

HOW TO STUDY AND INTERPRET THE BIBLE

We begin a new study tonight that will take us several weeks to complete. About 35 years ago, Mr. Miles asked me to put together a 10 week study on this subject and teach it in his church in Wayland on Friday night, which I did. I was first taught these things back in 1980 and for the past 42 years I have been honing my skills and it has changed my life.

Ever since then I have been thinking that this might be a good study to teach in the church. It is not technically a book study. It is not technically a doctrinal study. But I think we can establish it is a legitimate Biblical study.

What we would like to do in the next weeks is present to you a system that will enable one to carefully study, understand and interpret the Bible in a way that is accurate and true. We will cover many important subjects and examine many passages of Scripture in the next weeks.

Now this study is not typically presented to a congregation of a local church. This study is typically a series of multiple courses offered in a theological institution. It is usually presented to those who are preparing for ministry. Specific courses like Hermeneutics, Bible Study Methods and Exegesis are typically part of a curriculum at a theological school. This study will be a combination of all three. In fact, we think a new word should be invented to cover a study like this—"Hermegesis Bible Study Methodology."

I have always thought that things taught in theological schools should be taught in the church. When we were taught doctrine and systematic theology or Bible book studies, I remember sitting in class and thinking why aren't these things being taught in the church. This is what should be taught to people in the church.

We think there is tremendous value for this study for everyone in the church because it will enable everyone in the church to have the skill set and tools to spot those who are not interpreting the Bible accurately. Accurate Bible interpretation is critical to our faith. Even if a person doesn't himself/herself use the systematic study skills that will be presented, it will enable him/her to be solid in his/her understanding of whether or not God's word is being handled accurately.

Years ago, in High School we were required to take a class called "Shop Class." It was a class designed to teach us how to do woodworking and other mechanical things. I was no good at it. I made a knife holder and was thrilled I got a B minus. I enjoyed the class but I was not skilled at being a carpenter. There was one guy in our class who was skilled and built a beautiful gun cabinet. That class never made me a great carpenter, but it gave me skills to recognize who good carpenters are and it enabled me to recognize quality workmanship when I see it. This study will enable God's people to be able to spot quality workmanship in handling God's word and, by God's grace, will enable one to examine God's word and say that is what that text says.

(2)

The truth is most people know how to read the Bible but most don't know how to study to properly interpret the Bible. Most people who go to church know what a pastor or teacher has said about the Bible. Now there is nothing wrong with that because that is a key part of growth and God does give different gifts to the church and one is Pastor/Teacher. But what if the Pastor isn't teaching what is right? He is using his Bible to preach, but what if it isn't right teaching? How would the average person know whether or not they have been taught truth?

Years ago, a man came to me who was paranoid that he had committed the unpardonable sin based on something a minister proclaimed from a passage like **Matthew 12:31-32**. This man lived in fear that he had committed that sin. We turned to that passage and when he saw the first word of verse 31 was "Therefore," which points back to something previous (**v. 24**), he saw what it really meant and was set free. He spent years living with a fear because he had never been taught how to study and interpret God's word.

We think there is tremendous value in having this study for the people of God.

We will handle this study in question/answer fashion. In fact, we start with this question:

QUESTION #1 – Is there a legitimate Biblical precedence for teaching a course on how to study and interpret the Bible?

We are not interested in wasting time studying something at church for which there is no Biblical basis. We do not want to waste your time nor my time. So this is a very good question to ask. We think the Biblical answer to this question is yes. There is a Biblical precedence for this study. We offer six Biblical evidences:

Evidence #1 - The Bible is God's word and that would make knowledge of how to study it the most valuable knowledge of the most important book ever written.

Michael Heiser, who has written a good book called "*Brief Insights on Mastering Bible Study*" has titled a chapter which makes a powerful point: "**Ignorance is not a gift of the Spirit**" (p. 45). The Apostle Peter teaches that one of the qualities we are to pursue and add to our character so we may have an abundant entrance into heaven is "knowledge" (**I Pet. 1:5-11**). Having accurate knowledge of God's word is one of the most valuable things we may have.

All of the data pertaining to the Bible being God's word is very carefully taught in Mr. Tim Kelly's doctrine study of "Bibliology," so I am not going to repeat that here. But one thing we will point out here is that from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible says it is God's word. All 66 books from Genesis to Revelation are God's word. Every bit of it is inspired by God. The Bible is a living, God-breathed book. The Bible is actually called a "book" in many passages. In fact, the Bible ends with a warning not to add or subtract any words from this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

(3)

Every course studied requires numerous textbooks. **In this case our textbook is inspired by God and contains 66 books. So the point of Bible study is to know as much accurate truth as we can from all 66 books.** That will not happen by daydreaming.

Keep in mind that the Bible is a book in which God reveals to us things we cannot learn ourselves without it. This is God's written word and it needs to be treated as an inspired textbook about God.

Now a textbook must be studied. Since this is God's textbook, it must be carefully studied. So knowing how to study this book would be the most valuable knowledge one could have.

Evidence #2 - The inspired historical story found in **Acts 8:25-35**.

This is an extremely important story to a study like this. There was an Ethiopian eunuch who was traveling back to Ethiopia from Jerusalem in his chariot and he was reading the book of Isaiah. The Holy Spirit directed Philip to go up to the chariot and Philip said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" What we learn from this is very important. **It is one thing to read the Bible; it is quite another to understand the Bible. Just because one reads the Bible does not mean one really understands the Bible.** Some method is needed and some teacher is needed.

There is a big difference between reading and studying; reading and understanding. Reading is primarily low intensity and low energy. Studying is just the opposite. It is high-intensity and high-focused energy.

Evidence #3 - The inspired historical story found in **Acts 18:24-27**.

Another passage that is of significance to this study is here. Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt who went to Ephesus. He was a believer. He was an eloquent speaker. He was mighty in his knowledge of Scripture. He had a passion to preach and teach and communicate truth. He would go into synagogues and refute Jews. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him they realized he wasn't quite accurate in his teaching. So they took him aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately." **The principle to see here is this: just because someone has known the Lord for years and has read the Bible and has great knowledge of the Bible does not mean he is able to accurately interpret the Bible or accurately communicate it.**

The Bible is relatively easy to read, but it is not so easy to understand. Just because one loves the Lord and the word does not mean one may accurately interpret the Bible. **Bible study is not just after knowledge, it is after true knowledge.**

(4)

Evidence #4 - The Pauline assignment given to Timothy in **II Timothy 2:15**.

Now it is true that this text was addressed to a minister who had a gift, but we will build a case for application to all of God's people (**Psalm 1:1-3**). In these verses, God's people are not only challenged to not walk in the way of sinners, but to delight in the word and meditate on it day and night. To do that demands an accurate understanding of God's word.

In **II Timothy 2:15**, Paul challenged Timothy to study to show himself approved unto God and be very diligent in his "accurate handling of the word of truth" so that he would be an "unashamed workman." **Through very prayerful and careful study of God's word, it is possible to understand it and handle a text accurately. Through very prayerful and careful study of God's word, it is possible to study it and interpret it in a right way that leaves one unashamed in the way he handled God's word.**

Now to actually do this will require more than just reading. It will require serious study and carefully thinking about words and truth. It will require systematic analysis and it will take a system whereby one may skillfully study to come to the true "rightly divided" interpretation. Unfortunately, that is not how most people think when it comes to the Bible. **But the truth is serious Bible study means serious thinking and serious thinking is hard work.**

Evidence #5 - The statement concerning what is in the Bible in **Hebrews 10:7**.

Jesus Christ Himself testifies to the importance of the written word of God. There are several things brought out in this one verse. The Bible is a book. The Bible is written. The Bible contains written things about Jesus Christ. The Bible contains knowledge of God's will.

If ever there is a Biblical precedence for instruction on how to study and interpret the Bible, there can't be one much weightier than this.

So our conclusion is there is a legitimate Biblical precedence for such a study as this in the church.

Evidence #6 - The inspired historical record found in **Nehemiah 8:1-9**.

Nehemiah, who was a Biblical scribe and scholar and priest, brought the people together, along with other leaders, to read the word of God.

He read from early morning to midday. He read in front of men and women and "those who could understand and all the people were attentive to the book of the law." So what that means is that all the people who could understand the words that were being read listened. **But in verse 8** we read "They read from the book, from the law, translating to give the sense so they understood the reading."

(5)

What we learn from this is that it is not enough to listen to the word of God, but it is critical that sense is made of the words that are read so that God's people can understand it.

To accurately understand the Bible requires serious systematic reading and study.

Based on these evidences, we conclude that there is a legitimate Biblical precedence for this type of study in the Church.

QUESTION #2 – Is there a legitimate need for a course on how to accurately study, interpret and understand the Bible?

We think there is not only a need for a course like this, but this is the greatest need in today's church. We are not trying to be overly dramatic on this point, but this is probably the greatest need God's people have, even though most don't know it.

For most people in the United States, having a Bible or owning a Bible is not a problem. There are 20 million Bibles sold every year in the United States. Every home has an average of 4.3 Bibles and 85% of all American homes have Bibles in them. So the need, it would seem, is not the need for more Bibles. **The need is to be able to study, accurately interpret and accurately understand the Bible.**

Dr. Donald K. Campbell, in his Foreward to Dr. Roy Zuck's book, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, made a very important observation when he wrote: "...the Bible may well be the most abused book in the world" (p. 7). He is absolutely correct. People use the Bible in many ways to support many different beliefs. Denominations, Cults, Religions and Religious rituals all use the Bible.

We believe there is a tremendous need for this kind of study for at least six reasons:

Reason #1 - Because of the condition of the churches today.

If you asked most people what the greatest need of the church is today, very few would say **accurate knowledge of God's word**. The truth is Paul warned that as the Church Age nears its conclusion, it will depart from this focus on God's word and doctrines (II Timothy 4:3).

Paul specifically told Timothy that he was to "give attention to the public reading of Scriptures, to exhortation and teaching" (I Tim. 4:13). This is not happening in most churches today. Most churches have lost this focus.

In fact, the vast majority of churches have gone in a different direction. Generally speaking, the church has been influenced by four different major movements:

(6)

(Movement #1) - The Evangelistic Movement.

This movement stresses evangelism and neglects proper Biblical instruction and doctrine and it neglects feeding the flock. There is certainly nothing wrong with wanting to evangelize the lost. But if that is the focus of the church, it is neglecting its primary responsibility which is to equip those already saved and to build up the body of Christ in the faith so they will not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:11-14).

(Movement #2) - The Church Renewal Movement.

This movement stresses fellowship groups and subdivides people to make them all feel important. The point is we are going a new direction designed to focus on people, not the word of God. In this movement, serious, solid Biblical instruction is neglected.

(Movement #3) - The Church Growth Movement.

This movement stresses doing whatever it takes to increase numbers. This kind of church features entertainment, bands, gimmicks, movies and all kinds of other marketing strategies designed to cause numerical growth at the church. It neglects true, sound, systematic exposition of God's word.

(Movement #4) - The Charismatic Movement.

This movement stresses spiritual gifts and spiritual and emotional experiences at the expense of careful analysis of God's word.

The common denominator of each of these movements is something in the church has a higher priority than a careful understanding of God's word. There is a great need for a study like this because the churches are Biblically anemic and have lost their way.

Reason #2 - Because we are in a Satanic war and the key to our survival is to accurately know God's word.

Satan wants people ignorant of the truth of God and he does his greatest work in religious talk and twisting Scripture (**II Cor. 11:13-15**). This is how he tripped up Eve (**Gen. 3:1-6**). She wasn't quite sure what God's word said. **Satan does his finest work on Sunday in pulpits.** He wants people going to church and he wants people ignorant and confused about what the Bible does and does not actually say. He wants people religious, but ignorant. A key to survival in this dark, twisted world is to know God's word accurately. **Psalm 119:105 says God's word is a lamp for our development in a dark world.**

Satan doesn't care if people hear some of the words of the Bible, but he does not want people knowing all the word of God and he does not want people understanding Truth accurately.

(7)

It is no coincidence that Paul stressed the importance of knowing the truth and word of God as being part of the armor of God against Satan (Ephesians 6:14, 15, 17). In fact, he said, “the sword of the spirit is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He defeated him with this statement: “It is written, ‘man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4).

To carefully and accurately understand every word that proceeds from God is a daunting challenge and it will not come by some quick discipleship course, weekend retreat or even daily reading. It will require a careful system of study.

Reason #3 - Because this world is filled with religious people who adulterate the Word of God.
II Corinthians 4:2

That word “adulterate” (dolow) is one that means to use the word of God in a deceptive and corrupt way that is designed to ensnare people (G Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 120).

If one does not have some system and way of being able to study to actually arrive at the truth, one may fall prey for false religious teachers, denominations and viewpoints of those who are using God’s word in a deceptive way.

People can take the Bible and make it say what they want it to say by taking things out of context and twisting words. Brigham Young justified his having more than 30 wives by pointing out things from the Bible. The Mormon practice of being baptized for the dead is based on a Bible verse taken from I Corinthians 15:29. The concept of bringing rattlesnakes into a church service or drinking strychnine poison comes from one Bible verse in Mark 16:18.

We submit that most people who believe various things in their churches typically do so not based on a very careful study and analysis of God’s word. Most believe what they believe not even knowing whether it is Biblically true or not. Those who don’t know how to study the Bible to accurately interpret it are ripe for these Bible teaching predators, which are out to promote their own views and agendas by adulterating the word of God.

Reason #4 - This world is filled with untaught and unstable people who distort God’s word to their own destruction. **II Pet. 3:16**

Notice carefully that Peter specifically brings up the subject of the “untaught” and “unstable” in the context of not handling the Scriptures right. Often people will say, “he/she really knows the Bible.” Usually when you dig a little deeper, that person doesn’t know much of anything.

There are some people who boast about the fact that they are self-taught. Biblically speaking, there is no such thing. In Scripture, someone is to teach so others can learn. This is true in the O.T. and in the N.T.

(8)

Now the words “untaught” and “unstable” are given in the specific context of misinterpreting the Bible. The word “untaught” (amaqeiç) refers to one who has not been trained so one is ignorant of what the Bible actually says. This is a very rare Greek word that stresses one is unlearned interpreting the Bible (*Ibid.*, p. 23). **Clearly there is a real need to be taught.**

The word “unstable” (asthriktoi) refers to one who is unsettled and unstable in understanding Scripture (*Ibid.*, p. 65). This person is very superficial in the ability to properly handle the Scriptures.

Now what these kinds of people do is “distort” (streblow) the word of God. What that means is they twist, torture and pervert grammar, language and grammatical contexts and theology (*Ibid.*, p. 420). They really believe in what they are doing, but they are doing this to their own destruction.

There are many of these kinds of people who are leading Bible studies. Frankly, they are doing far more damage than good. This is why it is necessary to have some sort of instruction on how to study and interpret the Bible. **What we are after is a true interpretation of God’s word, not inaccurate distortion of it.**

It is not only possible to distort a passage but all of Scripture, because one is untaught as to how to properly interpret it. In **Titus 1:10-11** we learn that there are people distorting God’s word who must be stopped. These people need to be silenced. To do that requires accurate knowledge of God’s word and that requires study.

Reason #5 - This world is filled with religious teachers who use Bibles but very few expound them accurately or even know how to do it. **II Timothy 4:1-2**

Many years ago, I had the privilege of meeting, hearing and actually studying the works of Dr. Haddon Robinson. Back in 1980, he wrote this: “During two decades in the classroom I have evaluated nearly six thousand sermons. My friends marvel that after listening to hundreds of fledgling preachers stumble through their first sermons, I am not an atheist” (*Biblical Preaching*, p. 10). The problem was not the number of messages preached that he heard; it was that the messages did not accurately communicate what was in the text.

The truth is most preachers are not known for the one thing for which they should be known—serious, careful Bible expositors. Most ministers are known for anything but that, yet that is their God-given charge.

Many ministers today spend more time visiting, golfing, planning, and organizing than they do studying. Yet as the Church Age began, the Apostles said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables” (**Acts 6:2**).

(9)

In **John 21:15-17**, after Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, and when He met with the Apostle Peter, He specifically told him that he had a responsibility to “feed His sheep.” The word “tend” (boskw) is the word for feed. This word is used pertaining to a shepherd’s responsibility to see to it that the flock is well fed and feeding on nutritious food (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 84).

We may observe from this passage that in **verse 15** the object of the feeding are “lambs” (young sheep) and in **verse 17**, the object of the verb is “sheep” (older sheep). What Jesus is teaching here is that both groups of believers, young and old, need solid feeding. Jesus does not tell Peter to entertain the sheep; He tells him to feed the sheep. This is what God’s sheep need to grow. The job of the minister is to see to it that God’s flock is well-fed.

Frankly, systematic exposition of O.T. and N.T. books is declining in the pulpits and the flock is malnourished in the pews. Michael Heiser wrote that he had many Christians tell him that they could not remember the last time their pastor went through an Old Testament book. Then he went on to say, “Ignorance of the Old Testament is a serious issue. I’d call it a hermeneutical crime” (*Brief Insights On Mastering Bible Study*, pp. 73-74).

When God’s flock goes to church, they should go expecting to be fed the Word of God. That should be the expectation.

The fact is most people are going to churches where the word of God is being neglected. Most don’t recognize this or know it. **When the word of God is neglected, and when study is neglected, then the minister and the church lose the authority of God and they actually may lose the blessings of God because they are not growing to a maturity level that God will bless.** God’s word is the authority and when God’s word is not accurately handled, authority is lost and so is growth.

How is it that churches are in the condition they are in? Why are people more concerned with programs, bands, social groups, and other things other than a serious grasp of truth? Ministers have lost their way and are not carefully expounding God’s word.

So then the church becomes a place of entertainment and symposiums on this subject or that subject. Vain philosophies, religious viewpoints and worldly ideas and so-called scientific theories and lectures begin to take over.

If more of God’s people know how to study and interpret and accurately understand the Bible, they will be able to spot these guys quicker and realize they do not know what they are talking about.

God’s people are in a Satanic warfare and one of the key Satanic weapons he uses is ignorance of God’s truth. This is why it is so important that we are able to truly spot what is actually true, which is part of our armor. Eph. 6:14, 15, 17

(10)

Reason #6 - A believer's maturity and growth are at stake which is contingent upon an accurate understanding of God's word.

Every believer should strive to carefully and accurately understand the Scriptures because their entire spirituality and growth is contingent on this very point.

I Peter 2:2 teaches us that we are to long for "the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." Being fed the pure, true milk of the word of God is vital for this.

II Timothy 3:16-17 teaches us that the key to us becoming a mature, thoroughly furnished, completely equipped believer is an understanding of "All Scripture." This is a daunting challenge.

Philippians 1:9-11 teaches that we are to grow in "real knowledge and all discernment" that leads to us being filled with the righteousness of God. We have much at stake in accurately understanding the Bible.

The fact is if our interpretations aren't right, then our spirituality is not right. One may read the Bible and have a warm, fuzzy feeling, but no spiritual depth that pleases God.

QUESTION #3 – What is the goal of this study?

The goal of this study is not to replace the need for church or for gifted men who can teach the Scriptures because nothing will replace that. There are some goals of this study:

Goal #1 - To Glorify God. **I Cor. 10:31; Ps. 138:2**

In I Corinthians 10:31 we read, "whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." In Psalm 138:2 we read, "For you have magnified Your word according to all Your name."

So the word of God is the most majestic thing on this earth and when we are learning how to study to accurately understand it, we are doing something to the glory of God.

Goal #2 - To gain true, deep knowledge of God. **Eph. 1:16-17**

When we read a prayer like Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers in Ephesians 1:16-17, it is clear that God wants His people to have a "knowledge-upon-knowledge" level or deep knowledge of Him. To have that knowledge one must be wise and knowledgeable of the written Scriptures. In Paul's armor against Satan, he said the "the sword of the Spirit" is the "word of God." Eph. 6:17

(11)

Goal #3 - To actually transform our minds. **Rom. 12:2**

There is nothing on this earth that can and will transform a mind and renew a mind like careful study to come to an accurate understanding of God's word. **A true course on how to study and interpret the Bible should cause a believer to be a very careful thinker.**

Goal #4 - To give God's people the tools necessary so that there is a measure of Spirit-produced independence in being able to see God's truth and know it is God's truth in what is being studied, taught or preached.

Just having the skills to study and interpret the Bible does not mean we may eliminate those who have special gifts of God to be able to teach the Scriptures (**Eph. 4:11**). God still gives gifted men to the church and those men are needed to preach and teach the Scriptures. These gifts are still needed and will always be needed for the equipping of the saints.

But we do see in **I Corinthians 14:29** that Paul expected the people in the church to be able to listen carefully to what was being said in order to be able to pass some sort of judgment as to whether or not it was right and true. **This kind of ability requires thinking and not just reading, memorizing or feeling.**

When Paul and Silas went to Berea and opened up the word of God, we learn that they were "examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (**Acts 17:11**).

So the goal of this study is to present God's people with some of the skills necessary to come to a proper understanding and right interpretation of the word of God.

QUESTION #4 – How do people actually read the Bible?

Whenever anyone picks up a Bible, he/she has made some personal, intentional decision to attempt to read it. We don't necessarily know the reason or motive for reading it, but some decision has been made to read it. In fact, we believe the Bible is the best book one can read.

But there are at least seven different ways one may read the Bible.

Way #1 - One may read the Bible skeptically.

A skeptic may read the Bible, but he does so with the goal of questioning everything and not ascertaining truth or changing his mind about anything. Skeptics do read the Bible, but they are suspicious of it and very critical of it. Their goal for even reading it is sinister. They read it looking for supposed contradictions or mistakes. They are not after truth and they are not interested in coming to accurate conclusions.

