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Foreword

Psalm 119:105- Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Psalms 119:130- The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

Psalms 19:8- The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

In the first epistle of John chapter one and verse five, the apostle John by the Holy Spirit reveals an incredible truth- “God is light” just as we know that “God is love” in this same epistle. The simple fact is, our God is a God who desires to shed the light of His truth and revelation into our spirit being. The Bible is God speaking to you and to me and His Word is our final authority for all matters that pertain to life and godliness.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

2 Peter 1:21- For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Without the Bible, we would have no knowledge of salvation and God’s great plan of redemption. Our origins in the book of Genesis and the consummation of the ages in the Book of Revelation provide a beginning for mankind and the restoration of all things. God’s Word is God’s will revealed to mankind, so that humanity is without excuse. Revealed truth from God through His Word is the greatest treasure known to man.

Ephesians 1:17-19

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Yet God does not throw His pearls of truth to the calloused or the indifferent as stated in Matthew 7:6. The Word of God is only revealed by the Holy Spirit to those who hunger and thirst for it. Understanding and appreciating the infinite value of God’s Word is the foundation from which we live out the Christian experience; not just as hearers of the Word of God but as doers.

Luke 10:21

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”

1 Corinthians 2:14- The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The Word of God

I. The Origin of the Bible

The foundation of our Christian faith is found only in one book: the Bible. In it we discover who we are, where we came from and where we are going; it explains the “why” of the human condition, and the existence of evil in the world. Through its pages we become acquainted with the God of the universe, the all-powerful, loving, holy, just, Redeemer and Savior. The Word of God speaks to us about a personal relationship with God and with the community of saints, which is the Church.

Our attitude toward the Bible will determine our willingness to put into practice its principles. If we consider it to be the Word of God, it will be the measure by which we judge all human thought and systems of truth, whether social, scientific, historical or religious. It will rule our conduct and personal relationships. If we believe that the Bible is the divine Word of God, it will mold our values, attitudes, judgments and actions.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-14

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, **the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe.**

A. How the Bible Came to Us

The English word “Bible” comes from the Greek word *biblos*, meaning “a book”. The word *biblos* comes from the word given to the inner pulp of the papyrus reed on which ancient books were written.

The Bible is also called:



“The Scriptures” Mark 12:10; “The Sacred Writings” 2 Timothy 3:15; “The Oracles of God” Romans 3:2; “The Word of God” Hebrews 4:12

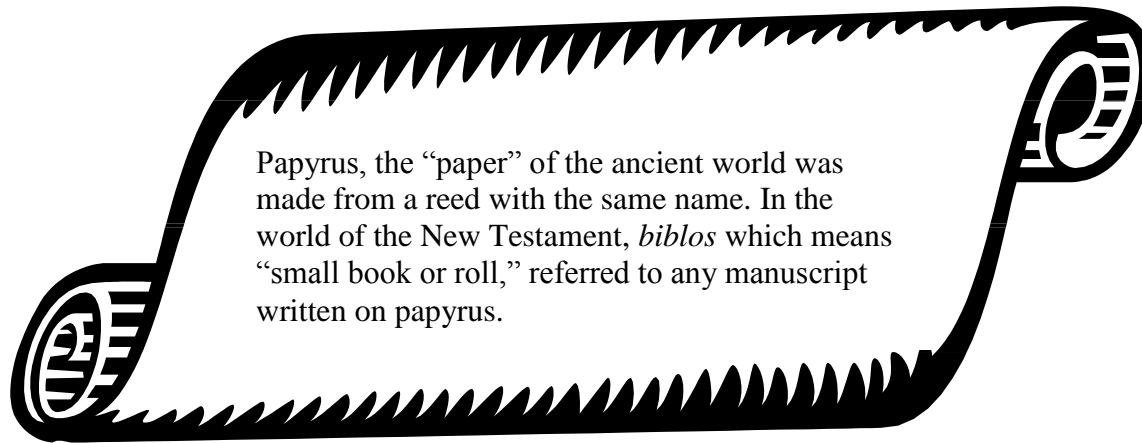
The Bible didn’t fall miraculously from heaven; it came to us through a historical process which was guided by the Holy Spirit. Only by the grace of God is it possible for these sacred books to be preserved and copied throughout the centuries.

1. Bible Writers

The Holy Spirit used between, 35 to 40 writers over a time period of around 1500 years to write the Bible, in different parts of the world, time, environment, personalities and culture. Among them were priests, prophets, kings, a tax collector, a doctor, a soldier, a scribe, a poet and a theologian. Yet they were consistent in what they wrote and did not contradict one another. The only solution is a divine author spoke through them. The Bible is the Word of God, preserved by God, and inspired by God. How were the books of the Bible written and then copied? It is truly a fascinating story. Let’s briefly overview the process by which the ancient copyists (i.e. the scribes) transmitted the Word of God throughout the centuries.

2. Writing Materials

Many of the first copies of the Bible were written on papyrus or on parchments.



Papyrus, the “paper” of the ancient world was made from a reed with the same name. In the world of the New Testament, *biblos* which means “small book or roll,” referred to any manuscript written on papyrus.

Of the more than 200 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament written on this material which still exist today, the oldest fragment which has been found to date is a part of John 18 written on papyrus between 100 and 120 A.D. in Egypt. On one side appears vs. 31-33, on the other, vs. 37 and 38.

The New Testament was written on rolls or loose sheets of papyrus until the Second Century, A.D. Short books like Philemon, 2 John and 3 John were written on single sheets, whereas longer books were copied to scrolls of different lengths: Romans was a scroll of about 4 meters, (almost 4 yards). Later the books were bound in a cheaper, more convenient format known as the codex; the sheets were attached together at the spine, similar to the books of our time.

3. The Parchments

Made of animal skins, this material was more durable and costlier than papyrus. Many of the ancient copies of the books of the Bible were written on parchments. For example, the Law of Moses (the first five books of the Old Testament) were usually written on one scroll for use in the synagogue. Another scroll would contain the Prophetic Books. In Luke 4:16-17 tells us of the rolls in the synagogue in Nazareth from which Jesus read.

4. The Scribes



Since the printing press was not invented until the 15th century AD., copies of the Bible before that time were made by hand. The Hebrews had such respect for the Law of God that over a period of time a group of scholars arose whose responsibility was to study and copy the books of the Old Testament. They were called scribes, or the doctors of the law, experts in the Law of Moses.

The rules for copying the Biblical text were very strict, as is demonstrated in the Talmud (definition: the Jewish commentary about the Law). Following is a partial list of the rules of transcription:

1. The parchment must be prepared from the skin of a clean animal; the sections of the parchment are to be tied with cords of a clean animal. Only a Jew may prepare the parchments which are destined for use in the copying of the sacred Scripture.
2. Each column must have between 48 and 60 lines. The parchment must be lined; if three words are written beyond the lines in the margin, the entire copy will be condemned.
3. The ink must be black, prepared according to the special instructions found in the Talmud.
4. No word or letter is to be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him and must read aloud each word before writing it.
5. The scribe must clean his pen before writing the word "God" and must bathe and change his clothing before writing the word "Jehovah".
6. The scribe is to follow the special rules found in the Talmud for the formation of letters, the space between letters, the type of pen used in the transcription, and the color of the parchment.
7. The manuscript must be checked within 30 days of its completion. A single mistake, would condemn a whole page; if three mistakes were found in a page, the whole manuscript would be condemned.
8. Each word and each letter is to be counted; if one letter is omitted or added, or one letter touched another, the manuscript was to be condemned and destroyed immediately.

Unit 1 Review:

How is it possible that over 35 writers over a time period of around 1500 years were able to write the various books that comprise our Bible today without any contradictions?

How were the books of the Bible written and then copied?

How does it affect your faith, now having a better understanding of how the Scriptures came to us?

B. The Canon of the Bible

The word “canon” comes from the Greek *kanon*, meaning “a measuring rod or reed,” and signifies a rule, a standard. Hence, the Canon of the Bible consists of those books considered worthy to be included in the Holy Scriptures.

The New Bible Dictionary puts it this way:

“The various books possessed and exercised divine authority long before men ever made pronouncements to that effect. Ecclesiastical councils did not give the books their divine authority, but merely recognized that they both had it and exercised it.”

According to authors Selby and West:

“Canonization was the result of a centuries-long development, whereby only those writings that proved useful for faith and worship were elevated to such a decisive role. The Canon, that is to say, was determined not so much by Rabbinic or Church decree as by the intrinsic merit of each separate book and its reception by the worshipping community for the inspiration or edification it offered.”

Internal evidence of the inspiration of the Old Testament

Internal evidence refers to the evidence of inspiration that we find in the Bible itself. Let’s look at the evidence of the inspiration of the 39 books of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament of the Israelites was divided into three parts: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.



THE LAW:
(Pentateuch)

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

THE PROPHETS:

<u>“Early Prophets”</u>	<u>“Latter Prophets”</u>
Joshua	Isaiah
Judges	Jeremiah
Samuel	Ezekiel
Kings	Hosea - Malachi

THE WRITINGS:

<u>“Poetic Books”</u>	<u>“Scrolls”</u>	<u>“Historical/Prophetic”</u>
Psalms	Ruth	Daniel
Proverbs	Esther	Ezra
Job	Lamentations	Nehemiah
	Song of Solomon	Chronicles
	Ecclesiastes	

The evidence for inspiration in each part of the Hebrew Old Testament is clear:

The Law:

Acts 7:38

Moses was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received **living words** to pass on to us.

The Prophets:

Deuteronomy 18:18-20

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put **my words** in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that **the prophet speaks in my name**, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.”

The Writings:

2 Samuel 23:1-3

The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs: “The Spirit of the LORD **spoke through me; his word was on my tongue**. The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me...”

There is also an abundance of testimony in the New Testament concerning the inspiration of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is referred to in the New Testament by direct or indirect reference more than one thousand times.

Twelve times Jesus categorically acclaimed all the Old Testament as the Word of God. For example, in Matthew Chapter four when Jesus was being tempted by Satan, the Lord quoted from the Old Testament, validating its authority:



Matthew 4:4

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

1. The Canonization of the Old Testament

The formation of the canon was accomplished in three steps:

- 1) The divine seal upon the book (inspiration).
- 2) The human recognition of that inspiration.
- 3) The collection of the inspired books.

Although there is no actual time specified when the canon of the Old Testament was closed, the Old Testament itself gives many suggestions of the beginnings of the writings of God's laws that they might be kept for the people.

Exodus 24:3-4

When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said."

Deuteronomy 31:24-26

After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God..."

An inspired book belonged to the canon from the moment of its writing whether or not it was recognized as such. But generally the first two steps occurred almost simultaneously. For example, the books of Moses were recognized as divine from the moment of its composition. (See Joshua 1:7-8). God promised to send a succession of prophets (Deuteronomy 18:15-22). Hebrews 1:1 tells us that God spoke through the prophets. Their writings were inspired and as such were accepted as Scripture.

Hebrews 1:1-2

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

External evidence of the early existence of the Old Testament Canon

External evidence refers to the corroboration of the internal evidence through historical evidence that we find in sources outside the Bible.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (written during the first and second centuries A.D. which were found in 1947 in some caves near Jerusalem) testify to the early existence of the Old Testament Canon. The Hebrew tradition attributes the collection of the canonical books to Ezra and his contemporaries Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Josephus, Jewish historian of the first century AD, accepted that tradition. He stated that in order that a book be considered a part of the canon, it had to have been written by a prophet. By considering Ruth to be an appendix of Judges and Lamentations to be an appendix of Jeremiah, Josephus echoed the opinion of the scholars of his day that the Old Testament consisted of 22 books. They are the same books which we have in our canon today. Remember that in the Hebrew Canon, the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles were single volumes, and that the minor prophets which we divide into 12 books, were all one volume. Thus we have the same books in our Old Testament as it had in the time of Jesus.

2. The Apocryphal Books

The Apocryphal books are the fourteen books written between the third and first century B.C. which were included in the Septuagint although the Hebrews never accepted them as inspired.

Jerome, Latin church father of the fourth century, used the Septuagint when he translated the Bible from Greek into Latin. His translation, called the Vulgate, included the Apocryphal Books; however, he considered them not as inspired books, but rather as books to be read for edification, and “not just to confirm the authority of Church dogmas.”

Both the Jews and the early church fathers refused to recognize the Apocrypha as inspired. When Luther translated the Bible into German, he placed the Apocrypha in a section entitled: “Books that are not to be held equal to Sacred Scripture, but whose reading is useful and good.”

Between 280-180 B.C. the Jews of Alexandria (Egypt) translated the Old Testament to Greek. This Greek version is known by the name “Septuagint” or “LXX” (70 in Roman numerals). The canon of the LXX contains the same books that we have in our Old Testament plus the Apocryphal Books.

Translations of the fifteenth Century also affirmed that the Apocryphal Books were not inspired. In light of this attitude, the Roman Catholic Church declared in 1546 that the Apocryphal books were canonical. For this reason, Catholic versions of the Bible include these books while Protestant versions do not, following, instead the Hebrew Canon of the Old Testament.

The Apocryphal Books serve a useful purpose as a source of information about the period between the Old and New Testaments. But they lack the divine seal of inspiration and therefore are not to be used as sources of doctrine. Not one apocryphal book is quoted in the New Testament.

The books listed as the New Testament Apocrypha contained much helpful information concerning the history of the Early Church, but they have never been accepted into the canon of the New Testament.

Internal evidence of the inspiration of the New Testament

What does the New Testament say about its own inspiration? Jesus Christ promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would bring all that He had said to their remembrance in John 14:26; that anointing resulted in the writing of the four Gospels. Acts, as a continuation of the Gospels, shares that inspiration. The writers of the Epistles were conscious of the fact that they were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:12-15

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Revelation 1:1-3

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16 was probably written around 68 A.D. The word “Scripture” in that verse refers to the Old Testament. At that time almost all of the New Testament was also written with the exception of the five books of John. These writings were considered “apostolic” and were also called “Scripture.” Paul had already written to Timothy quoting Matthew and Luke as Scripture (1 Timothy 5:18), and Peter had characterized the writings of Paul as such. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

The newly formed Christian church had the Old Testament Scriptures as the basis for their faith but, in addition to this, great importance was placed on the words of Jesus and the teachings of the Apostles. Therefore, it was not long until the Gospels were being placed alongside of the Old Testament.

