exodus 34:23, 24*)?

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The paragraph 12-15, as we have indicated, describes the reaction to Haggai's preaching. By unanimous decision they went to work on the house of God to rebuild it. For some unknown reason they were delayed for 23 days (1:15). Perhaps they were occupied in the harvest, which occurred in the 6th month, or it may have taken that period of time to complete other personal projects. By the end of the month, however, they had begun to clear debris from the site and gather the materials to rebuild.

Observe that they are now called *the remnant*, a word especially characteristic of Isaiah's prophecy. In the vision described by Isaiah (6:1-13), he was warned of the destruction of the temple and the captivity from which only a remnant would return (*Isaiah 6:11-13*). Also his son's name, *shear-Jashub*, meaning *a remnant will return* was symbolic of the central theme in his preaching (*Isaiah 7:3; 10:21; 11:11*). However, the return meant more than mere presence in the land. According to Isaiah, the term *remnant* signified a return to *obedience* to God (the Hebrew word *return* also means *repent*), as Haggai and his contemporary, Zechariah, knew (*cf. Zechariah 1:3*). Now that the exiles obeyed the voice of the Lord they had in fact *returned* and could be designated the *remnant*.

Some things to observe in this paragraph (1:12-15):

With what are Haggai's *words* equated (12)? What is inferred?

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What is the prophetic word today (*Hebrews 1:1; II Peter 1:12-21*)?

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What occurred once the Jews registered their intention to carry out Haggai's instructions (13)?

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What was behind the willing response of the leaders and people (14 *cf. Zechariah 4:6*)?

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What then, does this paragraph suggest about the nature of obedience?

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The issue in this first message is the order of importance that we assign to various elements in our life. What are your priorities? Honestly rank them in order of importance to you. *Consider your ways.*

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| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

Chapter 2, as noted before, contains the three remaining messages in the book. The second message occurs in the first paragraph (2:1-9). It was nearly a month after the work was begun that Haggai delivered this 2nd address. Read it again to refresh your thinking.

What is the problem that he now faced?

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Let's add some facts. During the weeks since the work was begun, they must have concentrated on clearing rubble from the site, testing walls, quarrying stone, and completing other physically demanding tasks. It was hard work in difficult circumstances. They had no money to import craftsmen from abroad, nor could they hope to match Solomon's achievements of the first temple (*I Kings* 5:1-7:51). The account there of Solomon's workforce, materials, and building efforts will give you some basis for comparing the two structures.

Note that the seventh month was marked by the observance of major feasts or festivals. Read *Leviticus* 23:23-44. What do you observe? How many actual workdays occurred?

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Observe again the date of Haggai's second message. At what point in Israel's religious calendar does it fall (*cf. Haggai* 2:1; *Leviticus* 23:39-44)?

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What were the Jews doing for the seven days prior to Haggai's message? What is the significance of the *Feast of Booths* (*Deuteronomy* 16:13-15)? What was the state of their harvest? What was the lesson God wanted Israel to learn?

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Now look closely at the message. Haggai first addresses the problem of their discouragement in 2:3. Apparently there were revered elders there who had seen the first temple in its glory and must have spoken nostalgically of its beauty. To them the rebuilding efforts seemed insignificant and their gloom soon affected all the people.

How does Haggai approach the problem? (Note the commands in verses 4 and 5. *cf. Mark 6:50*)

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Note the conjunction “*for*” which introduces verse 6. What relationship do verses 6-9 have to verses 4 and 5?

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For what reasons should these discouraged people take courage and work?

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The phrase *once more, in a little while* is merely an encouragement to wait a little longer. In a short interval God would begin to shake the world and bring to this temple the wealth of all nations. Then its later glory would exceed the former.

Remember *Ezra* 6:8-12? What is significant about those verses?

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This provision probably arrived just after Haggai’s claim that the wealth of the nations belonged to God and they would finance the temple from those treasuries!



What principle underlies this promise (*cf. Philippians 4:19*)?

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This second temple was the basic structure on which Herod the Great and his successors lavished their wealth. The temple of Jesus' day, which so impressed the disciples (*Mark 13:1*), was the *greater structure*, which Haggai predicted. It had a greater glory than Solomon's temple, but chiefly because the Lord of the Temple appeared there (*John 1:14-18*). And it was *in this place* that God did indeed make peace. The name of Jerusalem, incidentally, means, *City of Peace*. It was God's intention that the temple there be the source from which peace would emanate. Jerusalem would be the center around which all nations would be gathered in peace (*Ephesians 2:11-22*).

Now for the purposes of application, let's think back over this message. The issue in Chapter 1 is *disobedience*. The issue here is *discouragement*. In chapter 1 they were not doing the will of God. Now they are doing it but not seeing any results! What is the counterpart in our experience (*Haggai 2:3*)? Keep in mind the significance of temple building.

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What is Haggai's word to us (*Haggai 2:4, 5*)?

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What is God's promise (*Haggai* 2:6-9, *cf. Philipians* 1:6)

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The paragraph 2:10-19, as already noted, contains the third message. Read the paragraph again.  
What is the problem now? (Note verse 19).

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What had the people been doing for the past 2 months?

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What teaching method does the prophet use? (Note: the priests were the interpreters of the Law).

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What is the point of the prophet's actions (*cf.* 14)? What principle does he intend to establish?

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What truth does this message establish for you (*cf. Ephesians* 2:8, 9)?

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On what basis does God bless us? (Note the statement *from this day*.)

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Do you ever feel that God owes you something (e.g. health, security, companionship...)? On what is that feeling based?

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How do we deal with those feelings?

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The final message is found in the paragraph 2:20-23.  
Who was Zerubbabel? (Refresh your thinking.)

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What is a signet ring (or seal)? (Refer to Bible dictionary.)

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Compare *Jeremiah* 22:24. What do you observe?

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What was the problem now? (Recall the historical situation. How would tiny Judah feel?)

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What did God promise?

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What promise does God hold out to us when we are shaken (*Philippians 1:6; I Peter 5:10*)?

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What is the basis of our stability (*cf. Romans 5:17*)?

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Now let's review.

1. August 29 (1:1-15)

a. The Problem \_\_\_\_\_  
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b. The Solution \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. October 17 (2:1-9)

a. The Problem \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. The Solution \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. December 18 (2:10-19)

- a. The Problem \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. The Solution \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. December 18 (2:20-23)

- a. The Problem \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. The Solution \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What message is most significant to you now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you need to do in response? What will you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# SECTION 3

## **A HEART TO KNOW THE WORD** **How to Study the New Testament**

We will now move to a study of the New Testament book of *II Timothy*. Don't short yourself in these studies, but rather use the tools you have been working with to get all you can from every chapter.





## FORWARD

People have always been curious—and skeptical—about God's communication. Some mystics have taught that the Scriptures are enigmatic and obscure; others have distorted them for their own purposes.

Those with teachable hearts have found God amazingly articulate; yet His simple, direct Word, incarnated by His Son and made understandable by His Holy Spirit, is still hazy to many believers who deeply desire to hear from heaven. This kind of hunger has always moved God to sharpen the focus, as He did when Ezra clarified the law to the man on the street in Israel. He continues to be responsive to eager students of His Word.

Being under the Word of God is no substitute for being in the Word for one's self. This volume is one more challenge to first-hand Bible study. The instructions and approach are uncomplicated, but its simplicity does not sacrifice accuracy in handling Biblical truth.

Expert instruction always involves the use of probing questions. The questions are here, and for the reader who will slip into the harness and seek answers, rich veins of spiritual treasure await.

A word of caution: As you study this book you may have a tendency to shortcut. Resist the temptation and watch for the results! They will come, just as they did for Ezra (*Neh.* 8:8, 12).

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Dallas Theological Seminary



## THE ANGLE OF APPROACH

*God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be **homo unius libri** [a man of one book].*

-John Wesley, From *Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions*, 1746

Most Bible study is passive in the sense that we participate in the results and conclusions of someone else's study of the word. Our teachers tell us what *they* have come to know.

It is good to learn from others, and certainly, we should listen to those whom God has called and gifted to study His word and impart its truths to us. We should welcome all instruction, assuming that it is in agreement with the Word of God.

However, to exist *solely* on another's teaching is a mark of spiritual immaturity. The author of *Hebrews* has this to say about those who are unduly dependent on others: *For though by this time you ought to be teachers you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and have come to need milk and not solid food (Hebrews 5:1)*. There comes a time when everyone should nourish himself or herself from the Word, rather than depend on others. Our spiritual growth depends on it!

It is that fact that prompted me to write this study. I want you to experience the joy of discovery and the growth in grace that is the product of those discoveries. In this way the word becomes *your* word and uniquely *your* message to others.

This is a study, then, for those who are tired of being told what to believe and who want to learn for themselves. May their tribe increase!

## GOING FOR THE GOAL

We were made to know God, made manifest in Jesus Christ—to love Him and to be loved forever. That is the purpose for which all other purposes exist.

The problem with some of us is that we get the process confused with the purpose. We assume that the aim of Bible study is to know the Bible. We are more concerned with what God said than with the God who said it.

Jesus warns us, as He warned the scribes and Pharisees of His day, preoccupied as they were with mere Bible study: *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life*" (John 5:39, 40).

Paul would agree: He encourages Timothy to be an approved workman *who correctly handles the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15)*. The verb translated *correctly handles* means *to go straight to the goal*.<sup>4</sup> Paul then contrasts the methodology of those who were engrossed in aimless analysis and discussion that, he says *is of no value, and only ruins those who listen (2:14)*. Further, such *godless chatter* makes us *more and more ungodly (2:16)*.

Paul therefore warns Timothy to *flee the evil desires of youth (2:22)*—the passion of the immature to fix on mere knowledge. Those who mishandle the Scriptures in this way are *workmen who ought to be ashamed*.

The approved worker, on the other hand, will *pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a purified heart (2:22b)*. Approved women and men seek God and His goodness through His Word. To do so is to go for the goal!