I read of a skeptic in London who read the Bible and said that it was almost impossible to believe in any book whose authorship is not clearly known. Well, a Christian man was in the audience and he asked if the compiler of the multiplication table was known. The skeptic said “No.” So the Christian said, “Then of course you don’t believe in it?” The skeptic said, “Oh yes, I believe in it because it works well.” The Christian responded, “So does the Bible.” That silenced the skeptic.

Way #2 - One may read the Bible casually.

In a casual reading, one is not too concerned with technical matters in a text. Casual reading makes no attempt to actually dissect a text. Casual reading is done for pleasure. One can just casually read the Bible without much thinking at all. Quite honestly, casual reading does not require much thinking. Running our eyes over words on a page is relatively easy; as we will see, Bible study is not easy. The Bible is one of the most interesting books one can read.

Years ago, one famous General in the military said he loved to read the war stories in the Bible. He said it was fascinating. The stories in the Bible fascinate all ages of people. One problem with reading the Bible casually is that one is not really focused on the author’s true meaning of the text. **Reading the Bible casually is not the same as studying the Bible.**

Way #3 - One may read the Bible devotionally.

In a devotional reading, one reads the Bible with the idea that God will speak to your heart and mind. Many people pick up their Bibles and read it devotionally, realizing God does speak through His word. Truly, God does speak to His people through His word.

One does not need tools or helps to read the Bible devotionally and it is a good thing to do. Probably all of us have done this in our lives. For example, when going through a difficult and dark valley, many read the Psalms with the idea that it will minister to our hearts. It does minister to our hearts.

But picking up a Bible in search of a feeling in the heart is not Bible study. At the heart of Bible study is deep search to accurately understand what a biblical text actually says and means. Some have closed their eyes and opened to a passage and put their finger on a verse and read it believing God will speak to their hearts. The problem with just reading the Bible devotionally is that what you come to believe and feel may not be accurate.

Years ago, there was a minister who was touched by the story of the Exodus and he led a group of people to the Lake truly feeling that God would part it. Well, God didn’t part it and it was his devotional reading that left him standing there looking like he was out of his mind.

(13)

Dr. Michael S. Heiser made a great observation on this point when he said the goal of Bible study is not some “Spiritual Buzz.” “Bible study is not about you. It is about gaining the knowledge of God...” (*Brief Insights On Mastering Bible Study*, p. 29). The Bible is not man’s view of God; it is God’s view of man, Himself and everything else.

If one is always reading the Bible devotionally, how do we know what we believe in our hearts is really the meaning of the text?

Way #4 - One may read the Bible historically.

Many archeological discoveries have occurred in various countries, such as Israel and Turkey, because scholars have read the Bible with historical locations in view. They read the Bible as a history book. There are literal archeological trips taken to these parts of the world just to do historical, archeological work.

One of the latest archaeological discoveries was made last year in 2021. Archaeologists working near Jerusalem discovered an ancient wall that was five meters wide (5.4 yards) that proved biblical accounts of Jerusalem being fortified were accurate (i.e. Psalm 89:40). Many read the Bible looking for historical things like this.

William Ramsey was one such man who read the Bible historically. He was an attorney who initially was an atheist and took the Bible to historically track Paul’s journeys through Greece and Turkey. He had been told by his professors that Luke’s history in Acts was inaccurate and was not right. Ramsey believed them. He specifically took the book of Acts and went to Turkey and Greece and started tracking the record to see if the historical documentation was accurate. He discovered the history was completely accurate. Because of his reading the Bible historically and tracking it down, he became a believer and one of the great defenders of Biblical Christianity.

Way #5 - One may read the Bible inquisitively.

One may read the Bible to simply be inquisitive of what is in it or what it says. This does not mean one is pursuing a real personal relationship with God or a real focus on an accurate interpretation and application.

There is an interesting account in **Matthew 2:1-5**. When Herod heard from the Magi that the King of the Jews had been born, he gathered the chief priests and scribes together to have them research exactly where the Messiah was supposed to be born. They went to the O.T. book of Micah and determined that He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). They simply went to the Scriptures to inquire the facts of what Micah wrote and that was the interpretation they gave to Herod. They read it and reported it.

If one reads the Bible with an inquisitiveness to know truth, God can do some very positive and powerful things. Many who pick up a Bible are inquisitive as to what is in it.

Way #6 - One may read the Bible subjectively.

Many read the Bible with a personal bias that is so subjective that one jumps over passages that do not agree with the bias. Many read the Bible to support their arguments. This kind of reading uses Bible verses as proof texts for one's present beliefs. This kind of reading is not really interested in objective truth and is not really searching the Scriptures to make proper changes in what one believes. This person reads the Bible with the notion, "my mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts so I read my Bible to find verses that seem to support my views."

Way #7 - One may read and study the Bible hermeneutically, exegetically and objectively.

One may read with the goal of analyzing, observing and discerning all necessary, factual, technical data to arrive at a true accurate interpretation of what the passage or text actually says and what the author actually meant.

One may literally "search" a text and analyze exactly what the words say with the goal of understanding precisely what God's word is saying. This requires concentration, skill and effort.

We certainly would never or ever minimize the reading of the Bible; however, it is imperative that we seek to read with understanding; otherwise, we may never really know what the passage is actually saying. **Reading is the first step to understanding the Bible but it is not the only step.**

QUESTION #5 – What are the qualifications needed to study and accurately interpret the Bible?

There are nine qualifications if one is to be a true Bible interpreter:

Qualification #1 - One must be a believer in Jesus Christ, who has a desire to know truth and obey truth. **John 8:31-32**

Proper interpretation of the Bible starts here. **It is the Lord who must authorize and give a person an accurate understanding of His word (Luke 24:45; II Timothy 2:7).**

The believer is given the Holy Spirit that potentially enables one to grasp God's truth (John 16:13). However, it is the spiritually-minded believer whose mind will understand God's truth (Ephesians 4:23).

One who is not a believer does not have the capability of understanding the things of God. This is clearly stated in I Cor. 2:14. The unsaved person is spiritually blind (II Cor. 4:4) and spiritually dead (Eph. 2:2). In order for one to accurately understand and interpret the Bible, one must be born again and one must want to know and apply truth.

(15)

Now a non-believer could grammatically analyze the syntax of any Bible verse in the original language. An unbeliever could identify parts of speech like nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. Any serious linguist could do that.

However, the non-believer has no capacity whatsoever to be able to accurately grasp these things spiritually in a way that is right and true and God-honoring. The unbeliever cannot give a true, accurate interpretation of a text because Jesus Christ will not authorize it.

There are many passages of Scripture that teach God will not allow someone to accurately understand His word—Is. 6:9-10; Is. 44:18; Luke 8:10.

Qualification #2 - One must have a reverence for God and His word.

Deuteronomy 32:46-47; Job 23:12; Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5

Even in the New Testament Grace Age, the believer is challenged to “fear” God (I Pet. 2:17). Without a fear and reverence for God, one will never be a skilled interpreter of Scripture. Furthermore, in II Timothy 3:15, Paul called the Scriptures “sacred.”

One of the keys to properly interpreting the Bible is to approach the Scriptures in an honorable and reverent way. This is God’s Holy Word. When one approaches the Scriptures, one needs this very concept of Scripture; it is sacred. Without a high view of God’s word, there will never be a true interpretation of it.

This is the way it is to be viewed and handled. Dr. Roy Zuck eloquently says, “A lackadaisical or cavalier attitude toward the Bible does not contribute to proper understanding of God’s truth” (*Basic Bible Interpretation.*, p. 23).

Qualification #3 - One must be willing to pray to ask God for a proper interpretation and understanding. **Psalm 119:18; Matthew 7:7-8**

When Solomon taught his own son concerning the key to tapping into the knowledge of God, one of his instructions to his son was that he needed to cry out for discernment and lift up his voice for understanding(**Prov. 2:3**). In other words, he taught his son to pray. One who will arrive at true interpretations will be one who prays for true interpretations.

However, we want to point out something that is important here and that is **prayer does not replace careful study of God’s word. Prayer is a qualification, but not the only qualification.**

We must ask God to give us understanding of His word, but we also must carefully and systematically study the Scriptures to gain that understanding. We will never minimize prayer in the process of rightly dividing Scripture, but just because one prays does not mean one will study to rightly divide Scripture.

John Wesley and George Whitefield were both godly men of prayer. In fact, they often stayed together in the same room and one time Wesley rebuked Whitefield for the fact that he didn't pray as long as Wesley did. George Whitefield believed in the sovereignty of God and John Wesley believed more in the will of man. Both of these men were believers and both of these men were men of prayer, but Wesley got off into some strange man-centered doctrines to the point that Whitefield said he could no longer associate with him. Whitefield saw Wesley drift into a man-centered Arminianism that was focused more on experiences than the word of God. So just because someone prays, does not automatically mean one properly interprets the Scripture.

Martin Luther was a man of great prayer and there was a time in his life when he didn't think the book of James should be in the Bible. Jacob Arminius lived in the time of John Calvin. They both prayed but they had very different interpretations of the Bible. John Calvin was very God-centered and Jacob Arminius was very man-centered. Both men prayed. So prayer does not automatically mean one grasps truth.

Qualification #4 - One must be willing to give himself to intense research and study.

Again, in the same context when Solomon taught his son some keys to grasping the wisdom of God, he brought out the importance of intense search and research. He compared the intensity of study to the intensity of searching for treasure (**Prov. 2:4**). To become a skilled Bible interpreter requires intense effort. To accurately interpret a text is work. What we will discover is an accurate interpretation of a text is far better than a warm, fuzzy feeling, but it will require work.

Bible study is study. **Study is a verb, which means it requires intense action.** It requires skills, tools and effort. **Bible study is not initially looking for a feeling or a blessing; it is searching for God's truth.** It is seeking to understanding infinite truth from the Infinite God. Bible study and interpretation is like climbing a mountain; it is tough but when you get there, it is worth the struggle, especially to understand "the knowledge of God."

Michael Heiser said, "If you don't think Bible study is work, you aren't doing it" (*Brief Insights on Mastering Bible Study*, p. 41).

Qualification #5 - One must be willing to be taught by others who are skilled in the word.

In **Proverbs 2:2**, Solomon challenges his son to be willing to listen to instruction. One of the wisest things for an interpreter to do is to surround himself with other scholarly teachings of men who have met the qualifications and have struggled with the text. These are men of sound minds and serious focus on God's word.

This is not suggesting that one bypass the discipline of hermeneutics, but it is suggesting that there is a willingness to be taught by others who are skilled. If anyone thinks he has arrived to some level where he no longer needs to be taught "he has not yet known as he ought to know." (**I Cor. 8:2**).

(17)

The kinds of teachers, writings and teachings to which I am referring are not the shallow drivel that is often found in Christian Bookstores and some Bible studies. To learn, one must be taught by those skilled which includes studying skillful works and studies taught or written by skillful men of God. It is God who actually structured this teacher/student process of learning.

Paul said in **II Timothy 2:2** - “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” True interpretation demands this process.

To gain true knowledge and skills, we must learn and be taught. We must surround ourselves with skilled things. One such scholarly writing that this teacher truly loves to examine are the theological journals known as *Bibliotheca Sacra* published by Dallas Theological Seminary. I have a collection of these journals that date back to the mid 1930’s. It is iron-sharpening reading to think through a text in view of some of the most skillful and godly scholars to ever interpret the Bible.

Qualification #6 - One must be willing to study doctrine and be taught doctrine.

This is a major problem with many who teach and lead Bible studies. They have never really studied Systematic Theology and do not know what they are doctrinally doing. That minister who tried to walk on water and was killed by an alligator had no true understanding of Christology and the proof of the Deity of Jesus Christ. True interpretation demands true doctrine.

In **Romans 6:17**, Paul stresses the fact that a critical key to growth is being “obedient from the heart **to that form of teaching to which you were committed.**” Those words imply that there was a system of instruction in doctrine that was presented to the believers and they needed to know that and they needed to have a heart committed to that.

True doctrine and true systematic theology sets the parameters for legitimate and true interpretation. Remember this, **not every interpretation of a text is legitimately or doctrinally plausible.** No true interpretation of God’s word will ever contradict sound, true doctrine that is found in the word of God. To arrive at a true interpretation, two key systematic studies are needed: 1) One needs Systematic Theology; 2) One needs Systematic Bible book study.

Years ago, there was a man who was talking to people about prophecy and was using the Trumpet Judgments of Revelation as a basis for saying this is when the Rapture will occur because Paul said we will be caught up in the air at the sound of the last trumpet (I Cor. 15:52). His problem is he had never been taught doctrine to know the difference between Israel and the Church. So he was sharing what he thought was truth and it was not truth.

Qualification #7 - One must believe that a true interpretation of a text is possible.

When it comes to interpreting the Bible, you most definitely have a desire to be right. James says that when we ask for something we must ask in faith without any doubting and then he says that if we pray doubting, God will not let us receive that for which we pray (James 1:6-7). **Whenever we prayerfully approach a text of Scripture, we must approach it believing it is possible to properly interpret it. We will not deny that some things are, as Peter said, “hard to understand” (II Pet. 3:16), but that does not mean they cannot ever be understood.**

There are those who take the position that there are so many different views about verses that we cannot really ever know. **We believe there is one true interpretation of every text, which quite honestly means all other interpretations are wrong.**

In my years of Biblical study, I have accumulated quite a sizeable library. I am very particular about the commentaries I purchase. I have on occasion purchased a commentary that actually jumps over a text, because it seemed too difficult. One such commentary said, “We’ll leave this for the scholars to decide.” I thought, “You are writing the commentary, isn’t part of the responsibility to interpret what is there so others will know?”

No matter what the field of sport or occupation, you don’t get to the top without hard work and consistent pursuit. So it is with some interpretations. You must keep digging and believe a true interpretation is there.

We have very accurate translations of God’s word that does communicate God’s truth and that makes interpretation possible and we must believe that it is possible.

Qualification #8 - One must have an attitude of humility.

The Scriptures must be approached in a reverent way and in a humble way. There is no room for pride in connection to God in anything, including reading the Bible. **There are two extremes to avoid: 1) Unhealthy proud independency; 2) Unhealthy proud dependency.**

The Apostle Paul said it well when he wrote “If anyone supposes that he knows anything he has not yet known as he ought to know” (I Cor. 8:2). **God never blesses pride, even if it is in studying His word.** God never wants any of His people to think more highly of themselves than they ought (Rom. 12:3). We are all students and we all need to grow more, and learn more, and study more.

Coming to terms with God’s truth requires a humble attitude and contrite spirit. People become proud of their church, denomination, religion, and even their beliefs, but that does not mean they actually really understand the Bible. Proud people don’t. Proud people never grow deep because God will not ever permit them to grow deep (Heb. 6:1-3).

If we are going to accurately understand God's word, we must be humble enough and honest enough to admit we were wrong and to submit ourselves to God's truth and be willing to make changes when one sees truth and not arrogantly refuse it or stand against it.

I was raised in a Baptist Church background that quite honestly had ministers who loved the Lord but did not know what they were doing with God's word. So before I seriously studied the Bible, I just accepted what they said and figured it was true. But when I went to school and began to be taught doctrine and Scripture, and as I was exegetically poring through passages, there have been at many times I have come to a crossroad where I had to decide whether or not I would humble myself to truth or proudly defend what I was being taught in the church at the time - 1) Charismatic movement; 2) Legalism versus Grace; 3) Election; 4) Water Baptism; 5) The phrase "Husband of one wife"; 6) Drinking Wine; 7) Using wine at communion; 8) Altar Calls that beg people to come forward; 9) Versions of the Bible; 10) Gray Issues; 11) Leadership offices; 12) Lordship Salvation; 13) Divorce and remarriage. Each time in every one of these cases, I had to decide would I humble myself to truth or stay in some proud frame of mind against it because some guy in a church said it?

James brings out a critical point in James 4:6 when he writes: "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Those who approach the study of God's word with a humble, contrite spirit wanting to understand truth will discover they will learn more truth and grow deeper in truth and go far in their understanding of God's word.

Qualification #9 - One must have a sense of responsibility and passion to know truth and obey truth. **John 8:31-32**

To know truth of God, one must have a passion to know it and once one knows it, he has the responsibility to obey it and defend it. It is our job to know truth to grow and defend truth to others (II Tim. 4:1-4; I Pet. 3:15).

We must be able to sift through the opinions of others and sort out the true meaning. We are to be able to give answers to people who ask us things. We cannot defend truth unless we know truth. So a key to knowing truth is to be on a quest to know truth.

QUESTION #6 – Can the Bible be properly interpreted by the average Christian?

Another way to ask this question is "Would a believer have to go to Bible College or Seminary to be able to accurately interpret the Bible?" "Could any layperson properly interpret the Bible?" "Could the church actually teach the average Christian how to study and interpret the Bible?" The answer to this question is based on eight key presuppositions and observations:

Observation #1 - The Bible is the inspired word of God.

We start with this point: "all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable" (II Tim. 3:16).

The whole point of this study is based on this presupposition. Donald J. Campbell, in his foreword to Dr. Roy Zuck's book, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, says, "...since the Bible was given to reveal truth and not obscure it, God surely intends that we understand it" (p. 7).

The Bible is inspired by God and says it is profitable and to be profitable, one would need to understand it. So we would conclude that it is not only possible to interpret the Scriptures, it is profitable to do so.

The Bible is like no other book in the world because it is a book that has been given to us from God Himself (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21). We can start on page one of the Bible and see that it keeps repeating "and God said," which clearly indicates this is not a normal book.

Now because this is a book originally written by humans, but inspired by God, there are six key realities that we accept, believe and defend:

(Reality #1) - We believe the Bible is inerrant - this book does not contain any errors.

(Reality #2) - We believe the Bible is infallible- this book is incapable of containing errors.

(Reality #3) - We believe the Bible is authoritative - this book is the truth authority base for what we believe and all we believe.

(Reality #4) - We believe the Bible has a Divine unity - this book will not contradict itself and if all is studied, it will be proved to have a unity to it concerning any subject.

Martin Luther and John Calvin said Scripture will interpret itself. Multiple passages will ultimately reveal what the truth is on any subject. **We must always interpret obscure passages by plain passages.** There will always be a Divine unity in the various inspired books of the Bible.

For example, the prophetic portions of the Bible will have a Divine unity to them. Prophetic passages and books in the Bible will correspond in a unified way to other prophetic passages in books like Daniel, Matthew, II Thessalonians and Revelation.

(Reality #5) - We believe the Bible has supernatural depth - this book comes from the mind of God.

There will be things in the Bible that are very deep and complex because the Bible is rooted in the infinite wisdom of God. The Bible can captivate a child but it also can intimidate the greatest scholars in the world. Even an Apostle like Peter acknowledged that there are some very deep things that are "hard to understand" in the Scriptures (II Peter 3:16). So this is not just a simple book to unravel.

(Reality #6) - We believe the Bible is absolutely true - nothing in this book can be false.

Since God is a God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), the Bible is a book that cannot lie on any subject or theme. For example, if the Bible says that an ax head actually floated to the top of water, it has to be the truth because it comes from a God who cannot lie (II Kings 6:1-7). If the Bible says Jesus walked on top of water, it has to be true (Matt. 14:22-33). Nothing in the Scripture can be false because all Scripture is the inspired word of God.

Observation #2 - God did put His word into written form.

This is a critical, observable fact. God's word is written. When one opens the Bible, one does see written words on a page that people may read. We do have God's word in existence and in our language. In fact, Proverbs 30:5 says this includes "every word." Now one logical question is this: why did God go to the trouble to put His word in written word form? The obvious answer is so humans would have it, so they could read it and understand it.

By virtue of the fact that God's word is in written form for humans, then we know that He will use words, grammar and syntax to form sentences and paragraphs. It will be important, then, to analyze all these kinds of things to arrive at a true understanding of a written text.

Observation #3 - God did use humans to write His word.

J. Robertson McQuilkin said, "When God created individuals in His own likeness, He created them with the ability to communicate" (*Understanding and Applying the Bible*, p. 61). Human language is a gift from God and it is a gift that means one person may communicate with another person.

Now when God gave His word, He used humans to write it and He did not use humans to write His word to communicate with angels, but with other humans. So we know God used real humans to write in real human language to communicate truth to other humans. He oversaw what the various men wrote but He did have men write His word (II Peter 1:21). God used normal humans to write His word. He used all kinds of different men: Fishermen (Peter, James, John); Political Kings (David, Solomon); Peasant Farmer (Amos); Tax Collector (Matthew); Medical Doctor (Luke); Religious Scholar (Paul). God used all kinds of men to write and the reason they all wrote was so that they could accurately communicate truth to other humans.

This is a very important point because what this means is that humans wrote this book in linguistic ways books are written for other humans. They wrote in intelligible language. These writers obviously had a message to communicate and they wrote in a way that others could read and understand.

Now because this is a book written by humans, we know that humans who write do so by following normal grammatical ways of writing in their particular language. These writers used words and sentences to form paragraphs and they followed the normal rules of grammar and language at the time they wrote.

Normal humans write something in a way that is designed to make sense, not in a way that is designed to write nonsense. One of the basic presuppositions about God is that “God is a God of sense, not of nonsense” (Robert Cate, *How To Interpret The Bible*, p. 161).

If someone writes “the man went for a ride in his car,” you do not understand that to mean “the man was carried away by a demon-possessed vehicle.” You take it at face value. If we write “I decided to take a course on how to study and interpret the Bible,” we would expect the reader to interpret those words in exactly what they meant. We would not expect the reader to say what those words mean is that “this person decided to change his course in life in order to study to give interpretive meaning to the social world and business world.” We would expect someone to read the statement and interpret to mean this person decided to take a course on how to interpret the Bible. The meaning is precisely this and the normal use of human words conveys that very point.