The authority of the Apostles is fully attested. John declares, “*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard.*” (1 John 1:3); Peter says they “*were eyewitnesses of his majesty*” (2 Peter 1:16); and of the early believers we read: “*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer*” (Acts 2:42).

Since the epistles(letters) of Paul were written to meet a specific need of a local church or individual, these would be cherished for their spiritual value and would be read in the churches. On several occasions, Paul gave definite instructions that his letters should be read and circulated.

1 Thessalonians 5:27-28

I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

During the early years of the second century, the effect of the Church Fathers began to be felt. These were gifted students, teachers and church leaders. In their letters to the early churches they quoted profusely from the books which were to become the New Testament Canon. These letters bear distinct witness to the value of the book from which they quoted, placing them above their own words.

3. The Canonization of the New Testament

The books of the New Testament were written between 45 and 96 A.D. Thanks to the writings of the Early Church Fathers we can see the process through which the Early Church recognized and compiled the canon of the New Testament.

The proofs of inspiration

The pre-requisite for inclusion of a book into the canon was the seal of divine inspiration. FF Bruce expresses it this way: “The early Christians were not exceptionally intelligent, but they had the ability to recognize divine authority when they saw it.” When the question of authorship arose, the Early Church Fathers tended to give recognition to the books that were in agreement with Apostolic teaching. The fact that a book was accepted among the churches in various parts of the Christian world also was of importance as the Church considered recognition of a book as canonical.

Study Notes:

External evidence for the canonization of the New Testament

FIRST CENTURY

Clement of Rome (96 A.D.) cited Matthew, Mark, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, 1 John, and made references to others. He considered these to be “Scripture.”

SECOND CENTURY

Polycarp, disciple of the Apostle John, cited Matthew, Mark, John, Hebrews, 1 John, and 10 other letters of Paul.

Ignatius of Antioch (died in 107 A.D.) refers to the “Gospels and the Apostles.” It was common at that time to refer to the Old Testament as the “Law and the Prophets.” Therefore the “Gospels and the Apostles” became the name of the New Testament.

Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) wrote that “the four Gospels” were read each Sunday in the churches. To the Jewish mind, such a practice constituted the recognition of the books as canonical.

THIRD CENTURY

Origen (185-224 A.D.) divided the books into three parts:

- 1) Those accepted in all the churches: The four Gospels, Acts, the 13 Epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John and Revelation.
- 2) Those disputed in some churches: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude.
- 3) Those rejected by all the churches: The Apocryphal Books.

FOURTH CENTURY

Athanasius. In 367 A.D. Athanasius listed all 27 books which we have in our New Testament calling them divine and canonical. The universal recognition of the books of the New Testament was finally accomplished. The Council of Carthage in 395 A.D. recognized these 27 books as inspired and thus part of the canon.

4. Tests Used to Determine Canonicity

- 1) *Apostolicity*. Was the book written by an Apostle, or one who was closely associated with the Apostles?
- 2) *Spiritual Content*. Was the book being read in the churches and did its contents prove a means of spiritual edification? This was an important practical test.
- 3) *Doctrinal Soundness*. Were the contents of the book doctrinally sound? Any book containing heresy, or that which was contrary to the already accepted canonical books was rejected.
- 4) *Usage*. Was the book universally recognized in the churches, and was it widely quoted by the Church Fathers?
- 5) *Divine Inspiration*. Did it give true evidence of Divine inspiration? This was the ultimate test; everything finally had to give way to it.

The two Testaments encompass the complete revelation of God. Both the internal as well as the external evidence testify of the inspiration of the 66 books of our canon. We need nothing more. It is complete and totally trustworthy.

Many times a cult will claim inspiration for a book written by one of their leaders and add it to their canon. For example, the Mormons consider the Book of Mormon as a third Testament.

Study Notes:

20 horizontal lines for writing notes

Unit 2 Review:

What does the word “Canon” mean?

The Old Testament was divided into three parts, name them:

What is the significance of the “Dead Sea Scrolls?”

Why are the Apocryphal Books not considered to be inspired?

What examples of internal evidence do we have that the New Testament is inspired?

C. Bible Translations

The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. These languages are still spoken in some parts of the world today.

The word “manuscript,” as it is used today, is restricted to those copies of the Bible which were made in the same language in which it was originally written. At the time the Bible came to be printed (1455 A.D.), there were over 2,000 manuscripts in possession of certain scholars. At present, there are some 4,500 manuscripts of the New Testament.

This number is significant when it is considered that scholars are willing to accept ten or twenty manuscripts of classical writings to consider a work genuine. Contrast ten or twenty with thousands of manuscripts of the Bible. The manuscripts, of course, were written by hand.

Study Notes:

The Septuagint: The Old Testament in Greek

The Septuagint is the oldest translation of the Old Testament (3rd-2nd Centuries B.C.) in Greek. It is also known by the abbreviation LXX (which is 70 in Roman numerals). Ancient tradition tells us that the translation was done by 72 Jews in 72 days, which is why it is called the LXX. This Greek translation of the Old Testament was the version of the Old Testament which the early Christians knew about and used.

The Vulgate: The Bible in Latin

In the 4th Century, Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. This version is known as the Vulgate. It became the “Authorized Version” of the Roman Catholic Church, although disparities in the translation and later alterations by others devalued it as a translation.

1. The Scriptures in English

The beginnings of the English Bible go back to the seventh century, when an uneducated laborer by the name of Caedmon arranged stories from the Bible in verse form. In the next century, the first actual translation into English was done by Aldehelm, who translated the Psalms in 705 A.D.

The first English translation was completed around 1380. It was the work of Wycliffe, a great English scholar and student of the Bible. The Wycliffe translation was based principally on the Latin Vulgate.

Three events- the Reformation, the invention of the printing press and the revival of learning which made the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew more readily accessible- gave great momentum to the translation of the Bible in the vernacular tongues in Europe. In 1522 Martin Luther published the Bible in German; three years later William Tyndale produced the New Testament in English translated from the Greek. Other versions produced in the sixteenth century were the Coverdale Bible (later known as the Matthews Version) the Great Bible (with Anglican notes), the Geneva Bible (with notes from a Reformed viewpoint) and the Bishop’s Bible (a revision of the Great Bible). The Geneva Bible was the first to divide the Bible into verses. The Roman Catholic English translation, Douay-Rheims, appeared toward the end of the century.

The King James Version (The Authorized Version) 1611 AD.

The King James Version is the best known translation of the English Bible. King James called for a new translation of the Bible without marginal notes. The King James version was the work of 47 scholars. Although it was formally a revision of the Bishops Bible, the translators had at their disposal all existing versions, both English and foreign, plus the aids of the Hebrew and Greek scholars of their day. It became the English Bible par excellence *for* the next 300 years.

The Revised Version (1881-1884)

This revision of the King James Version was a joint effort of English and American scholars. Its distinction lay in its use of the most ancient copies of the original scriptures. The American Standard Version (1900-1901) was basically the same as the RSV, except that it used the readings preferred by the American members of that committee.

Versions of the Twentieth Century

More than twenty versions and revisions of the English Bible have been produced in the twentieth century. Some of the most important versions are compared below: The New American Standard Bible, The New International Version, and the Revised Standard Version. Whereas the RSV strives for a word-for-word translation, the NIV is a more fluid communication of thought and meaning in contemporary English.

(KJV) King James Version 1611

2 Peter 1:20-21

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

(RSV) Revised Standard Version (1954)

2 Peter 1:20-21

First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

(NIV) New International Version (1978)

2 Peter 1:20-21

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

(TLB) The Living Bible

2 Peter 1:20

For no prophecy recorded in Scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself. It was the Holy Spirit within these godly men who gave them true messages from God.

Some translations have endeavored to be literal renderings of the originals, while others are definitely paraphrases into what is considered to be more modern English usage.

So does this great flurry of "experts," to give us the exact language of the original autographs indicate that we cannot depend upon our present English Bible to declare the true message God would proclaim to Mankind? Perhaps the following quotation from Sir Frederic Kenyon, director of the British Museum, will answer the question best:

"It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God."

Unit 3 Review:

The Bible was written in what three original languages?

What assurances do we have that the modern Bible we have today is accurate?

Unit 1 Bible Reading:

John Chapter 1

Why did Jesus come into the world?

John Chapter 2

What did Jesus mean by this statement in verse 19, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days?”

John Chapter 3

What did Jesus mean when He said, “You must be born again?”

John Chapter 1

Who is the “Lamb of God” and what does it mean?

John Chapter 2

Why did Jesus clear the temple? How does that apply to us today?

John Chapter 3

In verse 15 Jesus talked about eternal life, what does that mean?

II. Inspiration of the Scriptures

In this day when it seems the whole world doubts that there is an absolute truth, this topic is more appropriate than ever. The basic question is this: Can we trust the Scriptures? To what extent is it trustworthy? Is it authoritative only in matters of faith, or are its historical and scientific declarations also to be trusted? Is the Bible just the human testimony of divine revelation, and therefore subject to error? Is the Bible really the Word of God, or is it just the method that God uses to deal with us through His Spirit? The answers to these questions depend on the definition of inspiration.

Definition The supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the sacred writers whereby
Inspiration the Scriptures were not merely their own, but the Word of God. Scripture not merely
contains but is the Word of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-14

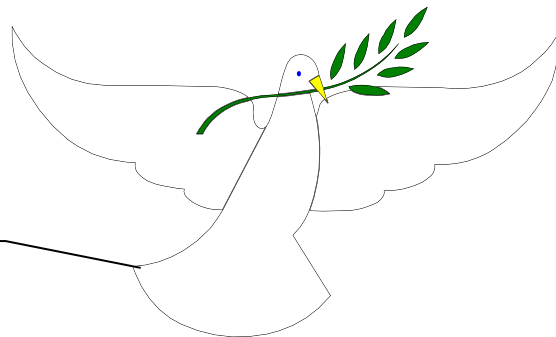
And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

A. Inspiration Explained

Inspiration is the process through which God, by means of the Holy Spirit, assured the existence of an exact and true record of the redeeming work of Christ, and the corresponding interpretation of the redemption story, produced in written form by holy men of God.

The Bible is the inspired, God-breathed Word of God. The Bible is an inherent, infallible book. It contains words, phrases, and sentences as it was originally written. The Word of God contains no errors. Doctrinally there is no error. The essence of the Word is still intact even when it is translated into other languages. God is more than able to preserve the integrity of His Word and to protect His eternal truths for all generations.

For Men Spoke
From God As
They Were Carried
Along By The
Holy Spirit.



God overruled human limitations and sinful biases so that His spokesmen were able to write what He wanted written. God guided the thought conveyed so that it was without error, accomplishing the objectives He intended.

2 Peter 1:20-21

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

This verse literally reads: "For the prophecy was not borne [or brought] by the will of man at any time, but men spoke from God, being borne [or brought] by the Holy Spirit."

"They Were Carried Along by the Holy Spirit"

The Holy Spirit utilized all the faculties of the writer. He guided the writers to choose the narratives and materials, the discourses of others, the imperial decrees, the genealogies, the official letters, and historical material that was necessary to relate the divine message of salvation.

Exactly what role did the human writers of the Bible play in their transmission of God's message? They were not totally passive as those whose hands move automatically in an unconscious state. Their distinctive ways of writing stand out, as in the four gospels, which describe the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Luke, the beloved physician, used many medical terms not found in Matthew, Mark, or John. Some biblical writers like Moses and Paul were highly educated; others were not.

Certainly, some passages of Scripture have been received by audible dictation...

Exodus 19:3

Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel..."

However, many were guided by a silent activity of the Holy Spirit ...

Luke 1:1-4

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

There is much history and many personal observations recorded there. What we are assured of is that the record is true. The Holy Spirit directed and influenced the writers so that, by inspiration, they were kept from every error of fact and doctrine. The Bible records the words and acts of God, men and the Devil. It is very important to take careful note of who is speaking when reading the Bible.

WM, Evans has expressed it well:

Though all Scripture is inspired, it does not stamp with divine authority every sentence which it reports as uttered by the men of who it speaks, nor does it mark with divine approval every action which it relates as performed by those with whose biographies it deals. In the book of Job, for example, Inspiration gives with equal accuracy the language of Jehovah, the words of Satan, and the speeches of Job and his three friends; but it does not therefore place them all on the same level of authority. Each speaker is responsible for his own utterances. Neither Satan, Job nor his three friends spoke by inspiration of God. They gave utterances to their own opinions; and all that Inspiration vouches for is that no one of them was misrepresented, but that each one spoke the sentiments that are attributed to him in Scripture.

Therefore, what is said gives insight into the character, activities, and motives of the Devil and men. Remember, that what they said is inspired by God, but **only** in the sense that what they said was **accurately recorded** as reliable information for our benefit.

1Corinthians 10:6,11

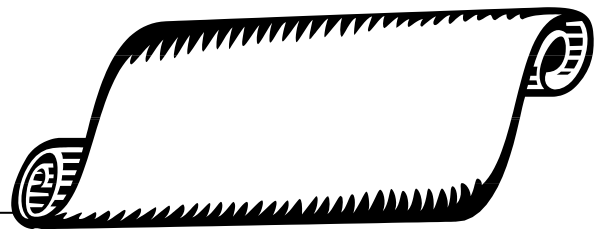
Now these things occurred as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

1. Prophecies Fulfilled

The fulfillment of thousands of prophecies that were recorded in the Bible proves that it is inspired by God himself.

About 3,300 verses of prophecy have been fulfilled, predictions made hundreds and even thousands of years before fulfillment. Not one detail has failed. Already, most of them have been fulfilled and are being fulfilled today. The Bible is not a man originated book but God's blueprint for the redemption of mankind, outlining His strategies and recording His victories. It is plain to see that by the prophetic nature of the Scriptures that it is a book inspired by God.

Heaven And
Earth Will Pass
Away, But God's
Words Will Never
Pass Away!



Matthew 5:17-18

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

Man's kingdoms and philosophies come and go like the wind, but God's words are eternal. They never grow old or become outdated or old-fashioned. They are as real and pertinent to today's issues and concerns. The Bible provides reflections on past happenings, answers for today's problems, and vision for tomorrow's uncertainties.