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<sup>4</sup>It was used, for example, by classical writers of workers cutting a road straight through a forest to a predetermined location. The Septuagint (the first Greek translation of the Old Testament) used the word in the last phrase of that familiar proverb: *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths* [to the goal] (*Proverbs 3:6*).

The purpose of Bible study, then, is clear: It should engender worship and God-likeness. To the extent that we read the Scriptures to that end, our reading is valid. To the extent that we do not, it is counterproductive. Thus we pray with the hymn writer, Mary Ann Lathbury, “Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee, Lord; / My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word” (“Break Thou the Bread of Life”, 1877).

## THE NECESSARY PREREQUISITE

A.W. Tozer wrote, “God is a person who can be known in an increasing degree of intimacy if we prepare our hearts for the wonder of it” (*The Pursuit of God*, 1945). There is the reality—God is a living person who can be known. But, ah, there is also the difficulty! We long for intimacy, and God responds to the slightest approach, but we are only as close as we want to be.

God will not foist Himself upon us. The consistent witness of Scripture is that He withholds Himself from those who do not want Him (*Isaiah* 6:9, 10; 8:16, 17; *Matthew* 13:10-17), but He lavishes Himself on *those who love Him* (*I Corinthians* 2:9).

The measure we give is the measure we get. Moses forewarns us, *If you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him, if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul* (*Deuteronomy* 4:29). Our progress toward God depends on our determination to know Him and love Him. The main thing is to want God very much, as the psalmist did:

*One thing I ask of the Lord,  
this is what I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
and to seek Him in His temple.*

—*Psalms* 27:4

We must be honest with ourselves. Do we desire God or not? As Augustine concluded, “*The entire life of a good Christian is nothing less than holy desire*” (*Commentary on the First Letter of John*). The knowledge of the Holy comes from the heart. God reveals Himself to those who yearn for Him: *Blessed are the pure (focused) in heart, for they (and they alone) will see God* (*Matthew* 5:8).

## UNIT ONE: UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

### (1) Select a unit of study

The first step in Bible study is to select a unit of study. The unit may be a verse, paragraph or chapter, or several chapters, but it should be one cohesive unit of thought. Normally, a paragraph is a good place to begin.

Be warned, however: the verse, paragraph, and chapter divisions are not always accurate in terms of the argument of a passage. These divisions are not part of the original text but were added later for the sake of convenience (the chapters were added in A.D. 1205; the verses in A.D. 1571). Do not rely on the accuracy of these artificial breaks. They are, however, a good place to begin an analysis of a text.

### (2) Read and reread the text

This is almost certainly the most strategic step in the process, yet this is where many of us fall short. We simply do not read the text enough times to observe what is really there.<sup>5</sup> There are no shortcuts to accurate observation. It comes through patient reading and reflection. Every text needs to be brooded over. The more times you read—the more you will see. Each reading produces a sharper image of the details of the text. So read and reread (preferably aloud) five to ten times. As Howard Hendricks says, “You may wear yourself out but you’ll never wear out the text!” (*Living by the Book*, 1993).

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<sup>5</sup>“What things would you do by yourself if your life depended on understanding something readable which at first perusal left you somewhat in the dark?”—Mortimer Adler, *How to Read a Book*.

Always have paper and pen handy to jot down your observations, or you may wish to note your observations in your Bible as you read. As you read, ask the Lord to open your eyes in order that you may behold *wonderful things* in His Word (*Psalms* 119:18).

**(3) Observe the literary context of the text**

The next step is to place the passage in its proper context in the book in which it is found. Read the paragraphs immediately before and after the unit you are studying. You should then expand the setting by reading the chapters that precede and follow the unit. You can then further enlarge the context if that becomes necessary. In some cases, it may be essential to read the entire book or the major section of the book in which your unit of study is located. However, for practical reasons, it is usually sufficient to include only the immediate context.

Note particularly any conjunctions, such as *therefore* or *but*, or other grammatical devices that indicate the relationship of your text to the preceding context. Also note any conjunctions connecting the passage you are studying to the following context. Conjunctions that introduce the next paragraph can often supply further interpretive material.

The purpose of establishing the literary context of any passage is to keep you from interpreting the passage in isolation from its overall context. The authors of the Bible were reasonable men and developed their material logically. The unit you are studying is usually only a part of that argument. It is essential, therefore, to understand their reasoning as a whole and not merely in its parts.

**(4) Observe the historical-cultural context of the text**

The next step is to establish the historical-cultural context of the text you've chosen. That means you have to dig up the past and uncover everything you can about the circumstances, customs, manners, and history that inform the author's words.

The Bible is rooted in history. These things *happened* (*I Corinthians* 10:6). All Scripture, then, is colored by place, time, circumstances, and the prevailing cultural views and attitudes of its time.

Get to know the author and those he is addressing. Learn to state specifically *to whom* or *to what* a text refers. Try to transfer mentally to their time and reconstruct the environment. What were the problems they were facing? What was the political, social, and religious climate of that day? What was the purpose of the writer? These and other fundamental questions ought to run through your mind as you read and observe the passage. (Biblical commentaries, encyclopedias, and other tools can help you.)

**(5) Observe the grammar of the text**

Then, thoroughly search the selected passage itself, trying to determine the meaning of every element of the text. You have to work with language and come to grips with that old nemesis, English grammar. You have to tussle with nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech.<sup>6</sup>

It is very hard work being a good student of Scripture. As Richard Baxter put it, a Bible student must not "slightly slumber over this work, but do it vigorously, and with all [his] might; and make it [his] great and serious business" (From the Dedication of *The Reformed Pastor*, 1656).

**(a) Take the Bible literally.**

Because I take the words of Scripture seriously, I am sometimes asked if I take them literally.<sup>7</sup> When I am asked this question, my usual answer is, "Why, yes, of course! Don't you?" I answer this way because I want to focus on the fact that the Bible ought to be read like any other piece of literature.

Normally, we interpret language in its plain meaning, which is what we mean when we say we take something literally. The term, *literal*, comes from the Latin, *littera*, meaning *letter*. To interpret something literally is to assume a conventional meaning for the letters. In other words, the meaning of a text is understood by applying normal rules of grammar, syntax, context, and conventional speech.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 4, "English Grammar Review."

<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the way the question is put suggests I still have training wheels on my bike.

Language is predictable. There are identifiable patterns and characteristics that we use every day in interpreting the newspapers and books we read, the letters we receive, and every other form of verbal communication that we carry on. We cannot make words mean anything we want them to mean. Words are subject to the laws that govern language.

For example, we do not normally read English words from right to left or diagonally across the page, nor do nouns become verbs and pronouns become adjectives. History does not convert to parable, and narrative prose does not mysteriously become allegory. We assume an ordinary and conventional meaning for every word in the text. We seek no hidden meanings; we do not assign arbitrary meanings to words, but understand them in an ordinary way. Human language is useful simply because it is predictable and kept that way by rules of grammar. It is these same rules that apply to our interpretation of Scripture.

The structure of the Bible is no different from the language of any human document. The inspired authors used verbs, nouns, and prepositions following the normal laws of grammar and syntax that most of us learned in elementary school, and the language of those authors has been preserved virtually intact in our modern translations.<sup>8</sup>

This is not to say that the Bible is a merely human book. It is not. The books of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration and are the written word of God. Thus, the Bible is a unique book, unlike any other piece of literature. This fact is pivotal to our evangelical faith. However, the Bible was given in human words in ways that do not violate the conventions of language. The reason is apparent—God wants us to be clear about who He is and how we can know Him.

The task of interpretation, then, is to understand human language and how it works. We must know the meaning of words and the exact relationship which these words have to one another.

**(b) Observe words.**

Look up obscure words in an English language dictionary or Bible dictionary. Or you may want to define their use in Scripture by means of a Bible concordance. You can look up any word in the passage you are studying, determine where it is used elsewhere in Scripture, and how it is used by the particular author you are studying. Note, first, how he uses the word elsewhere in the book you are studying (if it occurs). Then note how he uses it in other of his writings. And then observe how other writers use the term in other portions of Scripture.

The surest guide to the meaning of the word is how the author uses the term in the particular book you are studying. For example, if you were trying to determine the meaning of the term *entrusted* in *II Timothy* 1:12, a concordance would reveal that the word occurs three times (1:12, 13; 2:2). You should first observe how Paul uses the term in *II Timothy*.

Then the concordance would alert you to the fact that the same word occurs a number of times in *I Timothy*. Because both books are written by Paul we can assume that he would use the term consistently; thus, we can learn something about the word by its use in his first letter. Then, you could look for other occurrences of the word in other New Testament books—first, those written by Paul and then those written by other authors.

Another way to define words is to compare your translation with another version. For example, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation of *II Timothy* 1:13 reads, “Retain the standard of sound words which you heard from me.” Another translation reads, “What you heard from me, keep as a pattern [or example] of sound teaching.” Comparing translations will help you understand the shades of meaning of the original words behind the translation.

At times, the very passage you are studying may define an unknown or difficult word. In *II Timothy* 3:17 the term *adequate* is defined by the phrase “equipped for every good work.”

**(c) Note the order and sequence of words.**

The order of words in a sentence, particularly words that are arranged in series can be significant.

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<sup>8</sup>cf. Appendix 3, “The Reliability of the New Testament Documents.”

For example, *II Timothy* 3:10, 11

But you followed my *teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, sufferings*, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me.

The arrangement of these terms seems to be deliberately sequential and suggests that Paul is leading Timothy to a particular conclusion (*i.e.* that following Paul's example will lead inevitably to suffering).

**(d) Note repeated words.**

Is the same word (or synonymous or similar words) repeated? Repetition of a term or idea may give you a clue to the meaning of a passage. For example, read this brief description from *II Timothy* and note the number of times the same word occurs:

For men will be *lovers* of self, *lovers* of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, *unloving*, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, *lovers* of pleasure rather than *lovers* of God.

-*II Timothy* 3:2-4

Thus, the problem with the world is misdirected love; men and women love themselves rather than God.