So when a Biblical writer like Luke writes for example that Jesus would return to Jerusalem (Acts 1:4, 11-12), that is what he expects the reader to understand. He is communicating exactly what he means for other humans to read. He does not write so people may read it and then say it really means He will return to Salt Lake City.

When a Biblical writer like John writes that Christ will have a reign of 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-7) on this earth, he expects that when other humans read this, they will know this and not tamper with the number or invent some strange interpretation to it. God used humans to write His word in human language.

Observation #4 - God used men to write His word so His people could read it.

God’s whole point in putting His word into written form was so His people could read it. It is written in normal human language for normal humans to read. We know that man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). We also know that every believer has the indwelling Spirit of God, whose work is to guide God’s people into all the truth (John 16:13). Furthermore, every believer is a priest unto God (I Pet. 2:9) and certainly one of the responsibilities of a priest was to understand and interpret God’s word. In Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, he writes: “**I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren**” (5:27). So by virtue of the fact that God’s word may be read by humans, we conclude it may be understood by humans.

Observation #5 - God challenges His people to read His word. **Psalm 1:1-3; Col. 4:16**

In **Colossians 4:16**, Paul writes: “When this letter is **read** among you, have it also **read** in the church of the Laodiceans and you, for your part **read** my letter that is coming from Laodicea.” In this one verse Paul challenges people to read God’s word three times. The word “read” (anaginwskw) not only means to read it, but to read it recognizing and knowing what it means (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 28).

What this actually means is that God's word must be read, understood and applied. Since this was to be done in church, we must conclude that the person going to church could read and understand it.

When we analyze the Bible, we see many challenges in the word of God to read the Word of God to the people of God (Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27; II Thess. 3:14; I Tim. 4:13-16; II Tim. 4:1-2). We must initially assume that God has made it possible for His people to hear it, understand it and properly apply it in an accurate way. **True understanding of God's word demands true interpretation of God's word and that starts with reading.**

Observation #6 - God challenges His people to apply and obey His word. **II Thess. 3:14**

This is a significant text on this point. "If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame." Paul expected the word of God not only to be understood, but applied.

Over and over again this admonition is given in both the O.T. and the N.T.. The assumption is that people will be able to read the word, understand the word and apply the word and obey the word. As we have already previously studied, obedience to truth is a key to grasping more truth. Now in order to actually obey God's word consistent with what pleases God, one must properly interpret it and apply it.

Observation #7 - God challenges His people to defend His word. **I Pet. 3:15**

In I Peter 3:15, Peter says we are to be able to give a defense to everyone. To be able to defend the truth concerning everyone requires tremendous knowledge of God's word.

Observation #8 - God gave His Holy Spirit to every believer so every believer has the potential to interpret it and understand it. **John 14:26; 16:13**

Dr. Roy Zuck writes: "Its interpretation is not in the hands of an elite few scholars" (*Ibid.*, p. 24). God's Spirit was involved in the writing process and lives within every believer and therefore every believer may potentially understand it.

Based on these observations we conclude that if we meet the qualifications, **it is possible for the average Christian to properly interpret Scripture.** God wants His people to carefully and accurately understand His word.

However, this does not mean the average Christian will actually be able to do this and, based on observations we have made, we are of the opinion that the "average" Christian will not be given to the kind of study and hermeneutical discipline required for proper Biblical interpretation.

QUESTION #7 – What role does the Holy Spirit play in a person being able to accurately interpret the Bible? **John 14:26; I Cor. 2:10-13; I John 2:27**

The question boils down to this—how does the Holy Spirit guide and direct a person in the interpretive process of the Word of God? There are sixteen thesis truths we want to observe:

(Truth #1) - The Spirit's ministry **does mean** we cannot grasp truth without Him. **I Cor. 2:14**

No person without the Holy Spirit will ever be able to properly interpret Scripture, no matter how much they read it or study it. Without a proper connection to the Holy Spirit, we will not be able to grasp truth.

(Truth #2) - The Spirit's ministry **does mean** we cannot grasp truth by normal human methods without Him. **John 14:26; I Cor. 2:13-14**

The world through its wisdom did not come to know God (I Cor. 1:21). As John said, the Holy Spirit is who guides us into all truth (**John 16:13**). This cannot happen without Him. Academic courses invented by humans apart from the Holy Spirit will never come to terms with the deep truth of God. Bible study does follow certain study rules, but no rules can replace the need of the Holy Spirit in Bible study.

(Truth #3) - The Spirit's ministry **does mean** the Holy Spirit knows all truth perfectly.
I Cor. 2:10-11

The Holy Spirit knows all truth about God perfectly; we do not. We will need to depend on Him as we carefully study the Scriptures to learn and grow. He does not need more knowledge, we do. He does not need to change, we do. For us, understanding God's word is a process.

(Truth #4) - The Spirit's ministry **does mean** we must be properly related to Him if we are to grasp truth. **Ephesians 4:30; I Thess. 5:9**

In order to study the Bible and grow in truth, we must be properly related to the Holy Spirit, since He is so critical to our development. What this in part practically means is that we do not quench the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 5:9) and we do not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). We must be spiritually-minded and not fleshly-minded and be properly related to Him. Dr. Roy Zuck said, "a Christian who is living in sin is susceptible to making inaccurate Bible interpretations because his heart and mind are not in harmony with the Holy Spirit" (*Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 24).

(Truth #5) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** He gives new revelation.

God's Spirit will always work within the framework of the written inspired Scriptures and will never go beyond it either by way of addition or subtraction (i.e. Rev. 22:18-19). Our goal is to carefully and accurately understand what the Holy Spirit actually inspired in writing from Genesis to Revelation.

(Truth #6) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** one's interpretation is infallible.

When the Holy Spirit inspired the original manuscripts, He guarded them in such a way that they were without error (inerrancy) and incapable of error (infallibility).

When it comes to interpretation, the Spirit will guide one into truth, but He does not automatically guard against infallibility. For example, the Roman Catholic Church claimed that it was the only group who could understand and interpret the Bible in an infallible way. We totally reject this. Every person has a right to try and privately interpret the Bible, but that does not mean that the private interpretation is accurate or true.

Just because someone believes something about a Bible verse does not make it true. If the qualifications are not met for true interpretation, it is highly probable the interpretation will be faulty.

A key is to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in our own life and be very honest and accurate with the text. The text is infallible, but we are not.

(Truth #7) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does mean** one who has a true Spirit gift of Pastor/Teacher should be able to see and understand truths beyond the level of many. I Cor. 12:4-7; I Peter 4:11; Eph. 4:11-12

A spiritual gift is a supernatural enablement that enables a believer to excel in a spiritual area way above and beyond the average. A truly gifted minister should excel far above and beyond the average believer in the ability to understand God's truth.

We must be very careful on this point because any Pastor or religious leader may claim that the Spirit has permitted him to see something that may not be God's Spirit at all. Some of the guidelines for one truly gifted are:

1) Usually if a careful interpreter thinks he has unlocked something from God's word, other skilled interpreters will have observed the same truth. God teaches us that Scripture is not a matter of "one's own interpretation" (II Pet. 1:20). This does not mean we may not discover some new things, but they will be confirmed by others.

For example, this teacher was carefully analyzing the Greek text of I Peter and observed that the parsing of the verb which charges us to "be holy" is passive, not active (1:15). This point completely changes the emphasis for victory. We must be the recipient of the action, not the source of it. Since very few had actually spotted this key grammatical point, I wondered if I had parsed it wrong. I immediately went to other Greek scholars to determine if I were seeing it correctly, which I was.

(26)

2) If an interpreter presents discovered truth to God's people, others who are serious, dedicated students and teachers of the Bible will see it, sense it and embrace it. There will always be a certain spiritual ring to God's truth presented to God's spiritually-minded people.

(Truth #8) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does mean** that the unsaved person may be able to comprehend statements in the Bible but cannot appropriate them properly to their own faith system and life. I Cor. 2:14

There are many unbelievers who have understood historical facts of the Bible. In fact, some have undertaken archeological digs based on their geographical understanding of Biblical facts. Most unsaved people have cognitively grasped certain Biblical data, such as information about the birth of Jesus Christ and even His death and resurrection. However, the unsaved person has no capacity to be able to properly apply these truths to their lives or to the Biblical faith system.

This is precisely why one can actually know that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again, but also believe that to get to heaven he must work.

(Truth #9) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** that only Bible scholars can understand the Bible.

We have previously addressed this point; however, we must realize that the Bible was given by God to be accurately understood and if the previous mentioned qualifications are being met, one may come to a great level of understanding.

(Truth #10) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does coincide** with the real spirituality of a person.

A worldly or carnal Christian, not yielded to God, will not ever be able to grasp God's word fully at a meat level (I Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:13). As we already mentioned, the Christian whose life is full of sin is very susceptible to inaccurate interpretations of Scripture. A truly spiritually-minded believer has a far greater depth level and discerning ability which is actually produced by the Spirit of God.

(Truth #11) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** one must not diligently study. Josh. 1:8; Matt. 4:4; Ez. 7:10

Bible study is wonderful work but it is also tedious work and not many realize this. Most people who read the Bible do not do so with the goal of accurately understanding a text in its context. But that is what Bible study is. Nothing will ever replace careful, diligent study of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit works as one carefully studies the Scriptures. As an interpreter carefully studies a passage and meditates on it and then consults other careful works, God's Spirit begins to unravel His truth.

It has been wisely observed that the desire to publically perform means nothing without the desire to privately prepare.

(Truth #12) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** the interpreter has no need to consult study helps, commentaries, theologies, Bible dictionaries, etc.

We have previously addressed this; we may add that it is often asserted by “pseudo-devout” people that they can understand the Bible on their own without any help. This is nothing more than “veiled egotism.” To think that one is at such a remarkable level that he/she can bypass all godly learning and scholarship from all ages is very foolish, prideful and dangerous.

In the book of Proverbs a wise person is challenged to “make your ear attentive to wisdom” and “incline your heart to understanding” (Prov. 2:2). Now what this means is that we need to sit under good teachers, who know God's word and we need to listen and learn from them. Today, we have the privilege through books of sitting under some of the greatest Biblical teachers God used in history.

God's sovereignty has preserved the writings and the commentaries of some of the most dedicated men of God who ever put a Bible into their hands. Men like Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, Scofield, Morgan, Chafer, and many others. Some laid down their own lives defending Jesus Christ and defending the Word of God. To think that we can bypass them because of our elevated knowledge level is pure ignorance and arrogance.

(Truth #13) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** the interpreter can ignore common mental sense and logic.

There are many admonitions in Scripture that teach us we are to develop and have sound minds. Clear systematic thinking is the kind of thinking the Spirit of God uses. The more the interpreter thinks clearly about Biblical history, geography, culture and grammar, the more accurate will be the interpretation.

For example, if one reads a text that says, “he went up to Jerusalem,” it may mean he went up in from a lower elevation to a higher elevation or it may mean he went up in a north direction. A wise interpreter will discern which it is because that will be a key to truth.

There will always be perfect harmony between clear, concise thinking based on careful research and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is typically not at work in mindless emotion, but in careful, prayer mental investigation.

(Truth #14) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not typically** give sudden flashes of instant, intuitive insight into the true meaning of Scripture.

To have insight into Scripture requires careful study, thought and analysis. The Holy Spirit does not usurp careful verification and validation; He works in harmony with it.

(28)

Often times in what is called Bible study, people go around the room and share pooled ignorance. For someone to walk into a Bible study and think they will get some instant flash of wisdom that will enable them to bring out a truer or deeper meaning is faulty thinking.

(Truth #15) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** all parts of the Bible will be equally easy and clear in meaning.

II Peter 3:16 says that some things are "hard to understand." Some things require years and even lifetimes of study.

(Truth #16) - The Spirit's ministry in interpretation **does not mean** it is possible to understand everything about God comprehensively and completely.

There are some things that we will not know until we see our Savior "face to face" (I Cor. 13:12). Some of the mysteries of God we will not know until we get to heaven.

To sum up we conclude that the Holy Spirit is critical to our ability to properly interpret the Bible. He will work in harmony with our spirituality and mind in enabling us to come to a true and accurate understanding of the written word. It is very wise to always ask God for wisdom in being able to rightly divide the word of truth.

QUESTION #8 – What are the false ways and systems people use to interpret the Bible?

As we mentioned earlier, the Bible is the most butchered book in the world. Almost every person who owns a Bible thinks he is in some position to interpret it. The problem is there are many systems used and ways that the Bible is interpreted which actually are counterproductive to what the Bible really says.

Some pick up the Bible and say it teaches Arminianism and others pick up the Bible and say it teaches Calvinism. Some pick up the Bible and say it teaches premillennialism, postmillennialism or amillennialism. Those who do have their proof texts and they have some system of interpretation they follow.

What we are after is the truth. We are after true interpretation of exactly what the Bible says and means and obviously when there are contradictory viewpoints, someone is right and someone is wrong. Usually the matter is resolved in the system one uses for their interpretation.

There are at least eight false systems or false ways that the Bible is interpreted:

False System #1 - The Allegorical System of Interpretation.

This system of interpretation believes that **the Bible says one thing literally but really means something else figuratively. The Bible does not really literally mean what it literally says.** The Bible is an inspired, figurative book of riddles and everyone must study to unravel the hidden riddles.

The Allegorical system of interpretation has its roots in Greek philosophy. Philo was a Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria, Egypt in the first 50 years of the first century. He tried to bridge the gap between the Bible and Greek philosophy so he promoted and preferred allegorical interpretation of the Bible. He took the position that there were deeper hidden meanings to everything in the Bible. He rejected a literal approach to the Bible.

For example, in Revelation 20:1-6, the Bible speaks of a period of time of 1,000 years. But the allegorist says that 1,000 years is just a riddle number for something else. When Revelation 7 says there are 144,000 Jewish men, 12,000 from twelve tribes of Israel, the allegorist says it really doesn't mean that literally, it is figurative for something else such as the Church. The dietary laws found in the Old Testament are not really literal dietary laws to be followed but they really represent bad types of behavior associated with that particular animal.

Around the year AD 100 there was a letter that showed up in a collection of Apostolic fathers called "*The Epistle of Barnabas*." Many believe this was the Barnabas that split from Paul. If it was him, he ended up with some strange doctrinal quirks. He interpreted all of the dietary Laws in Leviticus with various immoral vices that he "imaginatively associated with those animals." For example, the law against eating swine (Lev. 11:7) is actually a law that means don't associate with people who live like pigs.

The law against eating rabbit (Lev. 11:6) actually means to stay away from people who are promiscuous (J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers, Second Edition, Epistle of Barnabas*, p. 174).

This allegorical system is one of the oldest systems of interpretation in the history of the Church. Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) believed that the Scriptures are written in such a way that the true meaning is hidden.

Origen (AD 185-254) believed that all of Scriptures was "one vast allegory" (Henry Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, p. 60). He taught there were three levels of interpretation to a Biblical text: 1) The flesh interpretation; 2) The soul interpretation; 3) The Spirit interpretation.

He was known for inventing some bizarre interpretations of passages of Scripture. For example, he taught that Noah's ark story was a story that really represents the Church and that Noah represented Christ. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, he said the donkey represented the Old Testament and the colt represented the New Testament.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37:

- 1) The man robbed represents Adam.
- 2) The city of Jerusalem from where the man came represents Paradise.
- 3) The city of Jericho where the man was headed represents the world.
- 4) The priest who passes by represents the O.T. Law.
- 5) The Levite who passes by represents the prophets.
- 6) The Samaritan represents Jesus Christ.

(30)

- 7) The Donkey represents Christ's physical body.
- 8) The wounds of the man represent his sins.
- 9) The Inn where he is to be cared for represents the church.
- 10) The Samaritan promise to return represents Christ's second coming.

Martin Luther, who prior to salvation said that he was "an expert in allegories," totally denounced this approach to the Bible after his salvation. He said, "Origen's allegories are not worth so much dirt" (Cited from Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, pp. 44-45).

John Calvin said that those who interpret the Bible allegorically are "torturing the Scripture in every possible sense, from the true sense" (*Ibid.*, p. 47).

Augustine (AD 354-430) came up with a list of solid rules and guidelines for the handling of Scripture. One of them was "The literal and historical meaning of Scripture should be held in high regard." He stressed that the job of an interpreter of Scripture was to determine the meaning of the Scripture and not to bring meaning to it. But then later he got into allegorizing the Scriptures. For example, he taught that the four rivers named in Genesis 2:10-14 are really four virtues and that Noah's drunkenness (Gen. 9:20-23) really represents Christ in His suffering and death.

Many people today allegorize the Bible in the way they interpret it. For example, when God promised Israel a land, a king and kingdom, there are many who teach He really didn't mean that, He meant something else.

There are some major problems with this method of interpretation:

- 1) If God doesn't mean what He says, how can we ever know what He means or what to believe?
- 2) How do we know who has the correct interpretation, if it is not based on literal words?
- 3) One person says a passage means one thing and someone else says another and how would one ever know truth based on Allegory?

Robert Palmer said, "If the Bible does not mean what it says, there is no way we can know what it does mean" (*How to Understand the Bible*, p. 44).

False System #2 - The Mystical or Devotional system of interpretation.

This is another system of interpretation that has been around for a long time. This approach to the Bible came about as a reaction against the cold, intellectual, dead, religious orthodoxy that developed between the years of AD 600 - AD 1500.

This is the system of interpretation that says **it really doesn't matter what the Bible says or means as long as it warms your heart and you have some type of feeling experience**. There is no need of precise understanding in your grasp of the Bible, as long as it warms your heart and touches your heart.

This system of interpretation believes that people can get direct knowledge from God through their experiences and feelings apart from Scripture (Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 50). In fact, **this system of interpretation rejects the objective analysis of Scripture and elevates the subjective analysis of Scripture.**

Don't worry about the words or grammar or doctrinal differences because the important thing is that the Bible speaks to you and you feel good in your heart.

Often times these people talk about their experiences and you hear things like "God told me" or "God revealed to me" or "God really spoke to me." There are several problems with this view:

- 1) God did not give His word to warm hearts; He gave His word to transform and develop sound minds (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 1:15-18; Philippians 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-11).
- 2) A heart that is truly rightly warmed is one that is right with God and that means one is after an accurate understanding of God's written word. This view says God reveals things beyond the written Scriptures.
- 3) When God challenges His people to "accurately handle" so that one is unashamed before Him, His own focus is not on emotion but exegesis (II Timothy 2:15).
- 4) Without a proper accurate grasp of God's word, there will never be a proper development of emotions. Emotions will tend to be emotional, irrational and sensational until they are Biblical.

False System #3 - The Liberal or Rationalistic system of Interpretation.

In the late 1800's what was called the "Scientific Age" began in Europe and by the 1900's it had spread to the United States. Men began to discover things and invent things and they became proud of their intellectual achievements.

A pride began to seep into man when it came to the Bible. They began to approach it from a very intellectual and rational way. They would only accept and believe the Bible if their minds could rationally figure it out or explain it.

Actually this was not a new system to the late 1800's because Thomas Hobbs (1588-1679), who was an English philosopher, taught that the Bible was only true if man's mind could reason it and if man's mind can't reason it, then it is to be rejected. Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), was a Dutch Jewish philosopher who taught the same thing. He taught that human reason was totally separate from Biblical Theology.

In the Liberal or Rational method of Bible Interpretation, the words of the Bible are not the authority; man's mind is the authority. The Bible may only be accepted and believed as long as it does not violate human reason or logic. This system totally rejects the supernatural so man's mind determines what is significant in the Bible and what isn't.

This system of interpretation postulates many false views:

- 1) There is no such thing as miracles because miracles go beyond the boundaries of our minds and beyond the boundaries of what we can scientifically prove or reason. The feeding of the 5,000 was really a story of a young boy who shared his lunch so others saw this and shared theirs. It wasn't a real miracle of Jesus.
- 2) The Bible is a history book, but not an inspired book.
- 3) Man is basically good and if you give him a good education, he will turn out fine.
- 4) When the Bible says something with which we don't agree or understand, we reject it. i.e. Such things as depravity, sin and hell are rejected.

There are obviously many fallacies with this heretical way of thinking:

- 1) Man's reason becomes superior to God's written Revelation i.e. Darwin's theory of evolution is better than the Bible, A day in the Genesis creation story cannot really be a day because man's mind has figured out the earth is billions of years old.
- 2) Man's reason is the authority for what we believe and do and not God's word.
- 3) Man's reason must determine which parts of the Bible are acceptable and which are not.

False System #4 - The Neo-Orthodox or Existential System of Interpretation.

In the early 1900's, liberal and fundamental clashes occurred concerning the Bible. World War I (1914-1918) proved that man was not good and that man could not solve world problems. When the Great depression hit, it proved that man could not solve economic problems and that liberalism could not give any answers or solutions.

There was a huge gap between liberals and fundamentalists. Some developed a new system that was called "Neo Orthodoxy."

Neo-Orthodoxy taught that the Bible is not the inspired word of God by the words written, but it becomes the word of God when a person by faith experiences it. The Bible is the word of God when it is experienced. When the Bible touches a reader's heart, it becomes the word of God.

There was no need to worry about words or doctrine but only whether or not it touches your heart. That is what makes it God's word to you. **This system rejects the objective and elevates the subjective.**

There are many problems with this view:

- 1) It denies the Bible is inerrant.
- 2) It denies the Bible is infallible.
- 3) When the Bible touches someone's heart, it is the word of God.
- 4) Things may be interpreted as myths - creation, fall of man, resurrection. These myths aren't important but personal experience is important.

False System #5 - The Ecclesiastical System of Interpretation.

The Ecclesiastical system of Bible Interpretation is a system that says it does not matter what the words of the Bible actually say, what matters is what the church believes and says.

This position says some things are more important than other things and the church is our authority for what we believe or think.

This system of interpretation is prevalent among many today.