Psalm 119:89, 96

Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. To perfection I see a limit; but your words are exceedingly broad and extends without limits into eternity.

119:152, 160, 144

Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever. All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal. Your statutes are forever right.

Proverbs 30:5-6

Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

Isaiah 40:6-8

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.

Since God's creation is accurately recorded in the Scriptures, it proves that the Bible is inspired by God himself.

Romans 1:18-20

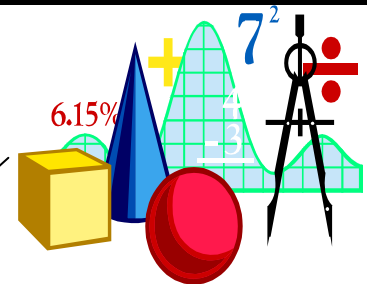
The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities- his eternal power and divine nature- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

2. Science Confirmed

Since God's creation is accurately recorded in the Scriptures, it proves that the Bible is inspired by God himself.

The Bible is scientifically and historically correct. No one man has ever found the Bible at fault in any of its hundreds of statements on history, astronomy, botany, geology, or any other branch of learning. When science sets out to disprove the Bible, it only confirms it as our final authority for all matters of human existence.

The Fool Says
In His Heart,
"There Is No
God."



We read in **1 Corinthians 14:33** that God is a God of order, which is demonstrated by the universe that He has so wonderfully created. It's no wonder that His written Word is fashioned in the same manner. The Word of God not only unlocks secrets to God's spiritual kingdom, but also the natural world we live in.

3. God-Breathed

Just as God breathed into Adam spiritual life, the “breath of life,” He also breathed into the body of Scripture the breath of His life.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We see in the first Chapter of the Gospel of John that the second person of the Godhead “The Word” coming to earth and taking on human form- the incarnation of the God-man Jesus Christ! The Word of God is a divine person from the glorious Godhead!

Hebrews 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Words are containers of various substances. Words can contain the substances of life or death!

Proverbs 18:21

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Since grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17), His words are containers of “Spirit Life!”

John 6:63

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Unit 4 Review:

What role does the Holy Spirit play in bringing about the inspiration of the Scriptures?

Does inspiration mean that everything that is recorded in the Bible came from the mouth of God? Explain.

What is meant by “God-Breathed” as it pertains to the Scriptures?

B. God's Final Authority

1. Five Erroneous Views about Inspiration

- 1) **Natural Inspiration.** This view denies that the Bible is supernatural. It argues, rather, that the Bible is a product of genius, but of a higher level. Others like Confucius, Mohammed, Socrates, Shakespeare were also inspired. The Bible is simply a great literary work.
- 2) **Universal Inspiration.** Any Christian is as inspired as were Paul, Moses and the other Bible writers. Comprehension of Biblical truth is universal.
- 3) **Mechanical Inspiration.** God dictated the Bible. The writers were just passive instruments of the Holy Spirit- automations in the hand of God.
- 4) **Partial Inspiration.** The Bible contains the Word of God. There is a mixture of divinely inspired revelation and non-inspired human thoughts.
- 5) **Inspiration of Thoughts.** Only the thoughts were inspired. The writers chose their own words to express the divine thoughts.

How to refute the false theories of inspiration:

Supernatural, not
Natural inspiration

1 Corinthians 2:13- This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words

Unique, not
Universal inspiration

If inspiration were universal there would be no reason why a new Bible could not be written today. This view confuses inspiration with illumination.

Dynamic, not
Mechanical inspiration

If inspiration were mechanical, how then can the differences in the writing styles be explained?

Full, not
partial inspiration

Who decides what has been inspired and what is not inspired?
1 Timothy 3:16 says that “All Scripture is God- breathed...”

Inspiration of the **words**
not just the thoughts

It is impossible to think without words. If the thoughts are inspired, so too are the words.

Study Notes:

2. The Verbal, Plenary Inspiration View

This view holds that all the words written are God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). “Verbal” signifies the words, and “plenary” means “full,” or “complete,” as opposed to partial. Thus it is held that the words themselves, and all of the them, are inspired. God gave full expression to His thoughts in the words of the biblical record. He guided the very choice of the words used within the personality of and culture-complex of the writers; so that, through the miracle of inspiration, the Bible is the Word of God, while being the words of men.

Inspiration, then, is the process whereby Spirit-moved men (2 Peter 1:21), produced Spirit-breathed writings (2 Timothy 3:16).

Evangelical Christians agree that the primary purpose of the Bible is to lead people to a personal relationship with God through Jesus as Savior. But everything taught by the Bible on any subject is helpful and instructive for the complete Christian life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Because Christianity does relate to the real world, the Bible’s declarations about the earth and history are completely trustworthy.

3. The Inerrancy of the Scriptures

Means that in its original autographs, the Bible contains no mistakes. In the original languages in which it was written, it is absolutely infallible- without error whatever. This has been the position of all the confessions of the great evangelical churches down through the years.

In contrast to this, atheists, agnostics and liberal theologians have declared the Bible to be full of errors and contradictions. However, God has hidden the truth of His Word from such as these, so it is no small wonder that they say such things.

1 Corinthians 2:14-15

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Matthew 11:25-26

At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

**“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”**

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

Study Notes:

There are those who teach a “limited inerrancy,” claiming the Bible to be inerrant in matters of faith and practice, but not necessarily so in scientific and historical matters. The problem with this position is, who is going to decide what is true and what is not? If one cannot have a positive faith in the infallibility of this Book, how can he speak with final authority when it comes to matters of eternity?

The doctrine of inerrancy comes from the Scriptures themselves. It claims to be inspired by God as stated in 1 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. The writers of the Old Testament are most explicit in claiming they were speaking the Word of God. They claimed 3,808 times to be transmitting the very words of God. The New Testament writers also bear witness to the fact that the Old Testament was God speaking. Jesus Christ Himself bore witness to the Scripture. Christ specifically confirmed the whole of the Old Testament. He did not find one error or inconsistency with it.

4. The Infallibility of the Scriptures

This doctrine states that the Bible is infallible, which is to say, without error in the original manuscripts. In other words, if we had access to all the facts concerning a Biblical manuscript, we would be able to demonstrate that in the original (when correctly interpreted) what the Bible says is entirely true and never false in all that it affirms whether it be doctrine, ethics, history or science.

- * Infallibility applies to all parts of the Scripture.
- * Infallibility is related to the correct interpretation of the Bible.
- * Infallibility of the Bible is not limited to doctrinal issues. Everything that the Bible affirms concerning faith and ethics is based on God’s action in history. One cannot separate the theological from the scientific and historic portions of Scripture.

**God’s Word is our final authority for all matters that pertain to
life and conduct!**

Unit 5 Review:

Why cannot one come to the Bible as he/she does any other book?

What does the “Verbal, Plenary Inspirational View” mean to us as Christians?

Why do atheists, agnostics and liberal theologians have a problem accepting the Bible as infallible?

Study Notes:

C. Revelation Knowledge

It is important to distinguish between revelation, inspiration, and illumination. Revelation, which may be oral or written, may be defined as an operation of God communicating to man truth that otherwise man could not know. Since man was created in God's image and endowed with a capacity to know God, it is rational to expect that God would communicate Himself and His mind to man. If unfallen man, being a finite creature, needed divine revelation and instruction (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:8), how much more is fallen man completely incapacitated by sin.

Inspiration has to do with the communication of the truth. A supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness. In other words, Revelation discovers new truth, while Inspiration administers the communication of that truth.

All that is in the Bible was not directly revealed to men. There is much history and many personal observations recorded there. What we are assured of is that the record is true and inspired of God. That means that the writers were guided and influenced in such a way by the Holy Spirit that they were preserved from falling into any kind of error whether doctrinal, historical or scientific, at the time of writing.

Although all Scripture is inspired, this does not put a seal of divine authority on every sentiment expressed, nor does it give divine approval on every act it narrates. Inspiration only guarantees the exactness of the narration of the incident.

Direct Revelation. Truth that has been directly revealed and imparted by God to the mind of the writer who would not have been able to learn it in any other way. For example: The Ten Commandments or the creation story. In the Old Testament, the phrase "the Word of God (the Lord) came." appears 3,808 times. This refers to direct revelation from God like what the Apostle Paul received.

Galatians 1:11-12- I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Known facts. The Bible also contains known facts that the writers themselves could observe or verify from written documents. For example: I and II Chronicles were written by Ezra who used various sources of information. Moses wrote about his own experiences in Exodus as did the Apostles of the Lamb.

2 Peter 1:16

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

General and Special Revelation. There are some facts about God that can be known through nature and through the human conscience. This is called general revelation. Paul refers to general revelation in Romans 1:19-23 and in 2: 14-16. Such revelation is sufficient so that mankind is without excuse (*you, therefore have no excuse...* Romans 2:1), but does not give sufficient knowledge of God for salvation.

Romans 1:19-20

Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities- his eternal power and divine nature- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

To be saved, mankind needs special revelation, i.e., the Bible. In it we come to know the nature of God and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Only in the Bible can we find the answers to the human condition, the existence of evil in the world and the marvelous plan of God for our redemption. Without special revelation we would be at the mercy of our human thought and fantasies.

Therefore, the Bible is the history, the interpretation, and the inerrant record (i.e. without error) of the revelation of God which finds its total disclosure in the presence of God Himself among mankind in the person of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh.

1. Illumination

Some confuse inspiration with illumination. Illumination refers to the influence of the Holy Spirit, common to all Christians, which helps them grasp the things of God. This illumination of spiritual things is promised to all believers and can be experienced by them.

John 16:13-15

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Illumination is a ministry of the Holy Spirit that enables all who are in right relation with God to understand the objective written revelation. Thus, revelation involves origin, inspiration, reception and recording, and illumination, understanding or comprehending the written objective revelation. In other words, revelation comprehends God's giving truth. Inspiration embraces man under divine control accurately receiving the truth thus given. Illumination deals with man's understanding the God-given, inspired revelation.

1 Corinthians 2:14

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Revelation as it concerns Holy Scripture had a specific time period involving the inspiration of certain sovereignly chosen individuals as the recipients of the revelation. It is plain that both of these divine operations have ceased. In contrast, illumination is continuously operative as a ministry of the Holy Spirit in all those believers who are walking in the light of God's Word.

Peter speaks of an interesting example where prophets were given inspiration to record great truths, but were not given illumination to understand the exact meaning of what they prophesied.

1 Peter 1:10-12

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Some try to explain the inspiration of the Scriptures as the result of this experience of illumination. They assert that within Man there is this spark of divine light which only need to be fanned, as it were, to enable men of old to write the Bible.

Illumination for the believer- We have received the Holy Spirit as our teacher to lead us into all truth. People can vary as to the degree of their illumination, some possessing a greater degree of insight than others. As to duration, illumination is, or can be, permanent.

1 John 2:27

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit- just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Inspiration through a select few- But in the case of Inspiration, in the Bible sense, a person is either inspired or he is not. Inspiration was given as the Spirit willed during the Old Testament and with the early church fathers. Therefore, inspiration was intermittent as the Spirit of God willed.

2 Peter 1:21

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:1-5

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles- Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery (of the gospel) made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

Illumination

Common to every believer. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth.

Permanent; or rather, it can be permanent.

Allows for degrees of illumination. Some can be more illuminated than others.

It will continue throughout the whole Christian age.

Inspiration

Unique. Only to those chosen by God. Sometimes they didn't understand the significance of the prophecy.

It was intermittent. It came and went at the discretion of the Holy Spirit.

It was complete. The author either was or was not inspired. It did not allow for degrees.

Inspiration terminated when the sacred canon was completed.

Unit 6 Review:

What is the difference between “General” and “Special” revelation?

How has the Holy Spirit illuminated you in regards to God’s Word recently?

Unit 2 Bible Reading:

John Chapter 4

What is eternal life?

John Chapter 5

How has crossing over from death to life affected you personally?

John Chapter 6

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life,” what does that mean to you?

John Chapter 6

Why did many of the disciples of Jesus desert Him?

III. The Symbols of God's Word

Many times the Bible uses symbolic language in order to teach. Jesus Himself often referred to common every day things to illustrate spiritual truths- taking concrete examples to explain abstract concepts- metaphors. Since the natural world we know was created out of the spiritual world, it is no wonder that God can use natural creation to teach us about spiritual principles.

2 Peter 1:2-4

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For the purpose of analysis, I have broken down some symbols into three categories. The first group emphasizes the "Power" of God's Word in our lives. The second group describes God's Word as a creating, sustaining, and nurturing source of God's grace. And finally, the last group looks at the Bible as a source of illumination and revelation for our spiritual growth.

A. God's Word - Power

1. The Sword of the Spirit

Our primary spiritual offensive weapon is the Word of God. It is the key to winning successfully. The objective is to get the Word of God into our heart and out of our mouth. Waving the Bible in the air is not wielding the sword of our spirit. Only when we speak that Word out of our mouth in faith, does it become the ultimate weapon in the universe.

Ephesians 6:17

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, **they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

Spiritual warfare is a war of words. Not guns or planes, but the clashing of words in the spiritual realm. It is through words that spiritual authority is released. Jesus gave us the keys to the kingdom that whatever we bind or loose on earth will be done in the atmosphere above us where the prince of the power of the air operates- Matthew. 18:18.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. **Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**

Did you know that every person has a spiritual sword. It's that red thing in our mouth called the tongue. When words are formed in the mouth and spoken, they produce life or death, healing or injury.

Whenever we hear the Words of God, they produce faith and hope, but when we listen to the words of the enemy, they produce fear and doubt.

Proverbs 18:21

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 12:18; 25:18

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is the man who gives false testimony against his neighbor.

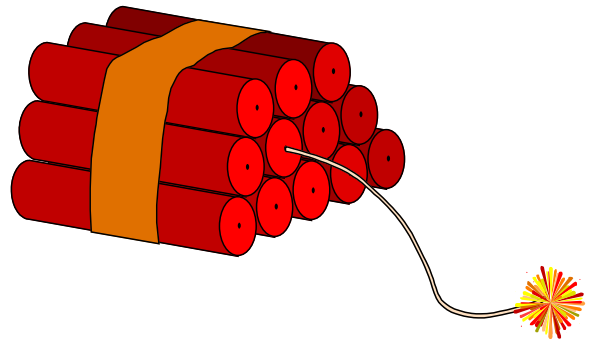
Psalms 57:4; 64:3

I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts- men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. **They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their words like deadly arrows.**

Matthew 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but **on every word** that comes from the mouth of God.’”

