
Matt's Notes for Understanding the Bible – Principles of Biblical Interpretation

IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY? - M.A.P.S.

Manuscripts

- There are 24,000 full or partial manuscripts (accurate handwritten copies) of the New Testament and 100's more of the O.T.
- Many OT manuscripts predate the time of Christ's birth and NT manuscripts are 1st century.
- 1947 Dead Sea Scrolls, an ancient collection of handwritten copies hidden by the Essenes over 2,000 years ago! Every BOOK of the O.T. except the book of Esther. The scrolls are dated to have been authored **before** the time of Christ!

Archaeology

- *"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference."* Rivers in the Desert, p.31
- 25,000 archaeological discoveries, many of which used the Bible as a guide for where to dig.
- Other religious books do not have a preponderance of archaeological evidence.

Prophecy

- Of the 26 other religious books that claim divine inspiration, none of them contain ANY fulfilled predicted prophecies. Zero.
- The Bible is filled with 100's of fulfilled prophecies. 1 in every 4 verses was prophetic when it was written!
- Not vague generalities, but detailed, specific prophecies.

Statistics

- *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell)

The Bible's internal consistency and harmony!

- It is unique in its continuity (not just one book like the Qur'an by Mohamed or Joseph Smith's revelation)
- 40 authors, 66 books of the Bible
- 39 books in the Old Testament
- 27 books in the New Testament
- 1500 years in writing covering 60 generations
- 3 languages: Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic
- 3 continents: Asia, Africa, Europe
- Written by people from different walks of life: Fishermen, shepherds, Prime Minister, doctor, Accountant, farmers
- 100's of controversial issues (origins, life, death, marriage, sex, morality) with complete harmony!
- This is **Internal Consistency**.
- **Authenticity** – Disciples' transparency and willingness to suffer.
- **Scientific Foresight and Knowledge**.
 - Bible teaches that the sun travels on a circuit through space in Psalm 19:6
 - The shape of the earth was a round sphere! Isaiah 40:22 (740 years before Christ) more than 2,000 years after Isaiah, people were worried about Columbus sailing off of the edge of the world!
- **Literary Evidence** outside of the Bible!
External Consistency – The Bible verifies other writings and histories outside of the Bible.

The main goal of Bible study is to know God more and to love Him by understanding and applying His Word!

Pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to understand and obey what you read.

-1 Cor. 2:10-16

READING THE BIBLE:

-Pick a book of the Bible and read through it. Keep things in context. Whom was the author writing to? What was the occasion or purpose in

writing? Try to read whole chapters or sections in one sitting and identify the main theme.

Hermeneutics and Exegesis

- ♦ **Biblical literacy** involves awareness (familiarity with scripture) and proficiency (understanding meaning in context).
- ♦ **Hermeneutics** (the science of biblical interpretation) and **exegesis** (pulling meaning *out of a text* rather than *reading into it* – which would be eisegesis) are **how** the Bible is **understood, interpreted, and applied**. (i.e. Luke 24:27) Feelings and emotions are part of human experience, but are not tools for hermeneutics and exegesis.

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

- O Observation (Who, what, where, when?)
- I Interpretation (Why? What does it mean?)
- A Application (How does this apply now?)

A TOOL FOR INTERPRETATION

-L.I.G.H.T.S.

Literal Principle – Interpret the passage literally (not literalistically) unless the type of literature or the context makes it clear it is metaphorical or symbolic. ***If the simple sense makes sense, seek no other sense.*** One interpretation, many applications. In a few cases there may be more than one valid interpretation, but they won't contradict the clear teachings of the Bible. (2 Tim. 2:15)

Illumination by Holy Spirit – ***Since the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the Bible (1 Peter 1:21), He will teach us, lead us and guide us when we ask Him to help us understand scripture.*** This doesn't mean that we are to forsake study, thinking and scholarship, but for those who have been born-again, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, this verse applies: 1 Corinthians 2:14–16 “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all

things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

Grammar – We can look up words in Greek or Hebrew, but we need to understand some grammar in our own language! There are Bible dictionaries that can help us understand the biblical meaning of words. Pay attention to the verbs and nouns. I highly recommend a word for word interpretation Bible for **study** such as the NKJV, ESV, NET, or NASB. For reading the NIV and NLT are also very good.