The Roman Catholic Church is known for its emphasis on the church's ability to give true interpretation. Church teachings and church traditions are far more important than God's word.

Back in 1925, a Catholic writer named Andrea Fernandez invented what he called the "sensus plenior" which means fuller sense or deeper meaning. The Catholic Church took the position that to get the true interpretation of a passage there must be an authoritative guide, which was the Roman Church officials. They became the guide to all kinds of distortions of God's word.

There are many Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches who are guilty of the same kind of thing. They become the authority base for trying to put people back under the O.T. law. They read the commandments and regardless of what a book like Galatians or Romans teaches, they try to keep people under the law. They even call Sunday the Sabbath Day and they are authoritative in the way they do that.

There are Baptist Churches that are the same way. They become the authority for all kinds of things from versions of the Bible to what people can or cannot do. At times, it doesn't matter what the actual words of Scripture say and mean, they are disregarded and the church gives its own interpretation. One example we may give of this is that most Baptist churches use Romans 6:3 and Colossians 2:12 as a basis for their promotion of water baptism. Neither of these passages is dealing with water baptism, but spirit baptism. But the church says otherwise.

In an Ecclesiastical system, the Church becomes the authority and not the literal word of God.

False System #6 - The Dogmatic System of Interpretation.

The dogmatic system of interpretation says it does not matter what the words of the Bible say, but what matters is what I dogmatically believe and will continue to believe and I will not change my mind. One's own system of belief becomes more important than the actual words of the Scriptures.

In this method of interpretation, a person has his own beliefs and then goes to the Bible in an attempt to find verses that support the beliefs. This method often uses isolated verses as proof texts for what they believe.

One illustration of this is the Roman Catholics who go to Matthew 16:18-19 to support their position that Peter was the first Pope. They have their dogmatic view and use this text to support it, when in fact it is not teaching that at all.

Another is the Jehovah's Witness who go door to door promoting the 144,000, a number they get from Revelation 7:4; 14:1. When you show them the truth of the number, they dogmatically hold to the dogma of the religion.

In this system the individual is the authority and not God's word.

False System #7 - The Hyper-Literal System of Interpretation.

This is the system of interpretation that takes things stated in the Bible in a hyper-literal extreme way that is really not the intention of the text and in a way that disregards any dispensational or contextual data.

There are several examples we may cite of this system:

- 1) Discipleship passages demand people need to sell everything and move into a commune.
- 2) Moses parts a sea so we may go to a lake or sea and God will part it.
- 3) Jesus walked on water so with enough faith we may walk on water.
- 4) Jesus washed feet of disciples so we need to wash feet at church.
- 5) Jesus said that a deadly snake will not hurt Apostles so we need snake handling in church.
- 6) Jesus said that drinking poison would not hurt Apostles so we need to drink it in church.
- 7) Jesus was nailed to a cross so one should be nailed to a cross.

These are just a few of the many ways that people hyper-literally interpret the Bible.

False System #8 - The isolated verse or proof text system of interpretation.

This is a system of interpretation in which the interpreter picks isolated verses out of the context to support the teaching.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote: “It is sometimes claimed that anything good or bad may be proved or defended from the Scriptures. Such an impression could be sustained only by the permission of violent misuse or disuse of the Sacred Text. It is noticeable that all theological systems and even modern cults make use of the Bible” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 114).

QUESTION #9 – What is the true way and true system to study and interpret the Bible?

The goal of studying to interpret the Bible is to know the exact meaning that the Spirit of God intended when He inspired the words that were written in every context. The goal is to accurately understand every specific text in its context. There is only one system of interpretation that can do this. We dogmatically hold to this system and teach this system.

The only true way to arrive at the true interpretation of any passage of the Bible is to interpret the Bible text literally. We call this the Literal Method of Interpretation. The literal method interprets the text in light of the plain meaning of the words of the text.

When God told Noah to build an ark with specific dimensions because He was going to send a worldwide flood, Noah interpreted that literally and he took it seriously (Gen. 6:14-17, 22). He did not fool around with the words by inventing some allegorical meaning that God really wants him to build a zoo for animals or some rationalistic system of interpretation which didn't see the real need because there was no water. He interpreted God's word literally. This is the only way to properly interpret God's word.

It is clear from Nehemiah 8:8 that this is exactly the way God intended His word to be handled. When God says in Genesis 2:10-14 that four rivers flowed out of Eden, they are four rivers, not four virtues.

This method of interpretation was critical to the Reformation when The Catholics were butchering the Bible with their bizarre interpretations. This method of interpretation was practiced by Martin Luther, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli. Roy Zuck observed that “The Reformers built on the literal approach...” (*Ibid.*, p. 44).

Martin Luther stressed this approach to interpreting the Bible. Again we cite Zuck, “...Luther stressed the literal sense (*sensus literalis*) of the Bible.” He went on to say that the Scriptures “are to be retained in their simplest meaning ever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids.” He also concluded anything other than a literal interpretation was not worth “dirt” (*Ibid.*, p. 45). **He believed that every spiritually-minded believer could understand the Bible if he approached the Bible this way.**

John Calvin said that anything other than a literal interpretation was nothing more than “frivolous games.” Calvin said, “it is the first business of an interpreter to let His author say what He does say, instead of attributing to Him what we think he ought to say” (*Ibid.*, p. 47).

Ulrich Zwingli stressed that one must take the words literally in light of the context. He said to take a text out of its context is like “breaking off a flower from its roots” (*Ibid.*, p. 48).

William Tyndale (1494-1536) said, “Scripture has but one sense, which is the literal sense” (*Ibid.*, p. 48).

The Literal method of interpretation is that method that interprets the Bible literally understanding that the words mean exactly what they say in the most simple, direct and ordinary meaning, unless something in the passage suggests the words should be interpreted figuratively (i.e. Revelation 17:3/10-12; Daniel 7:1-3/17; John 2:18-20/21-22).

The literal method is that which accepts the words of the writer at face value in their normal, usual, natural, customary way of use. For example, when John writes “Jesus wept,” it means exactly that.

The literal method does not look for hidden secret meanings. It looks straight at the text. It attempts to understand the literal meaning and intent of the writer in view of the words he literally uses.

God put His word in written form and He did this so that man could learn about Him. Because God chose to use human language as His vehicle for communication, we interpret the language as literally as possible with the words the writer uses.

The Golden Rule of Literal Interpretation is this:

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Therefore, take every word at its ordinary, primary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context indicate otherwise.”

Ordinary language contains figures of speech; however, figures of speech are always given for communicating a literal truth. Whenever a figure of speech is used, it is for that purpose.

In a literal interpretation of the Bible, we realize and accept the fact that writers sometimes use figurative language; however, we also realize that any symbolic language is designed to communicate a literal truth.

For example, we realize that language uses:

1) Metaphors - a figurative quality or name given to something that cannot possibly have a literal applicability.

For example, in John 10:7-9, Jesus calls Himself a door. Well we know that He cannot be a literal door, but metaphorically He is the door to life in that one must go through Him. When Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 5:13-14 that they were the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” He did not mean they were literally a bag of salt or 100 watt light bulb. Interpreting something literally does allow for use of metaphors.

(37)

2) **Similies** - a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another thing by a comparison to make a point. This uses words such as “like” or “as.”

For example, in I Peter 5:8 Peter says the Devil prowls around “like” a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. When we examine the context we observe that the Devil is a vicious being who is out to devour and crush a believer specifically through pride (I Pet. 5:6).

3) **Allegories** - a figure of speech in which one communicates a literal truth by using another story or illustration in an allegorical or figurative way to make the point.

A good example is Galatians 4:24. Paul specifically states that he is using the O.T. story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac as an illustration of being under law versus being under grace (4:21, 31). Notice Paul says he is allegorically speaking and writing.

To actually come to an accurate, literal interpretation of a text, there are three areas of study that come into play.

QUESTION #10 – What are the three courses closely related to a literal interpretation of the Bible?

There are three main fields of study or disciplines closely connected to the study and literal interpretation of the Bible:

- 1) Hermeneutics
- 2) Bible Study Methods
- 3) Exegesis

QUESTION #11 – What is Hermeneutics?

Hermeneutics is the art and science of Bible interpretation. It is a science because there are specific rules that must be followed. It is an art because the more one practices the more skilled one will become.

The actual Greek word “hermenenia” (ερμηνια) and its verb “hermeneuo” (ερμηνευω) occurs some 19 times in the N.T.. The word literally means to give an interpretation and is used exactly this way in Luke 24:27, which means to give a thorough explanation, also I Cor. 12:10; 14:26 (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 180). **Interpretation is an accurate analysis and explanation of what actually is in a text of Scripture.**

Hermeneutics deals with the principles, which are necessary, in order to come to a true, accurate interpretation and understanding of a passage of Scripture. Hermeneutics is often closely related to Bible Study Methods, but it is not the same.

QUESTION #12 – What is the difference between Bible Study Methods and Bible Interpretation?

Bible study methods deals with how to study the Bible whereas Bible interpretation deals with how to interpret a text in the Bible. Bible study methods deals with study methodology with the goal of discovering the actual meaning; Bible interpretation deals with the science of how to analyze a passage to arrive at the actual meaning. To this point in our study, we have been looking primarily at Bible Study Methodology.

It is true that paths cross in these two disciplines; however, they are not identically or technically the same. When one wants to come to a true interpretation of a passage, the question is much more than how does one study the Bible; it is what do I need to do to accurately interpret the meaning of this passage?

Dr. Elliott Johnson said the difference between the two is this: Bible Study Methods is how do I go about to discover the meaning of the text and Hermeneutics is how do I know that I have discovered the true meaning of the text? (*Expository Hermeneutics*, p. 8).

When it comes to studying the Bible to interpret a text, Michael S. Heiser observed that “A better synonym for Bible study than ‘Bible reading’ would be ‘Bible research.’ And research isn’t easy. It takes tools, tenacity and time.”

It is important to realize that the Bible, as no other book, is God’s book but as all other books, it is a book for humans. God did inspire His word for people to read. The fact that it is God’s book demands the utmost care in coming to true and accurate interpretations.

The fact that it is a book for humans means that there can be many human misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It is precisely this point that demands a course like this.

Someone wisely said, **“hermeneutics should teach us to read the Bible as any other book and at the same time read the Bible as no other book.”**

The truth is although we have not taken a formal course on how to interpret a newspaper or a conversation, we have been doing this all of our lives. Every time we watch a program or read a book and follow the context or analyze what it is all about, we practice hermeneutics. For us, a system of hermeneutics is applied, but not formally studied or learned.

When it comes to God’s word, the stakes are much higher than us having a conversation with someone or reading a book about something which perks our interest. For one thing, the Bible was written at a different time, in a different language and in a different culture.

To properly interpret the Bible means we must crawl back into various contexts. One must know something about language, about culture and about history. We cannot superimpose our linguistic rules of English to rules of Greek or Hebrew because this will perhaps lead us to faulty conclusions.

Furthermore, there are different spiritualities and different spiritual gifts that come into play, making the interpretation of a passage not just a simple academic matter.

But perhaps the most significant reason for studying hermeneutics is to clearly understand the true interpretation of God-breathed, God-inspired truth. If we do not understand the true interpretation of God's word, we may be very sincere but also very wrong.

When it comes to the Bible, there are many that speak about a variety of important issues and then use the Scripture to defend their position. There are a variety of interpretations which cause confusion and as a result the average person is left with the idea that "one interpretation is as good as another." "Your interpretation is as good as mine."

In fact, Bible studies and small study groups are taking all kinds of forms and most "forget what a risky business it can be" (*Ibid.*, p. 8). One of the main dangers is that people go to some home Bible study and they tend to discuss some passage and what it means to them, without knowing what it means.

For example, Roy Zuck cites an example of John 10:28. This verse says, "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand." One person at a home Bible study says this means when we believe in Christ we have eternal security. Another person says it means that no one else can take you out of God's hands but you can take yourself out. In Nahum 2:4, we read "the chariots race madly in the streets and rush wildly in the squares." One person at the Bible study says to me this means there will come a time when there will be major automobile traffic in the cities. Do you actually think that God intended His precious word to be handled like that? Do you think God's idea was whatever it means to you is fine?

Bible study is not a free for all of whatever it means to you. When it comes to interpreting God's precious word, someone is right and someone is wrong.

The science of interpretation says that there is one true interpretation to God's inspired word and that by following a system of true hermeneutics, one may come to a true interpretation.

QUESTION #13 – What is Exegesis?

The word "exegesis" comes from a Greek verb (exhgeomai) that means to lead out, show the way, unfold and declare (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 100). As it relates to Biblical study, **exegesis means to go to a text of Scripture and precisely bring out or lead out or draw out and show by way of the actual written words that are used in a text the exact meaning of the text.**

The goal of Exegesis is to carefully examine the written words of a text and determine the writer's actual meaning. John Grassmick defined Exegesis as meaning "to explain a word, sentence, paragraph, or a whole book by leading out the true and proper meaning of the text" (*Principles and Practices of Greek Exegesis*, p. 7).

“Exegesis is a high-definition form of reading and studying the Bible” (Darrell L Bock; Buist M. Fanning, *Interpreting the New Testament Text*, p. 17).

QUESTION #14 – What are some related fields of study when it comes to Hermeneutics?

There are at least five major disciplines to which Hermeneutics is related:

Hermeneutics is the art and science of the rules that must be followed for interpreting the true meaning of a Biblical text.

Exegesis is drawing out the exact historical and grammatical and technical meaning of a text expressed by the written text by careful application of hermeneutical rules.

Exposition is the verbal communication of the meaning of a text with a relevance to the hearer.

Homiletics is the art and science of organized structure for public communication of a text.

Pedagogy is the art and science of teaching the true meaning and relevance of a Biblical text.

The two disciplines most closely connected to Bible study, when it comes to interpreting it, are Hermeneutics and Exegesis.

Hermeneutics provides the rules or guidelines to follow to do careful exegetical work. Exegesis gives a specific interpretation of a specific text based on words, grammar and syntax; Hermeneutics gives the perimeter principles necessary to arrive at an accurate interpretation. Exegesis follows the principles to interpret the text.

Dr. Chafer said that hermeneutics was the laws or principles that must be followed to arrive at a true meaning of a text and exegesis was the application and implementation of those rules for the interpretation (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 115).

Roy Zuck uses a good illustration when he says that Hermeneutics is like a cookbook where you get the recipe for a cake and exegesis is the actual process or preparation work of putting all the ingredients together for the making and baking the cake. Following his same illustration, Homiletics would be dressing the cake up in a nice servable way and Exposition would be serving the cake (*Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 22).

QUESTION #15 – What are some of the problems we face when it comes to Bible Interpretation?

When we consider the fact that the first five books of the Bible were written around 1400 B.C., and the last book of the Bible chronologically written, which history suggests may have been the Gospel of John rather than Revelation, was written somewhere around AD 95, we may logically expect a few problems and challenges.

Anyone who attempts to understand the Bible must attempt to interpret the Bible. Everything we do with the Bible is subject to Interpretation. **God does not expect us to understand all reasons why He said something, but He does expect us to understand what He said.**

(41)

The main problem of hermeneutics or Bible interpretation is this: “What do the words written in the Bible actually say and what do they actually mean?”

There are right challenges to accurately interpreting the Bible:

(Interpretive Challenge #1) - God’s mind is infinite and our mind is finite. Romans 8:33-36

When we open the Bible we are delving into infinite truth. That alone is a daunting challenge. The wisdom and knowledge of God is beyond any level of total comprehension.

(Interpretive Challenge #2) - Some things in Scripture are hard to understand. II Pet. 3:16

There are some people who take the position that we don’t want to get too serious or deep in our understanding of God’s word. We just want to love Jesus and keep it simple. What this basically says is this: “We are too lazy to get real serious about the discipline it takes to carefully understand the whole counsel of God.” Just because it is hard, does not mean it is not worth it. Most things that are worth it are hard.

(Interpretive Challenge #3) - There is a major gap in time between us and the original writers and readers.

Moses’ books were written about 1400 BC, some 3,600 years ago and John’s were written around AD 90 nearly 2,000 years ago. To understand things, we will need to crawl back through time to the time Scripture was written.

September 11 is my wife’s birthday and that is all I knew the date to mean until the year 2001. In just a few short minutes on Tuesday, September 11, 2001 everything about this date changed.

On September 11, 2001, nineteen Islamic militant terrorists hijacked four jet airplanes and carried out four suicide missions. Two jets hit the Twin Towers World Trade Center in New York; one jet hit the Pentagon and one jet crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. On that day nearly 3,000 innocent people were killed.

Now, whenever we hear someone say “September 11,” most people’s minds immediately focus on the terrible terrorist attacks that were leveled against our country that cost thousands of innocent people their very lives. All we have to say to most people of the world is the date “September 11” and most know immediately what we mean.

But suppose you are a person living in 2500 AD. Let us hypothetically suppose you are reading a book about phobias or fears. As you are reading you come to a part of the book where you read these words “I have been terribly afraid ever since September 11. I can’t eat, I can’t sleep, and I often am paranoid. In fact, I don’t want to fly anymore.” If you were reading these things 500 years from now, you would probably immediately wonder “What does that mean?”

“What is the connection between a date –September 11–and the subject of fear?” “Do I need to be petrified of September 11?” “Does something bad happen on this day?” “What does that have to do with flying on an airplane?” “What does this really mean?”

If one really wanted to accurately understand what he was reading and interpret what was written, he/she would need to do a little research. One would have to crawl back in time 500 years to see what had actually happened. Now one could speculate concerning what may have happened, but if one really wanted to know, one would need to carefully study what was written concerning what actually happened in the United States of America on September 11.

The moment one began research to arrive at a proper interpretation of the true meaning, he would begin a scientific study that would bridge the world of two disciplines, hermeneutics and exegesis. One would need to carefully analyze history and context and words that describe what happened to come to a true understanding of what was meant.

Roy Zuck, in his book *Basic Bible Interpretation*, says it well when he says when it comes to interpreting the Bible, we were not there and we cannot talk to writers or readers or hearers to get firsthand knowledge (p. 36).

When we read Revelation 17:1, we learn that John got his own interpretive angel. It would be nice if we got that, but we do not. So we need to understand as much as we can about the time and historical context as we can.

(Interpretive Challenge #4) - There is a major gap in geography between us and the original writers and readers.

We live where we live and those original writers and readers lived where they lived. We live in Kalamazoo, Michigan and they lived in lands far away from us. They lived in Egypt (6,174 miles away), Israel (6,112 miles), the Mediterranean world (5,264 miles), Iraq (6,305 miles), Turkey (5,705 miles), Rome (4,707 miles) and Spain (4,067 miles).

For example, we read in I Samuel 22:1 that David escaped “to the cave of Adullam.” This must be a very important place because it is mentioned in II Samuel 23:13 and in I Chronicles 11:15. This cave is mentioned in the superscription to Psalm 57.

Now this cave was located some 6,083 miles away from Kalamazoo, Michigan. We don’t have caves around here, so to understand what this means we would need to research something about life in a cave and find out as much as we could about that cave.

(Interpretive Challenge #5) - There is a major gap in culture between us and the original writers and readers.

There were various Biblical cultures in Biblical times and for us to properly interpret Scripture, we will need to know something about the culture. Many bizarre interpretations are derived from people who do not understand different Biblical customs and cultures.

(43)

We could cite many Biblical examples of this point. For example, in Ruth 4:7, there was obviously a custom that existed in former times that did not exist when Ruth was written about land exchanges. In John 18:39, Pilate said the Jews had a custom to release a prisoner at Passover. Obviously these were cultural things that did exist.

There is a special Nazarite vow that included several things, one of which was one was not to cut his hair (Numbers 6:5). On the other hand, in Corinth, it was a dishonor for a man to have long hair (I Cor. 11:14). Also in Corinth, a man praying or prophesying was not to wear a hat (I Cor. 11:7), but if a woman were to publicly pray or prophesy, she was to wear a hat (I Cor. 11:5-6). What does all of this mean to us and to our culture and our customs? We don't live then and there; we live here and now. To properly interpret and apply, we must know what it meant in the original culture.

(Interpretive Challenge #6) - There is a major gap in language between us and the original writers and readers.

The Bible was not written in English, but in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. To do complete justice to the Bible, we will need to familiarize ourselves with how those original languages work.

To properly interpret Scripture, we are going to need to understand something about the language in which it was originally written. We will need to brush up on language so we may think in terms of grammar and verb tenses and syntax.

For example, in **John 16:28** Jesus tells His disciples that He came forth “from” the Father and in **John 16:30** Christ's disciples said they believed that Jesus came “from” God. It looks relatively clear and straightforward. However, upon close examination of the Greek text there are two different prepositions being used, one by Jesus and a different one by the disciples, which are both translated into English as the preposition “from.” Why?

Let us use another example. In Matthew 17, Jesus comes down from a mountain having been transfigured and He was immediately confronted with the unbelief of His own disciples (Matt. 17:14-16). Jesus addresses the subject of their unbelief and said if they had just a little of the right kind of faith, they could say to “this” mountain be moved (Matt. 17:20). In the Greek text, Jesus uses a strong near (not far) demonstrative pronoun emphasizing “this mountain.” Why didn't He say “any” mountain? Or why didn't He point to another mountain and say “that” mountain? What was so special about “this mountain”? In order to arrive at a true interpretation for this, the original pronoun must be seen.

Does one need to study Biblical languages to accurately interpret the Bible?

I want to revisit the language gap point again because I do think ministers should study Biblical languages. I do not think a “Tools based” course will ever replace this. One historian said until the late 1800's the Biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew were considered to be essential to interpreting accurately the Bible.

