

## Interpreting the Bible

To get the correct meaning of the Bible .... we must interpret scripture

.... without pre-conceived paradigms

.... from the text and context itself

.... by analyzing the evidence and illustrations

.... and draw right conclusions out of it.

Faithful Christians learn truth this way.

Joseph depended on the Holy Spirit to enlighten him to God's truth:

**Gen 40:8** And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream,  
and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them,  
Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

It is by God's use of repeated examples .... that He illustrates the true interpretation of a verse to His servants. By comparing scripture with scripture .... we apply sound reasoning .... that we come to good judgment .... not our own opinion .... about the Holy Word we are reading:

**2 Peter 1:19-21** We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first,  
that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man:  
but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

We may all learn and be comforted (1 Cor 14:31) .... by trustworthy interpretations. God's doctrines will not conflict:

**1 Cor 14:33** For God is not the author of confusion,  
but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

God gives us the capacity to be changed by His Word ....

and to be conformed to it:

**2 Tim 3:16-17** All scripture is given by inspiration of God,  
and is profitable for doctrine,  
for reproof,  
for correction,  
for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect,  
thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

God is the Only Author Who is always present every time His book is read:

**Prov 22:20-21** Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge,  
21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Paul instructed Timothy to charge faithful men (2 Tim 2:2) before the Lord .... not to strive about words to no profit .... that would subvert (Greek <katastrophe>) the hearers (2 Tim 2:14) .... but, instead, to handle the truth right .... to teach it directly and correctly .... to cut straight ways:

**2 Tim 2:15-19** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: (a gangrene, a disease by which any part of the body suffering from inflammation becomes so corrupted that, unless a remedy be seasonably applied, the evil continually spreads, attacks other parts, and at last eats away the bones)

of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

18 Who concerning the truth have erred (swerved, deviated, missed the mark), saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow (subvert, destroy) the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. (His elect - 2 Tim 2:10)  
And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

It is by God's Holy Spirit of truth .... that we see the truth He shows us:

**John 16:13-14** Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

We must study with a humble spirit (Isa 57:15; Matt 18:4, 23:12; James 4:6,10; 1 Pet 5:5,6) to receive our Father's teachings .... rather than invent our own. He that is perfect in knowledge is with us (Job 36:4):

**Psa 36:9** For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

We should not hold a position, then hunt for verses to support it. That is the 'backward' way. Rather, we should begin with God's word .... by using His models as our standards. After mentioning things in Israel's history, Paul wrote for us to learn .... from what took place to them:

**1 Cor 10:6** Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

**1 Cor 10:11** Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

We can come to very dependable judgments about interpretation of scripture .... similar to the way, in a court of law, that a juror takes in and examines the facts from the scene. He is careful to make notes .... in order to come to a right conclusion based upon the induction of evidence:

**2 Cor 4:2** But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Here is a simple example of inductive Bible study.

This illustration shows how to draw an interpretation 'out of' the Bible text.

It does not come from 'man' .... but from the authority of God's word.

The old testament scriptures teach that the LORD is Shepherd to believers:

**Psalms 23:1** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

The old testament scriptures show that the Shepherd will be killed:

**Zech 13:7** Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,  
and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts:  
smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:  
and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd, Who gave His life for His sheep:

**John 10:11** I am the good shepherd:  
the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. (also Heb 13:20)

Therefore, we can correctly conclude that Jesus is the LORD of the old testament .... Who is the Shepherd .... and that believers are His sheep (Rom 8:36) for Whom He died .... and shed the blood of the new testament:

**Matt 26:28** For this is my blood of the new testament,  
which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Like the acronym of a 'RINO' .... a person may be a 'CINO' .... that is, a Christian In Name Only. Does his 'walk' match his 'talk'? Someone just saying that Jesus is the LORD .... is not the sign of a true Christian:

**Matt 7:21** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

God is faithful to teach .... those who will obey His teaching:

**John 7:17** If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

**John 8:47** He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

To properly interpret scripture .... we must have a ready mind to obey it:

**Acts 17:10-11** And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 **These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**

Jesus is the Author of Eternal Salvation to all them that obey Him (Heb 5:9):

**Rom 6:16-17** Know ye not, that **to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?**

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but **ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine** which was delivered you.

