

The Skillful Bible Student

Lesson One - The Lord's Use of Language



Introduction: "What if....?"

$$x = \log / \cos * 1(10) + \sin x 4.$$

- What if God had decided to speak to us in difficult terms?

Or consider the following:

- Let's imagine that God used ordinary words, but each stood for a hidden meaning.

"Do not fear, for I am with you." (Isaiah 41:10)

- Do = I
- not = am
- fear = angry
- for = and
- I = you
- am = are
- with = in
- you = trouble.

- How would such a "code" affect our reading of God's Word?
- How would it affect our certainty of our salvation?

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

- God does not use language that only geniuses can understand!
 - Whom did God love?
 - How great is His love?
- God doesn't trick us by saying one thing and meaning something entirely different. God uses ordinary language, and He means what He says.
 - How does this affect our reading of God's Word?
 - How does it affect our certainty of salvation?

Because God talks to us in ordinary language and means what He says, we can set up a basic rule for understanding the Bible.

Stick to the _____ of the Words of Scripture.

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Application:

- Respond: George said, "Well if there is a simple meaning to Scripture, then that means that there really is no work involved in studying it."
- What are some major obstacles in your life to studying God's Word?

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Literal vs. Figurative Language:

There are times, when we talk to each other, that we use picture language to emphasize a point we are trying to make. Consider the following:

<p>Mr. Doofensmirtz is a bear on Mondays when he has to be back to work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What fact are we saying about Mr. Doofensmirtz? ➤ What are we NOT actually saying about him?
<p>"When it was Heinz' turn to do a lay-up in basketball, he blew it."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Did Heinz blow on the ball with his breath? ➤ What fact are we saying about Heinz?

These illustrations are pretty simple and may seem silly, but the point is that we often use what is called _____ to make a point. They are not to be taken literally.

_____ are also part of ordinary language, and **in that way** God uses them. God does not wish for us to take them literally and miss the point He is making.

<p>The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the comparison in this verse? ➤ What is the beautiful point which God is making?
<p>[the LORD] will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. (Psalm 91:4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What foolishness would result from taking this figure of speech literally? ➤ What is the point the Lord is making with the figurative language in this passage?

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Application:

- What is one basic rule in reading God's Word?
- Respond: "When I get to heaven, I expect to see a real lamb with four legs and wool sitting on the throne because that is what the Bible says and I take it literally!"
- "Don't drink that. It's poison!" How would you expect people to interpret that statement?
- If they guzzled it down thinking it meant, "Its taste is not that good", it would be a serious error. So also, we dare not go overboard and take anything we please as a figurative statement.

We take statements literally – that is, in the most exact sense of the words – unless circumstances make it plain that the statement is figurative.

Example:

- What does "resurrection" mean?
 - o However, the Bible also speaks of a figurative or spiritual resurrection which takes place at conversion: a person who is spiritually dead, becomes spiritually alive in Christ.

[Jesus said] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:39-40)

⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4)

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24)

➤ In the first passage, is this a literal or figurative/ spiritual resurrection?

- o How can you tell?

➤ How is the resurrection meant in the Romans and John 5 verses?

- o How can you tell?

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Focus:

- Where God is plainly using figurative language, the figurative sense is the _____ of the words.
- Where the natural use of language does not indicate a figurative sense, we are to stick to the simple, literal, _____ of the words.
- Keeping this in mind, what two things does God want us to avoid doing when reading His Word?
 - o Don't take _____ statements _____.
 - o Don't take _____ statements _____.

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Simple Math:

R41 - L53 - R17 - L20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What do you think this is?➤ What happens if you add other numbers or leave out one of the numbers?
"Take one tablet by mouth 4 times a day, after meals and at bedtime."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What happens if a patient decides to improve on the doctor's prescription and adds the phrase "at least" before "one tablet" or leaves out "4 times a day, after meals and at bedtime"? After all, one little extra direction or change isn't going to hurt, right?➤ If it is important to our physical life not to make changes for directions, it is much more so for our eternal souls.

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Another way of failing to stick to the plain meaning of words is to add something to them that changes the meaning or to leave out or ignore some of the words, so that the meaning is changed.