Before I get into this I want to make some important observations to the congregation of believers who probably will not study Greek or Hebrew:

- 1) There are no second class Christians - those who study Greek and Hebrew versus those who don't. All Christians are in the family of God and are important whether they study the English Bible or Greek and Hebrew. However, you will become a better student.
- 2) If a minister is truly preparing to feed his flock first hand meals from the original texts It does give confidence to the flock that they are being taught God's word.
- 3) If a minister is preparing by careful study of the Greek and Hebrew, it does create a healthy sense in the congregation that they are being fed truth.
- 4) If a minister is preparing from Greek and Hebrew, the congregation will be protected from gimmicks and fads in religion because they are dissecting God's inspired word. KJV only Bible fad.
- 5) If a minister is preparing from Greek and Hebrew, it does make a congregation better equipped to defend truth because they have confidence it is truth.
- 6) If a minister is preparing from Greek and Hebrew, you can go to worship expecting you will know God better and be truly closer to Him.

Most people who promote their ideas and beliefs on this point of whether they should study Biblical languages do so based on their own subjective experience or subjective level of education on the subject. Most form their conclusions on their own personal biases.

- 1) A person who has not studied the Biblical languages of Greek or Hebrew usually takes the position you do not need to study them to understand the Bible. If one is teaching and has not formally studied the languages, one is apt to subjectively say you don't need it.
- 2) A person who has somewhat studied the Biblical languages but doesn't use them probably won't conclude you need them.
- 3) On the other hand, a person who has studied the Biblical languages of Greek or Hebrew and uses them usually takes the position you do need to study them to understand the Bible.
- 4) Typically, Greek and Hebrew teachers usually are very subjective in their opinion and very favorable for language study. Obviously a teacher who teaches the Greek Language will promote the idea that you need to study Greek. A teacher who teaches the Hebrew Language will promote the idea you need to study Hebrew.
- 5) Some with little knowledge run around quoting stuff from Greek and Hebrew trying to convince people they really know what they are talking about when then don't. A guy was doing this one time in front of people, trying to impress them so I said would you say that clause is exegetical or oppositional? He had no clue.

I would like to try to address this from an objective perspective. I have no axe to grind and at 72-years-old, there is no pride issue in this discussion as I am in the twilight days of my ministry.

Lewis Sperry Chafer had very little formal theological education. However, his father, Thomas Franklin Chafer, was a graduate of Auburn Theological Seminary in 1864 and he probably would have studied the languages and he may have stressed the importance of those languages to his son Lewis.

Dr. Chafer said the greatest influence of his life was C. I. Scofield and had been saved as a drunken attorney so he did not initially know Hebrew or Greek. However, if you study the Scofield Reference Bible, it is clear that at some point he did study it and was familiar with manuscripts. His pastor in St. Louis had a tremendous impact on him and he became a dedicated student of Scripture as did his friend and student Lewis Sperry Chafer.

Here is what Dr. Chafer wrote on the subject of the original languages:

“Apart from the knowledge of original languages in which the Bible was written, there can be no very accurate conclusions as to what a difficult passage teaches. For this reason the study of both Hebrew and Greek to the extent that worthy exegesis in one’s own right is undertaken is most essential and belongs to the preparation of the Bible expositor. The history of the great preachers and teachers of the past, relative to the use of the original languages, is most stimulating. Those who have not gained a working knowledge of the original languages can hardly be expected to realize what a wealth of disclosure that ability imparts. To be utterly dependent upon the findings of other men, while it may not preclude one from a fruitful ministry, is depressing since the vital authority in utterance (which should be graced with humility) is lacking” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 118-119).

Now I have formally studied the Biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew. I spent three years studying the Greek language and one year studying the Hebrew Language. So I do come from a background of Biblical language study. I have never regretted learning what I learned. This does put me in a position to make some key observations on this subject.

Let me give you an overview of what we were required to do:

- 1) The Greek language studies I went through was taught by two teachers from
A. Grace Seminary and B. Dallas Seminary.

The first year was two semesters of four hours per week for 15 weeks. In the first year we went through J. Gresham Machen’s *New Testament Greek for Beginners*.

The second year first semester was one semester of intermediate level Greek syntax, which met 3 times a week for 15 weeks. We went through *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* by Dana and Mantey.

(46)

The second year second semester was Greek Exegesis. We met 3 times a week and studied *Principles and Practices of Greek Exegesis* by John Grassmick. During this semester we were taught how to grammatically diagram and analyze the Greek text.

The third year was a graduate level year of Greek Exegesis. We met 3 times a week for two semesters and we diagrammed books in Greek and were responsible to present our textual Analysis in class. Plus we had to write commentaries on various assigned passages that dealt with the Greek Language.

2) When it came to Hebrew it was a one year course- we used Allen Ross, *Hebrew Grammar*. My teacher was from Capital Bible Seminary.

Could you do this on line? Maybe? I admire someone who can do it. But it would be tough and very difficult to do. Now there are on-line courses that may be taken that can teach one the Greek and Hebrew Language. But nothing replaces the discipline of the class room with quizzes and exams.

Now I want to be clear on this, just because someone takes an on-line course of Greek or Hebrew or even sits in a classroom will not guarantee they know what they are doing with the language.

Most courses on Greek and Hebrew are introductory level and rightly so. Just because a school offers this does not mean one will come out with the skills God would want them to have. Remember the goal of Biblical languages is to accurately see what is in the text and accurately understand it so you have the exact meaning God intended in His written word. That is the goal.

I knew a man who headed a Greek department at a theological seminary. I liked this man. I respected this man. When I sold Kregel books, I called on the seminary and had lunch with this man many times. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on “compound verbs Paul used in Ephesians.”

Now a compound verb in Greek is you usually combine a preposition with a verb to form one word. It may change the meaning, intensify the meaning or bring precision to the meaning. In Ephesians, Paul uses over 60 different compound verbs. He gave me a copy and I read it and enjoyed reading it.

In our Greek Exegesis class we had to go through the entire book of Ephesians in the Greek text. We had to grammatically diagram the book and we had to write Greek commentaries on certain passages. So I was happy to read his dissertation.

He could track Greek words and their meanings at the highest level. He analyzed the compound verbs and tracked it through the Septuagint and tracked it through Greek of the first century. It was fun to read. But what he couldn't seem to do was grasp the contextual point.

I said to him, I love your verb study, but you are missing the whole point of why Paul used the verb in that context. His comment to me was “You have been trained well.”

(47)

Here is my point. He was the head of the Greek department at this seminary and was brilliant when it came to tracking Greek words, but if you studied under him you would not have a handle of what the text was saying in the context.

When we left Demotte, the church got a graduate from that seminary who probably studied under him. He was lost when it came to a context.

Martin Luther said the entire Reformation began through his study of Greek and Hebrew and comparing it to the Latin of Catholicism.

1. If our goal is to accurately understand God's written word, then any tool we may use to enhance that would be a valuable tool. The goal of study is precision with God's word, not pride in the study.
2. God has given us our English Bibles in our own English language. You should expect when you go to church you will be fed God's word accurately.
3. God has preserved Greek and Hebrew manuscripts from which our Bibles are translated.

This is a fact. To be able to look at the Greek and Hebrew text does give you first hand access to what God inspired. It is like reading the Bible in high definition. You follow scientific rules and steps to form true conclusions. Our goal is to know God and His word as precisely as we can. Greek and Hebrew do help a minister do this.

(Interpretive Challenge #7) - There is a major gap in literary styles of the writers.

We do not typically ourselves talk in parables today or in proverbs. Yet, in Biblical times they did. Our poetry typically has some rhyme to it, but not poetry in the Bible. Some of the metaphors and figurative language becomes quite a challenge to understand. To carefully assess a writing by Peter is not the same as carefully assessing a writing by John. Our challenge is to properly interpret over 40 authors who have different styles of writing, who wrote in three different languages and wrote from three different continents. That is a huge challenge and it does present some interpretive problems.

(Interpretive Challenge #8) - There is a major gap in spirituality between interpreters.

The Bible is not a normal book; it is God's inspired book and therefore one's spirituality plays a key role in his or her ability to properly interpret and understand and apply Scripture (I Cor. 2:14-3:2; Heb. 5:11-6:3).

Spiritually-minded people will be able to grow deep if they search deep. Carnal people will be shallow and those without God's Spirit just won't seem to figure out too much of anything.

(For a good discussion on these points, see Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, pp. 15-18.)

(48)

QUESTION #16 – What is the system of rules that must be followed to arrive at a true understanding and application of God’s written word?

There are six steps that must be followed to accurately interpret and apply God’s word:

Step #1 - Observation - observing what the text actually says.

Step #2 - Interpretation - deciding what the text actually means.

Step #3 - Summarization - determining the main point of the text.

Step #4 - Evaluation - Evaluating the text to determine key material for people today.

Step #5 - Application - Applying the text to make an application to life today.

Step #6 - Actualization - Actually working and applying and implementing the text to our life.

QUESTION #17 – What is Observation?

Observation is the act of seeing a Biblical text as it really is and seeing what is actually there in the text. One looks at a text and observes and notices carefully what is really and exactly there in a text. **Seeing what is there means also not seeing things that aren’t there or seeing things we think should be there.** Observation analyzes specific things to determine the exact meaning of God. Learning to see exactly what is in a text takes thought, training and time.

There is a great Biblical illustration of this very important step given by God Himself in regard to His prophet Amos. In **Amos 8:1-2** God asks Amos what he observes or sees and Amos simply observes what is actually there. He does not add nor subtract. That is observation.

The purpose of observation is to see the text in regard to what God has actually written and revealed. Our responsibility is to see what is there and not invent things that aren’t there or see what we think should be there. As Dr. Zuck said, “...the goal of Bible interpretation is to determine the original meaning of the text” (*Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 63).

Robert Traina, in his book *Methodical Bible Study*, said there are three prerequisites for making accurate observations (pp. 32-33):

Prerequisite #1 - One must have the will and desire to make accurate observations.

When Jesus taught His own disciples about receiving good things from God, He taught them that if “you seek you will find” (Matthew 7:7-8).

Prerequisite #2 - One must desire to observe exact data and details.

In any course of study, seeing what is exactly and precisely there is a key to determining truth.

(49)

Dr. Traina said he knew of a prominent physician who always taught his medical students to observe details. He said in a lecture that a bottle on his desk contained a sample for analysis and by testing it they could determine the disease of the patient.

Then he put his finger into the fluid and then into his mouth. Then he said I am going to pass around this bottle. Each of you taste the contents as I did and see if you can diagnose the case. After all of his students had passed the bottle and tasted it, he retrieved the bottle and said, “Gentlemen now you will understand what I mean when I speak about details. Had you been observant you would have seen I put my index figure in the bottle, but my middle finger into my mouth.”

His point was his medical students needed to be exact in their observations and details. We need to be the same way in handling God’s word.

Prerequisite #3 - One must be persistent to discover the exact meaning of a text.

Often times we will discover exact meaning of a text after looking at it over quite an extended period of time. It does not come quickly.

Each passage is in the text to communicate something and the job of the interpreter is to determine and observe what is communicated.

QUESTION #18 – What observations do we need to make to accurately interpret the Bible?

There are several very important observations we need to make regarding a text:

Observation #1 - We need to observe the context.

J. Robert McQuilkin writes: “**Context is king**” (*An Introduction to Hermeneutics*, p. 123).

We define context as the parts which precede and follow a word or text that affects its true meaning and true interpretation. Dr. Roy Zuck said, “Disregarding the context is one of the greatest problems in Bible Interpretation” (*Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 76). If one does not analyze context, one can say a text of Scripture means anything one wants it to mean. There are at least five contextual observations that must be made:

(Contextual Observation #1) - In every passage there is an immediate context surrounding the verse or text that needs to be carefully examined.

Mr. Miles taught us to always read ten verses before a verse and ten verses after a verse.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer makes a key point on this when he writes: “The student must learn to establish context boundaries regardless of the mere mechanical chapter and verse divisions” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 117).

He gives a great illustration from Matthew 16:28. If a person reads the Bible and comes to Matthew 16:28, it is the last verse of chapter 16. But if the careful student looks at context, he will see the immediate connection to chapter 17 because verse one says that six days after Jesus made that statement, three of the Apostles saw it. This moment was specifically referred to by the Apostle Peter who was there and saw it (II Peter 1:16-21).

(Contextual Observation #2) - In every passage there is an intermediate context that surrounds the immediate text.

A good example of this is John 3:16. The immediate context of John 3:16 is a discussion Jesus is having with Nicodemus, who was a key Pharisee, ruler and teacher of Israel. In the discussion Jesus develops two lines of thought:

- 1) One must have a new spiritual birth in order to enter the Kingdom of God. 3:1-12
- 2) One must believe in Jesus Christ in order to have that new spiritual birth. 3:13-21

John 3:16 is surrounded by these contexts - immediate and intermediate. The immediate context is that the Son of Man, who came from heaven, must be lifted up on a cross to offer eternal life. The intermediate context establishes the necessity of the new birth and the necessity of believing in Jesus Christ to have that new birth. One of the things that motivated God to provide this system of salvation was His love.

(Contextual Observation #3) - In every passage there is a broad context that contains the intermediate context.

In the broad context of John 3:16, Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem and into the Temple at Passover time (John 2:13ff). He had blasted the false religion and one of the Pharisees saw Him and listened to Him and decided to go talk to Him.

(Contextual Observation #4) - In every passage there is a book context that contains all the contexts in that book.

Every passage of Scripture sits in a book of the Bible which means there is some connection that text has to that book. The Gospel of John is a book context that is clearly designed to show that Jesus Christ is God (John 1:1) so that people may believe on Him and be saved (John 20:30-31).

(Contextual Observation #5) - In every passage there is a Bible context which contributes to the whole Bible.

Floyd Barackman accurately observed, "The whole Bible is the ultimate context of any biblical passage" (*How to Interpret the Bible*, p. 26).

For example, John is part of the New Testament. It is one of the four Gospels. The Gospels reveal specific data concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The specific point of the Gospel of John is to show that Jesus Christ is God, and that the only way to eternal life and eternal salvation is to believe on Him and be saved. Just as Matthew was designed to show that Jesus Christ is the Divine Messiah/King, John is designed to show Jesus Christ is the God/Savior. Everything in the book contributes to this.

Dr. Zuck said when we look at context, it includes several things:

- 1) It includes verse(s) immediately before and after a passage.
- 2) The paragraph and book in which the verses occur.
- 3) The dispensation in which it was written.
- 4) The message of the entire Bible.
- 5) The historical-cultural environment of that time when it was written (*Ibid.*, p. 77).

We would do well to remember Rudyard Kipling's questions that he said an honest person would be willing to ask to come to true conclusions:

1. Who?
- 2) What?
- 3) When?
- 4) Where?
- 5) Why?
- 6) How?

Dr. Roy Zuck gives a good illustration on this point. Let's say you read the sentence "That is some turkey." How would you know what is meant by that? The word turkey can refer to a strange person; a bird; three strikes in bowling; a failure of some theatrical production. To determine which of these was the intended meaning, we would need to examine context (*Ibid.*, p. 47).

In Jonah 2:9, Jonah is praying to the Lord from the belly of the fish and he says, "Salvation is from the LORD." To what salvation is he referring? Salvation in Scripture may refer to several things. We would need to carefully examine the context to determine which it was.

In Romans 5:3 Paul says that "tribulation" is something a believer experiences. To what tribulation is he referring? Context is critical to determine the meaning.

Observation #2 - We need to observe the grammar.

There are three closely related matters in grammatical context:

- 1) Grammatical observation observes the words in the text.
- 2) Syntax observes how the words relate to each other in the text.
- 3) Lexicology observes what the words actually mean or say in the text.

Dr. Rollin T. Chafer, the brother of Lewis Sperry Chafer, wrote this: "The first rule of Biblical interpretation is: Interpret Grammatically; with due regard to the meaning of words, the form of sentences, and the peculiarities of idiom in the language employed" (*Interpretation*, p. 203).

To properly interpret a passage one must follow the normal rules of language since God put His word in written form in written language. To come to a true conclusion about the text, one must analyze the words and the grammar to determine what is being communicated.

Observation of grammatical context means to observe what the words are, what the words mean and how the words relate to each other.

Henry Virkler gives a good illustration of the importance of examining words in the context. Suppose you read a statement that said, “the man was green” (*Hermeneutics*, p. 94). What would that mean? We certainly know what the word “man” means. We certainly know what the color “green” means.

But we would have to carefully analyze the words in the context to determine what that meant.

- 1) It could mean the person was green in the sense of inexperienced.
- 2) It could mean the person was green in the sense he looked sick.
- 3) It could mean the person was green in the sense that he was jealous or envious.
- 4) It could mean the person was green in the sense of color having green paint on him.

To determine what was meant by that written statement, we would need to carefully examine surrounding words and context. In other words, we would need to examine grammatical structure.

Since the goal of Bible interpretation is to determine exactly what a text says, we need, as Dr. Roy Zuck wrote, “to study His words and how they are associated in sentences. If we neglect the meanings of words and how they are used, we have no way of knowing whose interpretations are correct” (*Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 99).

Grammatical observation means we observe several things:

- 1) We need to observe and identify the meaning of words.
- 2) We need to observe how the words are used to form the sentence.
- 3) We need to observe how the words of the sentence relate to the paragraph.
- 4) We need to observe how the words of the paragraph relate to the chapter.
- 5) We need to observe how the words of the chapter relate to the book.
- 6) We need to observe how the words of the book relate to the Bible.

One example we may cite is I John 3:9. In that verse it says concerning one born of God that he “cannot sin.” What in the world does that mean? Now to determine what John meant, there will need to be a careful examination of the grammatical context that surrounds that statement.

Observation #3 - We need to observe the historical context.

When any writer wrote an inspired book, he did so living in a real historical context. This obviously is something God wants us to consider because He reveals much about it. In fact, there are Psalms that specifically inform us of the historical context - Psalm 18, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63. It is clear that these are critical, historical, contextual moments that need to be considered when interpreting the text.

In Philippians 1:13-14 the Apostle Paul specifically brings up the fact that he is in prison. God obviously wants us to know about this historical context.

In I Timothy 2:1-2, Paul says we are to “pray for kings.” Obviously in that historical context it was a king rule.

To accurately handle a text, we need to carefully understand the historical context of the text.

Observation #4 - We need to observe the cultural context.

For example, there are many passages of Scripture that exhort slaves to be obedient to masters (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22; Titus 2:9).

The subject of washing feet shows up a total of 19 times in the Bible:

Genesis 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24

Exodus 30:19; 40:31

Judges 19:21

I Samuel 25:41

II Samuel 11:8

Song of Solomon 5:3

Luke 7:44

John 13:5-6, 8-10, 12-14

I Timothy 5:10

QUESTION #19 – To determine the exact meaning of the Holy Spirit in a written passage, what interpretive areas need to examine when it comes to words?

We do have a Biblical mandate to carefully observe words. When we say that we believe in “verbal inspiration,” we mean we believe the Bible is inspired to the very “word” or “words.”

When it comes to the words of the Bible, we have some very important inspired statements:

Psalms 12:6 says, “The words of the LORD are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.”

Proverbs 30:5 says, “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.”

Revelation 22:18-19 says we must not add nor subtract from the words of “the book of this prophecy.”

So words are critical to the written Scriptures.

In the Bible, as in all written literature, there are various types of words which are used. Collectively these words are called “parts of speech” or “parts of language.”

To understand a passage accurately, we need to be able to spot and identify these words because these words show up in the Bible and are the key to accurate understanding and interpretation:

There are different main kinds of words that are used in the Bible:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1) Nouns | 8) Verbs |
| 2) Pronouns | 9) Participles |
| 3) Adjectives | 10) Infinitives |
| 4) Adverbs | 11) Clauses |
| 5) Prepositions | 12) Sentences |
| 6) Conjunctions | 13) Phrases |
| 7) Articles | |

Now we will assume that you have forgotten everything you have ever learned about these different kinds of words and are going to go through these things from the ground up:

QUESTION #20 – What is a noun?

Biblical nouns are critical to the sense of any context or sentence. The first verse of the Bible in Genesis 1:1 contains three nouns: “In the beginning **God** created the **heavens** and the **earth**.”

A noun is a word used for a person, place, thing or idea. There are four categories of nouns:

Category #1 - Proper Noun

A proper noun gives a specific name of a person, place or thing. A proper noun always begins with a capital letter.

Specific Name - Lewis Sperry Chafer;

Specific Place - Kalamazoo, Michigan;

Specific Thing - Texas Corners Bible Church.

Category #2 - Common Noun

A common noun gives a general name to a person, place, thing or idea.

General Name - a teacher;

General place - a church;

General thing - a book, a pen, a pencil;

General idea - paycheck, government, friendship, insomnia

There are two types of common nouns:

1) Concrete common noun that is concretely seen - man, dog, house, organ, piano.

2) Abstract common noun that is not concretely seen - love, grace, hope, fear, sadness.

Category #3 - Collective Noun

A collective noun sees a group or class as a whole and usually does not see it as plural.

For example, “flock” or “herd” or “church” or “team” or “brethren.”

A good example of this is seen in I Corinthians 10:32:

“Jews” is a collective noun referring to those physically related to Abraham without Christ.

“Greeks” is a collective noun referring to those not physically related to Abraham without Christ.

“Church” is a collective noun referring to all those who have believed on Jesus Christ.

5

Category #4 - Compound Noun

A compound noun is two or more nouns put together. Sometimes a hyphen is used in a compound noun.

Romans 16:3 - “fellow workers”; Colossians 4:10 - “fellow prisoner”; Rev. 22:9 - “fellow servant”

For example: toothpaste, haircut, bedroom, fellow-servant, fellow-prisoner, daughter-in-law

A noun may be either singular or plural. Gen. 1:1- “heavens” “earth”

For example, dog/dogs; cat/cats; car/cars

A noun may be masculine, feminine or neuter.

For example, father, mother, son, daughter. Neuter - table, cap, bed, umbrella.