**(6) Interpret the text**

As E.D. Hirsch said with such guru-like simplicity, "A text means what its author meant" (*Validity in Interpretation*, 1967). And so the question for us when we approach any part of the Bible is to ask, *What did the author have in mind when he wrote?* That is not always a simple question. A complex discipline called *hermeneutics*<sup>9</sup> has developed in response to it, but here are some basic principles that anyone can follow.

**(a) Refuse to go beyond the facts.**

Good interpretation is characterized by a refusal to go beyond what is actually in the text.<sup>10</sup> In all matters where the Bible is specific we can be specific. On the other hand, where Scripture is not specific, we cannot be. In the words of John Calvin, "Let this be our sacred rule: to seek to know nothing except what Scripture teaches us; when the Lord closes his holy mouth, let us go no further" (*Calvin's Commentaries: Volume 38: Romans* 9). As an inspired apostle warns us, we must not *exceed what is written* (*I Corinthians* 4:6).

**(b) Assume the normal, socially accepted meaning of words.**

Interpret the Bible as you would interpret any piece of literature. Seek to understand it the way language is conventionally understood. Interpret history as history, poetry as poetry, and figures of speech, allegories, metaphors, and other symbolic language as you would normally expect those literary forms to be used.

The safest course is to assume a literal meaning for a text unless the context or the manner in which the words are used clearly indicate that it has symbolic value (as, for example, in poetic books). Your decision on what is literal and what is figurative must be based on the grammar, history, culture, context, and literary style of the original author.

Do not automatically assume that a term has symbolic meaning merely because it initially appears to be used figuratively. Assume that it is literal unless you can demonstrate a symbolic meaning. The literal meaning—the customary and socially acknowledged meaning—must become the base for figurative meanings. If you decide that an expression is symbolic, you should be able to give sound reasons for that conclusion. If you are a careful and thorough interpreter, you will assign

<sup>9</sup>From "Hermes," the mythical messenger of the gods.

<sup>10</sup>I'm told that one evening after dinner at one of Oxford's colleges, a porter handed an English Lord his hat. "How did you know it was mine?" the Lord asked. "I didn't," the porter responded, "I just knew it was the one you came in with."

literal and figurative meanings to terms because the passage you are interpreting demands these procedures.

**(c) Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture.**

Bring all of Scripture to bear on the passage you are studying. Other passages in the same book may be helpful, or other material by the same author may interpret a passage for you. Since the Bible is a harmonious whole, any passage has to fit into the overall teaching of Scripture. The Reformers called this principle the *Analogy of Faith*, by which they meant that truth in one portion of the Bible must correspond or be analogous to truth in other portions. In other words, the Bible agrees with itself. There are no internal contradictions. Check cross-references for parallel passages. They are indicated in the margin of most Bibles. Compare your unit of study with analogous teaching elsewhere in the Word. Discard any interpretation that clearly contradicts the uniform teaching of Scripture.

**(d) The place of devotion**

*“But,” I hear someone say, “If the Bible is to be interpreted simply by applying a few simple rules, what about prayer? Shouldn’t we seek God’s assistance in understanding the Bible?”*

My answer is, *“Of course,”* but for a different reason than most people think.

I believe almost anyone can understand the language of the Bible, given an application of the rules we apply to normal speech. Paul does say that those without God cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God (*I Corinthians 2:14*), but he was referring not to the words of the Bible but to their implication for life.

It is here that prayer plays a crucial role, and it is here that the Bible is radically different from other books. Prayer cannot help us determine the difference between prose and poetry, between nouns and verbs, or between commands and general observations about life. That understanding comes from hard mental effort, not free association, intuitive flashes, or special insight.

But prayer can lead us to understand the particular truth that we need for ourselves. I believe that is what Paul meant when he encouraged Timothy to “reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this” (*II Timothy 2:7*). Reflection on the words of Scripture and reliance on the Spirit of God enable you to see what God wants you to see.

Prayer is also essential to rid our minds of pride, prejudice, and the preconceptions to which we so doggedly cling. It enables us to hear God’s word with objectivity and susceptibility, so that we can understand what is being said to our self-will and self-reliance.

Furthermore, prayer serves to convert mere knowing into knowing God and loving Him. As Jude puts it, “But you brethren, building yourselves up on your most holy faith [the apostolic teaching], praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God” (*Jude 20*). Truth cannot be rationally assimilated; the process by which the word becomes flesh and touches our heart of hearts is supra-rational—accomplished by prayer. It is for that reason that Paul knelt before the Father and prayed that those in Ephesus who read his words (*Ephesians 1:1-3:18*) might *know* what could not otherwise be known (*Ephesians 3:19*).

**(7) Summarize the text**

At this point, you may want to summarize your conclusions. An outline may be helpful. One warning, however—do not be frustrated if some texts defy every attempt at outlining. East is not west, and any Bible interpreter has to understand that a difference exists. Paul, who was trained in Western thought and developed his ideas more logically from our point of view, is fairly easy to outline. John, whose thought is more Eastern or Semitic, is not. Therefore, if you have difficulty putting down the results of your study in a logical outline, do not be frustrated, and do not try to force the text into an artificial structure. Let it speak for itself.

In lieu of an outline, you may want to write a paraphrase of the passage or draw a map, simple diagram, or chart to summarize your findings. In any case, synopsize your work in some easily preserved and memorable format. This will help to sharpen the focus of your thinking.



**(8) Apply the truth**

It is never enough to study God's word and leave it there. Faith without works is not merely dead. As James would say, it is downright demonic! The Word was written to be believed (*John* 20:30). We must, then, give ourselves something to *believe*.

This step is the necessary conclusion of all Bible study. I have placed it last because logically it follows Biblical interpretation, but chronologically it should occur at every stage of the process. God's word is not good advice but rather a revelation to which we *must* respond. Therefore, as you study any passage of Scripture ask yourself what the text is saying to you: Is there a truth about God to ponder? Is there a promise to claim? (Be sure you understand what is actually promised!) Is there a sin to avoid? Is there a warning to heed? Is there a command to obey? You must take God's part and ask for His strength to comply.

Some sayings are *hard*, as the apostles lamented (*John* 6:60), but we must think about their meaning. As George MacDonald warns, "If we do not think about the meaning of this book [the Scriptures] our lives are a failure" (*cf. Joshua* 1:8).

**Now we are ready to go to work.**

Find a quiet place and the time when you can work without interruption. Gather the following tools:

- Bible—preferably a New American Standard Bible or a New King James
- pen and paper
- modern English dictionary
- Bible dictionary with maps and a concordance.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> If you do not have a Bible concordance or a Bible dictionary, you will still be able to do well with only an English dictionary, but you should consider purchasing both as soon as possible.



# CHAPTER 1

## *II Timothy 1*

Read Chapter 1 of *II Timothy* five times at one sitting. Record your observations.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

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What are the paragraph divisions in your Bible? Do you agree that the chapter should be divided in this manner? How would you divide the chapter?

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Verses 1 and 2 are obviously the salutation, or introduction, to the letter. Salutations to correspondence of the first century generally followed this pattern: *A (writer) to B (recipient) greeting*. What elements does Paul add that are distinctively Christian? What do these additions tell us about the apostle's work?

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Define the following using a Bible dictionary or standard dictionary:

- (a) grace \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) mercy \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) peace \_\_\_\_\_

How do these words differ?

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Verses 3-5 contain Paul's word of thanksgiving to God for his friendship with Timothy. What aspects of that relationship cause Paul to give thanks?

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---

Read 6-14 again. Note the imperatives (commands). Underscore them in your Bible. The argument in this section revolves around these verbs.

Verse 6 begins with the clause, *And for this reason*. For *what* reason? This *reason* is evidently the basis of the commands that follow. What does this fact tell us about the nature of obedience?

---

The first command, *kindle afresh*, is found in verse 6. What does the image of *rekindling* suggest?

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The *gift of God* referred to in verse 6 is either a spiritual gift (*i.e.*, a divinely given capacity for service, *cf. I Corinthians* 12:4-11; *Romans* 12:3-8) or the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Which do you think it is? Why? You may want to consult a concordance to see how Paul uses this term. Observe especially the occurrence of this word in the first letter to Timothy. Note also the context of this verse, especially verse 7.

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---

Verse 7 begins with the conjunction *for* indicating that the information in this verse explains the action in verse 6. For what reason, then, is Timothy to *kindle afresh the gift of God*?

---

---

What is the tense of the verb *has (not) given*? What does this tense indicate about the nature of the gift?

---

---

Define the following using a dictionary:

(a) power \_\_\_\_\_

(b) love \_\_\_\_\_

(c) discipline \_\_\_\_\_

The second imperative is found in verse 8. It is stated both negatively (*do not be ashamed*) and positively (*join with me in suffering*). Of what was Timothy tempted to be ashamed? Why?

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---

Verse 8 begins with another conjunction, *therefore*, indicating the verse states a logical conclusion to the preceding argument. What is the force, then, of Paul's command? On what basis is Timothy to unashamedly join with Paul in suffering?

---

---

What relationship does 9-11 have to the development of Paul's argument? At first these verses seem to be disconnected, but look again. Note the phrase, *I also suffer... I am not ashamed*. Compare with verse 8. This entire section from 8-12 appears to be one unit of thought dealing with shame and suffering, does it not? How does it fit together logically? Note the occurrence of the term *gospel* in this section. Repeated words or ideas sometimes give you the key to understanding a passage.

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---

What are the elements of the gospel as Paul enumerates them in verses 9 and 10?

---

---

Verse 12 can be translated two different ways:

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| (1) RSV  | "He is able to guard until that day <i>what has been entrusted to me</i> ." |
| (2) NASB | "He is able to guard <i>what I have entrusted to Him</i> until that day."   |

Both translations are legitimate. The Greek states ambiguously, "He is able to guard *my commitment* until that day." What is the essential difference in the two translations cited above?

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What is it that is *entrusted*? Which translation do you consider accurate? Read carefully the immediate context that includes verses 8 – 14.

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---

The third command is found in verse 13: *Retain the standard of sound words*. Compare this translation with other versions (if you can). What are the *sound words* to which he refers? Is there something in the context that will help you understand that phrase?