Historical context – ***The books of the Bible were written by real people to real people during real historical situations.*** It is helpful to keep this in mind, especially when understanding cultural norms, the author's intent, and the audience it was written to.

Types and metaphors - There are times when it is obvious that the language is metaphorical and symbolic. When Jesus says He is the Bread of Life, He doesn't become a loaf of bread but is our nourishment and sustenance. When He says He is the door, He doesn't become a physical door, but the entryway to the Father. ***Look at the context and language to figure out when a passage is metaphorical.***

Scriptural context – ***Let scripture interpret scripture!*** When you want to understand a word, look at the whole verse. Look at the chapter. Look at the book. Look at other books the author has written. Then look at the rest of the Bible. Scripture will not contradict itself. It is consistent and supernaturally unique in its continuity.

APPLICATION (Applying It To My Life)

HOW CAN I APPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS PASSAGE TODAY?

- ♦ Every teaching is to be received unless the Bible itself limits the audience.
- ♦ We are to respond to God's word with faith and obedience.

- ◆ **How** should I respond? Is there a...
- ◆ Sin to confess and forsake?
- ◆ Error to avoid?
- ◆ Example to follow?
- ◆ Promise to believe?
- ◆ Command to obey?
- ◆ Action to take?
- ◆ Thought to consider?
- ◆ Prayer to pray?
- ◆ Principle to guide me?

Digging Personally:

- ◆ What did you learn about God's character?
- ◆ Where do I see Christ or the gospel in this passage?
- ◆ How are you encouraged & strengthened?
- ◆ How has the Spirit spoken to you through this passage?
- ◆ What do you now intend to do in response?
- ◆ Is there a sin in your life that needs to be confessed and repented?
- ◆ What adjustments do you need to make because of receiving this word?
- ◆ What is my personal prayer response?
- ◆ How should I carry out these changes?
- ◆ **Pray** to ask God how to implement His truth.
- ◆ Teach (share with) someone else what you've learned.
- ◆ Write down what God is saying to you, what you discovered, what questions you have.

HELPFUL BIBLE RESOURCES:

Bible Study Helps

- *A Primer on Biblical Literacy* by Cory Marsh
- *Living by the Book* by Howard & William Hendricks
- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *Understanding and Applying the Bible* by Robertson McQuilkin
- *Inductive Bible Study* by Dan Finrock
www.icmbible.org
- *30 Days to Understanding the Bible* by Max Anders
- *How to Study the Bible* by Kay Arthur
- *How Not to Read the Bible* by Dan Kimball

Language Helps

- *The Complete Word Study New Testament and Old Testament* by Spiros Zodhiates (Greek and Hebrew word studies)
- Thayer's Greek Dictionary
- Brown – Driver – Briggs' Hebrew Definitions

Cultural Helps

- *Manners and Customs of the Bible* by Various Authors
- *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim

Commentaries/ Bible Handbooks

- *New Bible Commentary* by Wenham and Carson
- *Commentaries* by Warren Weirsbe
- *Haley's Bible Handbook*
- *Thru the Bible Commentary* by J. Vernon McGee
- *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem

Reliability of the Bible

- *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Norman Geisler and Nix
- *The Trustworthiness of the Bible* by Charlie Campbell DVD and Book

Web Based Study Helps

- www.enduringword.com
- www.blueletterbible.com
- www.gotquestions.org
- www.alwaysbeready.com
- www.calvarychapel.com
- www.breshears.net
- www.biblicaltraining.org