QUESTION #21 – What is a pronoun?

A pronoun is a word that is used to take the place of a noun or another pronoun to avoid needless repetition.

The actual word that the pronoun replaces is called the antecedent.

It is extremely important to identify the antecedent in Biblical passages because this is a key to unlocking the truth of a passage or context.

A good illustration of this is found in **II Peter 2:20**. This text has been butchered by various interpreters simply because they do not ask one simple question of **verse 20** - who is the antecedent of the pronoun “they.” Some have concluded based on this verse that one could lose salvation.

If the purpose of a pronoun is to take the place of a noun, then who or what is the noun that the pronoun “they” or “them” is replacing?

If you backtrack in the context to verse 1, it is referring to “false prophets” who indulge their flesh and have corrupt desires and despise authority (v. 10). Verse 17, these are springs without water, that is they are unsaved false ministers. Verses 20-21 say it would be better for these false prophets and ministers to have never known anything about God or Jesus Christ.

This has nothing to do with a believer losing salvation. We may conclude that from the use of the “pronoun.” Now in the Bible there are about eight different types of pronouns we may observe:

Pronoun Type #1 - Personal pronoun refers to a person or thing that it replaces.

Pronouns such as I, you, it, he, she, him, her, we, you, they. These all fall into this category. John 3:16 - “He gave” refers to God; believes “in Him” refers to believe in Son.

Pronoun Type #2 - Relative pronoun relates various clauses and pieces of information to the noun it replaces.

A relative pronoun always introduces a subordinate clause to the noun.

Relative pronouns are “who,” “which,” “what,” “that,” “whoever,” “whom.”

Matthew 2:9 - personal pronoun “they” refers to “magi” (2:7) and relative pronoun “which.” Refers to more information about the “star” (2:9).

Mark 6:16 - relative pronoun “whom” refers to John. We are introduced to significant data Herod had beheaded John and he thought he had risen from the dead

Ephesians 1:3 - the relative pronoun “who” introduces us to blessed data from God the Father that goes clear to the end of verse 14.

Pronoun Type #3 - Demonstrative pronoun is a pronoun used to specifically point out or put special emphasis on a noun subject.

Demonstrative pronouns are “this” “that” “these” “those.” These are very important pronouns to spot.

A Biblical writer wants to point out something specifically when he uses this pronoun.

Matthew 3:3 - The demonstrative “this” is used to point out that John is the one referred to by Isaiah. John and no other is the one Isaiah predicted by his statement.

Romans 9:9 - The demonstrative “this” is used in reference to a specific time.

Hebrew 7:1 - The demonstrative “this” is used in reference to Melchizedek to stress this one and no other.

Daniel 12:1 - The demonstrative “that” is used to specify a specific time. Many times in prophetic passages there will be a demonstrative used “in that day” which specifically refers to a prophetic moment of time in the future (Is. 2:11, 12, 17; Joel 3:1, 18; Zech. 13:1, 4; 14:1, 4, 6, 8).

Pronoun Type #4 - Reflexive or Intensive pronoun used to intensify the noun antecedent.

A reflexive pronoun is typically formed by adding the word “same” or “self” to emphasize the point.

Luke 7:7 - the reflexive pronoun “myself” is used to emphasize the centurions unworthiness.

John 5:19 - Jesus uses the reflexive pronoun “Himself” to show His connection to the Father.
v. 30

Romans 8:16, 26 - the reflexive pronoun “Himself” is used to stress the Holy Spirit’s work.

Philippians 2:2 - the reflexive pronoun “same” is used stressing same mind and love.

II Thess. 3:17 - Paul uses his proper noun name and then uses a personal pronoun “I” and then uses a reflexive pronoun “myself” or “my own.”

Pronoun Type #5 - Reciprocal pronoun - a pronoun that has action that interchanges with a verb. It is always a plural. There are 100 in the N.T.

This kind of pronoun includes the subject or antecedent in the action with someone else:

Matthew 21:38 - the pronoun “yourselves” is reciprocal to the “you testify” action.

Mark 9:50 - the pronoun “one another” is reciprocal to action of be at peace.

This is an interesting use of pronouns because in this one verse Mark uses:

- 1) A personal pronoun “you”
- 2) A reflexive pronoun “yourselves”
- 3) A reciprocal pronoun “one another”

I Corinthians 6:7 - The pronoun “one another” is reciprocal to action of lawsuits.

Ephesians 4:25 - The pronoun “one another” is reciprocal to “we are members.”

Ephesians 5:19 - The pronoun “one another” is reciprocal to the action of speaking.

The antecedent may be contextually tracked to “children.” **5:1, 8**

James 5:16 - The pronoun “one another” is reciprocal to the action of praying.

I John 4:7 - Beloved let us love “one another” is reciprocal to the action of beloved loving.

Pronoun Type #6 - Interrogative Pronoun - a pronoun that asks a question.

Kipling’s pronoun question is filled with interrogative pronouns:

Who, what, when, where, why, how. There are 615 used in the N.T..

Matthew 3:7 - Matthew uses the interrogative “who” here in asking a question.

Matthew 7:3 - Matthew records the words of Jesus and uses the interrogative “why.”

Matthew 7:4 - Matthew records the words of Jesus and uses the interrogative “how.”

Matthew 20:22 - Matthew records the words of Jesus and uses the interrogative “what.”

Mark 8:27 - Jesus uses an interrogative with His own disciples “who.”

Mark 9:33-34 - Jesus uses an interrogative to His disciples “what,” then in **verse 34** Mark uses a reciprocal pronoun “one another” and another interrogative pronoun “which.”

Luke 1:62 - The interrogative pronoun “what” is used in regard to the name of John.

Luke 4:34 - A demon uses the interrogative pronoun “what” to question and identify Christ.

Pronoun Type #7 - Possessive Pronoun - a pronoun used to show possession or ownership. Possessive pronouns include “my,” “me,” “mine,” “yours,” “his,” “ours,” “hers,” theirs.” These pronouns show something specifically belonging to someone.

Luke 19:8 - Zaccheus uses a possessive pronoun in referring to “my possessions.”

John 5:30 - Jesus uses possessive pronouns “my” and “me” to stress His relationship with God the Father.

John 20:28 - Thomas uses a possessive pronoun in referring to Jesus being “my Lord” and “my God.”

I Corinthians 5:9 - Paul uses the possessive pronoun “you” in that he specifically wrote them a letter.

I Corinthians 9:3 - Paul uses possessive pronouns “My” and “me” to stress his own defense in view of people examining him.

Pronoun Type #8 - Indefinite Pronoun - a pronoun that does not refer to anyone or anything in reference to a specific particular. There are 543 in the N.T.. Indefinite pronouns include “any,” “anything,” “anyone,” “everyone,” “everything.”

Matthew 16:24 - Jesus uses the indefinite pronoun “if anyone.”

Luke 22:35 - Jesus uses the indefinite pronoun “anything.”

John 6:51 - Jesus uses the indefinite pronoun “if anyone.”

Romans 5:7 - Paul uses the indefinite pronoun “someone.”

Philemon 18 - Paul uses the indefinite pronoun “anything.”

Hebrews 2:9 - Jesus tasted death for “everyone.”

Hebrews 3:4 - Every house is built by “someone.”

James 1:5 - James uses the indefinite pronoun “any one.”

I Peter 4:11 - Peter uses the indefinite pronoun “whoever” two times.

II John 10 - John uses the indefinite pronoun “anyone.”

Revelation 3:20 - Jesus uses the indefinite pronoun “if anyone.”

This syntactical chart concerning pronouns we have derived from translating the Greek text so the numbers may be slightly different in English but will be very close. This chart is based on the Lexico-Syntactic chart produced by Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pp. 352-354).

1. The pronoun “one another,” which is a reciprocal pronoun, is used 100 times in the N.T.
2. The pronoun “he,” “him,” “she,” her,” which is a personal, possessive or intensive pronoun, is used 5,596 times in the N.T..
3. The pronoun “himself,” which is a reflexive pronoun, is used 319 times in the N.T.
4. The pronoun “I,” which is a personal or possessive pronoun, is used 1,804 times in the N.T.
5. The pronoun “that,” which is a demonstrative or personal pronoun, is used 265 times in the N.T.
6. The pronoun “myself,” which is a reflexive pronoun, is used 37 times in the N.T.
7. The pronoun “me,” which is personal or possessive, is used 864 times in the N.T.
8. The pronoun “this,” which is a demonstrative, is used 10 times in the N.T.
9. The pronoun “whoever” which is a relative pronoun, is used 1,406 times in the N.T..
10. The pronoun “which,” which is a relative pronoun, is used 145 times in the N.T..
11. The pronoun “that which,” which is a demonstrative or personal, is used 1,387 times in the N.T.
12. The pronoun “what,” which is interrogative, is used 33 times in the N.T..
13. The pronoun “how,” which is interrogative, is used 27 times in the N.T.
14. The pronoun “yourself,” which is reflexive, is used 43 times in the N.T.
15. The pronoun “you,” which is personal or reflexive, is used 1,067 times in the N.T.
16. The pronoun “who,” “which,” which is interrogative, is used 546 times in the N.T.
17. The pronoun “something,” “anything,” “anyone,” an indefinite, is used 543 times in the N.T.
18. The pronoun “you,” “yours,” a personal or possessive pronoun, is used 1,840 times in the N.T.

The frequency use has been based on the Greek New Testament and this teacher has translated each pronoun from Greek to English.

QUESTION #22 – What is an adjective?

An adjective is a word that is used to describe, modify or qualify the meaning of a noun or pronoun. In fact, Dana and Mantey said, “**The genius of the adjective is description**” (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 117). An adjective can be just about any word but it will usually modify or qualify a noun or pronoun.

There are basically three ways an adjective may be used:

- 1) The attributive adjective - Adjective is in the first position before the noun—“the perfect Bible.”
- 2) The predicate adjective - Adjective describes subject by linking verb—“the Bible is perfect.”
- 3) The substantive adjective - Adjective replaces noun, doesn’t modify “when the perfect comes.”

In the New Testament, an adjective will always match the noun or pronoun it is modifying in number, gender and case.

In **John 10:11**, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd.” The adjective “good” is nominative, masculine, singular and so is the noun “shepherd.”

In **Hebrews 8:2**, the writer says Jesus is a minister in the “true tabernacle.” The adjective “true” is a genitive, feminine, singular adjective and the noun “tabernacle” is a genitive, feminine, singular noun.

Adjectives are important because they are used by God to describe many things. They can describe color, size, shape, number, location and so many other things. This is why God uses so many (about 8,000) in the New Testament. Some examples of what adjectives describe:

In **Mark 5:7**, God wants us to know that the demon-possessed man was shouting with a “**loud** voice.”

In **John 2:10**, John reveals an important truth about Jesus Christ being God by using the adjectives “**Good**” and “**poorer**” to modify the noun wine.

In **Acts 2:33**, Luke records that Jesus is exalted to the “**right hand**” of God. He repeats “right hand” in **verse 34**. This specifies a specific place where Christ is seated. The word “right” is the adjective that clarifies and qualifies where Jesus is specifically sitting.

In **I Timothy 6:17-18**, Paul told Timothy to instruct those who are rich to be rich in doing “**good** works.”

In **Hebrews 3:1**, the writer wanted believers to realize they were “**holy** brethren.”

In **Revelation 20:11**, John uses two different adjectives to describe and qualify the judgment at the Throne of God. He uses the adjective “**great**” and he uses the adjective “**white**.”

- 1) By using the noun Throne, one would immediately realize that this is a place of God’s kingly power and sovereignty.
- 2) By adding the adjective “great” he modifies the throne as being majestic in size and rank.
- 3) By adding the adjective “white” he qualifies this as being a very pure, bright and clean Throne.

Almost any noun or word may function as an adjective. A good illustration of this is **Matthew 3:6** - “in the **Jordan** river.” The proper noun “Jordan” is functioning as an adjective to qualify and specify the river.

In **Revelation 1:11**, Jesus said send the written book of Revelation to “the seven churches.” The number “**seven**” functions as an adjective to qualify the number of churches.

In **Revelation 22:16**, one of the last things Jesus says in the word of God is that He is “the bright, morning star.” Both words “**bright**” and “**morning**” qualify the noun star.

Adjectives are critical in the Bible and very important to properly interpreting what God inspired. Daniel Wallace concluded that there are just under 8,000 adjectives used in the New Testament (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 298).

God uses many adjectives to accurately describe and qualify truth and it is important that we spot them and consider them to arrive at a proper interpretation.

One example we may give concerning the importance of grammatical precision with adjectives is **I Corinthians 13:10**.

In **I Corinthians 13:10** the substantive adjective “perfect” is used as a noun/subject= “the perfect comes.”

This adjective “perfect” refers to something that would come that would put an end to the revelatory sign gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge (13:8-10). **Now the adjective “the perfect” is a neuter adjective, not masculine and not feminine.**

The adjective “perfect” (teleion) is one that refers to something that reaches its completion or end or maturity. The word means something is completed that finishes or completes something and takes it to a mature level (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 442).

Paul uses a form of this same adjective in Romans 10:4 by saying that Christ is the “end” (telos) of the law.

In I Corinthians 2:6, the same word is translated “mature.” In I Corinthians 14:20, the same word is translated “mature.”

So what Paul is saying by use of this adjective is that something would be completed and finished that would put an end to the revelatory gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge.

In the immediate subsequent context of I Corinthians 13:10 are verses 11-12. Whatever the “perfect” is that would be completed would be able to take one from a childish status of understanding to a man status in understanding. It would also enable one to see himself honestly and accurately.

This one adjective “perfect” is critical to true interpretation. We conclude that this refers to the completion of the inspired written Scriptures, which Paul will stress just before he is executed.

In **II Timothy 3:16-17** he will state all Scripture is inspired and profitable to fully equip believers

In **II Tim. 4:1-3, 13** he says preach the word and he wanted the word brought to him in prison.

We base our interpretation on five facts:

- 1) The substantive/adjective “perfect” is neuter “that which” not masculine “he who.”
If Paul had the Coming of Jesus Christ in mind, he would have probably said, “when He who is Perfect comes.”
- 2) The thing that takes a believer from childhood to adulthood in their spiritual life is the written Scriptures. This point was precisely expressed by many writers of the N.T.-
I Cor. 3:1-2; I Pet. 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-6:3; Eph. 4:11-15; Col. 1:28 - Paul specifically uses this very word “complete” in the very context of teaching the word of God.
- 3) The thing that would put an end to the revelatory gifts of prophecy and knowledge would be the completed Scriptures. We are not to add or subtract from that (Rev. 22:18-19).
- 4) The thing that is able to cut into the soul and heart of a person and show the person what he/she really is, is the word of God (Heb. 4:12).
- 5) I cannot find one place where Paul refers to the “coming” or “appearing” of the Lord to be “the perfect” or “the completion.”

Paul uses this word seven times in the New Testament: I Cor. 2:6; 13:10; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12. Colossians 1:25-28 is clearly in context of preaching the word.

The primary use of an adjective in the Bible is to give a modifying description of a noun or other substantive. An adjective will always be related to some noun or substantive in the context. It can be just about any word that modifies another noun. So a critical key is to look for the noun to which the adjective connects

In **Romans 7:12** - the noun “commandment” is modified by three descriptions:

- 1) The commandment is “holy.” We can understand this as meaning a holy commandment.
- 2) The commandment is “righteous.” We can understand this as a righteous commandment.
- 3) The commandment is “good.” We can understand this as a good commandment.

When looking at an adjective we may observe that sometimes there is an article “the” that includes the adjective with the noun. This is the easiest way to determine the adjective God wanted to use to modify or qualify the noun:

In **Matthew 4:5** - we see that the Devil took Jesus “into **the holy city.**”

In between the article “the” and the noun “city” is the adjective holy.

In **Luke 6:45** - we see Jesus speak of “**the good man.**”

In between the article “the” and the noun “man” is the adjective good.

In **Revelation 1:11** - Jesus tells John to write what he sees and send it to “**the seven churches.**”

In between the article “the” and the noun “churches” is the adjective seven.

Sometimes there is no article and the adjective is seen in a comparative context:

In **Matthew 21:28** “a man had **two sons.**” In the context, the two sons will be compared by using an adjective “first” son and then the adjective “second” son.

In **I Corinthians 3:10** we read “like a **wise master builder.**” The adjective “wise” is used in the context to compare how Paul built his ministry and how others should build theirs.

In **II Timothy 3:16**, we read “All **Scripture is inspired** by God.” The adjective “inspired” modifies “all Scripture.” We could literally understand this as meaning “all God-breathed, inspired Scripture” is profitable. It is all God-breathed and it is all profitable.

Sometimes an adjective will be used in a superlative way to express, what Dan Wallace called, a “par excellence” (*The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, p. 132).

In **Matthew 13:32** the adjectives “smaller” and “larger” are used in a comparative way by Jesus.

In **Luke 9:48** we read “the one who is **least** among all of you, this is the one who is **great.**” We have two superlatives - on the negative side there is the least; on the positive side the greatest.

In **I Corinthians 13:13** a superlative adjective “greatest” is used in context of faith, hope and love.

In **Hebrews 9:3** we read “the **Holy** of Holies.” Of all the holy places in the tabernacle, this was the holiest of all.

Pay attention to adjectives, for God put them in His word to carefully modify and qualify many different things He has revealed.

QUESTION #23 – What is an adverb?

An adverb is a word that is used to modify, describe, limit and qualify a verb, adjective or another adverb or phrase. **Adverbs are in the verb family and are used to help state a matter with exactness and precision.**

Dana and Mantey write: “Adverbs are of great value for defining and stating a matter with exactness, as well as for stimulating the imagination by suggesting graphic, extravagantly painted pictures” (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 234).

Floyd Barackman gives some good examples of the use of adverbs with verbs when he says that when an adverb is used with a verb, *How To Interpret the Bible*, p. 33.

- 1) It can tell how - **he ran quickly.**
- 2) It can tell when - **he arose early.**
- 3) It can tell where - **the boat went under.**
- 4) It can tell to what extent - **the man ran far.**

An adverb can modify an adjective; **She wore a very red dress.**

An adverb can modify another adverb; **He ran extremely far.**

Some of the popular adverbs often used are: safely, justly, strongly, fearfully, quickly, sweetly, near, very, up, down, far, then, now, here, there, thus, so, away.

Dr. Roy Zuck said, “an adverb may suggest manner or quality, telling how: he spoke softly; he prayed earnestly; he ran fast. Adverbs may also suggest place, indicating where, as in the sentences “he went away,” “he ran ahead,” “he ran around the block.” An adverb may suggest degree, indicating how much as in “he ran enough.” Adverbs may also indicate time, telling when: “he came early,” “you were formerly darkness,” “he ran yesterday” (*Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 114).

Adverbs may be divided into four categories:

Category #1 - Adverbs that express matters pertaining to time -
“then” “now” “always” “early.”

In **Philippians 1:4**, Paul uses the adverb “**always**” in regard to times he prayed.

In **Ephesians 5:8**, Paul uses the adverb of time “**formerly**” to describe our status before Christ.

Category #2 - Adverbs that express matters pertaining to place -
“here” “there” “near” “away” “up” “down” “outside.”

In **Matthew 12:47**, someone said to Jesus “your mother and your brothers are standing **outside**.”

(66)

In **Mark 11:4**, two disciples went and “found a colt tied at the door **outside** in the street.”

In **John 19:20**, John uses the adverb “**near**” in regard to the place Jesus was crucified.

In **John 19:42**, the adverb “**nearby**” is used to describe the location of Christ’s tomb.

In **Philippians 4:5**, the adverb “**near**” is used to described the nearness of the Lord.

Category #3 - Adverbs that expresses action pertaining to **manner or quality** - often end
“ly” – “quickly,” “swiftly,” “gently,” “godly,” “softly,” “earnestly,” “slowly.”

In **Ephesians 1:6**, Paul says God “**freely**” bestowed sovereign blessings upon those He saved.

In **I Thessalonians 3:10**, Paul says he prayed “**earnestly**.” He wanted to qualify this.

In **Revelation 22:7, 12, 20**, Jesus says He is coming “**quickly**.”

Category #4 - Adverbs that express matters pertaining to **degree** -
“very” “rather” “enough.”

In **II Corinthians 12:9**, Paul says God’s grace is “sufficient” or “enough.”

QUESTION #24 – What is a preposition?

A preposition is a word that is used with a noun or pronoun that relates it to other words or a word in a sentence to form a prepositional phrase. **The preposition always has a noun or pronoun as its object.**

It is called preposition which is “pre-position.” It is in a pre-position because it normally is placed just before a noun or pronoun. **The noun or pronoun that the preposition precedes is called the object of the preposition. The combined use of the preposition with the noun or pronoun is called prepositional phrase.**

Most prepositions function adverbially but they give much more information about the noun or pronoun than an adverb can and may function adjectively. Floyd Barakman gives a good example of this: “The boy **in the yard** ran **in front of a car**.” The prepositional phrase “in the yard” modifies the boy like an adjective and the phrase “in front of a car” modifies ran like an adverb (*How to Interpret the Bible*, p. 35).

Prepositions stress direction and motion in various relationships and connection between things. Often a preposition will be added to a verb in Greek to give more information about the action.