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How do you *retain...sound words,...in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus*? What is the meaning of this verse?

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---

The fourth and final command is found in verse 14: *Guard...the treasure*. What is the treasure that has been entrusted to Timothy? Again, give particular attention to the context.

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---

Compare verse 14 with verse 12. What do verses 12 and 14 teach about the nature of human activity?  
(cf. *Phil.* 2:13, 14)

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---

Does verse 14 help you in interpreting the nature of the *gift* in verse 6?

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---

Verses 15-18 form a new paragraph. What is the subject of this section?

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What is the relationship of this paragraph to the one preceding (3-14)?

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What verb found in verses 15-18 is repeated twice in the paragraph formed by 3-14?

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Who is the subject of the verb in each case?

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Does this help you see the relationship of these two paragraphs? Explain.

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What is the region referred to as *Asia* in verse 15? What churches were located there? Refer to a Bible dictionary.

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Why is it significant that *all* had turned away from Paul in Asia?

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What further information does that give us about Timothy's situation? Compare *II Timothy* 4:16.

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Who was Onesiphorus? (His name occurs in the New Testament only here and in 4:19.)

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Read the paragraph again for clues to his condition at the time Paul wrote this letter. What do you think happened to him? Why? What part does the information contained in verses 15-18 play in Paul's word of encouragement to Timothy?

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# CHAPTER 2

## *II Timothy 2*

Read Chapter 2 five times at one sitting.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

The New American Standard Bible divides the chapter into two paragraphs: 1-13 and 14-26. Do you think this arrangement is valid? Why or why not?

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Observe the main verbs in Chapter 2. You will note again, as in chapter 1, that most of them are commands. Mark the imperatives in your Bible in some conspicuous way.

Note that the second word in verse 1 is the conjunction *therefore*. Remember that this term introduces a conclusion or inference (*cf.* 1:8). The action of the verb is based on some prior fact. On what basis, then, is Timothy to be strong?

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What further incentive to *be strong* is contained in the verse itself?

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Why are these two incentives so important in Timothy's case?

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Verse 2 also begins with a conjunction, *and*. What does this connective suggest concerning the action of the two commands in verses one and two?

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---

Recall the meaning of Timothy's nature. What was he naturally inclined to do?

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---

How many generations are envisioned in verse 2?

---

What pattern of ministry is established in this verse?

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---

What characteristic is Timothy to look for in those to whom he is ministering?

---

Assuming that you *entrust* the truth to one faithful individual each year and equip that person to reach one more each succeeding year, and the process continues unbroken for twenty years, how many will be reached? (You may have to use a calculator for this one!)

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---

The second command in this chapter is found in verse 3, *suffer hardship with me*. Read 2:3-13 again. How does Paul develop his argument? Are there any repeated words or ideas that indicate the theme of these verses?

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Again, what does this teaching suggest about Timothy's natural inclination toward his assignment in Ephesus?

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---

Paul uses three illustrative metaphors in this section. What are they and what specific attribute does each one illustrate?

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Note that in each case there is a responsibility and a reward. What are they?

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Verse 7 contains another command, *Remember Jesus Christ*. Why does he insert this statement at this point in the argument?

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Note the order of the Lord's names. Is this Paul's normal order in this book? (Use a concordance and note occurrences of the names or quickly re-read *II Timothy*).

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What does this order suggest about the Lord that would encourage Timothy?

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What does the designation *descendent of David* add to the argument? Why not *Son of God*?

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Why is it important to Timothy that Jesus is *risen from the dead*?

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In verse 9 Paul refers again to his own circumstances. He is imprisoned but the word of God is not. What does he mean?

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What effect would that statement have on Timothy?

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According to verse 10, Paul's reason for endurance is two-fold. The phrase *for this reason* looks back to some fact in verse 10. What is it?

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The *that* in verse 10 introduces a purpose clause (a purpose clause expresses the aim of the action indicated by the main verb) and supplies a second reason for endurance. What is it?

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Paul is quoting a portion of an ancient hymn or early liturgical formula in verses 11-13. It is designated *a trustworthy statement*, or a word to be believed. How does this hymn develop Paul's argument? What new facts pertaining to suffering hardship are introduced?

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What incentives and warning would Timothy receive?

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---

And what about us?

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---

Note the problem in verses 12 and 13. What is the difference between denying Him and proving faithless? (The consequences certainly differ!)

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---

The second paragraph in this chapter begins with verse 14. Read verses 14-26 again. What is the theme of this division?

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How does it differ from 2:1-13?

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To whom is the reminder and solemn charge in verse 14 addressed (*cf.* 2:2)?

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In this paragraph Paul is contrasting two classes of workmen. What are the methods of each class and the results that their methods produce?

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The crux of this paragraph is verse 15. The approved workman who has no need to be ashamed handles the word of truth accurately. What does that phrase mean? Compare various translations. The Greek actually says [he] *cuts straight to the goal*.

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What is the goal of all Biblical instruction? (*cf.* 2:25, 3:16; *I Timothy* 1:5).

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Contrast this goal with the results of the disapproved workmen whose methods Paul condemns.

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Note verse 19. The conjunction *nevertheless* denotes contrast. Paul is contrasting two truths—one found in verse 18, the other in verse 19. What is Paul contrasting?

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Why would verse 19 particularly encourage Timothy?

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In verse 19 what two seemingly contradictory principles comprise God's *seal*?

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What do the vessels of honor and dishonor correspond to in verse 20? (Remember the context!) Note that the *New American Standard Bible* has placed the word *things* in italics (verse 21). Most versions use italics to indicate words that are added in the translation to clarify but do not occur in the original language. In this passage the translators want you to know that the pronoun *these* does not refer to the vessels but to something else. Do you agree with their thinking?

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From what, then, is Timothy to cleanse himself?

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Verse 22 contains a command to *flee youthful lusts*. In English the term *lusts* almost always refers to sexual matters. The Greek term from which this word is translated, however, means *desires* and is a much broader term referring to almost any sort of strong passion. Now, noting again the context, what are the strong passions that might drive and control young Timothy?

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What pursuits would serve Timothy better?

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Define righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

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Are these attributes that Timothy himself should possess or a climate that he should seek in the church?

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Verse 23 is in contrast with verse 22 (“*But*”). Does this help you answer the last question?

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Verses 24-26 provide a look behind the scenes. Why do people oppose the gospel?

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Who, then, is the enemy?

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Does this truth affect your attitude toward those who are in opposition to you?

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What are the characteristics of God's bond-servant?

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# CHAPTER 3

## *II Timothy 3*

Read chapter 3 (5-10 times) in one sitting.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐ or more

Observe that 3:1 begins with the conjunction *but*. (Some translations have *and*.) The connective indicates that the two chapters are related. What connection do you see?

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What are the last days? Are we in the last days? Was Timothy? Compare *Acts 2:17ff* and *Hebrews 1:2*.

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According to verse 2, why are these last days so difficult? (Note the *for*.)

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Who is responsible for these difficult times?

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What does this fact suggest about the cure for social ills?

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Verses 2-4 are a description, then, of these men, who are responsible for the character of contemporary society. It is essentially a catalogue of moral conduct. Observe this list carefully, particularly the sequence in which these terms occur. Are there reoccurring words or ideas? If so, list some below.

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What do you consider to be the root of their misconduct?

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Use an English dictionary or Bible dictionary to define each term in the list in verses 2-4.

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Verse 5 speaks about their religious beliefs. How would you describe them?

---

What is the power of godliness? Compare *Romans* 1:16.

---

---

Verse 6 describes their methods of propagating their beliefs. Note the conjunction *for* with which the verse begins. Remember that *for* introduces an explanation. How does verse 6, then, relate to the last command in verse 5?

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Why do these unscrupulous men prey on this particular class of women?

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Why are their victims particularly vulnerable?

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---

Why do they learn and never know (in experience) the truth? (Look for the answer first in the immediate context, verses 6 – 7.)

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Find out who *Jannes* and *Jambres* were. (You may need help from a Bible dictionary.)

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In what ways were those two men like those who will oppose Timothy?

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Why will they not make further progress?

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What was *their folly*? Read the original account in *Exodus*.

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Note that 3:10-4:8 is an extended argument based on a series of contrasts between Timothy and those who will oppose him. Mark in your Bible the occurrences of the expression *but you* or *you, however* (*you, however* is one expression). In each case note the immediate preceding verse. What do you observe? How does Paul develop his argument?

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Note the verb tenses in verse 10 (*you followed*) and verse 14 (*you, however, continue*). How do they differ?

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Verses 10-13 look back at the example set by the Apostle Paul. Is there any significance in the order or sequence of these terms describing his life and ministry?

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What is the major emphasis in this section? What words or ideas are stressed through repetition?

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What general principle of Christian life and service do you derive from verses 12 & 13? (Note the two verses are connected by *and*—thus, linking the action in both.)

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Verse 14 is stated in contrast to the principle in verses 12 and 13. Timothy, *however*, is to continue. What are the sources for Timothy's contrastive behavior? Read 14 and 15 carefully.

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What are *the things you have learned and become convinced of*? From whom had he learned them? (Notice that the *whom* is plural.)

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What are the *sacred writings*?

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What two essential facts are revealed about the Scriptures in verse 16?

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Define the terms in this verse (English dictionary or Bible dictionary).

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Verse 17 is introduced by the conjunction *that* indicating purpose or result. What, then, is the purpose of the Scriptures?

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Define an *adequate* person from this verse. (Always look for definitions in the immediate context.)

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# CHAPTER 4

## *II Timothy 4*

Read Chapter 4 five to ten times in one sitting.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐ or more

Note again the commands in this chapter. Mark them in your Bible. Also observe once more the contrast between Timothy's behavior and his opponents' behavior.

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Note the solemn charge in verse 1. On what is it based?

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Why is it necessary? (Reflect again on Timothy's natural temperament.)

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In verse 2 Paul commands Timothy to preach the word and describes the character of that proclamation. Define these terms. Compare various translations (if possible).

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How would you describe the ministry to which Timothy is being called?