God's Word Is
The Ultimate
Weapon In The
Universe!



2. God's Word is a Fire

Fire in the Bible is referred to as an act of judgment and purification. Just think about it, as the Word of God is being spoken, the fire of God consumes the enemies of God, and also purges our life.

Jeremiah 23:29

“Is not my word like fire,” declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 20:9

But if I say, “I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,” his word is in my heart **like a burning fire, shut up in my bones.**

Hebrews 12:25-29

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken- that is, created things- so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, **for our God is a consuming fire.**

God judges the world and us through His Word. All judgment is and will be carried out by what is written in the Bible- 2 Peter 3:7, 10-12. If we would judge ourselves by God’s Word, we won’t come under judgment according to 1 Corinthians 11:31-32

Jesus said, “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”

John 12:47-48



For the believer, we must all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:10. This future judgment will not be in regards to our salvation, rather it will address how we faithfully applied the Word of God to our lives.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

If any man builds on the foundation of Jesus Christ using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

The Bible speaks of the Spirit infilling as being baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire- Matthew 3:11. I believe that the fire of the Holy Spirit in this context, refers to us speaking the Word of God with boldness. The Holy Spirit’s unction upon our lives is what causes the gospel to be proclaimed with power and authority in fulfillment of Acts 2:41; 4:13.

Acts 4:31

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

3. God's Word is like a Hammer

When it comes to cracking some hard nuts, God's Word is more than able to get the job done. According to Hebrews 3:12-13, a sober warning is given about the deceitfulness of sin, "*See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*"

When we think of a hard heart, our minds picture the worst sinner on the earth, and say, "There is someone with a hard heart." However, the above Scripture says, "See to it, brothers..." speaking of Christians having a hard heart. The practice of sin will harden anyone's heart, saint or sinner. When someone is found in that kind of condition, there is only one thing that can penetrate; the HAMMER of GOD'S WORD.

Jeremiah 23:29

"Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"



Ezekiel 11:19

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

Hebrews 8:10

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

James 1:18

He chose to give us birth through the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

God uses His Word to break stony hearts, and bring the new birth to the sinner and new life to the saint. He also uses that hammer to chisel His character and nature onto the tablets of our hearts. He inscribes the New Covenant onto our spirit, just as He wrote the 10 commandments on the stone tablets- 2 Corinthians 3:3 "*Not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*"

Jesus spoke about the parable of the sower in Luke chapter eight, and said that some people have a heart that is as hard as a sidewalk. We need the holy jackhammer of God's Word to break that hard heart to pieces. It's better to fall on the rock and be broken than to be crushed by it- Matthew 21:44, Selah!

4. The Rod of God's Word

God uses His Word to correct His children, not trials, tests, and temptations. Some people have the notion that God and the devil work together to perfect the believer through crisis and tragedy. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Good God versus bad devil. Simple doctrine, but when we get them confused, we can find ourselves in a heap of trouble.

Study Notes:

Lined area for study notes, consisting of 25 horizontal lines.

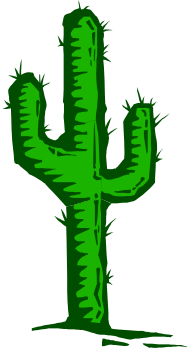
John 10:10

The thief comes **only** to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

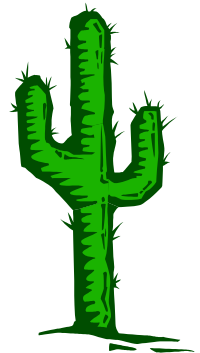
James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Various portions of Scripture point out the value of trials, tests and temptations; but only when we overcome them by acting on God's Word. We can have a mile of trials and not grow an inch unless we are acting on the Word in the midst of those trials. Trials, tests and temptations are from Satan and are out to destroy us- 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 2 Corinthians 11:1-3; James 1:13-15.



**You Could Walk A Mile Of Tests
And Trials And Not Grow An Inch
Unless You Act On The Word Of
God In The Midst Of Those Trials.**



One final point, I personally believe that most problems in a believer's life, originate from actions and decisions he/she has made. It's too easy to blame the devil or reason that God in His sovereignty is trying to teach us some deep spiritual truth. If only we had said "NO" to credit card debt, had not dated that unbeliever, gotten mad at our employer, and harbored bitterness towards our parents- on and on it goes, Galatians 6:7-8. We are personally responsible for a lot of things. Sure the devil does come in and attacks us when we are walking in God's will, but let's not be so quick to rationalize our problems on someone or something else. God uses His Word to teach His children. If your child disobeyed you, would you put cancer on him, make him a cripple or break his leg. NO WAY! The authorities would put you in jail for child abuse. Our loving heavenly Father does not treat His children this way either. Jesus addressed that kind of erroneous teaching as follows:

Matthew 7:9-11

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Satan is the thief that tries to kill, steal and destroy through trials, tests and temptations. However, God can salvage and work the best out of any situation in order to avoid a total loss. It is never God's best that we suffer at the hand of the evil one. How much better to read the Bible and heed its warnings, instructions, and admonitions and avoid tragedy all together; at least that is the goal we should all strive for. Remember, God uses His Word to train and discipline us; in order to produce a harvest of righteousness in our lives according to Hebrews 12:4-11.

Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me: **your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Timothy 4:8

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

5. The Water of God's Word

We all know according to Ephesians chapter two and verse eight, that salvation is obtained by grace through faith. The rules don't change once we get saved; especially when it pertains to living for God. Our faith in God's Word releases God's grace (Power) for living. The grace we need to live the victorious Christian life comes through faith in God's Word. Grace is God's power at work in us who believe!

Acts 20:32

Now I commit you to God and to the Word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

To live a holy, sanctified (set apart) life as a disciple of Christ, takes the power of God. The Gospel is the power of God to receive salvation and to work it out in our lives- Romans 1:16. Apart from God's grace working in our lives to overcome carnality, all we have left is religion- Galatians 3:1-5.

Colossians 2:23

Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

The key to sanctification is to mix God's Word with our faith- Hebrews 4:1-3. In the Bible, water is a type of the Word of God, because it purifies, refreshes and sustains life.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Ephesians 5:25-27



By appropriating the Word of Faith principles in Romans chapter ten, in regards to Scriptures that cover sanctification and holiness, the result will be a life transformed by God's grace. To put on Christ and clothe ourselves with the new creation as spoken of in Ephesians 4:20-24 & Colossians 3:1-14, we must first put the Word in our mouth until it gets into our spirit. Let's put the creative power of God's Word to work in our lives.

Study Notes:

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (with the Word of God). Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Hebrews 10:22

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Peter 1:22-23

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

Unit 7 Review:

How is spiritual warfare waged in the spirit realm?

Fire as it pertains to the Bible is referring to what?

How does God’s Word act as a hammer, what affect does it have upon a hard heart?

Does God purposely put evil in our lives like cancer or accidents to teach and discipline us?

What is meant by, “cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” in Ephesians 5:25-27?

Study Notes:

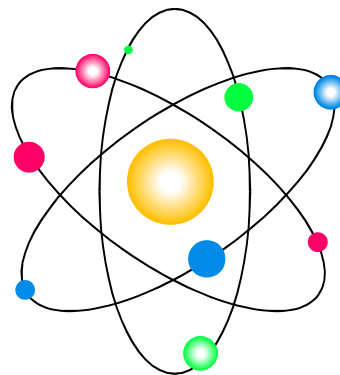
B. God's Word - Sustenance

1. God's Incorruptible Seed

We have been saying all along that the Bible is no ordinary book to the believer. Unlike a magazine, newspaper or history book, the Bible is a living force of God's spirit life- John 6:63. The Bible requires one ingredient that will release the power of God in our life. Without this vital element, the Bible would appear to be just any other religious book- dead and lifeless. That key component is FAITH- it is the catalyst! Faith is the key that unlocks God's power that is stored in His Word. It releases the treasures of God's wisdom and ability to move any mountain, meet any need and defeat any demon. Until faith is introduced and mixed with the Word of God, it remains dormant. When the believer mixes God's word with faith- look out! God's will is coming on earth as it is in heaven!

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12



Acts 7:38

Moses was in the assembly in the desert, with our fathers and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai; and he received living words to pass on to us.

For The Word Of God Is Living And Active

Just as the potential for life is within a natural seed, so the Word of God is waiting to germinate, and produce life in the heart of the believer. Certain conditions in the natural must be met before a seed will grow and develop to its full potential- soil, water and sunshine. So it is with God's incorruptible seed- the spirit of man, faith and God's grace.

1 Corinthians 3:5-6

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe- as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

The seed is the Word of God. The seed is planted through the preaching of the Word- Romans 10:14-17; 15:15-20. The seed is watered through the teaching of God's Word- Acts 18:24-28; 11:19-26. It's only by God's grace and the Spirit of God that makes that seed grow and produce the fruits of eternal life in the life of the believer.

Study Notes:

I had just mentioned on the previous page that the seed is the Word of God. Let us look at the explanation of the parable of the sower that Jesus gave us in order to illustrate this powerful truth.

Luke 8:11-15

“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the Word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they cannot believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the Word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by perseverance produce a crop.”



The seed of God’s Word is sown into the human heart whenever it is heard. As we have just read, the condition of a person’s heart will determine if that seed will grow and produce a harvest. What I want us to appreciate is the fact that the seed has the power within itself to bring about its own fulfillment and produce after its own kind. As long as the conditions of faith are operating in a good and noble heart, God’s grace will bring the increase and harvest in time.

Let the Word do the work! Jesus said His yoke would be easy and His burden light. However, without faith in God’s Word that would be impossible. So often we rely on our own natural resources and efforts to get the job done. Natural skill and resources are limited, but all things are possible to them who believe. The Father wants His children to enter into rest by sowing His Word in our lives, and allowing our faith to bring substance to the things we hope for.

Hebrews 4:1-3

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard **did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest.**

There we have it, God has made provision for His children to enter into His rest and provision. In 2 Peter 1:2-4, it is revealed that God has given us His exceedingly great and precious promises. So how are they to be appropriated into our lives?

Just as we have been saying: speak it, believe it and receive it = faith in God’s Word.

Finally, I would like to illustrate two spiritual laws found in Genesis that will summarize the eternal truth of the incorruptible seed of God's Word. The first law is this, "Everything produces after its own kind." There is a natural side as well as a spiritual side to this law that God set in motion in Genesis chapter one. The seed of every living thing is within itself to reproduce itself. Trees reproduce trees of the same species. A bird and a fish cannot reproduce together. Jesus refers to this natural principle with a spiritual application- the seed is the Word of God.

Genesis 1:11-12,29

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation; plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said to man, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it.

John 12:24

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

If we had acres of land on a farm, and in those fields we wanted to reap a harvest wheat. What would we need in order to harvest a wheat crop? Wheat seed of course! We can't take rice seed and plant them and expect to receive a harvest of wheat. The Bible contains thousands of promises from God in the form of spiritual seed; this is God's primary way for us to receive His provision for every area of life- plant seed to meet needs. However, to meet a specific need, we need to find the specific seed that covers that area of need. If our body is in need of physical healing, then let's find some healing Scriptures and plant them in our heart through the principles of faith. That healing seed will grow in our heart and materialize in time. If we need more of God's peace in our life, let's not focus our time and energy on planting sanctification seed. It's the same as planting rice seed and expecting wheat to appear in the natural. We must sow the type of seed to meet the specific need. We have to sow before we can expect to reap a harvest and receive God's provision for our lives.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me void or empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:10-11



Study Notes:

The second law of Genesis is this, “As long as the earth endures, there will be seed time and harvest.” Notice the Scriptures does not say, “Harvest then seed time.” Before every harvest, there is always a season of planting. This principle is true in the spiritual as it is in the natural. To reap a spiritual harvest, spiritual seed must be planted. The seed is the Word of God. When we sow the Word in our heart through faith, and can expect to reap a harvest of God’s provision for our lives.

Genesis 8:20-22

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

The spiritual law of sowing and reaping not only refers to speaking the Word of God, but also to actions. Every act has a corresponding consequence, good or bad.

Galatians 6:7-10

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good **for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

Matthew 26:51-52

One of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, **“for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”**

Before any of us received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the seed of God’s Word was sown in our hearts. Someone preached the Word on salvation to us- Romans 10:14-15. Remember, we cannot reap a spiritual or natural harvest until we first sow the seed.

Jesus said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain- first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.

Mark 4:26-29



God's Word is incorruptible. That means it can never change, be altered or perverted in any way. I would encourage you to read Psalms chapter 119. The whole chapter is devoted to glorifying God for His Eternal Word. Our first experience with this life giving seed was in the new birth of our human spirit. We had mentioned earlier that the salvation experience is precipitated by the planting of God's Word in our heart. It is that same Scripture on salvation that produces the fruit of eternal life in our spirit by the Holy Spirit.

James 1:18

He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

1 Peter 1:23-24

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever."

Mark 13:31

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

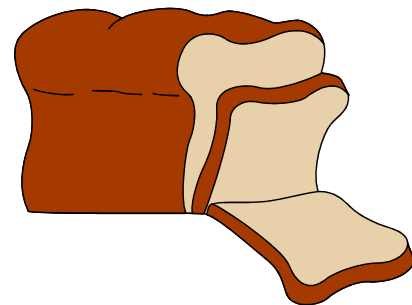
Psalms 119:89, 152, 160

Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever. All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

2. The Word of God is the Bread of Life

As natural food is to our body, so the Word of God is to our spirit. A minister once said, "People wonder why they don't have any faith to receive from God. They feed their body three hot meals a day, but their spirit one cold snack a week." God's Word is our primary way of nourishing ourselves spiritually. The Word of God is our bread of life.

**Jesus answered, "It is written:
'Man does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes from
the mouth of God.'"
Matthew 4:4**



Natural food contains energy called calories. When we study the food cycle, all our food sources come from the sun's energy. That awesome power is converted into biological matter that sustains life on this earth. We have read in Hebrews 4:12 that, "*For the Word of God is living and active*" and in 2 Timothy 3:16, "*All Scripture is God-breathed.*" The Son of God shines His light and breathes His Spirit into the Word of His grace, and it is alive and full of life. It releases spiritual calories that are converted into spiritual energy for us to "*live, move and have our being*" Acts 17:28.