Roy Zuck, in his book *Basic Bible Interpretation*, gives a good breakdown of prepositions taken from the book of Ephesians. It shows the direction and motion and data about various things:’

- 1) A preposition may express means **by His blood**.
- 2) A preposition may express accompaniment, **with Jesus**.
- 3) A preposition may express location, **in Him; on the earth; at Ephesus**.
- 4) A preposition may express benefit, **for His glory**.
- 5) A preposition may express motion, **to heaven; from the dead**.
- 6) A preposition may express direction, **toward us**.
- 7) A preposition may express origin, **the word of God**.
- 8) A preposition may express a characteristic, **the Father of Glory; the Holy Spirit of Promise; the Day of Redemption**.
- 9) A preposition may express identity, **pledge of our inheritance**.
- 10) A preposition may express position, **over all; at His right hand**.
- 11) A preposition may express permeation, **through all**.
- 12) A preposition may express entrance, **into the lower parts**.
- 13) A preposition may express opposition, **against the devil’s schemes**.
- 14) A preposition may express conformity, **according to the flesh**.
- 15) A preposition may express time, **before the foundation of the world**.

(Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p.113)

God’s inspired word in the New Testament contains over 10,000 prepositions (we count 10,384), so they are extremely important to communicate God’s inspired, written word. In fact, they are critical to doctrine and theology.

God begins His word in both Hebrew and Greek with a prepositional phrase: “**In** *the* beginning.” This phrase adverbially modifies the verb “created.”

Some of the main prepositions in the New Testament are:

- 1) “up” used 13 times (ana)
- 2) “against” used 22 times (anti) - often something in exchange for something else
- 3) “before” used 47 times (pro)
- 4) “with/together” used 126 times (sun)
- 5) “for/over” used 149 times (huper) - often instead of or in behalf of
- 6) “from/beside” - used 194 times (para) - alongside of
- 7) “under” used 220 times (hupo)
- 8) “about/around” used 333 times (peri)
- 9) “among/amid” used 469 times (meta)
- 10) “down from/according to” used 473 times (kata)
- 11) “from” used 646 times (apo) - separation from edge of something; moving away from
- 12) “through/because of” used 667 times (dia)
- 13) “to/toward” used 700 times (pros) - near in sense of facing toward something
- 14) “on/upon” used 890 times (epi)
- 15) “out of or out from” used 914 times (ek) - out from within something
- 16) “into” used 1767 times (eis) - go into something
- 17) “in” or “within” used 2752 times (en) - Paul uses the expression “in Christ” 164 times

There are three important questions to ask and answer about the preposition:

- 1) What does the preposition word actually mean?
- 2) What is the preposition connected to?
- 3) What is the prepositional meaning in the Biblical context?

In **Matthew 20:28**, Jesus says He came “to give His life a ransom “**for**” many.” He says exactly the same thing in **Mark 10:45**. The preposition “for” is huper. This is a critical preposition and critical preposition phrase because Jesus, in the context, is explaining why He came.

Now the preposition huper means that Jesus Christ, who is above all and over all, came to take the place of sinners so they may be saved. This preposition is critical to Christ’s substitutionary work because it shows **He is over all as God and as God takes our place to pay our sin debt**. Paul uses that preposition in **II Corinthians 5:14**—saying that Christ “died **for** all.”

In **Galatians 3:13** Paul uses prepositions to really emphasize the work of Jesus Christ: Christ redeemed us “from” (ek) out from within the curse of the law. Christ became a curse “for” (huper) us that is He took our place in our behalf.

These prepositions are critical to the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(69)

This preposition direction chart is taken from Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 112 and Dan Wallace, *The Basis of New Testament Syntax*, p. 162.

QUESTION #25 – What is a conjunction?

The actual word “conjunction” comes from a Latin verb *conjungo*, which means “join together.”

A conjunction is a connecting word that is used to connect and join words, sentences, phrases or clauses to each other. Conjunctions are linking words that connect to other words to complete the thought.

These words are vital to a true interpretation of God’s written word because they determine the true grammatical flow and meaning of a passage.

There are primarily two types of conjunctions:

Conjunction Type #1 - There is the coordinating conjunction.

A coordinating conjunction connects words, phrases, sentences and clauses of equal rank. The technical name for a coordinate structural connection is paratactic connection.

Some examples of the most common coordinating conjunctions are: “and,” “but,” “or,” “for,” “therefore,” “wherefore,” “also,” “as well as,” “nor/neither,” “then/next.”

There are 14,183 coordinating conjunctions used in the New Testament and the ones we have listed are by far the most that are used.

John 1:1 - “In the beginning was the Word **and** the Word was with God **and** the Word was God.”

The coordinating conjunction “and” is critical to seeing that Jesus, who is the Word, is equal with God because He is God.

Conjunction Type #2 - There is the subordinating conjunction.

A subordinating conjunction connects words, phrases, sentences and clauses that are subordinate to and dependent on that which it modifies. The technical name for a subordinate structural connection is hypotactic connection. Dan Wallace said, “These conjunctions amplify the verbal idea in a specific way” (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 674).

Some examples of subordinating conjunctions are “because,” “that,” “in order that,” “just as,” “if,” “whether,” “since,” “when,” “so that.”

Philippians 2:14-15 - “Do all things without grumbling or disputing **so that** you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you appear as lights in the world.”

1. There are five ways that a coordinating conjunction may be used in a connective way:

(Way #1) - A coordinating conjunction may be used as a copulative.

This is also called an additive conjunction because it adds something else to the thought. A copulative coordinating conjunction shows something has been added. It brings a coequal addition to the idea.

Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be the God **and** Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 1:1 - “Paul **and** Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:2 - “Grace to you **and** peace from God.”

(Way #2) - A coordinating conjunction may be used as a disjunctive.

A disjunctive coordinating conjunction adds a coordinating alternative possibility or contrast to the idea presented.

Matthew 5:17 - “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law **or** the prophets.”

Matthew 5:36 - “You cannot make one hair white **or** black.”

(Way #3) - A coordinating conjunction may be used as an adversative.

An adversative coordinating conjunction gives a co-equal contrast or opposite thought to that which it is connected.

Matthew 5:17 - “I did not come to abolish (the Law or the Prophets) **but** to fulfill.”

John 3:29-30 - “For everyone who does evil hates the light...**but** he who practices the truth comes to the light.”

John 15:16 - “You did not choose Me **but** I chose you...”

(Way #4) - A coordinating conjunction may be used as an inferential.

An inferential coordinating conjunction gives a deduction, conclusion or summary to the preceding thought.

Romans 12:1 - “**Therefore** I urge you...to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.”

Romans 15:7 - “**Therefore**, accept one another just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

(Way #5) - A coordinating conjunction may be used as a causal conjunction.

A causal coordinating conjunction gives the cause or basis or the ground for an action.

John 4:17-18 - “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; **for** you have had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.”

Romans 8:28-29 - “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God... **For** those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.

Colossians 3:6 - Consider yourselves 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...”

2. There are eight ways a subordinating conjunction may be used.

(Use #1) - A subordinating conjunction may be used to express the purpose of something.

A purpose conjunction introduces to goal or aim or purpose of the action. It is subordinate to the action:

John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son **that** whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

The purpose of God sending His Son was so that all who believe would not perish.

John 5:34 - “but I say these things **so that** you may be saved.”

The purpose of Jesus saying the things He said was so that people would be saved.

(Use #2) - A subordinating conjunction may be used to express the result of something.

A result conjunction gives the outcome or the consequential results of the action. The focus here is more on the outcome of the action rather than the intention or purpose of it.

John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world **that** He gave His only begotten Son...”

The result of God loving the world was He gave His only begotten Son.

John 9:2 - “Who sinned, this man or his parents, **that** he would be born blind?”

The point is which one sinned that resulted in the man being born blind from birth.

(Use #3) - A subordinating conjunction may be used to express the cause of something.

A causal conjunction expresses the basis or ground of an action:

(73)

Luke 1:34 - "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be **since** I am a virgin?'"

Her comment to the angel is because I am a virgin, how can I have a baby?

John 5:27 - "And He gave Him authority to execute judgment **because** He is the Son of Man."

The thing that prompted God the Father to turn all life and judgment over to Jesus was because He is the Son of Man. He is God incarnate.

(Use #4) - A subordinating conjunction may be used to express a comparison of something.

This conjunction makes an analogy or comparison between the connected ideas or tells how something will be done.

Ephesians 4:32 - "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other **just as** God in Christ also has forgiven you."

(Use #5) - A subordinating conjunction may be used to express a condition of something.

A conditional conjunction introduces the idea that some condition must occur before the action or the conclusion can or will occur. This is often introduced by an "if" clause. The technical name for an "if clause" is the protasis of a sentence and the independent idea to which it is connected is called the apodosis.

John 5:31 - "**If** I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true."

His point is God the Father gave Him His power and also testifies that Jesus is the very co-equal Son of God who has all authority to execute judgment. God the Father testifies of that by the miracles and works He does (**5:36**).

John 13:17 - "**If** you know these things, you are blessed **if** you do them."

The condition to be blessed is you must know these things and you must do these things.

I Corinthians 2:8 - "**if** they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

There are four different kinds of "if" clauses we will discuss later:

1) First class conditional "if" clause assumes reality and may be translated "since."

Galatians 5:18 - "But **if** you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

Revelation 20:15 - "And **if** anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Point being since the unbelievers were judged at the Great White Throne Judgment out of the works books and were not in the book of life, they were thrown into the Lake of fire.

2) **Second class conditional** “if” clause assumes untruth and non-reality contrary to fact.

Luke 7:39 - “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is...”

John 5:46 - “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.”

I Corinthians 2:8 - “if they had understood they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Galatians 1:10 - “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

3) **Third class conditional** “if” clause presents what probably and most likely will happen in the future if one does something.

Matthew 4:9 - “and he said to Him ‘all these things I will give You, if you fall down and worship Me.”

Matthew 9:21 - “for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.”

John 11:9 - “If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble.”

I John 1:9 - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

4) **Fourth class conditional** “if” clause presents what probably and most likely will not happen in the future. It would be remotely possible, but not probable; highly unlikely.

I Peter 3:14 - “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.”

(Use #6) - A subordinating conjunction may express a **declaration** about something.

Matthew 11:25- “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, **that** You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.”

Luke 2:49 - “Why is it **that** you were looking for Me? Did you not know **that** I had to be in My Father’s house?”

(Use #7) - A subordinating conjunction may express a **temporal time of when.**

Matthew 9:25 - “But **when** the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.”

Acts 1:12 - “**Then** they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet...”

(75)

Romans 2:16 - “On the day **when**, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

(Use #8) - A subordinating conjunction may be used to express a local place of where.

Matthew 6:19 - “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, **where** moth and rust destroy and **where** thieves break in and steal.”

Romans 4:15 - “...but **where** there is no law, there also is no violation.”

Some of the general ways we may classify conjunctions:

“but” is adversative

“therefore” is inferential

“until” is temporal

“wherefore” is inferential

“because” is causal

“if” is conditional

“when” is temporal

“that, so that” is purpose or result

“and” is continuative

“however” “nevertheless” is adversative

“in order that” is purpose

“before” is temporal

“so that” result or inferential

QUESTION #26 – What is an article?

An article is the word “the” that is used to specifically point out or identify or draw attention to something specific. Articles always specifically particularize something.

Dana and Mantey say, “The function of the article is to point out an object or to draw attention to it. Its use makes the word stand out distinctly. Whenever the article occurs the object is certainly definite” (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 137).

The article “the” is the most used word in the New Testament. Dan Wallace observes: “It is used more frequently than any other word in the Greek NT (almost 20,000 times, or one out of seven words)” (*The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, p. 94).

Dan Wallace observed that to do complete justice to the article “the” one would have to study every use of every writer in the New Testament. But we may be certain of this fact and that is the use of the article “the” is never meaningless (*An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, pp. 207-208).

In English, the word “the” is called a definite article. The articles “a” or “an” are called indefinite articles. For example, there is “the Bible” is different in meaning than there is “a Bible.” In English, the lack of article tends to make the word it modifies lesser in importance.

But when it comes to God’s word written in Greek, there is no such thing as an indefinite article. So we do not call the article “the” a definite article but rather an article because the idea of indefinite article is non-existent.

When an article “the” is used before something, it is called an articular (no article) construction. The writer wants something specifically identified—“the Bible.” The writer means I want to draw attention to and identify this specific Bible.

When an article is not used before something, it is called an anarthrous construction. The writer is stressing the character and quality of something—“a Bible.” The writer means this Bible has all of the character and quality to it as to what a Bible is.

Dana and Mantey observed, “**The articular construction emphasizes identity; the anarthrous construction emphasizes character**” (*Ibid.*, p. 140).

It is extremely important to realize that the article “the” means one thing and the lack of an article means something else.

We will cite a critical Biblical example from **John 1:1**:

“In the beginning was **the Word** and **the word** was with **the God** and **the word** was God.”

There are four articles “the” used in this one verse, but the last proper noun God does not have an article.

Because of this some conclude (i.e. Mormons) what this means was **the word was a God and not the God**. They take the position that the missing article on the last noun “God” lessens the fact that He was “the God.”

But here is where understanding true grammar becomes important. When the article is not used, it is emphasizing the character and quality of something. So when John writes “the word was God,” what he is saying is that “the word is everything the character and quality of God was.”

In other words, not only was Jesus Christ the God, but His character and quality was fully God as well. So both in identity and quality, Jesus Christ is fully God.

Now often times the English translators of the Bible add an article “the” when it is not there or don’t include the article “the” when it is there for English purposes.

For example, in John 1:1 there is an article “the” before the first noun God and it is not translated in the KJV, NASV or NIV. The text literally reads:

“In beginning was the Word and the Word was with the God and God was the word.”

En arxh hn o logos kai o logos hn proç ton qeon kai qeoc hn o logos

For English understanding purposes, the English translators add an article “the” before beginning “In *the* beginning” and they eliminate the article “the” from the prepositional phrase “with God” and then they reverse the words “and God was the word” into “the word was God.”

The English translation that errs the most in the missing of or adding of articles is the King James Bible. Much of the King James Bible is based on the Latin Translation and there is no article in Latin. Therefore, as Dan Wallace observed, “the KJV translators frequently missed the nuances of the Greek article” (*An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, p. 208).

For example, in **Matthew 4:5**, the KJV reads the Devil took Jesus to “a pinnacle of the Temple.” The Greek text reads the Devil took Jesus to “the pinnacle of the Temple” (NASV, NIV).

In **Matthew 5:1**, the KJV/NIV reads Jesus went up into “a mountain.” The Greek text reads that Jesus went up into “the mountain” (NASV).

In **John 4:27**, the KJV reads Jesus talked with “the woman.” The Greek text reads that Jesus talked with “a woman” (NASV/NIV).

In **Luke 18:13**, the KJV/NIV reads “God be merciful to me a sinner.” The Greek text reads “God be merciful to me “the sinner” (NASV).

There are different ways the article “the” may be used:

Way #1 - The article may be used to point out a specific person or object.

Matthew 3:2 - “Repent for ‘**the** kingdom of **the** heavens’ is at hand.”

(78)

In Matthew, this phrase is used 32 times and only in Matthew. So this is a very specific Kingdom being offered from the heavens, which takes one immediately to the third heaven, the throne of God. The articles “the” are pointing this out.

Mark 1:10 - ...“He saw **the** heavens opening and **the** Spirit like a dove descending upon Him.”

This was not any Spirit descending; this was the heavenly, Holy Spirit descending upon Him. The article “the” makes that clear.

Mark 13:24 - “But in those **the** days after that **the** Tribulation, **the** sun will be darkened and **the** moon will not give **the** light of it.”

This is very specific information that God is giving by using these articles:

- 1) The specific days when this will happen will be after “The Tribulation”
- 2) The specific sun will be darkened.
- 3) The specific moon will not give its light.

We have specific days, specific times, specific places when and where this will take place.

John 1:21 - “Are you **the** prophet?”

John is being asked whether he was the specific Messianic prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15 to be sent by God. Just before God establishes the kingdom for Israel, it is predicted that a specific prophet would come. This is the question they are asking.

John 19:5 - “Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, **the** man!’”

Pilate is specifically pointing out Jesus Christ. He is the One who is on trial and that this was the specific man with whom he found no fault (v. 4).

Way #2 - The article may be used to point out a **previous** reference.

Sometimes an article “the” may be used to point back to something specific in the context. Usually when this construction is used, the initial first mention does not have the article.

John 4:11 - “...where then do You get “**the** living water.”

In **John 4:10**, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that He could give her living water. There is no article “the” used in connection with this living water. But in **verse 11**, the woman asks about “the living water” He just previously mentioned.

Actually there are two articles used here. One article “the” is before “living” and another article “the” is before water. Literally “the water, the living *water*.” The article “the” becomes contextually critical because Jesus just referred to this in **verse 10**.

(79)

He also discusses and develops this idea in **verses 13-14**. In **verse 14**, the noun water has the article “the” with it to refer to the living water He previously mentioned.

John 4:40, 43 - “...and He stayed there two days” (v. 40). “After **the** two days” (v. 43).

When John writes Jesus stayed with the Samaritans two days in **verse 40**, he does not use an article but when he mentions He left Samara to go into Galilee, he uses the article “the” to refer to the same two days previously mentioned.

John 4:50 - “Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son lives.’ **The** man believed the word ...”.

The specific man to whom this article “the” refers is the official that was previously mentioned in the context in **verse 46**. There is no article used in **verse 46**, but it is specifically used in **verse 50** to refer back to that specific official.

This is how the article of previous reference works. Again we see the importance of context.

Way #3 - **The article may be used to point out something specific about an abstract noun.**

The Bible will often use the article “the” to specifically point out something about the noun. For example, the noun “grace” may contain the article “the” to show this is specific grace. The noun “love” may contain the article “the” to show that this is specific love. The noun “faith” may contain the article “the” to show that this is specific faith. The noun “truth” may contain the article “the” to show that this is specific truth.

Luke 18:13 - “God be merciful to me **the** sinner.”

Jesus uses the article “the” to show that the one who is justified is the specific individually who admits to God that he is the specific sinner who needs to be justified.

Romans 4:5 - But to **the** one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies **the** ungodly **the** faith of him is credited as righteousness.”

Specific faith in Jesus Christ means that any ungodly person will be credited as being righteous. It is not any faith that does this; it is faith that specifically believes in Christ and not works.

I Corinthians 13:4 - “**The** love is patient; **the** love is kind, **the** love does not brag and is not arrogant.”

The use of the article here specifies that this is the specific love of God.

Ephesians 2:8 - “For by **the** grace you have been saved through faith.”

This use of the article makes it clear that this is the specific salvific grace of God that saves.

Way #4 - The article “the” is used to point out specific identities and names of individuals.

For example, this is “the Jesus.” This is “the Paul.” This is “the John.”

Acts 19:13 - “I adjure you by **the** Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

Paul was preaching about a specific Jesus and the Jewish exorcists knew about the specific Jesus he was preaching. Also Paul does not have an article before his name stressing the importance of identifying Jesus in this.

It is interesting that it has been observed that the article “the” appears with the name Jesus 909 times in the New Testament and the article “the” does not appear with the name Jesus some 359 times (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 143).

Romans 9:5 - “**the** Christ is **the** one who is God blessed forever.”

The article “the” specifically identifies Jesus Christ as God.

Colossians 4:11 - “and also Jesus, who is **the** called Justice.”

This is fascinating because there was apparently a man in the Colossian church whose name was Jesus. Paul does not use the article “the” before his name, but he does use one to say this is “the one” called Justice.

I Thessalonians 1:2 - “We give thanks to the God...”

The specific God is the God of the Bible

QUESTION #27 – What is a verb?

A verb is a word or part of the sentence which affirms or asserts some action or state of being about some person, place or thing. Roy Zuck said, “The verb asserts something about what a noun or pronoun is or does” (*Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 114).

Precisely spotting and identifying the verbs is the key to understanding the Bible. Without verbs there is no precise action and no precise meaning.

Take, for example, Genesis 1:1. If we leave the verb “created” out, the verse doesn’t make sense. “In the beginning God (created) the heaven and the earth.” Leave out the verb “created” and what we read is “In the beginning God the heaven and the earth.” We would ask what does that mean? But by adding the verb “created” we know precisely what it means.

(Verb Question #1) - What are the two types of verbs?

There are two specific types of verbs, categorically speaking:

Type #1 - There are action verbs.

Action verbs express action as it relates to the subject. When it comes to action verbs there are two kinds:

Action Verb Kind #1 - Transitive verb action.

A transitive verb requires a direct object to complete its meaning and action. For example, the verb “I threw” requires some direct object that was thrown. “I threw *the ball*.”

In **Matthew 10:8**, Jesus uses a series of transitive action verbs as He sent out the twelve: **“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.”** Now Jesus could have told the disciples “you heal”; “you raise”; “you cleanse”; and “you cast out.” The problem with this is they would not know exactly what He meant by that. So He included a specific object. You are to heal the sick. You are to raise the dead. You are to cleanse the lepers. You are to cast out the demons. This makes the verbs “heal, raise, cleanse and cast out” transitive verbs.

In **Mark 8:23**, Jesus asked a blind man “do you see anything?” In **verse 24**, the man looked up and said, “I see men.” Now he could have said “I see,” but he adds an object of what he sees, which was men. Therefore the verb is transitive.

In **Acts 16:30** the Philipians jailer asked Paul “What must I do to be saved?” In **Acts 16:31** Paul used a transitive verb and said “believe.” Believe what? “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...”. The transitive verb “believe” requires some object of the faith, which is Jesus Christ.

In **I Corinthians 15:3** we read “Christ died for our sins.” Now Paul could have said, “Christ died” as a historical fact. But in **verse 1** we learn that he is presenting the essence of the gospel that he preached. So with the verb “he died” he completes the action by saying, “he died for our sins.” That makes the verb “he died” a transitive verb.

Action Verb Kind #2 - Intransitive verb action.

An intransitive verb does not require an object or direct object to complete the meaning.

In **John 11:35**, we read “Jesus wept.”

In **John 9:25** the blind man who had been healed by Jesus was being questioned by the Pharisees and he said to them what I know is that I was blind “now I see.” The verb “I see” does not say what he sees, it simply says, “I see,” which makes the verb “I see” an intransitive verb.