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Why is it imperative that Timothy preach with such urgency? (Note the conjunction with which verse 3 begins.)

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Do you see any logical order in the sequence of actions described in verses 3 and 4?

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Note the contrast in verse 5. Explain the meaning of each command in this verse.

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Again, why is it essential that Timothy so conduct himself? (Observe verse 6.)

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What is the Old Testament background for the drink offering (*Num. 28:7*)? How does this help you understand Paul's use of this metaphor?

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How does your awareness of Paul's circumstances help you to understand verses 7 and 8?

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Paul does not say that *he* is finished but that his *course* is finished. What was his course? (*cf. Acts 20:24*)

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What immediate prospect did Paul have in mind when he wrote verse 8? (*cf. verse 16, At my first defense*)

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What was Paul's earthly reward for his years of faithfulness? (*cf. 1:15 and 4:16*)

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Now look back over the section from 3:10 to 4:8. In view of the almost universal declension of men (described in 3:1-9), what action is Timothy to take? This question is crucial because it touches the fundamental concern of all true Christians: *What should we do in response to the character of our society?* Reflect on the usual answer given to that question. What significant omissions do you find in Paul's list?

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The argument of *II Timothy* concludes with 4:8. What is the purpose of the postscript in verses 9-22?

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Using a concordance (and/or Bible dictionary) find out all you can about the individuals mentioned in this section.

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What does this information suggest further about Paul's feelings at this time?

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Think carefully! Paul has outlined the principles that ought to control Timothy's ministry at Ephesus. Now he urges Timothy to leave Ephesus as soon as possible and join him in Rome. What, then, was the purpose of the letter?

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There is a striking note in the final verse of *II Timothy*, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." There are two pronouns in the verse. The first is singular in number, "The Lord be with *your* [Timothy's] spirit." The second pronoun is plural, "Grace be with *you* [those of us who are looking over Timothy's shoulder as he reads]." Paul knew that we would be reading Timothy's mail! What implication do you draw?

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# **SECTION 4**

## **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER (3 Studies)**

In this section, you will use everything you have learned in the previous sections. Hopefully, it will encourage you to begin to study the Bible on your own. May God bless your studies!





# STUDY 1

## Discipline that Heals

### Reading Assignments

*Matthew 18, I Corinthians 5, I Timothy 5, Titus 3*

### Memorize

*Luke 6:46*

*Romans 3:19-20*

*I Timothy 5:19-20*

**Read *Matthew 18:15-20* 5 times.**

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

What is the context both before and after the passage? Describe it. \_\_\_\_\_

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There are at least three steps listed in this passage about dealing with a sinning brother. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What does verse 17 mean *Let him be to you as a Gentile and tax gatherer*? \_\_\_\_\_

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Explain verse 18-19. \_\_\_\_\_

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Explain the context of verse 20. \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read *I Corinthians* 4:18 - 5:13 twice and note the following:**

#1 ☐ #2 ☐

What is the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What were the Corinthians doing about the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What does Paul say they should be doing? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is Paul's point in verses 3 and 12-13? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Read the passage again and note what Paul tells them to do (be specific). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Read *I Timothy* 5:19-25 at least twice.**

#1 ☐ #2 ☐

Who are *those* in verse 20? \_\_\_\_\_

How is this to be done, and what should be the result? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is verse 21 warning Timothy (and you) against? What specifically would cause us to transgress this?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What does verse 22 mean? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the context of wine drinking in verse 23 (*i.e.* how does it fit into this passage)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Explain what verses 24-25 are saying. \_\_\_\_\_

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Be specific in answering the following:

Have you ever witnessed the above passages being carried out and, if so, was it done properly? \_\_\_\_\_

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What would cause the Church (Christians) to avoid actually *doing* this? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will be your response when *you* are asked to participate in this process? Explain exactly what you would do (*i.e.* Step 1, 2, 3, etc.).

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Write *Titus* 3:9-11 in your own words.

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# STUDY 2

## Jonah

### Reading Assignment

*Jonah*

### Memorize

Three important verses from *Jonah*

Read *Jonah* five times in one sitting.

#1 ☐ #2 ☐ #3 ☐ #4 ☐ #5 ☐

There are three parts to the assignment in *Jonah*.

1. Determine the concept of the *whole* book of *Jonah*. What is the main point that the author is trying to communicate? Develop a concise statement to complete the following:

The main point that the author of *Jonah* was trying to communicate is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What support for your answer can you give? (*i.e.* what particulars in the book can you cite for evidence that your statement is true?)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Using a Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia, research Nineveh and the Ninevites and explain how knowledge of Nineveh may help in understanding the book of *Jonah*. In particular, how does it help explain Jonah's reluctance to preach to the Ninevites? Spend the rest of your study time doing this part.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# STUDY 3

## A View of the Virgin Birth & Strong Drink

### Study of the Virgin Birth: *Isaiah 7:14*

Write a written response to the following interpretation of *Isaiah 7:14*:

“Matthew quite clearly tells us in *Matthew 1:23* who the virgin and child are that Isaiah was thinking of and referring to in *Isaiah 7:14*. Matthew, the inspired interpreter of the *Isaiah* passage, makes it quite clear that Isaiah was not thinking of a virgin of his own day, but was given a prophetic insight into the distant future. Isaiah, here, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was able to see seven centuries into the future and foretell the birth of Jesus Christ.”

#### Suggestions of Where to Start

1. Look up the word for *virgin* in *Isaiah 7:14* and see how it is used in a Hebrew concordance.

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2. Reconstruct the Author's (Isaiah's) intended meaning.

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3. Research the names mentioned in *Isaiah 7:1* to reconstruct the historical context. Be sure to read *II Kings 16-17* for setting up the historical background.

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4. What word does *Matthew 1:23* use for *virgin*?

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#### Your Written Response

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## Study of Strong Drink: *Deuteronomy* 14:22-26

The focus of this interpretive problem is in verse 26. Evaluate the following interpretation of this verse:

"The passage in *Deuteronomy* 14:26, which appears to commend buying *strong drink*, cannot be used as a divine approval for drinking it. Firstly, the Old Testament clearly condemns drinking *strong drink* as the following passages indicate (*Lev.* 10:8-9; *Prov.* 20:1; *Prov.* 31:4-5; *Isa.* 5:11; *Isa.* 24:9; *Mic.* 2:11). Secondly, the passage does not say they should drink it, but only that they should buy it. Thirdly, *strong drink* was used for medicinal purposes. Thus, the commendation here is probably to buy medicine (see *Prov.* 31:6)."

### Suggestions of Where to Start

1. Using your concordance, look up the word translated *strong drink* to gain some feel for the meaning of the Hebrew word.

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2. Concentrate on the writer's suggestion that the purpose for which this *strong drink* was to be used was medicinal. Does that fit with the author's thought? What, most probably, was the author's intent?

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3. Reconcile your conclusion about *Deuteronomy* 14:26 with the passages listed by the author. Is your view of *Deuteronomy* 14:26 compatible with the view of drinking suggested in those passages? If so, how?

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4. Understanding something about the tithing practices alluded to in *Deuteronomy* 14 may help, but is not necessary to solve our interpretive problem. Therefore, if time permits, do some additional research.

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### Your Written Response

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# APPENDIX 1

## THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

### 1. According to the Versions

#### A. The Law:

- (1) Genesis
- (2) Exodus
- (3) Leviticus
- (4) Numbers
- (5) Deuteronomy

#### B. History:

- (1) Joshua
- (2) Judges
- (3) Ruth
- (4) 1 & 2 Samuel
- (5) 1 & 2 Kings
- (6) 1 & 2 Chronicles
- (7) Ezra
- (8) Nehemiah
- (9) Esther

#### C. Poetry and Wisdom:

- (1) Job
- (2) Psalms
- (3) Proverbs
- (4) Ecclesiastes
- (5) Song of Solomon

#### D. Prophets:

##### a. Major Prophets

- (1) Isaiah
- (2) Jeremiah
- (3) Lamentations
- (4) Ezekiel
- (5) Daniel

##### b. Minor Prophets

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| (1) Hosea     | (10) Haggai    |
| (2) Joel      | (11) Zechariah |
| (3) Amos      | (12) Malachi   |
| (4) Obadiah   |                |
| (5) Jonah     |                |
| (6) Micah     |                |
| (7) Nahum     |                |
| (8) Habakkuk  |                |
| (9) Zephaniah |                |

### 2. According to the Hebrew Bible

#### A. The Law:

- (1) Genesis
- (2) Exodus
- (3) Leviticus
- (4) Numbers
- (5) Deuteronomy

#### B. The Prophets:

##### a. Former Prophets

- (1) Joshua
- (2) Judges
- (3) Samuel
- (4) Kings

##### b. Latter Prophets

- (1) Isaiah
- (2) Jeremiah
- (3) Ezekiel
- (4) The Twelve

#### C. The Writings:

##### a. Poetry

- (1) Psalms
- (2) Proverbs
- (3) Job

##### b. Rolls

- (1) Song of Solomon
- (2) Ruth
- (3) Lamentations
- (4) Ecclesiastes
- (5) Esther

##### c. Historical

- (1) Daniel
- (2) Ezra
- (3) Nehemiah
- (4) Chronicles



## APPENDIX 2

### THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The books of the Old Testament were mainly composed in Hebrew, though some short sections are written in Aramaic (*Ezra* 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26, *Jeremiah* 10:11, *Daniel* 2:46-7:28, and one word in *Genesis* 31:47).

Aramaic occurs in the Old Testament because it was the language of the Jewish exiles. From the 7th century B.C. on, it was the official court language of, first, the Babylonian and, later, the Persian Empire. It became the language of the exiles living under those regimes, so it is understandable why Aramaic would occur in books that have their setting in the exilic period. It is important to know, that although Hebrew and Aramaic are different languages, they are in the same family—the Semitic language group—and, thus, have many common characteristics. (Grammarians describe them as *cognate* languages because they share a common parent language.) For practical purposes we can view them in the same way. When we refer to Hebrew in this study, we are referring to the language of the Old Testament.