Job 23:12

I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

Jeremiah 15:16

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.

Food is the substance that gives life and energy, and speaks of sustaining power. God's Word produces the same affects for our spiritual life which encompasses our whole being and destiny. Notice by these Scriptures that it involves an act of our free will to open our mouth and eat, but it's easy when we are eating the honey of God's Word- our joy and our heart's delight.

Ezekiel 2:8; 3:1-3

You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

Psalm 119:103

How sweet are your promises to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 19:9-11

The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Do not worry about becoming over weight with God's Word. It does not have the same negative affects as obesity does in the natural. As a matter of fact, the Scriptures admonish us to be full of God's Word. Physically we cannot live on a few snacks a week. We cannot afford it spiritually either. To be equipped and nourished spiritually is more important than it is for our physical bodies, because to be spiritually sound has eternal implications. A human spirit depleted of God's Word is weak, feeble and frail; unable to deal with life's issues that confront us.

Let The Word Of Christ Dwell In You Richly!

Let us approach the banquet table of God's Word with a hearty appetite and eat our fill of His salvation!

The Bible is our source of spiritual food and nourishment for the new babe in Christ and the mature believer. There is always something good to eat in heaven's kitchen.



We feed our spirit through meditating on the Word of God. Unfortunately, in our western world, we are the fastest readers on the earth. Like the rest of our culture, everything is fast- quantity without a whole lot of quality. Bible meditation speaks of a slow savoring process that submerges oneself in the Scriptures in order to extract spiritual truth- given by the Holy Spirit according to Ephesians 1:17-19.

Remember how Mom would tell us at the dinner table, “Now you need to chew each mouth full 20 to 30 times before you swallow.” The wisdom in these words kept us from having an upset stomach. The Bible needs to be approached in the same way; let’s give ourselves lots of time, without being in a hurry. We should not set some quota for ourselves- 10 pages in 10 minutes. Rather, we need to allow ourselves time to take in each verse, one at a time; chewing on it in order to extract all the wonderful revelation we can before we move onto the next bite.

“Meditate” in the Hebrew means- To murmur or mutter, to ponder, imagine, speak, study, talk and utter. To speak God’s Word out loud.

We need to eat the Bible like a cow eats grass:

**Graze in the pastures of God’s Word.
Chew it in your mouth and heart for a long time.
Bring it back up later on and chew on it some more.**

Be prayerful as you read the Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit for understanding and revelation. Reflect, resonate, savor, relish, mutter, and speak God’s Word. Take it from Betsy!



Joshua 1:7-8

Be strong and courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart **from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.**

**Bible Meditation + Careful Application =
Prosperity and Success!**

3. God’s Word is Medicine to all our Flesh

When we get attacked in our bodies with sickness or disease, we instinctively reach for some medicine to ingest into our body. I believe that doctors, hospitals, and medicine are a tremendous help to suffering humanity. I believe in these natural means to receive help for our physical bodies, but I trust in God most of all. Thank God for His healing Word!

Proverbs 4:20-23

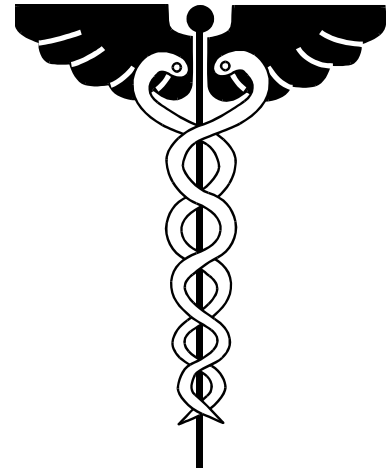
My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; **for they are life to those who find them and **health to a man’s whole body**. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.**

The Word of God

According to the Bible, God's Word is health to a person's whole body! Let's look at the Hebrew word for "Health":

Curative, a medicine, a cure, deliverance, healing, remedy, sound, wholesome.

Therefore, we can say that the Bible is God's medicine. It is life to those who find them; eat them through Bible meditation- speaking the Word.



God's Word is a living, powerful force that will consume any form of death that may be at work in our physical body. Sickness and disease is a form of death; if left unchecked it can lead to physical death. Jesus conquered death through His redemptive work- Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh according to the gospel of John chapter one. When we receive and abide in God's Word, we are abiding in the resurrection life of Jesus Christ- full of life and God's power according to John 15:7.

Psalm 107:20

He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Exodus 15:26

The Lord said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring (permit) on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, **for I am the Lord who heals you.**"

The phrase in Exodus 15:26, "for I am the Lord who heals you" refers to the Hebrew redemptive name of God, Jehovah Rapha- the Lord that heals you. God's primary way of healing is through faith in His Word. God's Word contains the power to heal our hurting body.

The Hebrew word **RAPHA**- To mend (by stitching) to cure, heal physician, repair, thoroughly make whole.

John 6:63

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Matthew 8:14-17

When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he **drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.** This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah; "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

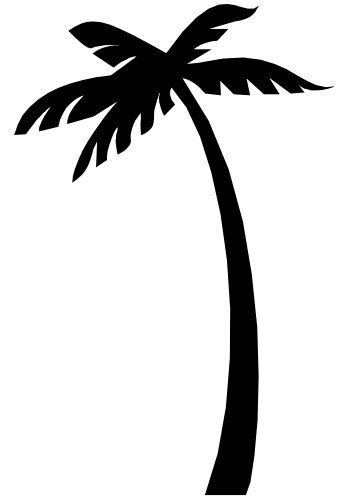
God's Word Contains The Power To Heal Our Hurting Body!

Someone may ask, "Well how do I take my medicine?" When we go to the great physician (Jesus) for healing, He will prescribe for us to ingest His Word day and night until our healing manifests. He will also tell us to continue in His Word in order to keep the alignment from ever coming back. As we meditate (mutter) His healing Scriptures, they will eventually get into our spirit, where faith grows and in time will release the healing power of Jesus into our body.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does prospers. Psalm 1:1-3

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Joshua 1:8



Unit 8 Review:

What is meant by God's Word being incorruptible seed?

How do we get God's Word down into our spirit in order for it to nourish us?

What is God's medicine and how do we take it so we can experience healing in our bodies?

C. God's Word - Revelation

1. The Light of God's Word

Just as natural light reveals this natural world, the Word of God reveals the kingdom of God to us. God's will for our lives is to walk in the truth of His Word and not stumble around in ignorance. The measure of God's Word that we are walking in and living from day to day is the measure of spiritual light we are walking in. Without the Bible, God is extremely limited in revealing Himself and His kingdom to us. God's Word enables us to see clearly as things really are, not as they appear to be to our physical senses.

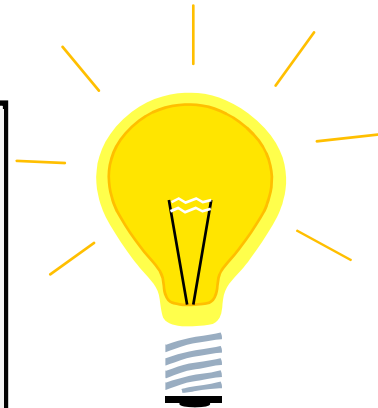
Psalm 119:130 AMP

The entrance and unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding- discernment and comprehension- to the simple.

- Hebrew word for (**Entrance**)= Disclosure, opening, open wide, appear, break forth, draw out.
- Hebrew word for (**Light**)= Illumination, lightning, bright, clear, day light, morning sun.
- Hebrew word for (**Understanding**)= Distinguish, consider, discern, inform, instruct, have intelligence, knowledge, perceive, be prudent, skillful, regard, teach, think, view, deal wisely.

God's Word imparts knowledge, and understanding concerning God, ourselves and the world we live in. Revelation is unveiling of truth that enriches our lives to know the Lord and walk in His ways.

There is no other source of written material that has divine inspiration like the Bible. It is our source of all truth as Jesus said, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" John 17:17. The Bible does not just have truth, IT IS TRUTH- Through & Through!



Let The Word Turn The Lights On In Your Life!

Luke 2:28-32

Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, **a light for revelation** to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Study Notes:

God's light shines through His Word and drives the darkness of ignorance, confusion and hopelessness out of our lives. This light produces eternal life and freedom that translates us from the authority of darkness into the kingdom of light of God's dear Son according to Colossians 1:12-14- "*The entrance of your words gives light*" Psalm 119:130. Knowledge of God through His Word produces **LIGHT!** What a wonderful treasure we have. Storing up the knowledge of God in our hearts, that we may be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ from glory to glory- Colossians 2:2-3.

2 Corinthians 4:6-7

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Colossians 2:2-3

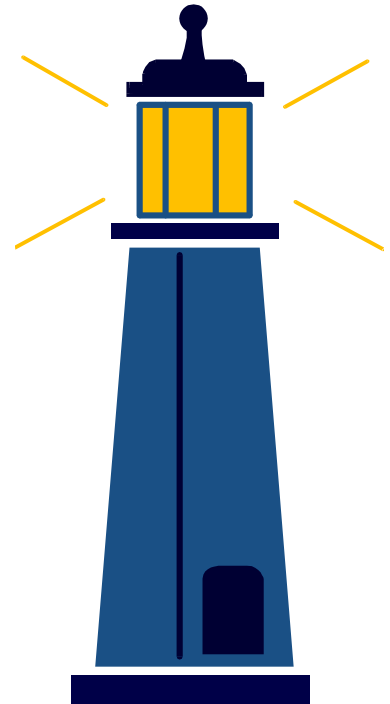
My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."
Psalm 119:105**

"Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell." Psalm 43:3

The Word of God is a light that guides our life along the path of eternal life. It is our only source and final authority for all matters that pertain to life and conduct. The Bible will always lead us into the presence of God to receive salvation and all things that pertain to life and godliness.

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Matthew 7:13-14



One step out of God's Word is one step into the darkness of error and deception. Stay with the Word, and do not embrace the philosophies of men and the lies of this world. The Bible is our only source to lead us to God, and to understand His kingdom. All we need to know about spiritual revelation is found in the Bible. When people start seeking revelations that are beyond the Word, they are in dangerous waters. Satan is known to appear as an angel of light to distort Scripture and provide counterfeit revelation to deceive people from knowing the truth-2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 4:6-7.

Get Full Of God's Light By Getting Full Of God's Word!

2. The Word of God is a Spiritual Mirror

Mirrors in the natural are used by us every day. They give us an accurate reflection of what we look like. We have learned to trust them to portray an accurate reflection of how we look from a natural standpoint. We have learned to appreciate and sometimes disgust the blatant honesty of a mirror. It reveals our good days and our bad days without any prejudice or bias. God's Word is a spiritual mirror that reflects a spiritual image unseen to the natural eyes. This true image of who we are in Christ Jesus can only be seen through the eyes of God's Word. This is how God sees us and this is the way we stand and are positioned spiritually before Almighty God through Jesus Christ.

James 1:22-25

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it- he will be blessed in what he does.

An important principle to point out in the Scripture above is that hearing the Word without putting it into practice will do us no good. Here are a couple of ways we can put God's Word into practice in our lives. First, by meditating on the promises of what God has given us through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Second, obey any instructions concerning lifestyle, behavior and attitudes. The fulfillment of Jesus' redemption and our obedience in following God's commands is accomplished first by meditating on those very Scriptures. That first step provides God's grace and power to put them into practice.

Luke 11:28

Jesus replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

There are some 30,000 plus promises in the Bible. According to 2 Corinthians 1:20 all these promises are "**Yes**" for us today in Christ Jesus- "*... in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" Colossians 2:3, "*For in him we live and move and have our being*" Acts 17:28. In Jesus Christ we have all things, can do all things and are all things, "*So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future- all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God*" 1 Corinthians 3:21-22.

2 Peter 1: 1-4

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Matthew 7:11

"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Romans 8:31-32

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

1 Timothy 6:17

Put your hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Unfortunately, with the help of religious tradition and a backwards society, many Christians end up having a distorted image of God and themselves. Remember the “Mirror” analogy? Sadly, the kind of mirror that many Christians look at is like those found in a carnival; all twisted and out of proportion. Their minds are full of all kinds of goofy and twisted thinking. But thank God, if we let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16), we can renew our minds (Romans 12:2) into the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). This will result in us having a transformed life; in order to think right, believe right, and therefore receive the right things from God.

2 Corinthians 5:16

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

I would like to encourage you to start looking at yourself and others through the eyes of God’s Word. Believe me, things will become much more focused and clear. Don’t stop there, go beyond looking to doing the Word. Put God’s precious promises in your mouth, and in your heart and start receiving God’s provision of grace for every area of life. Life does not have to be the same, you can change, and your circumstances can change as you learn to mix His word with faith- Hebrews 4:1-3. Begin acting on and confessing God’s Word; in time, your life will begin to be re-arranged and transformed.

Begin Looking Through The Eyes Of God’s Word!

3. God’s Word is a Solid Rock on which we Stand

All decisions and behavior are based on some kind of belief system. The type of social, religious or philosophical training is the cornerstone from which a life is built. Unless that cornerstone is Jesus, our life will be off base. I have been saying that God’s Word is our final authority for all matters that pertain to life and conduct. The Bible is the rock on which we build our lives.

2 Timothy 3:14-16

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalm 119:89, 152, 160

Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever. All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal. Great peace have they who love your word, and nothing can make them stumble.

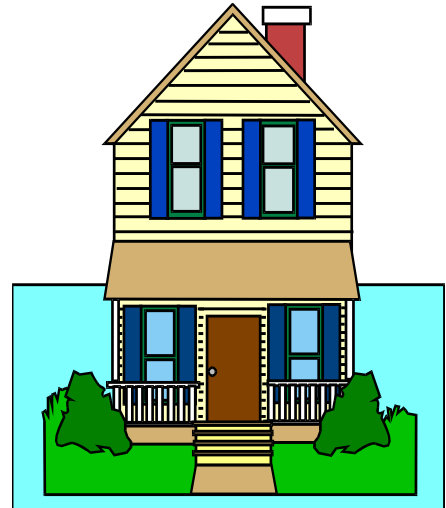
Mark 13:31

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

In the natural, the ideal foundation on which to build any structure is upon solid rock. The engineers will direct the construction crew to drill pylons deep into the ground until they can be anchored into sheer bedrock. This solid foundation stabilizes the structure against storms and earth quakes. When the believer learns to practice the Word in every area of life, he/she is building their house upon a rock. Regardless of the prevailing winds of false doctrine and crisis, God's Word sustains us and supplies the grace we need in order to overcome.