All of MAN's ideas .... whether scientific or historical .... must be subject to GOD's word. Our study of the Bible should not be influenced by nations, politics, culture, habits, traditions of men or church, or modern Theologians:

**Col 2:8** Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Some use the philosophy, "If the literal makes sense .... then seek no other sense." It is a catchy phrase, but not a sound way to interpret. Every conclusion, no matter how reasonable it may appear, must be tested by the rest of the Bible to determine whether it is in harmony with the WHOLE scripture.

The Bible can have more than one 'level' of meaning. Such as:

- the historical setting,
- the moral (or spiritual) teaching,
- the salvation message.

The Bible is perfectly accurate in whatever facts God gives of past events, whether history or science, God's accounts are 100% true. For example:

- **Gen 1**, God created the universe, and everything in it, in 6 '24-hour' days.
- **Gen 2:7**, the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground.
- **Gen 7:17-22**, the flood covered the entire earth and destroyed all life except for Noah's family of 8 people and the animals on the ark with them.
- **Exod 14:22**, the children of Israel passed through the midst of the Red Sea on dry ground when escaping from Pharaoh's Egyptian army: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.
- **Gen 10:25**, in the days of Peleg the earth was divided. During his 239 year life span (Gen 11:18-19), the land mass separated into continents.

In the Old Testament, God sometimes spoke directly about salvation, like in:

- **Psa 103:1-4**, the LORD forgives all our iniquities and redeems our life from destruction.
- **Isa 53**, He is the Man of Sorrows Who was bruised for our iniquities.

In the New Testament, Jesus is clearly identified as the Sin-Bearer:

**John 1:29** The next day John seeth **Jesus** coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**

Yet, sometimes God 'hides' the gospel in the language of the Bible, as when Abraham was told to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice to God:

**Gen 22:8** And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a lamb** for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

Some of God's word is written plainly and can be easily understood;

and some of God's word is 'veiled' so that its meaning is not openly visible:

**Mark 4:10-12** And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11 And he said unto them, **Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:** (like earthly stories with heavenly meanings)

12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Isa 6:9-10)

God purposely both gives truth and He withholds truth:

**Matt 7:6** Give not that which is holy unto the dogs (Prov 26:11, Phil 3:2), neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Jesus fulfilled prophecy by speaking in dark sayings, things which were kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matt 13:34-35; Psa 78:2, 49:4):

**Luke 10:21** In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, **that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes:** even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

The LORD's secret is with the righteous (Prov 3:32), those who obey Him:

**Psa 25:14** The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him;  
and he will shew them his covenant.

**Deut 29:29** The secret things belong unto the LORD our God:  
but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children  
for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

We are given understanding by the inspiration of the Almighty (Job 32:8):

**Amos 3:7** Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but **he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.** (Dan 2:22, 1 Pet 1:18-20, Rev 1:1)

Paul was one of many prophets and apostles (Acts 13:1, Eph 3:5)

that God used to communicate His 'good news' to the world (Mark 16:15).

The gospel of grace that Paul also preached was prophesied

thousands of years before in **Gen 12:3**, when God called Abram:

**Gal 3:8** And **the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.**

God also used stories, conversations, and events that happened in the lives of people .... to teach 'spiritual truth' .... as in the case of Abraham and Sarah with Isaac, and Hagar with Ishmael (Gen 21:9-14 and Gal 4:21-31).

The ceremonial laws and feasts of Israel pointed to aspects of salvation.

The Bible is filled with illustrations .... types .... patterns .... figures.

The words God chose for His Holy Book (Bible) are exactly those we need:

**John 17:3** And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The Bible is our rule book for all matters of faith and practice ....

that we may be saved and glorify God Who saved us:

**John 20:30-31** And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

When interpreting the Bible, remember: God's word does not conflict itself.

*This is David Dowell saying, "Think about it!"*