The family of Semitic languages is usually divided into three groups according to their geographical distribution: Northeast Semitic, Southwest Semitic and Northwest Semitic. The Northeast Semitic branch is called Akkadian and, generally speaking, was the language of the Assyrians and Babylonians. The Southwest branch embraces Arabic and a Northwest Semitic language group that is by far the largest, comprising the previously mentioned Aramaic language (originally spoken in Aramea—later Syria) and a number of dialects usually termed Canaanite. The people in Phoenicia, Canaan, Edom, Moab, and apparently even portions of Sinai, all used some form of this Canaanite language.

It may surprise you to learn that Hebrew is derived from this Canaanite branch of the Northwest Semitic family. Hebrew is, in fact, called in the Bible the “Language of Canaan” (*Isaiah* 19:18). We do not know what language the patriarchs spoke originally (we can reasonably assume that it was an early form of Aramaic), but, apparently, after settling in Canaan, they adopted the local Canaanite dialect, and that became the basis for Israel’s national language.

What this means, then, is that Hebrew belongs to an extensive language family that was spoken throughout the Near East from Syria to the Sinai Peninsula and from the Mediterranean Sea to Mesopotamia. Furthermore, since all the nations in this region were bound together linguistically, we should expect to find other parallels, and, indeed, they do exist. All these so-called Semitic people were united by a more or less common culture. Israel, as a nation, did not stand in cultural isolation nor did her literature. There are now literally thousands of documents from the Near East that have had some bearing on our understanding of the language of the Old Testament. New meanings for rare Biblical words are being discovered, and many obscure references are being cleared up. And this information is increasingly available even to the non-specialist.

### THE HEBREW MIND

The difficult thing about Hebrew from our perspective is simply that it is a Semitic or Eastern language quite different from any of the Indo-European languages most familiar to us. Most of us in the West have at least dabbled around with Spanish, Latin, or French in our school days, but unless you’ve taken an Arabic language course, you have never encountered anything quite like Hebrew. There are a host of rather obvious differences (the script is peculiar, it reads from right to left...); however, the real difference is less obvious, but it is the real crux of the matter. Hebrew is a vehicle for expressing a uniquely *Eastern* viewpoint, a problem alluded to earlier. The problem is not merely one of understanding another language but of understanding another way of looking at life—a point most English readers do not fully appreciate. There are many specialized language tools which can be used to define terms and explain nuances of meaning, but these in themselves are not adequate because they can’t reproduce this cultural dimension. In fact, I don’t know that the cultural dimension can be adequately reproduced. The only way to understand a people is to get fully involved in their language, literature, and customs. Unfortunately, this just isn’t possible for most folks. Few have the time or inclination to learn a sufficient number of the dead Semitic languages and immerse themselves in the literature.

However, I believe there are some basic perspectives which, when maintained, will enable anyone to more fully appreciate and more accurately interpret the Old Testament. These are as follows:

### 1. A Way of Looking at an Action

Hebrew tenses are odd things! At least they are from our point of view. I'm sure they made perfectly good sense to the Semite on the street. Apparently, they were more concerned with the *mode* or *manner* of an action rather than the time when it occurred. To put it another way, they were not so much interested in *when* an act took place as in its *state of completion*—whether it was complete or incomplete. Properly speaking, Hebrew verb tenses are not tenses at all. They rather indicate *aspect*, a phase of action, as the grammarians say. In English, we usually think in terms of strict time sequences. If I say, "I went to Oregon on my vacation", any English-speaking person hearing those words would understand that the action occurred in the past. This is not so in Hebrew. The Hebrew-speaker evidently did not think in those strict categories. He could view that action as completed (and, thus, perhaps in the past), or still going on, or not yet begun. Apparently, nothing beyond those aspects of action mattered! Let's see how it works.

Hebrew verbs indicate two "aspects" of action. The Hebrew *perfect* viewed the action as complete; the *imperfect* represented it as incomplete, repetitive, or continual. Normally, the translators render the Hebrew perfect as an English past tense and the imperfect as an English present or future tense. There is really no other way to handle the problem, but you have to understand that the Hebrew author was *not* thinking in those strict temporal categories. For him, the action was complete or incomplete. Time was almost irrelevant, and that is the way you have to learn to view the action. For example, *Genesis* 12:1 reads, "Now the Lord *said* to Abram, 'Go forth from your country,'..." etc. That verse has produced a lot of controversy because of an apparent conflict with Stephen's statement in *Acts* 7:3 indicating that this call occurred *before* he migrated to Haran. The *Genesis* passage, on the other hand, makes it appear that the call came *after* he reached Haran. Once you understand the Hebrew verbal system, however, the apparent conflict vanishes. The point of the statement in *Genesis* 12:1 is simply that the action *occurred*. It was completed at some point in time. The actual sequence of events is irrelevant. We could, therefore, translate the verb as an English pluperfect, "The Lord *had said* to Abram..." and make perfectly good sense out of the sequence of events.

There are numerous examples of this in the Old Testament since almost every statement contains at least one verb. Perhaps you've seen enough now to gain a general impression. The important question to ask yourself in each case is "What *aspect* of action does the author have in mind?"

One qualifying note... In order to clarify this matter I have vastly over-simplified it. The issue is actually far more complex. At times, the Old Testament writers, contrary to expectations, will indicate a *future* action by employing a *perfect* tense verb. They do so when they intend to represent these future actions as completed *in the thought of the speaker*. They conceive those actions as accomplished facts although the action *has not yet taken place*. *Numbers* 17:12 is a good example. "Then the sons of Israel spoke to Moses saying, 'See, we have perished, we have died, *we have all died*.'" In their mind, they were as good as dead. We would say, "We are done for."

This same idiom occurs in contracts and treaty stipulations (*Genesis* 23:11, "I gave you the field," though the field was not yet in Abraham's possession), and especially in promises made by God (*Genesis* 15:18, "To your descendents I *have given* this land").

The most vivid use of this verb form is in the prophetic material where the event or scene which the prophet describes is depicted as having already been realized. In his mind, the event, though yet future, is deemed as good as finished. For example, *Isaiah* 5:13 actually reads, "My people *have gone* into captivity" (obviously they had not in Isaiah's time). In *Isaiah* 9:1, "A child *has been* born to you." The Messiah, of course, was born 700 years after Isaiah's time.

English readers may find it difficult to identify these “prophetic perfects” in our English translations. However, you should be aware of this grammatical feature since it can occasionally affect your interpretation of prophetic statements. At times, the translator may inadvertently mistranslate one of these verbs to indicate action in past time. The impression is left that this is an action which has already occurred—an historical event, whereas, in fact, it is not. It is a *prediction*, but the prophet sees it existing in the future in a completed state. *Isaiah* 10:28-32 is a case in point. Most translations take those verbs in the past tense, but it is obvious from the context that the action is yet future. Isaiah is predicting the line of march, which an invading army (Assyria), will take on their trek southward to besiege Jerusalem. This is an event yet future from Isaiah’s standpoint, but the attack is so certain in the prophet’s mind that he treats it as an accomplished fact. Even without a knowledge of Hebrew, you should be able, in most cases, to spot this prophetic use of the perfect. *Any past tense verb in a context of future tense verbs may be a prophetic perfect.* You should at least consider that possibility. In the passage mentioned above (*Isaiah* 10:28-32), the verbs in the paragraph before and after are in the imperfect, and, thus, are translated as English future tenses. The abrupt shift in tense at verse 28 should tip you off to the presence of this feature. Watch for it!

## 2. Understanding Sentence Formation

Sentence formation in ancient Hebrew was, as the grammarians say, *paratactic*; they simply connected whole strings of sentences using the conjunction “and”. *Genesis* 1:1 is a good example of this tendency: “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth *and* the earth was without form and void *and* darkness was on the face of the deep *and* the Spirit of God was brooding over the waters *and* God said, ‘Let there be light *and* there was light,’” etc. Very rarely did they subordinate clauses or phrases as we do in English. Ancient Hebrew did possess various particles capable of expressing precise subordinate relationships. The conjunctions (“in order that” or “but”) occur, but for the most part the simple “and” served to convey those ideas.

As a connective between clauses “and” may mean simply “and” (if the idea of clause A is *coordinate* with the idea of clause B), or “but” (if the idea of B stands in *opposition* to that of A), or “in order that” (if B explains the *purpose of A*), or “so that” (if B is the *result of A*) or “while” (if B is the *attendant circumstance of A*), etc.

In other words, the “and” in Hebrew simply operated as a plus sign, linking idea B with idea A and left it to the reader to put them in proper relationship to one another. There is even some recent thinking that the Hebrew “and” is not a conjunction at all but simply a way of introducing the next idea — a *presentative* — like the French “voilà” (“behold!” or “here it is!”). For example, all the following sentences in Hebrew are connected by “and”; note what a variety of relationships can be expressed.

Elijah went to show himself to Ahab  
*when* [and] the famine became severe in Samaria.  
 -*I Kings* 18:2

O Lord, you have searched me  
*so that* [and] you know me intimately.  
 -*Psalms* 139:1

He [the servant of the Lord] was oppressed  
*even though* [and] he was submissive [bowed down].  
 -*Isaiah* 53:7a

We could multiply examples, but this is enough to give you some understanding of this grammatical feature and a way of looking at sentence structure. When you see “and” in an Old Testament text learn to look for other possibilities. In some cases, the translators may have linked two thoughts as coordinate sentences when in actual fact some other relationship is intended. Ask yourself, “*Can I insert ‘but’, ‘so that’, ‘in order that’, ‘when’, ‘while’, or other subordinating conjunctions?*” That question may lead you to a new and significant insight.

### 3. Understanding Evocative Imagery

Hebrew is a language rich in imagery. The Semitic people in general were given to eloquent symbolism and imagery, rather than to abstract or precise definitions of ideas. Hebrew is, therefore, a powerful medium for touching and moving the emotions.

Hebrew lacks the ability of most Indo-European languages to express subtle shades of meaning. Latin is far more concise—the proper medium for legal terminology, while Greek is better suited to the delicate shades of theological meaning found in the New Testament. Still, Hebrew has a force of its own—the remarkable ability to evoke enduring mental images by use of powerful symbols. It's this characteristic that I call *evocative imagery*.