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Matthew 7:24-27



Luke 11:28

Jesus replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and obey it.”

James 1:25

But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it- he will be blessed in what he does.

Human nature likes to procrastinate until tomorrow when it comes to Bible reading and meditation. However, it is often too late to build our faith in the midst of the storm. How much better to establish a lifestyle of building our life upon a rock. It's no fun when our life crashes around us due to negligence and a lack of preparation. There is a higher realm in God to live by, rather than resorting to a crisis management system of scrambling for answers and uttering desperate pleas for help.

Matthew 26:40-41

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.

Study Notes:

1 Peter 1:13; 4:7

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Psalm 119:9

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

Unit 9 Review:

God’s Word is spiritual light, what does that mean?

What do we see when we look into the mirror of God’s Word?

If God’s Word is the rock on which we build our lives, what benefit does that give us as Christians?

Unit 3 Bible Reading:

John Chapter 7

What was Jesus talking about when He said, “Streams of living water will flow from within him”?

John Chapter 8

How did Jesus deal with the woman caught in the act of adultery?

John Chapter 8

How does the truth of God’s Word set us free?

IV. Studying The Bible

For many, the Bible remains an enigma capable of many different interpretations. Some people have become discouraged about their own ability to make sense of it. To others, the Bible has a nose of wax capable of being shaped into anything the reader wants.

2 Peter 3:16

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

There are some principles of Bible interpretation that will serve as a check and balance for our all-too-common tendency to interpret the Bible according to our own prejudices. The Bible itself instructs us to be a student of God's Word so we can correctly handle the word of truth.



Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

A. Why Study the Bible?

1. Dismissing the Myths

First, we will look at some of the reasons people give for not studying the Bible. These "reasons" often contains myths which are passed off as truisms through much repetition. The myth that claims first place in our hall of excuses is the idea that the Bible is too difficult for the ordinary person to understand.

Myth 1: The Bible is so difficult to understand that only highly skilled theologians with technical training can deal with the Scriptures.

This myth has been repeated many times by sincere people. People say, "I know I can't study the Bible, because every time I try to read it, I can't understand it." When some people say that, they may want to hear, "That's all right. I understand. It's really a difficult book, and unless you've had seminary training, maybe you ought not to tackle it."

Or perhaps they want to hear, "I know, it's too heavy, too deep, too profound. I commend you for your tireless efforts, your strenuous labors in trying to solve the mystifying riddle of God's Word. It is sad that God has chosen to speak to us in such obscure and esoteric language that only scholars can grasp it."

If we can read the newspaper, we can read the Bible. In fact, I would venture to guess that more difficult words and concepts are expressed on the front page of a newspaper than on most pages of the Bible. God has kept it simple that even a child can understand God's Holy Written Word!

Study Notes:

Myth 2: The Bible is boring

Kind of sounds sacrilegious doesn't it! When people say the Bible is dull it makes me wonder why. Biblical characters are full of life. There is a unique quality of passion about them. Perhaps the dullness some experience is due to the antiquity of the material that may seem foreign. How does the life of Abraham- lived so long ago and so far away- relate to us? But the characters of biblical history are real. Though their life settings are different from ours, their struggles and concerns are very much like ours.

1 Corinthians 10:6-13

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did-and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did-and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did-and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

2. The Clarity of Scripture

Martin Luther, the sixteenth century Reformer was convinced that what was obscure and difficult in one part of Scripture was stated more clearly and simply in other parts of Scripture. Some parts of the Bible are so clear and simple that they are offensive to those suffering from intellectual arrogance.

The message of redemption is simple enough for the most simplistic of human beings to understand. What kind of God would reveal His love and redemption in terms so technical and concepts so profound that only an elite corps of professional scholars could understand them? God's Word is primitive for the simple to understand, yet profound that it keeps others busy for a lifetime inquiring into the depths of the riches of the knowledge of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18-29

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

**"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."**

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Biblical Christianity is not an esoteric(secret knowledge) religion. Its content is not concealed in vague symbols that require some sort of special “insight” to grasp. You might find that in Eastern religions where insight is limited to some remote guru who lives in a shanty high in the Himalayas. Maybe the guru has been thunderstruck by the gods with some profound mystery of the universe. You travel to inquire and he tells you in a hushed whisper that the meaning of life is “one-hand clapping.” That’s esoteric. That’s so esoteric that even the guru does not understand it.

He cannot understand it because it’s an absurdity. Absurdities often sound profound because they are incapable of being understood. When we hear things we do not understand, sometimes we think they are simply too deep or weighty for us to grasp when in fact they are merely unintelligible statements like “one-hand clapping.” The Bible does not talk like that. The Bible speaks of God in meaningful patterns of speech. Some of those patterns may be more difficult than others, but they are not meant to be nonsense statements that only a guru can fathom.

Matthew 11:25-26

At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”

3. The Biblical Basis for Bible Study

The Bible itself has much to say about the importance of studying the Bible.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Here God sovereignly commands that His Word be taught so diligently that it penetrates the heart. Repeated discussion is the order of the day, every day. The same message is echoed in the Book of Joshua.



Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Joshua 1:8-9

2 Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Continue in what you have learned...

There is no room for the proverbial once over lightly- consistency is the key.

The holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation...

The Scripture offers a supernatural wisdom that has to do with the practical matter of learning how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

This fear is not speaking of being in terror of God, but rather living in a posture of awe and reverence which is necessary for authentic godliness.

We are commanded to acquire knowledge, but more to acquire wisdom. Knowledge is necessary if wisdom is to be gained, but it is not identical with wisdom. One can have knowledge without having wisdom, but one cannot have wisdom without having knowledge. A person without knowledge is ignorant. A person without wisdom is deemed a fool.

Wisdom in the highest sense, is being wise with respect to salvation. The Holy Spirit through Paul is saying to us today that through Scripture we can acquire that kind of wisdom that concerns our ultimate fulfillment and destiny as human beings.

All Scripture is God-breathed...

Bottom line is that the Bible is God speaking to me!

Is useful for teaching...

Being instructed and trained in the things of God is a priceless treasure that God's Word affords us!

1 Timothy 4:8

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...

When we sin, we need to be reproved. When we err, we need to be corrected. When we are out of shape, we need to go into training.

Hebrews 12:5-6

“My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”

Mark 8:36-37

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

That the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Christian who is not diligently involved in a serious study of Scripture is simply inadequate as a disciple of Christ. So please do not let that happen to you, the world needs to hear the message of Jesus from your lips!

The Bible as Revelation

One of the most important advantages the Bible gives us is that it provides information that is not available anywhere else. Our universities provide us with a wealth of knowledge acquired by human investigation of the natural world. We learn by observation, analysis and abstract speculation.

Only God can provide us with an eternal perspective and speak to us with absolute and final authority. The Scriptures come to us as divine self-disclosure. Here the mind of God is laid bare on many matters. With a knowledge of the Scripture we do not have to rely on secondhand information or bare speculation to learn who God is and what He values. In the Bible He reveals Himself.

Right Thinking and Practice

The spirit of America has been defined as the spirit of pragmatism. This spirit is manifested nowhere more clearly than in the arena of politics and in the public school system which has been informed by the principles and methods of education set down by John Dewey.

Pragmatism may be defined simply as the approach to reality that defines truth as “that which works.” The pragmatist is concerned about results and the results determine the truth. The problem with this kind of thinking, if left uninformed by eternal perspective, is that the results tend to be judged in terms of short-range goals.

Here is where the content of Scripture is most relevant to our lives, it gives us big picture purpose from an eternal perspective as well as specific individual steps for our lives today. Right thinking produces right believing and that results in right living.

Nothing could be more practical than God’s Word because it proceeds from a revelation that is established from the eternal point of view.

4. The Word of God Helps Us Grow Up

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly-mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men?

What is the worldly or sensuous Christian? “One who is highly susceptible to influence through the senses,” as one dictionary puts it. The sensuous Christian lives like the world does, by his feelings rather than through his understanding of the Word of God- this is also referred to as being carnal (earthly).

The mature believer is rooted and grounded in God’s Word, speaking and acting according to Biblical beliefs whether he feels like it or not, or whether it is popular or not.

2 Timothy 3:12

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

The sensuous Christian is one who lives by his feelings rather than through his understanding of the Word of God. The worldly Christian cannot be moved to service, prayer or Bible study unless he “feels like it.” His Christian life is only as effective as the intensity of present feelings. When he experiences good spiritual feelings, he is a whirlwind of godly activity; when he is depressed, he is a spectator on the side lines. He constantly seeks new and fresh spiritual experiences and uses them to determine the Word of God for himself. His “feelings” become the ultimate test of what course of action he should take in life- in reality this is idolatry.

The sensuous Christian feels he does not need to study the Word of God because he already knows the will of God by his “feelings.” He doesn’t want to know God; he wants to experience Him by his feelings. He thinks that when the Bible calls us to childlike faith it means a faith without content, a faith without understanding- just being plain lazy.

1 Corinthians 12:1-2

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.

Oh, but we are civilized and educated, we don’t worship idols anymore. Oh really? What about materialism, fame and substance abuse.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world-the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

The world system is all about luring people by their five senses, like a fish being attracted by some cheap glimmering metal. Not realizing that there is a sharp hook at the end to ensnare the unsuspecting victim.

The sensuous Christian goes his merry way until he encounters the pain of life that is not so merry and he folds. He usually ends up embracing a kind of “relational theology” (that most dreadful curse on modern Christianity) where personal relationships and experience take precedence over the Word of God. If the Scripture calls us to action that may jeopardize personal comfort, then the Scripture must be compromised. The highest law of the sensuous Christian is that bad feelings must be avoided at all cost.

Reflect for a moment. What happens in your life when you act according to what you feel like doing rather than what you know and understand God says you should do? Here we encounter the ruthless reality of the difference between joy and pleasure- not that all pleasure is bad, only that which is experienced outside of the boundaries of God’s Word.

The pursuit of happiness is regarded as our “unalienable right.” But joy and pleasure are not the same. Both of them feel good, but only one endures. Sin can bring pleasure, but never joy. If sin were not so pleasurable, it would hardly represent a temptation. Yet, while sin often “feels good,” it does not produce joy which comes only supernaturally from God and satisfies the very core of our hearts.

Hebrews 11:25

Moses chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

Only through the Scriptures can we distinguish the difference between God's best and Satan's counterfeits. There is a remarkable relationship between God's will and human happiness. The fundamental deception of Satan is the lie that obedience can never bring true happiness and joy.

From the temptation of Adam and Eve to what the world is saying today, the lie has been the same. "If you do what God says, you will not be happy. If you do what I say, you will be 'liberated' and know happiness." Well we know the rest of that story don't we, human history is a living testament, full of the misery that follows Satan's lies.

John 14:15-18

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

Now it is important to understand that God's Word is the key to living a holy life, a life that is pleasing to God. God is not opposed to us experiencing good feelings, certainly they should be enjoyed and appreciated as we follow God and act on His Word. It is just that feelings should always take a back seat to obeying the Bible. In time as we grow as believers in Jesus, we can train our bodies and renew our minds with God's Word to produce feelings and emotions that partner with and are in harmony with a life of obedience. True spiritual maturity is reflected by a deliberate and relentless pursuit to obey God's Word which is the key to walking in love!

1 John 5:2-4

This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world.

So we can be thankful and enjoy the presence of God, because often times the Holy Spirit will produce wonderful spiritual experiences that effect our emotions and feelings in our bodies. Let's just always put God's Word first and act on God's Word whether we feel like it or not, then we will find that the good feelings will come. Faith and acting on God's Word is the locomotive of our lives while feelings are the caboose. So thank God for good feelings, enjoy them when they are there, so we don't live by and base our decisions on them.

Psalms 16:11

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

The truth is what sets us free! The truth is that God, being our creator and infinitely wise, knows what is best for us better than we do. Yet many subject themselves to the school of hard knocks, with its motto, "I did it my way!" Well, the proof of the "pudding" is in the eating.

1 Timothy 6:10

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Unit 10 Review:

What is meant by, “The Clarity of Scripture?”

Why is it so important that we study the Bible?

The Bible among many other things gives us an “Eternal” perspective, what does that mean?

What is the sensuous Christian, and how can we avoid that trap?

B. How to Study the Bible

Fundamental to the spiritual growth of a believer is the ability to feed himself/herself with the Word of God. Now we will explore two ways of “eating” the Word; the first way is indirect Bible study and the second is direct Bible study. The two are equally valid to supply the nutritional needs of a follower of Christ.

1. How to Read the Bible

Read it book by book. Many people attempt to read the Bible just by opening its pages and reading at random. Others read portions here and there in the Bible, and still others look for verses on some subject that interests them (and sometimes interpret them out of context!) Each of these practices is not only incorrect, but it can be even more dangerous than one thinks. Reading systematically keeps us from taking verses out of context. The Bible is a literary work composed of 66 books. The best way to understand the Bible is to read it book by book.

Follow a reading plan. One of the best ways to get to know a book very well is to read it many times like Psalms and Proverbs.

We shouldn't be surprised if this is one of the most difficult habits to form, such as lack of time - there are others of a spiritual nature- such as the devil, the flesh and the world - which also try to rob us of the time necessary to read and study the Bible. But the spiritual riches that we can expect in Bible study more than reward us for the time and effort that we invest in it.

The Spiritual Diary

One of the dangers of devotional reading of the Bible is the tendency to skim over the pages of our Bible without thinking about what we are reading. Later on we don't have the faintest idea of what we read. The best way to prepare the mind for Bible reading is to have a pencil ready to write down what we observe in the passage. We more readily learn something if we write it down.

2. How to Use Bible Study Tools

As a student of the Word of God, there are three Bible study tools that would be worthwhile for you to obtain for your personal library: a concordance, a Bible dictionary, and a commentary. Bible study software is a tremendous blessing to the serious Bible student and worth every penny.