The verb “I see” is the same verb Mark uses in **Mark 8:24** when he says, “I see the men.” **So what we learn from this is that context determines whether a verb is transitive or intransitive.**

The same verb may be used in a transitive or intransitive way and it is the written context that surrounds the verb determines this.

Type #2 - There are linking verbs.

A linking verb is a verb that expresses action by linking words together. It doesn’t show action within itself, but describes the subject. The most common linking verbs are verbs of being—“be” “is” “are” “were” “am” “was.”

In **John 9:5** Jesus says, “**I am** the light of the world.”

In **John 10:7, 9** Jesus says, “**I am** the door of the sheep”; “**I am** the door.”

A linking verb links something to the subject to have meaning. This is what is so staggering about God. God is the only Being that may use a linking verb and not link to anything:

In **Exodus 3:14** God says, “**I am who I am.**”

In **John 8:58**, Jesus says, “before Abraham was born, **I am.**”

(Verb Question #2) - What are the five qualities of every verb?

Every verb has these five qualities to it.

Quality #1 - Every verb has a voice - active voice, passive voice, middle voice.

The Active Voice is used 20,697 times in the N.T.. The Passive Voice is used 3,933 times in the N.T.. The Middle Voice is used 3,500 times in the N.T. (Daniel B. Wallace, *An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, p. 410).

Quality #2 - Every verb has a person - First person, Second person, Third person.

Quality #3 - Every verb has a number - Singular or plural.

Quality #4 - Every verb has a mood- Indicative, Imperative, Subjunctive, Optative.

The **Indicative Mood** is used 15,618 times in the N.T.. The **Imperative Mood** is used 1,631 times in the N.T.. The **Subjunctive Mood** is used 1,858 times in the N.T.. The **Optative Mood** is used 68 times in the N.T. (*Ibid.*, p. 447).

Quality #5 - Every verb has a tense - Present, Future, Imperfect, Aorist, Perfect, Pluperfect.

The **present tense** is used 11,583 times in the N.T.. The **future tense** is used 1,623 times in the N.T.. The **Imperfect tense** is used 1,682 times in the N.T.. The **Aorist tense** is used 11,606 times in the N.T.. The **perfect tense** is used 1,571 times in the N.T. The **Pluperfect tense** is used 86 times in the N.T. (Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, p. 214).

(Verb Question #3) - What is the definition of the active, passive and middle voice verbs?

Active Voice Verb - The subject performs the action.

In **Galatians 4:4** we read, “God sent His Son.” God performed the action of sending His Son.

In **Genesis 1:1** we read, “God created the heavens and the earth” God performed the action.

Passive Voice Verb - The subject receives the action. The subject is acted upon.

In **Romans 3:28** we read, “for we maintain that a person is **justified** by faith apart from works of the law.”

In **I Corinthians 12:13** we read, “For by one Spirit **we were all baptized** into one body.”

In **Hebrews 11:23** we read, “By faith Moses, when he was born **was hidden** for three months by his parents.”

Middle Voice Verb - The subject performs the action and receives the action performed.

This is very peculiar in that the subject not only is responsible for the action, but also involved in the results of the action.

In **Matthew 27:5** we read concerning Judas, “and he went away and **he hanged himself.**” Judas performs the action and is involved in the results of the action.

In **Romans 9:22** that God “**has prepared for destruction**” vessels of wrath. God is involved in the action and in the results of the action.

In **I Corinthians 10:2** we read, “all **were baptized** into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”

In **Ephesians 1:4** we read, “just as **He chose** us.” This middle indicates He chose us for Himself.

(Verb Question #4) - What are the categories of distinction in the persons of the verb?

When it comes to a verb there are three categories: first person, second person, third person. These categories give a point of view or a perspective in regard to the verb action:

1. In the first person of a verb it is the “I, we” viewpoint - I did it or we did it; I spoke.

Philippians 1:3 - “**I thank** my God in all my remembrance of you.”

II Timothy 4:7 - “**I have fought** a good fight, **I have finished** the course, **I have kept** the faith.”

2. In the second person of the verb it is the “you” viewpoint - you did it; you spoke.

In **II Timothy 2:1** “**you**, therefore, my son **be strong** in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

3. In the third person it is the “he, she, it, they” viewpoint - he, she, or they did it; he spoke.

II Timothy 4:14 - “Alexander the coppersmith (*he*) **did me much harm.**”

(Verb Question #5) - What are the numbers connected to a verb?

The numbers are either singular or plural.

A **singular verb** is a verb in which one person or one object performs the action. Usually in English a singular verb will end with an “s” or an “es.”

A **plural verb** is a verb in which more than one person or object performs the action. In English a plural verb does not end with an “s” or an “es.”

(Verb Question #6) - What are the various moods of the verbs?

Now the mood of a verb determines how it relates to reality, actuality and potentiality.

1) The Indicative mood presents something as being reality, certain or factual.

Mark 4:3 - “The sower **went out** to sow”

John 1:1 - “In the beginning **was** the Word”

Romans 3:21 - “Apart from the law the righteousness of God **has been manifested.**”

Romans 4:5 - “But to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly His faith **is credited** as righteousness.”

2) The Subjunctive mood presents something as being uncertain but probable.

Hebrews 4:15 - “**Let us hold fast** our confession”

Hebrews 12:1 - “ and **let us run...**”

I John 4:7 - “**Let us love** one another”

3) The Optative mood presents something as being possible, such as a wish.

Romans 6:2 - “**May it never be**” - context of saying one should continue in sin to manifest grace.

Romans 9:14 - “**May it never be**” - context of saying God is unjust in His choice of election.

II Timothy 1:16 - “**May the Lord grant mercy** on the house of Onesiphorus.”

4) The Imperative mood presents a command for something that is possible.

The imperative mood is the mood that is used for commands. A command may be given to positively do something or a command may be given to negatively not do something.

Mark 2:14 - “**Follow me**” is a command that Jesus gave to Levi the tax collector.

James 1:5 - “If anyone of you lacks wisdom, **let him ask** of God.”

Mark 5:36 - “**Do not be afraid**, only believe.” Jesus speaking to synagogue official

Romans 6:12 - “Do not let sin **reign** in your mortal body.”

(Verb Question #7) - What is the verb tense?

The tense of a verb is the aspect of the verb that tells us **when** the action of a sentence takes place and what **kind** of action it is that is taking place.

Every verb has a tense. The tense of the verb reveals two things:

1) The tense of the verb has to do with the time of the action.

2) The tense of the verb has to do with the type of the action.

If a writer or speaker said, “I threw the ball,” it would not be too difficult to realize he threw the ball at some time in the past, because he was not presently throwing the ball at the time he was speaking or writing.

So we could conclude from that statement that at some point in past time, the writer or speaker was informing us that “I threw the ball.”

But in that statement, did he mean he threw it one time or did he throw it several times? Verb tense can tell us what the writer meant by that.

In John, Jesus taught that if one would believe in Him, one would have everlasting life. He used different metaphors to illustrate the point:

In **John 4:13-14**, Jesus is speaking to a woman of Samaria, and He uses the illustration of drinking water metaphorically of believing on Him as the living water for salvation. He says to her that “whoever **drinks** of the water that I will give him shall never thirst.” That water would give eternal life.

In **John 6:51**, Jesus uses the metaphor of Him being the living bread and “**if anyone eats**” of this bread he would live forever.

Now a question to ask the verbs “drink” and “eat” is how many times do you have to perform this action to have eternal life. Was Jesus saying you need to drink and eat multiple times to have eternal life or was He saying you need to drink and eat one time to be saved?

Well the answer is in the verb tense. The answer is one time. This is why the study of a verb tense is so important to theology. These two verses clearly teach eternal security to one who believes on Jesus Christ.

As to action related to time, the action may take place in past time, present time or future time.

As to action related to type or kind, it may be a continuous action or a completed action or ongoing, occurring action.

There are six are different tenses:

Tense Type #1 - Present Tense

The present tense basically presents continual action in the present time. The present tense presents action as continual, habitual and in progress with no regard for the beginning or end of the action. The present tense describes something at the present time:

Matthew 7:7 - Jesus, in instructing on prayer, uses present tense verbs to stress the need for continual, habitual, repeated action. **Ask...Seek...Knock**

John 14:17 - Jesus teaches that the Holy Spirit continually **abides** with you.

John 16:27 - Jesus says that God the Father continually loves those who love Him “for the Father Himself **loves you** because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.”

Romans 9:1- Paul is stressing the fact that he continually tells the truth and continually does not lie. “**I am telling** the truth in Christ; **I am not lying.**”

II Corinthians 9:7 - Paul writes God **loves** a cheerful giver. The present tense indicates that God continually loves one who cheerfully gives offerings to Him.

I John 3:8 - John is stressing that the Devil continually sins and he has done so since the beginning “The Devil **has sinned** from the beginning.”

Tense Type #2 - Imperfect Tense

The Imperfect Tense is used to describe continual action that is or was in progress in the past time.

Mark 9:20 - a boy was brought to Jesus and a demon threw him into a convulsion and falling to the ground he **began rolling around** and foaming at the mouth.” This was continual action in past time.

Mark 12:41 - Mark uses the imperfect tense in the episode of the widow and her mites by saying “many rich people **were putting** in large sums.”

Luke 1:59 - Luke says concerning the naming of John that “**they were going** to call him Zacharias.”

Romans 6:17 - Paul uses an Imperfect Tense to teach that before salvation “**you were** slaves to sin.” In other words, we were in past time continually a slave to sin.

Tense Type #3 - Aorist Tense

The aorist tense is the tense of the verb that views the action as occurring in past time and at one point of time. **The time of the action is usually past time and the type of action is a point of time or a punctiliar moment.**

It is like the Imperfect tense in that it typically puts the action in past time, but it is unlike the Imperfect tense in that the Imperfect tense is continual action in past time, where the aorist tense is a point of action in past time.

For example, the Imperfect Tense would say, "I was sleeping." The Aorist tense would say, "I slept." The Imperfect Tense would say, "I was reading my Bible." The Aorist tense would say, "I read my Bible."

Now it is true that the aorist may look back in time, but not always. The genius of the Aorist is that it points to a specific moment or point of time.

Mark 12:44 - "they all **put in** out of their surplus."

John 4:20 - "Our Fathers **worshipped** in this mountain." Samaritan woman reflects on this.

John 4:14 - "whoever **drinks** of the water that I will give him shall never thirst..." The verb "drinks" is aorist tense meaning whoever drinks at one point of time will never thirst for eternal life.

John 6:51 - "if anyone **eats** of this bread, he will live forever..." The verb "eats" is aorist tense referring to eating at one point of time.

Romans 5:14 - "death **reigned** from Adam to Moses." Paul is looking back to that point of time.

Romans 8:30 - "and these whom He **predestined**, He also **called**; and these whom He **called**, He also **justified** and these whom He **justified**, He also **glorified**."

Philippians 2:28 - "therefore **I have sent** him..." Paul on moment he sent Epaphroditus.

Paul uses all aorist verbs here to look back to a point of time when a person believed in Jesus Christ, and at that point of time became the recipient of all of these benefits.

The aorist tense looks at point of time action from different angles:

- 1) Action is complete at a specific point of time - **John 2:20** - 46 years "**to build**" this temple.
- 2) Action is started at a specific point of time - **II Cor. 8:9** - "for our sakes He **became poor**."
- 3) Action is culminated at a specific point of time - **Phil. 4:11** - "**I have learned** to be content."

Tense Type #4 - Perfect Tense

The Perfect tense is the tense of completed past action with continual results and progress of the action. So the action was completed in the past, but it has results that exist at the present time and even into the future. To state it another way, **something exists at the present time that is the result of action in past time.**

The Aorist tense sees the action as having been completed. The Perfect Tense sees the action as having been completed with lingering results.

If someone asked a judge “What did you do with the prisoner” and the judge said, “I have released him,” we would understand that to mean he released him at some point in the past and that he was still released at the present time. This is the perfect tense.

If, on the other hand, the judge said, “I released him” in the aorist tense, it would simply mean at one point of time he was released. It may be he was also imprisoned again because all the judge was saying is there is that at one point of time, he was released. This would be the aorist tense (Illustration taken from J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, p. 189).

Point of time action in past time but continual action into present and future time.

Luke 5:20 - Jesus said, “Friend, your sins **are forgiven** you.” From that moment of time in the past and still are in the present and the future.

John 16:27 - Jesus says that God the Father continually loves those who “**have loved** Me and **have believed** that I came forth from the Father.” These disciples had believed this from a point of time in the past and continued to believe it at the present time when Jesus was speaking.

Romans 3:10 - Paul writes: “Just as **it is written**, there is none righteousness, not even one.” The Scriptures written at a point of past time (Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3) have present and future tense results and applications.

Tense Type #5 - Future Tense

The future tense focuses on action that will take place in the future. The future tense presents something that will take place or come to pass in the future. At some future point of time, the action will occur.

Matthew 1:21 - An angel appeared to Joseph and said concerning Mary, “she **will bear** a Son and you **shall call** His name Jesus for He **will save** His people from their sins.” There is a tremendous amount of future information in this one verse in the use of these future tense verbs.

John 14:26 - Jesus says that when the Holy Spirit comes, “He **will teach** you all things.” Actually there are several future tense verbs in this verse.

- 1) The Father **will send**
- 2) The Spirit **will teach**
- 3) The Spirit **will bring to your remembrance**

Romans 6:14 - “for sin **shall not be master** over you.”

Philippians 1:18 - Paul says, “I rejoice (present tense). Yes, **I will continue** to rejoice” (future tense). So Paul is saying I rejoice presently and continually and will do so in the future.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17 - “the dead in Christ **will rise** first...then we...**will be caught up**...”

This is a critical passage that deals with the future of the Rapture of the Church at the end of the Church Age.

Tense Type #6 - Pluperfect Tense

This is a very rare tense. There are only 86 of these used in the New Testament. **The Pluperfect Tense is the tense that emphasizes the fact that the action took place in past time and the results of the action also occurred at a past moment of time.**

This tense represents action as completed at some point of time in the past and the results of the action were also in the past.

Mark 15:46 - Joseph, in regard to Jesus body, “laid Him in a tomb which **had been hewn** out in the rock...”.

John 18:16 - “But Peter **was standing** at the door outside.” This action occurred at a past moment and the results of it were also in the past time.

Acts 1:10 - “two men in white clothing **stood beside** them.” This occurred at the ascension of Jesus Christ and the two men stood beside them at that time. They are no longer standing beside them.

Galatians 4:3 - Paul says when we were under the law prior to grace, “we...**were held** in bondage to the elemental things of the world.”

The Pluperfect is critical here to theology because this teaches that we are no longer under the law for it was completed in past time.

Revelation 7:11 - “all the angels **were standing** around the throne...” This action was after the sealing of the 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel.

(91)

When it comes to verbs, there are two ways to view the action:

Way #1 - Action as occurring at a point in time or moment in time. This is called

Punctiliar action (•)

Way #2 - Action as occurring as a continual progress in time. This is called

Linear action (_____)

Here is the way we would chart N.T. verbs from the Greek Language:

Present Tense - continuous action, present time (_____)

Aorist Tense - punctiliar, point completed action in past time (>•<)

Perfect Tense - punctiliar action in past time with continuing results at present time

(•>_____)

Imperfect Tense - continuous action in past time (_____<)

Pluperfect Tense - completed action and results of action at some past time (____•____<)

Future Tense - action either completed or continual that will happen in future (>_____)

QUESTION #28 – What is a participle?

A participle is an action word that is part of the verb family that often functions as an adjective. **We could call a participle a “verbal adjective.”**

Because it is in the verb family, a participle will have tense and voice.

Because it is in the adjective family, a participle will have gender, number and case.

Because it functions as an adjective, it will modify or be dependent upon something.

Participles are often formed by adding “ing” to the verb or by adding “ed” to the verb. Generally speaking, when the “ing” is added to the verb, it refers to present tense continual action and by adding “ed” to the verb, it refers to past tense completed action.

Some examples of participles are:

Matthew 2:7 - “the exact time the star **appeared**.”

Luke 1:45 - “blessed is she who **believed**.”

John 4:11 - “where then do You get that **living** water?”

John 4:25 - “He who is **called** Christ”

Hebrews 4:12 - “For the Word of God is **living...piercing** as far as the division”

QUESTION #29 – What is an infinitive?

An infinitive is an action word that is part of the verb family and often functions as a noun.
We could call the infinitive a “verbal noun.”

Because it is in the verb family, an infinitive will have tense and voice.

Because it is in the noun family, an infinitive will have a case.

Infinitives are usually formed by adding “to” to the word.

An infinitive may be used in verb ways or noun ways:

1) Some verb ways an infinitive may be used:

Matthew 2:2 - “we...have come **to worship** Him.”

Luke 10:19 - “I have given you authority **to tread** on serpents and scorpions..”

Romans 1:10 - “I may succeed **to come** to you.”

James 1:27 - “Pure and undefiled religion...**to keep** oneself unstained by the world.”

2) Some noun ways an infinitive may be used:

Mark 9:5 - “Rabbi, it is good for us **to be** here...”

Philippians 1:21 - “For to me **to live** is Christ and **to die** is gain.”

James 1:27 - “Pure and undefiled religion...**to visit** orphans and widows in their distress...”

THE MATTER OF BIBLE TRANSLATION

I want to discuss the matter of translation of the Bible with you:

In a translation of the Bible, one is translating from the original language, which is Greek and Hebrew, to the English language, which is our language.

Now we have to use words that English speakers can understand to do that. Otherwise, it will make no sense:

Edadrusen o Ihsouç means zero to one who does not know Greek so we translate “Jesus wept.”

Pantote cairete means zero to one who does not know Greek so we translate “rejoice always.”

So in translation, we take one language and translate it into another language.

Now we have an abundance of Greek manuscripts available today. **A Biblical manuscript may be defined as a handwritten copy of a portion of a Biblical text.**

Now the types of Greek manuscripts that God has preserved for us to translate into English are basically four:

1) There are the papyri manuscripts.

Their name is due to the material upon which the words were written. **There are in existence 128 papyri manuscripts.**

2) There are the majuscule/uncial manuscripts.

Their name is due to the fact that the text is written in all capital letters. **There are 322 uncial manuscripts in existence.**

3) There are the minuscule manuscripts.

Their name is due to the fact that the text is written in small letters, cursive style. **There are 2,926 miniscule manuscripts in existence.**

4) There are the lectionaries manuscripts.

Their name is due to the fact that the manuscripts are various portions that were assigned for reading. Lectionaries are more in book form and not a complete continuous text. **There are 2,462 lectionary manuscripts in existence.**

The total number of manuscripts is 5,838.

There are 5,838 Greek manuscripts of Biblical texts.

There are 10,000 Latin manuscripts.

There are 15,000-20,000 manuscripts that were copied into other various languages.

There are over 1 million quotation manuscripts from early church fathers.

In fact, it has been said that **if we lost all other sources of Biblical manuscripts, we could reconstruct the entire N.T. based on the quotations of passages that were written by early church fathers.**

Now there are about 138,000 words in the Greek New Testament. And when you read the Greek manuscripts there are some slight variations. Most of the textual variations are insignificant to the text. That has no real effect on the translation.

For example, we pointed out in Matthew 10:8 that most English translations read “Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers” and there is no article “the” in the Greek text. It is added for English purposes.

Now one of the reasons why there are some differences is because it is possible to communicate the same thought in multiple ways. Daniel Wallace gives a great illustration of this that we want to borrow from him in the book (*Interpreting the New Testament Text*, p. 35).

1. Jesus loved Paul. Ihsouç agapa paulon
2. Jesus loved the Paul. Ihsouç agapa ton paulon
3. The Jesus loved Paul. o Ihsouç agapa paulon
4. The Jesus loved the Paul. o Ihsouç agapa ton paulon
5. Paul Jesus loved. Paulon Ihsouç agapa
6. The Paul Jesus loved. ton Paulon Ihsouç agapa
7. Paul the Jesus loved. Paulon o Ihsouç agapa
8. The Paul the Jesus loved. ton Paulon o Ihsouç agapa
9. Loved Jesus Paul. agapa Ihsouç Paulon
10. Loved Jesus the Paul. agapa Ihsouç ton Paulon
11. Loved the Jesus Paul. agapa o Ihsouç Paulon
12. Loved the Jesus the Paul. agapa o Ihsouç ton Paulon
13. Loved Paul Jesus. agapa Paulon Ihsouç
14. Loved the Paul Jesus. agapa ton Paulon Ihsouç
15. Loved Paul the Jesus. agapa Paulon o Ihsouç
16. Loved the Paul the Jesus. agapa ton Paulon o Ihsouç

Now if a man were copying a manuscript by hand, he could communicate basically the same point by copying the text in any of these ways. This explains why there are some manuscript differences.

Most of the textual variants fall into this category of not being significant to the meaning of a text. Dan Wallace said of all the textual variants of manuscripts only about 1 percent would affect meaning (*Ibid.*, p. 37).

For example, in **Romans 5:1** we read “Therefore having been justified by faith **we have** peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. Some of the manuscripts read “we have” ecomen -- in middle of word note letter O (Omicron).
2. Some manuscripts read “we have” ecwmen in middle of word note letter W (Omega).

The difference is one letter. Both letters are pronounced with the “o” vowel sound. We may see how a copyist could make a copying error, but the meaning is significantly different based on this one vowel:

The first “we have” is indicative, meaning it is a fact we have it.

The second “we have” is subjunctive, meaning let us go after this.

There are manuscripts that copy it both ways.

The point we need to understand is that Bible translators take these manuscripts very seriously. They analyze and do their best to bring it into the English Language. We owe the copyist a great debt, we owe the translators a great debt and most of all we owe thanks and praise to God that we have such wonderful translations in our English Language.

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