The images in the Old Testament come from a number of sources but principally are drawn from the physical features of the Near East (the flora, fauna, and topography of that region), the customs and habits of the people (*cf. Jeremiah 2:13; Isaiah 5:1, 2; Isaiah 40:26*), and Israelite or pagan worship. It may surprise you to learn that some of the most powerful symbols are taken right out of pagan cult terminology and from their myths and legends. For example, the sea monster frequently referred to in the Old Testament and variously named (Rahab, Leviathan, and Tannin) is taken directly from Near Eastern mythology. The theology of the Old Testament, of course, is radically different from that of pagan literature, but many of the symbols and figures are common to both.

Be aware of this characteristic in the Old Testament, and try to focus on the *image* that the writer wishes to convey instead of the specific details of the passage. It's not that the details are unimportant; every aspect of scripture has its own importance. However, there is a big picture being painted, and you ought to stand back and look at the whole in order to grasp the full intent of the author. Note this lovely lyric interlude in Isaiah's prophecy (41:17-20, RSV):

When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,  
and their tongue is parched with thirst,  
I, the Lord, will answer them,  
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.  
I will open rivers on the bare heights,  
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,  
and the dry land springs of water.  
I will put in the wilderness the cedar,  
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;  
I will set in the desert the cypress,  
the plane and the pine together;  
that men may see and know,  
may consider and understand together,  
that the hand of the Lord has done this,  
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Can you picture this scene in your mind? I believe it is clear what Isaiah is saying about God's provision for the exiles' needs. Truth, graphically portrayed in this way, has an intensity and emotional impact that mere words of abstractions could never produce. As another example, note Isaiah's description of the fall of Babylon (13:9-16, RSV):

Behold, the day of the Lord comes,  
cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,  
to make the earth a desolation  
and to destroy its sinners from it.

For the stars of the heavens and their constellations  
will not give their light;  
the sun will be dark at its rising  
and the moon will not shed its light.  
I will punish the world for its evil,  
and the wicked for their iniquity;  
I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant,  
and lay low the haughtiness of the ruthless,

I will make men more rare than fine gold,  
and mankind than the gold of Ophir.  
Therefore, I will make the heavens tremble,  
and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts  
in the day of his fierce anger.  
And like a hunted gazelle,  
or like sheep with none to gather them,  
every man will turn to his own people,  
and every man will flee to his own land.  
Whoever is found will be thrust through,  
and whoever is caught will fall by the sword.  
Their infants will be dashed in pieces  
before their eyes;  
their houses will be plundered  
and their wives ravished.

Babylon fell in 539 B.C., so this is a prophecy which has historically been fulfilled and, thus, gives us a reference point for interpreting this imagery. The cosmic disorder described there did not actually occur—at least there are no historical references to the heavens trembling and the earth being shaken out of its orbit. The intent of the author is not to give a precise description of events, but rather to paint a vivid mental image of the political and personal upheaval and turmoil that accompanied the fall of Babylon. Learn to *see* the Old Testament in this way.

#### 4. Interpreting Symbols and Figures of Speech

A characteristic closely related to evocative imagery is the extensive use of figures of speech in the Old Testament. No language has a word for every idea. That's one of the weaknesses of language, and Biblical Hebrew in particular suffers in this regard since it has such a limited vocabulary. There is, likewise, a tendency to express ideas symbolically rather than abstractly, so that the authors of the Old Testament rely extensively on figurative language. You should learn to recognize these frequently employed figures of speech. They are:

- a) *Euphemism*—the substitution of an inoffensive or mild expression for one that might offend or suggest something unpleasant. *Isaiah 57:8*—“You loved their bed. [Their] *hand* you gazed at [a euphemism for illicit sexual desire].”
- b) *Metonymy*—the use of a concrete term for another more abstract idea. *Isaiah 22:22*—“Then I will set the *key* [the way to gain access] of David on his *shoulder* [as a burden or heavy responsibility].”
- c) *Synechdoche*—a use of the whole for a part or a part for the whole. *Isaiah 53:10*—“If he would render up his *soul* [himself] as a guilt offering”
- d) *Merism*—a form of synecdoche where a totality is expressed by two opposites. *Genesis 1:1*—“In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the *earth* [i.e., the universe].”
- e) *Personification*—the representation of inanimate objects or abstract objects as endowed with personal attributes. *Isaiah 53:1*—“The *wilderness* and the *desert* will be glad...”

- f) *Apostrophe*—a turning away from one’s audience to address directly a person or thing, or an abstract idea or imaginary object (frequent in prophetic books). For example, *Isaiah* 14:9-20 is a taunting song directed to the fallen king of Babylon.
- g) *Hyperbole*—an exaggeration used for emphasis. For example, *Isaiah* 34:1-17 is a description of destruction of nations.
- h) *Irony*—the intended implication is opposite the literal meaning of the words. *Isaiah* 41:23—[Addressed to idols] “Indeed, do good or evil that *we may anxiously look about us and fear.*”
- i) *Simile*—one thing, action, or relationship is explicitly compared with something else (using the words “as” or “like”). *Isaiah* 1:8—“And the daughter of Zion is left...like a *watchman’s hut* in a *cucumber field.*”
- j) *Metaphor*—a word or phrase used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy. *Isaiah* 1:10—“Hear the word of the Lord you *rulers of Sodom* [Jerusalem].”
- k) *Hendiadys*—a stylistic device in which two coordinate terms are joined by “and” in order to convey a single concept. *Genesis* 3:16—“I will greatly multiply your *pain* and *childbirth* [i.e., painful childbirth].”
- l) *Anthromorphism*—the representation of God in the form of or with the attributes of a man. *Isaiah* 7:18—“And it shall come about that the Lord will *whistle* for the fly which is at the sources of the rivers of Egypt.”
- m) *Anthropopathism*—the ascription to God of the emotions and passions of man. *Psalms* 2:4—“He who sits in the heavens will *laugh.*”
- n) *Zoomorphism*—the representation of God in the form of, or with the attributes of, the lower animals. *Psalms* 63:7—“In the shadow of Thy *wings* I sing for joy.”

There are other less frequently used symbols in the Old Testament. E. W. Bullinger’s, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House), will give you a more complete listing. Those listed above are the figures of speech you will encounter most often in the Old Testament, and once understood, you will have a greater appreciation for the Hebrew mind and the image-producing faculty of the Hebrew language. The purpose of the author is to produce a vivid, mental picture, rather than convey a merely abstract concept. Keeping that purpose in mind will prevent you from going beyond the intent of the author.

## 5. Defining Hebrew Vocabulary

Unfortunately, there are fewer tools in Hebrew for the non-specialist than in Greek, but there are some available and you should learn how to use them. They can help you get beyond the English translations to the meaning of the Hebrew texts underlying them. They are:

### 1) Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

An exhaustive concordance of the Bible contains every word found in the Bible and indicates where each word occurs. Strong’s concordance is based on the British text—the Authorized Version (the King James Version). It’s really simple to use and correctly utilized can give you a richer understanding of any word found in scripture. For example, look at a term taken from another of Isaiah’s prophecies—the well-known suffering servant passage in *Isaiah* 53. Verse 53:5 reads in part, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” To learn the meaning of the term, *wounded*, look up the word in Strong’s concordance. Under the entry, “wounded”, find the clause containing that word in *Isaiah* 53:5. In the right hand column, find a number (in this case, 2490) which would be found in the “Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary” at the back of the concordance. There, opposite number 2490, notice the definition—“chalal—to bore, etc.” That might give us some food for thought!



## 2) Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament

The value of Englishman's is that once you have found the Hebrew word, you can see a list of all of the verses where the word occurs. This allows you to quickly see where and how the word is used. Let's follow the process using the same word in Isaiah 53:5. Since it is Strong's number, 2490, find that section using the smaller reference numbers in Englishman's (not the page number) as your guide. When you have arrived, you will find a list with every place in the Old Testament where חָלַל (chah-lal) is used. It will give you an overview of how the translators of the King James Version have treated it. The numerous references to being *profaned* or *defiled* may lead to an extended meaning in which this boring or piercing action makes the subject unclean or cursed in some way. Now we know that this form of being wounded has a deeper meaning than just being pierced.

### A Few More Hints

- 1) Italics in most translations do not indicate emphasis but omission. These words do not occur in the text but were added by the translators to clarify. Try reading a text without the italicized words to get the force of the original text. For example, *Exodus 2:25*—"And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice *of them*." Therefore, in the original, the passage ends with the word "notice".
- 2) The personal name of God, יְהוָה (Yahweh or Jehovah), is normally translated LORD with each letter capitalized. The term of respect, אֲדֹנָי (Adonai, Lord, or we would say, "Sir") is spelled Lord with only the first letter capitalized. The generic name for God, אֱלֹהִים (Elohim), is always translated, God. Note, for instance, the translations of *Genesis 1* and *2* and the careful distinctions made in the names. Note, also, *Genesis 7:16*, "And they [the occupants of the ark] went in as God [אֱלֹהִים, Elohim, the Sovereign of the Universe] had commanded him, and the LORD [יְהוָה, Yahweh, the covenant keeping God of Noah] shut him in."



# APPENDIX 3

## THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

It may surprise you to know that we do not have a single book in the New Testament written by an apostle of Christ. We do not have *Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, nor do we have the books of *First and Second Corinthians*, nor *Hebrews*, nor *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* or *John*. In fact, not one book, not one chapter, not one verse, not one word written by an apostle has survived to the 20th Century.

I am speaking, of course, of the original compositions—the autographs, as scholars refer to them. Nothing remains of the original pieces of papyrus on which Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John wrote. What we have today are copies of copies of copies, and everyone knows how badly mangled a document can become when it is copied by many hands over many years.

The question arises then: How do we know that our present day copies accurately reflect the original texts? Isn't it possible that the material has been distorted over the years? Perhaps what certain groups say is so: *Traditional Christianity is all wrong and needs to be corrected*.