Concordance

A concordance is an alphabetical index to all the words found in the English text of the Bible. A well-known concordance based on the King James Version of the Bible is Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

To find verses. When you want to find a verse in the Bible, but you remember only a phrase, the concordance will help you locate it rapidly. Using the alphabetical index, you only have to look up one of the principle words in the passage and then the verse you want.

To study topics of interest. The concordance is useful not only to find a verse that you remember; it also helps you investigate topics and ideas that you are interested in. To study people, places and events. The concordance also gives us information of the variations in the names of Biblical characters.

The Bible Dictionary

Another very useful tool for study of the Scriptures is a good Bible dictionary. A dictionary gives us invaluable information about Bible characters, Bible books, geography, the cultural context of the Bible, theological topics, and much more.

To investigate the historical background of a book. Let's suppose that as a result of our Bible reading we want to do a more in-depth study of Paul's Epistles. Before beginning our study of the message of Paul's letters, we can do an investigation of the background of his writings. It will help us better understand the message of the books we want to read.

The Commentary

While the concordance answers the question of where to find a passage, and the dictionary provides explanatory information, the commentary emphasizes interpretation of the Biblical text.

To explain passages difficult to understand. Like a Bible dictionary, a commentary can provide information about a passage which will help us understand its meaning. Or it may give us a new perspective about a passage or a verse.

Study Notes:



3. Synthetic Method of Study

Since the Bible is comprised of 66 books, a very effective way to learn the basic message of each book is to use the synthetic Bible study method. This method helps us overcome one of the most common mistakes in Bible reading which is the tendency to see Scripture as isolated verses instead of understanding the message of the natural literary divisions. The purpose of synthetic Bible study is to get to know a book of the Bible as a whole. By using this method, we will be able to see the unity of the book and better understand the reason why the author wrote as he did.

The original manuscripts of the Bible were written without chapter and verse divisions. The first divisions appeared in the year 1228 in the Latin version, the Vulgate. The division of the chapters into verses was first done in 1551 in the Geneva Bible. Although the chapter and verse divisions can help us find passages, such divisions may impede our overall perspective of the book.

The Bible isn't written in pieces, or as disorganized thoughts scattered throughout its pages. The major part of the Bible is written in logical units of thought, both long and short, which provide a logical revelation of God and which also determines our approach to Scripture. The unit of thought we are referring to is the paragraph. To develop a synthetic Bible study based on paragraphs means searching for the units of thought of the author of the book. In the study of literature, a paragraph has only one principle idea, which is developed by the sentences which form the paragraph.

The synthetic method:

- 1) Choose a book to study.
- 2) Do an introduction to the book.
- 3) Determine the divisions (paragraphs).
- 4) Title each section.
- 5) Develop the outline.
- 6) Write a summary of the message of each paragraph.
- 7) Make a personal application of the message of the book.

Remember that no Bible writer used chapters and verses. Rather, following the norms of literature, all Bible writers arranged their books around certain inter-related ideas to achieve their purposes. When we discover these key ideas, we can identify the structure of the book, and based on that, the author's purpose for writing the book. The paragraph is the basic unit of thought that contains a central idea which is developed by the sentences that make up that paragraph. The fundamental idea of the synthetic method is to become acquainted with the content of a Bible book.

4. Topical and Biographical Methods

The purpose of the topical method is to know what the Bible says about a certain topic.

The Topical Method:

- 1) Choose a topic.
- 2) Look up the references that have to do with the topic.
- 3) Read each passage in its context and summarize it in a descriptive phrase.
- 4) Organize the subject material that has been gathered.
(Optional: Chose a key verse)
- 5) Apply the teaching.

Study Notes:

The topic can be limited to a certain book of the Bible or it can be a study of what the whole Bible says about a concept, an idea or a question which you may have. Perhaps you have been asked a question that you can't answer at the moment. Or perhaps you want to develop a Bible lesson about a certain topic. The topical method gives you the opportunity to develop a study over whatever topic you wish. If you choose a broad topic, such as Love, try to subdivide your topic into more concrete topics, such as "The Love of God", "Love Your Neighbor", "Love Demonstrated in the Body of Christ."

After having analyzed each passage, read the descriptive phrases several times concentrating on the central message of each phrase and the relationship between phrases. Write down your observations. When you have finished, with your notes at hand, write a summary of the content, reorganizing the topic, and the relationship between phrases. Look for cause-effect, for definitions, principles, etc.

The Bible is an inexhaustible source of topics to explore. Its pages encompass all topics which have to do with life and human need. It could be that the greatest problem you will have with this method is restricting your focus to a topic which you will be able to develop in a responsible manner.

The Biographical Bible Study Method

The purpose of the biographical method is to learn everything possible about a Bible character by studying the biographical details in one book of the Bible, or by doing a complete Bible search for information about him or her. There are around three thousand persons mentioned in the Bible. The narratives of their lives is a rich source of information about the plan of God for all humanity.

The Biographical Method:

- 1) Choose a Bible character.
- 2) Find corresponding Biblical references and information.
- 3) Do an "interview" with the Bible character.
- 4) Summarize the important points of the study.
(Optional: select a key verse)
- 5) Apply the lesson personally.

To find the corresponding Bible references and information you will need a concordance. Write down all the Bible references you can find about the person you are studying. For example, if you were to do a study of the life of Luke, you would look in the concordance for references that mention him by name (there are three) and you would write them down on a worksheet. If the person you are studying wrote a book of the Bible, read the book rapidly, drawing from it biographical information. In the case of Luke you would find information in Luke 1:1-4, and in various portions of Acts.

Do an interview of the Bible character. Is there some detail about his birth, or childhood or family given in the Scripture? Describe his upbringing, the influence of family, his occupation. Who were his friends and/or enemies? What do they say about him? Describe his surroundings, the time in which he lived, the religious/social/political influences upon him. What was his major accomplishment? What effect did he have on his world (nation, church, family)? What characteristics do you see? Was there a trait that characterized him? Note his attitude, motivations, and philosophy of life. Describe his spiritual life, prayer habits, the quality of his faith in God, and service to God. Is there some detail about his death? What were the factors that contributed to his spiritual growth (or lack thereof)? Note elements of power and of success in his life, the difficulties which he overcame, the opportunities which he had, the mistakes made, the dangers avoided, and the people who helped him. There is much more you may ask your "interviewee"; so use your imagination.

Study Notes:

Unit 11 Review:

What is the benefit of having a spiritual diary as you study God's Word?

What is the purpose of using the synthetic method of Bible study?

What is the difference between the topical and biographical methods of Bible study?

C. Bible Interpretation

Let's take a quick look at Martin Luther and private interpretation. Two of the great legacies of the Reformation were the principle of private interpretation and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. The two principles go hand in hand and were accomplished only after great controversy and persecution. Scores of persons paid with their lives by being burned at the stake (particularly in England) for daring to translate the Bible into the vernacular.

Luther's greatest achievement was the translation of the Bible into German so that any literate person could read it for himself. It was Luther himself who brought the issue of private interpretation of the Bible into sharp focus in the sixteenth century. Hidden beneath the famous response of the Reformer to the ecclesiastical and imperial authorities at the Diet of Worms was the implicit principle of private interpretation.

When asked to recant of his writings, Luther replied, "Unless I am convinced by Sacred Scriptures or by evident reason, I cannot recant. For my conscience is held captive by the Word of God and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me." With this controversy the principle of private interpretation was born and baptized with fire.

Private interpretation opened the Bible to everyone, but it did not do away with the principle of educated men and women in full-time ministry. Going back to biblical days, the Reformers recognized that in Old and New Testament practice and teaching there was a significant place for the rabbi, the scribe and the ministry of teaching. That teachers should be skilled in the ancient languages, customs, history and literary analysis is still an important feature of the Christian church.

Study Notes:

1. Objectivity and Subjectivity

The greatest danger of private interpretation is the clear and present danger of subjectivism in biblical interpretation. Which simply means, placing a personal bias on explaining the meaning of what the Bible is saying. When people read into the Bible what they want, project their personal view or put words into God's mouth, error occurs. Which is a place where none of us wants to be.

1 Timothy 4:16

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Revelation 22:18-19

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

It is worth repeating in reference to the "clarity" of Scripture, that the Bible through the illumination of the Holy Spirit contains a simple but profound and eternal message. But all of us are guilty of not always getting it just right every time. I am not so much talking about the basic tenants of the faith, like the deity of Jesus and the principles of salvation. Evangelical denominations all basically agree on the major truths of God's Word, what make them all a little different is how they interpret certain Biblical principles. For instance, in regards to water baptism, do we sprinkle, splash, dash or dunk the person in water. Sadly, churches and individuals part ways over such things.

Acts 18:24-26

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

However, if our heart is sincere and we are not deliberately distorting God's Word for personal advantage, there is hope. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled, Jesus said.

Acts 20:30-31

Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

1 John 4:1-3

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Yes, there are those well meaning or not who have been led astray into various cults through false doctrines. Such was a problem back in the early church as it is today. As always it revolves around Biblical interpretation.

However, those involved in cults that claim to be Christian like Jehovah Witnesses or the Mormons have created their own private interpretations of the Bible in order to suit their pet beliefs. Sure they live moral lives, but they deny the deity of Christ as the only source of salvation for mankind- a fatal error, among others.

2 Timothy 4:3-5

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Jude 4

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

In seeking an objective understanding of Scripture, we do not thereby reduce Scripture to something cold, abstract and lifeless. What we are doing is seeking to understand what the Word says in its context before we go about the equally necessary task of applying it to ourselves.

A particular statement may have numerous possible personal applications, but it can only have one correct meaning. Alternate interpretations which are contradictory and mutually exclusive cannot both be true unless God speaks with a forked tongue.

Proverbs 19:2

It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.

Proverbs 16:25

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

One of our goals to arriving at sound biblical interpretation is to find the objective meaning of Scripture and to avoid the pitfalls of distortion caused by letting interpretations be governed by subjectivism.

Biblical scholars make a necessary distinction between what they call *exegesis* and *eisogesis*. Exegesis means to explain what Scripture says. The word comes from the Greek word meaning, “to guide out of.” The key to exegesis is found in the prefix “ex” which means “from” or “out of.” To exegete Scripture is to get out of the words the meaning that is there, no more and no less. On the other hand, *eisogesis* has the same root but a different prefix. The prefix *eis*, also coming from the Greek, means “into.” Thus, eisogesis involves reading into the text something that isn’t there at all. Exegesis is an objective enterprise. Eisogesis involves an exercise in subjectivism.

James 3:1

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

2. Guidelines for Bible Interpretation

Historically the United States of America has a special agency that theoretically functions as the supreme board of interpretation for our land. That agency is called the Supreme Court. One of its primary tasks is to interpret the Constitution of the United States.

The constitution is a written document that requires such interpretation. Originally the procedure of interpreting the Constitution followed the so-called grammatico-historical method. That is, the Constitution was interpreted by studying the words of the document itself in light of what those words meant when they were used at the time of the formulation of the document.

Since the work of Oliver Wendell Holmes the method of Constitutional interpretation has changed radically. The current crisis in law and public confidence in the nation's highest court is directly related to the underlying problem of method of interpretation. When the court interprets the Constitution in light of modern attitudes, it in effect changes the Constitution by means of reinterpretation. The net result is that in a subtle way the Court becomes a legislative(making policy) rather than interpretive agency.

The same kind of crisis has occurred with Biblical interpretation. When biblical scholars utilize the method of interpretation that involves "bringing the Bible up to date" by reinterpretation, the original meaning of Scripture is obscured and the message is brought into conformity with contemporary trends in opinion. Like ministers that are openly practicing homosexuality, trying to be inclusive and politically correct.

The Analogy of Faith

When the Reformers broke with Rome and claimed the view that the Bible was to be the supreme authority of the church, they were very careful to define basic principles of interpretation. The primary rule of Bible interpretation was called "the analogy of faith." The analogy of faith is the rule that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. In other words, Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter.

This means, quite simply, that no part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture. For example, if a given verse is capable of two renditions or variant interpretations and one of those interpretations goes against the rest of Scripture while the other is in harmony with it, then the latter interpretation must be used.

Interpreting the Bible Literally

The Bible should be interpreted according to its literal sense. The term *literal* comes from the Latin *litera* meaning letter. To interpret something literally is to pay attention to the *litera* or to the letters and words which are being used. To interpret the Bible literally is to interpret it as *literature*. That is, the natural meaning of a passage is to be interpreted according to the normal rules of grammar, speech, syntax and context.

The Bible is a very special book, being uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit, but that inspiration does not transform the letters of the words or the sentences of the passages into magical phrases. Under inspiration a noun remains a noun and a verb remains a verb. Questions do not become exclamations, and historical narratives do not become allegories.

Literal Interpretation and Genre Analysis

The term *genre* means simply "kind," "sort" or "species." Genre analysis involves the study of such things as literary forms, figures of speech and style. We distinguish between lyric poetry and legal briefs, between newspaper accounts of current events and epic poems. We distinguish between the style of historical narratives and sermons, between realistic graphic description and hyperbole.

Failure to make these distinctions when dealing with the Bible can led to a host of problems with interpretation. Literary analysis is crucial to accurate interpretation.

For example, the Bible describes the hills as dancing and clapping their hands. Such figures of speech are usually easy to recognize and cause no difficulty of interpretation. In some cases, however, questions of personification have led to serious debate. In the Old Testament there is a record of Balaam's donkey speaking. Is this a sudden intrusion of a poetic form in the midst of a historical narrative? Does the speaking animal indicate the presence of fable in the text? Or do we find here an indication of a miracle recorded in history?

This particular episode takes place in the midst of a section of Scripture that does not bear the marks of poetry or fable. The immediate context bears all the marks of historical narrative.

The Problem of Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. The Bible frequently makes use of metaphors, and they are found often on the lips of Jesus.

When Jesus says, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved" John 10:9, how are we to understand that? Does that mean that where we have skin Jesus has mahogany veneer? Jesus of course is using a figure of speech to make a comparison- a concrete example to illustrate an abstract truth.