That, however, is not a necessary conclusion because the reliability of our existing copies has been established to a high degree of probability by the discipline of textual criticism—the science of reconstructing ancient documents on the basis of existing copies. It is an established and precise discipline, which works with all ancient documents, not merely the biblical texts.

Basically, New Testament textual critics have three difference classes of literature to work with in order to see this reconstruction: existing Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, early versions or translations of New Testament, and patristic citations (quotes and allusions to the New Testament) from early Church fathers. The value of this evidence is in the order described, the highest value going to the New Testament Greek manuscripts; the other two have secondary rather than primary value.

We do not have the original documents of the New Testament. What we do have in terms of primary sources—New Testament Greek manuscript evidence—is 4,700 Greek copies of the New Testament, 1800 Greek lectionaries (church readings of scripture from the early centuries), and 70 early Greek papyri containing fragments or portions of the New Testament—more material and earlier manuscripts to work with than any other document from antiquity.

For example, for *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, a document composed between 58 and 50 B.C., there are only 10 extant copies that are readable. The oldest dates from about A.D. 900, almost 1,000 years after the document was composed. Aristotle wrote his *Poetics* in the 4th century B.C. The oldest extant manuscript dates from the 11th century A.D. For *The History of Thucydides* (c. 460-400 B.C.), we have eight manuscripts from A.D. 900. Yet no scholar doubts the authenticity of these texts. They are considered first-rate historical sources.

The New Testament manuscripts and fragments listed below are divided into different families and groupings by age and area and have relative degrees of importance or unimportance.

For example, *Codex Vaticanus* (so called because it is kept in the Vatican Library in Rome) contains almost the entire text of the New Testament and dates from the 4th century, probably from the time that Constantine ordered copies of the Scriptures to be made and circulated throughout the Empire (c. 330 A.D.).

*Codex Sinaiticus* (discovered in the Monastery of St. Catherine near Mt. Sinai) also dates from the 4th century A.D. and contains the entire New Testament.

There are others: *Codex Alexandrinus* (5th century); *Codex Bezae* (5th or 6th century); the *Chester Beatty Papyri* (3rd century); and the earliest papyrus, the *Rylands Fragment*, a portion of the *Gospel of John* dating from the beginning of the 2nd century, within only a few years of the original composition of John's Gospel.

The function of a textual critic is to sift and weigh this manuscript evidence and attempt to reconstruct the original text from it. If, for example, all the available manuscripts of the *Gospel of John* begin with the reading, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God,*” and if textual critics find the same reading in early church lectionaries and citation from Polycarp, Eusebius, Ireneus, Clement of Rome, and other church fathers, there is *reasonable* certainty that John actually wrote, “*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*”

This is not absolute proof that we now have the original text. It is possible that the first verse of *John* was copied badly by the first copyist and that the error has been perpetuated. That is the problem with the textual criticism: We cannot be certain that we have the text of the original document. That uncertainty, however, is not a reason for skepticism or radical unbelief. In terms of scientific probability, we are more certain about the beginning verse of *John* than we are about the opening lines of the *Gettysburg Address*. It is not a matter of blind faith and hopeful wishing, but scientific probability.

One New Testament scholar, Fredrick Kenyon, writing on the dilemma of the lost autographs, has stated that textual critics can now reconstruct the New Testament documents with almost absolute certainty. In terms of textual problems, less than 1/1000 of the total New Testament is in question. Or put another way, 999 out of 1,000 passages in the New Testament are *not* in question. All uncertain passages, if grouped together, then, would occupy less than one half of one page of the Greek New Testament. More significantly, not one would impinge on any vital doctrine of Christian faith. (Most have to do with variant spelling and grammar.)

Therefore, we can be reasonably sure that what we read in modern translations of the New Testament is essentially what we would find in the original texts if someday they were unearthed—not 99 percent sure, but in fact 99 and 99/100 percent sure.

# APPENDIX 4

## ENGLISH GRAMMAR REVIEW

### PARTS OF SPEECH

- **NOUNS**

A *noun* is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea.

“In the *beginning* God created the *heavens* and the *earth*” (*Genesis* 1:1).

“Paul an *apostle* of Jesus Christ...” (*II Timothy* 1:1).

It is important to note:

- (a) the *number* of a noun
  - singular (e.g. *earth*)
  - plural (e.g. *heavens*)
- (b) the *state* of the noun
  - definite (e.g. *the* heavens)
  - indefinite (e.g. *an* expanse)
- (c) the *gender* of the noun
  - masculine (e.g. *He* is in Rome...)
  - feminine (e.g. ...if *she* has shown hospitality...)
  - neuter (e.g. ...for *it* will lead to further ungodliness . . .)

- **PRONOUN**

A *pronoun* takes the place of a noun.

“And the darkness *He* [God] called night” (*Genesis* 1:5).

“The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for *he* [Onesiphorus] often refreshed *me* [Paul, himself]...” (*II Timothy* 1:16).

- **VERBS**

A *verb* indicates action, being, or state of being. It asserts something about a noun.

“In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth” (*Genesis* 1:1).

“I *thank* God... as I *remember*...” (*II Timothy* 1:3).

There are several things to note about verbs:

- (a) Who or what is the *subject* of the verb?

The subject may indicate:

- (1) the author (first person)  
“*I* have fought the good fight”
- (2) the one addressed (second person)  
“*You* be sober”
- (3) a third party or object (third person)

“*They* will not endure.”<sup>12</sup>

- (b) What is the *tense* of the verb (past, present or future)?

Indicates the time of action. In English there are six tenses, but the three most important are:

- (1) past  
“*I have kept* the faith.”
- (2) present  
“*I am being poured* out...”
- (3) future  
“*They will not endure*...”

- (c) What is the *voice* of the verb?

Views a state or action as either:

- (1) active (performed)  
“*I remind* you.”
- (2) passive (received or acted upon)  
“*I was appointed*.”

- (d) What is the *mood* of the verb?

Reflects the attitude of the speaker or actor. The moods are:

- (1) indicative mood (used to express a true statement)
- (2) imperative mood (used to express a command)  
“*Be strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”
- (3) subjunctive mood (expresses strong possibility or probability)  
“*They may come* to their senses.” or “*They shall surely come* to their senses.”

- **ADJECTIVE**

An *adjective* restricts, limits, qualifies, or in some way modifies or describes the meaning of a noun or pronoun. It usually answers one of these questions:

- (a) Which one?
- (b) What kind?
- (c) How many?

“Let the *dry* land appear” (*Genesis* 1:9).

“I am mindful of the *sincere* faith...” (*II Timothy* 1:5).

Some adjectives, called *predicate adjectives*, follow verbs such as *be*, *seem*, *taste*, *smell*, *appear*, and *become*, and modify the subject of the sentence.

“The light was *good*” (*Genesis* 1:4).

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<sup>12</sup>Carl Sandburg notes that the Civil War was fought over a verb tense: “The U.S. *are* or U.S. *is*”

- **ADVERBS**

An *adverb* modifies (describes, limits, or qualifies) verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. Adverbs usually answer the following questions:

- (a) When?
- (b) Where?
- (c) How?
- (d) Why?
- (e) Under what conditions?
- (f) To what degree?

“...it was *very* good” (*Genesis* 1:31).

“He *eagerly* searched...” (*II Timothy* 1:17).

The important thing to note about adjectives and adverbs is the extent to which they change the meaning of the word they modify. For example, is it significant that God gave *every* (adjective) *plant* to man for food? (*Genesis* 1:29). Yes! We believe that it is. Adjectives and adverbs *are* important in better understanding the text.

- **PREPOSITIONS**

A *preposition* is a word that shows the relation of a noun or pronoun to some other word. There are approximately 60 prepositions in the English language. Common ones include:

about	beneath	instead of	past
above	beside	into	since
across	between	like	through
after	by	near	to
against	down	of	toward
along	during	off	under
among	except	on	underneath
around	for	onto	until
at	from	on top of	up
before	in	out of	upon
behind	in front of	outside	with
below	inside	over	within
			without

“In the beginning...” (*Genesis* 1:1).

“Guard *through* the Holy Spirit who dwells *in* us...” (*II Timothy* 1:14).

Prepositions are important because they show the relationship of various elements in a sentence and also frequently introduce phrases that indicate the time, location, means, circumstances, etc. of an action.

- **INTERJECTION**

An interjection is a word that expresses emotion or feeling.

“And *behold*, it was very good” (*Genesis* 1:31).

- **CONJUNCTIONS**

A *conjunction* is a word that connects words, phrases, or clauses. Conjunctions are very important because they help you understand the way a writer is reasoning. Common conjunctions include: *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, *yet*

For example, they reveal:

- (a) *Series or progression* (and, moreover, furthermore, likewise, then)  
“And the earth was formless *and* void” (*Genesis* 1:2).
- (b) *Contrast or alternative* (but, on the other hand, nevertheless)  
“...and thus they upset the faith of some. *Nevertheless*, the firm foundation of God stands” (*II Timothy* 2:19). (Note the contrast: The faith of some is being upset; in contrast, God’s foundation is unshakable.)
- (c) *Comparison* (even as, like, just as, such as)  
“Their talk will spread *like* gangrene” (*II Timothy* 2:17). (The comparison introduces an analogous thought or illustration to explain or elaborate the action of the main clause).
- (b) *Reason or cause* (because, since, for)  
“...in the last days difficult times will come. *For* men will be lovers of self...” (*II Timothy* 3:2). (The last times will be difficult because men will love themselves, etc.)
- (e) *Result or purpose* (that, so that, in order that)  
“No soldier in active service entangles himself *so that* he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier” (*II Timothy* 2:4). (His purpose for remaining unencumbered is to please the one who enlisted him.)
- (f) *Conclusion or inference* (for, therefore, on the basis of, on account of)  
“*Therefore*, a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife” (*Genesis* 2:24).
- (g) *Condition* (if)  
“*If* a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor” (*II Timothy* 2:21). (One will be an honorable vessel *on the condition* that he cleanses himself from these things.)





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