The Grammatico-Historical Method

As the name suggests, this method focuses attention not only on literary forms but upon grammatical constructions and historical contexts out of which the Scriptures were written. Written statements come to us within grammatical structure of some sort. It is helpful to understand English grammar as well as Greek and Hebrew. If for example, the American public had a thorough knowledge of Greek grammar, the Jehovah Witnesses would have a much more difficult time selling their interpretation of the first chapter of the Gospel of John by which the Witnesses deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

Source Criticism

The method of so-called source criticism has been helpful in some respects in shedding light on the Scriptures. Following the notion that Mark was the first Gospel written and that Matthew and Luke had Mark's Gospel in front of them as they wrote, many questions of the relationship of the Gospels can be explained. We see further that both Luke and Matthew include certain information that is not found in Mark. Thus, it seems that Luke and Matthew had a source of information available to them that Mark did not have or did not choose to use. Such is the practice in Luke and Matthew.

By isolating the material found only in Matthew or only in Luke, we can discern certain things about their priorities and concerns in writing. Knowing why an author writes what he writes helps us understand what he writes. As a result, we discover that Luke is obviously writing his Gospel for a wider audience than Matthew and is very concerned with communicating to the Gentile world.

Authorship and Dating

Questions of authorship and date are also important to a proper understanding of text. Since language can change its meaning from one generation to another and from differing localities, it is important to be as precise as possible in fixing the place and date of a book.

Historical Narratives are to be Interpreted by the Didactic

The term *didactic* comes from the Greek word that means to teach or to instruct. Didactic literature is literature that teaches or explains. Much of the Apostle Paul's writing is didactic in character.

The relationship between the Gospels and the Epistles often has been defined in the simple terms of saying that the Gospels record what Jesus did and the Epistles interpret the significance of what He did. Such a description is an oversimplification in that the Gospels often teach and interpret as they are giving a narration.

But it is true that the emphasis in the Gospels is found in the record of events, while the Epistles are more concerned with interpreting the significance of those events in terms of doctrine, exhortation and application.

Note that Jesus lived under a different period of redemptive history than we do. At that time, He was required to fulfill all the laws of the Old Covenant including dietary and ceremonial laws. Jesus was being perfectly obedient to the Father God when He was circumcised as a religious rite. The gospels record events and narrative in regards to Old Testament living. Jesus was bringing transition into a New and better Covenant. After the Lord's resurrection, the Holy Spirit through the Apostles wrote about the new liberty we have in Jesus.

Even though the Gospels are a part of the New Testament, it recorded events that pertained to Israel and to us. The letters to the Churches that began with the book of Acts until Revelation, are written in the current dispensation we live in today- the Age of Grace! Building doctrine or drawing too many inferences from narratives alone is dangerous business. For example, we learn from the mistakes of the Old Testament saints, we don't repeat them just because they are recorded in the Bible.

Galatians 3:24-29

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The Implicit is to be Interpreted by the Explicit

In the business of language, we make distinctions between that which is implicit and that which is explicit. Often the difference is a matter of degree and the distinction can be muddled. But usually we can determine the difference between what is actually said and what is left unsaid, though implied.

Not only do we have problems when we draw too many implications from the Scripture, but we also face the problem of squaring implications with what is explicitly taught. When an implication is drawn that is contradictory to what is explicitly stated, the implication must be rejected.

If we interpret the clear in the light of the obscure, we drift into a kind of esoteric interpretation that is inevitably cultic. The basic rule is the rule of care: careful reading of what the text is actually saying will save us from much confusion and distortion. No great knowledge of logic is necessary, just the simple application of common sense.

The following Scripture really puts things into perspective. In our present state, we live in a weakened state due to the fall. Yet as Christians we have been given God's grace that grants us strength and abilities in Christ. Even so, we will always be learning, never knowing everything, but one thing remains crystal clear. The wonderful revelations of Faith, Hope and Love, the three pillars of a balanced Christian life!

1 Corinthians 13:9-13

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Determine Carefully the Meaning of Words

Whatever else the Bible is, it is a book which communicates information verbally. That means that it is filled with words. Thoughts are expressed through the relationship of those words. Each individual word contributes something to the whole of the content expressed. The better we understand the individual words used in biblical statements, the better we will be able to understand the total message of the Scripture.

Studying the roots and original meanings of words can be very helpful to gain the flavor of a term. For example, the Hebrew word for glory originally meant “heavy” or “weighty.” Thus, the glory of God has to do with His “weightiness” or “significance.” In addition to origins and derivations, it is extremely important for us to study language in the context of its usage. Words undergo changes in meaning depending on how they are used. For example, the word *cute* in the Elizabethan period meant simply bowlegged.

There are words with multiple meanings. Only the context can determine the particular meaning of a word. For example, the Bible speaks frequently of the will of God. There are a few different ways this word is used.

- 1) The precepts God has revealed to His people.
- 2) God’s sovereign act to bring about whatever He wills to happen.
- 3) The sense of well being “that which is pleasing to God, that which He delights in.”

Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Note the Presence of Parallelisms in the Bible

One of the most fascinating characteristics of Hebrew literature is its use of parallelism. Parallelism may be defined as a relationship between two or more sentences or clauses that correspond in similarity or are set with each other.

Proverbs 19:5

A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.

Or

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Study Notes:

Note the Difference between Proverb and Law

A common mistake in biblical interpretation and application is to give a proverbial saying the weight and force of a moral absolute. Proverbs are catchy little sayings designed to express practical truisms. They reflect principles of wisdom for godly living. They do not reflect moral laws that are to be applied absolutely to every conceivable life situation.

Here is an example of when a proverb can be contradictory if taken as absolutes with no exceptions.

Proverbs 26:4-5

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.

Verse 5- Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

Thus there are times when it is foolish to answer a fool according to his folly, and there are times when it is wise to answer a fool with foolishness.

Observe the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter of the Law

Note that the Pharisees in the New Testament were quite detailed about keeping the letter of the law while violating the spirit constantly. For example, in the law it refers to the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath day, a day of rest.

Exodus 23:12

Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed.

Yet the Pharisees, went by the letter of the law and accused the disciples of working by simply getting something to eat.

Matthew 12:1-8

At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread-which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Be Careful of Parables

People usually enjoy sermons that are based on parables. Since parables are concrete stories based on life situations, they seem easier to handle than abstract concepts. Parables often use the literary simile in order to make a comparison- beginning with “like” or “as”.

Matthew 13:24-25

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field...”

The safest and probably most accurate way to treat the parables is to look for one basic point in them. As a rule of thumb, avoid all allegorizing of every detail within a parable, trying to look for some secret meaning in every statement. Unless the New Testament is clearly indicating an allegorical meaning. Many of the parables are simply not suited to allegorical interpretation.

Some parables, such as The Prodigal Son, obviously have more than one point. Some are extended similes; others are comparative stories; others have an obvious moral application.

Be Careful with Predictive Prophecy

Handling predictive prophecy both from the New Testament and the Old is one of the most abused forms of biblical interpretation.

Of all forms of prophecy the apocalyptic form is the most difficult to handle. Apocalyptic literature is characterized by a high degree of symbolic imagery that is sometimes interpreted for us and sometimes left uninterpreted. The three most prominent books that fit this category are Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation. It is very easy to get bewildered with Daniel's symbols and the drama of the New Testament apocalypse. One important key to interpreting these images is to seek the general meaning of such images in the Bible itself. For example, most of the images of the book of Revelation are found elsewhere in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament- "seas" refer to gentile nations.

Cultural Conditioning and the Bible

The better I understand the first-century culture of Palestine, the easier it becomes for me to have an accurate understanding of what was being said. But the Bible was written a long time ago, in a cultural setting quite different from our own, and it is not always easy to bridge the sheer chasm of time between the first century and the twentieth century.

The problem becomes more acute when I realize that not only is the Bible conditioned by its cultural setting, but I am conditioned by my cultural setting as well. It often becomes difficult for me to hear and understand what the Bible is saying because I bring to it a host of extra-biblical assumptions.

In many circles today the issue is principle and custom. Unless we conclude that all of Scripture is principle and thus binding on all people of all ages, or that all Scripture is local custom with no relevance beyond its immediate historical context, we are forced to establish some categories and guidelines for discerning difference. Bottom line, there is a balance between the two. By close scrutiny of the Scriptures themselves we can see that they display a certain latitude of custom.

3. Dispensations

NT:3622

oikonomia (oy-kon-om-ee'-ah) administration or management of a household or estate; specifically, a (religious) "economy": KJV - dispensation, stewardship.

A dispensation is an era of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some definite revelation of God's will. Seven such dispensations are recognized by many theologians.

Innocence

Man was created innocent, set in an ideal environment, placed under a simple test and warned of the result of disobedience. The woman fell through pride; the man, deliberately (1 Timothy 2:14). Although God restored the sinning creatures, the dispensation came to an end at the judgment of the expulsion-Genesis 3:24.

Conscience

By an act of disobedience man came to an experiential knowledge of good and evil. Driven out of Eden and placed under the Adamic covenant, man was accountable to do all known good and to abstain from all known evil and to come before God by sacrifice. The result of this testing was complete degeneration ending in the judgment of the Flood (Genesis 6-9).

Human Government

The declaration of the Noahic covenant after the Flood (Genesis 8:20-9:27) put man under a new test, featured by the inauguration of human government, the highest function of which was the judicial taking of life. Man is responsible to govern the world for God. That responsibility rests upon the whole race, Jew and Gentile. With the failure of Israel under the Palestinian covenant (Deuteronomy 28:64) and the consequent judgment of the captivities, “the times of the Gentiles” began (Luke 21:24). The world is still Gentile-governed, and hence this dispensation overlaps other dispensations and will not strictly come to an end until the second coming of Christ.

Promise

This era went from the call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1) to the giving of the Mosaic law (Exodus 19:8). The dispensation was under the Abrahamic covenant and was exclusively Israelite.

Law

This era reaches from Sinai to Calvary. The period was a time of teaching used to bring Israel to Christ and was governed by the Mosaic covenant (Exodus 20-31).

Grace

This period began with the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 3:24-26; 4:24-25). The point of testing is no longer legal obedience to the law as a condition of salvation but acceptance or rejection of Christ with good works as the fruit of salvation (John 1:12-13; 3:36; 1 John 5:10-12). The predicted end of the testing of man under grace is the apostasy of the professing church (2 Timothy 3:1-8) and the subsequent apocalyptic judgments.

The Kingdom

This is the last of the ordered ages regulating human life on the earth, previous to the eternal state. It involves the establishment of the kingdom covenanted to David (2 Samuel 7:8-17; Zechariah 12:8; Luke 1:31-33). This will include Israel’s restoration and conversion (Romans 11:25-27) and her rehabilitation as a high-priestly nation in fellowship with God and as head over the millennial nations (Zechariah 3; 6:9-15).

The subject of dispensations is most important as it weighs heavily upon the subject of Bible interpretation. Ignorance or lack of regard in this area can result in a lot of problems. The NIV translation uses the words “times” while many other translations uses “dispensation”. It refers to a measure of time with a beginning and an end. From the beginning of time as we know it in the Garden of Eden to the endless age where the Book of Revelation ends; human history from a Biblical perspective is divided into dispensations, times and ages. These unique periods of time require from us special consideration, understanding the specific circumstances that ruled that period, unique revelation given by God. Most importantly, realizing that when a new dispensation starts some of the rules change.

Study Notes:

Ephesians 1:9-10 NKJV

having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him).

Ephesians 3:1-7 NKJV

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

When the Bible tells us something does not apply anymore, changed, or introduces something new, we must take heed. For example, the understanding of dispensations teaches us:

- ☞ We don't exterminate people by conquest- Israel taking the Promise Land- Joshua 9:24; Luke 6:27
- ☞ Sacrificial system and Levitical Priesthood don't apply to the Church- Hebrews 10:1-10
- ☞ New changes took place, like the indwelling of the Holy Spirit- John 14:17
- ☞ Greater revelation about the Kingdom of God is introduced- Colossians 1:25-29
- ☞ We will receive new glorified bodies like Jesus has now- Philippians 3:20-21
- ☞ There will be a millennial reign of Christ, new heaven and new earth- Revelation 20 & 21

As Christians, we are currently living under the dispensation of Grace, and that is significant. God has given us revelation by the Spirit of God through the early Church Apostles for us to understand and experience firsthand the power of the New Covenant that we have with God through Jesus Christ. Previous generations did not know these things, but we have been honored under this new dispensation.

Colossians 1:25-29

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness- the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

The Church has made mistakes in Bible interpretation as a result of not rightly dividing the Scriptures as it pertains to the subject of dispensations. For example, some groups have adopted priests as mediators between God and man as it was under the Old Covenant, but the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus alone is our mediator not any man- 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15;12:24.

It is critical that we pay attention to what the Bible says to us in the dispensation we live in today. The epistles, or letters to the Churches (Romans – Revelation) and the book of Acts were written in the same dispensation we live in today.

The Gospels were transition writings that referred to the last days of the Old Covenant and foretelling of the soon in coming New Covenant. There were a number of things in the Gospels that were said and written that applied to the Jews specifically.

Jesus lived and died under the Old Covenant, it was His resurrection that ushered in the New Covenant. Certainly the Old Testament books are inspired by God, written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and they serve us today as examples to learn from- 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. Since God does not change, all His awesome characteristics recorded in the Old Covenant are just as real today as it was back then- so we learn from those Scriptures today.

However, how God dealt with man and the spiritual condition of man under the Old Covenant was unique. Don't make the mistake of being a New Covenant believer trying to live under the Old Covenant era- big mistake! How they worshipped, served and experienced God back then is different than it is today. How different you may ask, as different as the New Testament revelation explains it as being different.

Unit 12 Review:

What is the difference between Objectivity and Subjectivity when it comes to interpreting the Bible?

Having read a number of Bible interpretation principles, which one stands out to you the most, and why?

What is meant by, "The Analogy of Faith?"

Unit 4 Bible Reading:

John Chapter 9

What do you think Jesus meant by that statement, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

John Chapter 10

How is Jesus our Shepherd, what does that mean to you?

John Chapter 10

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” What does that mean for us today?

John Chapter 11

What is Jesus talking about when He referred to Himself as “the resurrection and the life?”

Lesson I Credits:

The following sources of material have made significant and substantial contributions to the content of this training lesson.

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“Knowing Scripture” by R.C. Sproul

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