<p>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. 19And 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. (Revelation 22:18-19)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What are the two warnings?➤ What happens to those who play “fast and loose” with God’s Word?
<p>“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” (Romans 3:28)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What phrase clearly states that obedience is not the way we are justified?➤ What happens if a person subtracts or ignores the phrase “by faith apart”?➤ What happens if a person, as some have done, add the word “ceremonial” before “law”?
<p>“25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” (Ephesians 5:25-26)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ According to the passage, what is the benefit of being “cleansed”? To what is St. Paul referring?➤ Yet some will object and say that water is water, it can’t wash the soul clean of sin. What words or phrases are they ignoring?

Focus:

- Sticking to the plain meaning of God’s Word, we will be sure NOT to _____ or _____ from it.
- **A/D** – The Bible contains the Word of God.
- **A/D** – Adding to or subtracting from the Bible is the most dangerous when it is done in connection with what the Bible teaches about our salvation.

Next Week: Handling Apparent Contradictions.

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Practicing at Home – The Lord's Use of Language part I.

For each of the five numbered exercises, read the Bible verse in quotation marks. Decide whether the “interpretation” shows a correct or incorrect understanding of the verse. Remember that figurative statements must be interpreted figuratively, and literal statements must be interpreted literally.

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- 1) “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Corinthians 11:3)

Interpretation: “Head” is to be taken literally as the part of the body made up of the skull, brain, eyes, etc..., since the word “head” is never used figuratively.

Correct

Incorrect

- 2) Then [Jesus] went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. (Luke 7:14-15)

Interpretation: Since corpses can't sit up and talk, “dead” must be taken figuratively, as when we say, “It's really dead around here – nothing exciting is going on.”

Correct

Incorrect

- 3) God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)

Interpretation: The word “day” here must be taken literally, as a day of the week and not as a much longer period of time, because this day comes to an end as soon as the next morning dawns.

Correct

Incorrect

- 4) Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. (John 21:11)

Interpretation: The passage is to be taken literally since there are no indications of figurative speech. There actually were 153 large fish in the net Peter brought ashore.

Correct

Incorrect

- 5) And [the explorers] said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size... We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” (Numbers 13:32-33)

Interpretation: The words of the explorers are to be taken literally. They meant that the people they saw were over a thousand times as big as the explorers themselves since a human being is over a thousand times as big as a grasshopper.

Correct

Incorrect

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Practicing at Home – The Lord's Use of Language part II.

Read each Bible verse. Then read the three statements following it. Compare each statement carefully with the passage to see whether it adds something to the passage or contradicts any part of the passage and in this way “subtracts” from it. Only one of the three statements is a correct interpretation.

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- 1) After the disciples saw Jesus ascend into the clouds, they were told by an angel, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)
 - _____ a) When the Bible talks about Jesus coming back after His ascension, it always means His coming into the hearts of His believers.
 - _____ b) The disciples were told that sometime during their lifetime they themselves would see Jesus return.
 - _____ c) The disciples were promised that someday Jesus would return from heaven in such a way that His body would be visible coming down out of the clouds.

 - 2) St. Paul writes to Christians, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)
 - _____ a) The freedom we Christians possess means that we have been freed from the power of Satan and sin so that we can say no to sin and treat one another in love.
 - _____ b) Since God has called us to freedom, He doesn't care what we do; we are free to do whatever we want to do.
 - _____ c) Freedom is what God wants to give us, but it is a freedom we don't actually receive until we get to heaven; meanwhile, we are like slaves who have to keep all sorts of rules.

 - 3) St. Paul writes, “However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” (Romans 4:5)
 - _____ a) The faith that is credited as righteousness is trust that God justifies you if you keep His laws.
 - _____ b) The faith that is credited as righteousness does not count on your own efforts but trusts that God justifies a wicked person like you, provided that you aren't too wicked.
 - _____ c) The faith that is credited as righteousness is the attitude of a person who doesn't try to work for his justification because he is confident that God justifies him even though he is wicked.

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Answers to pages 6-7.

Page 6 –

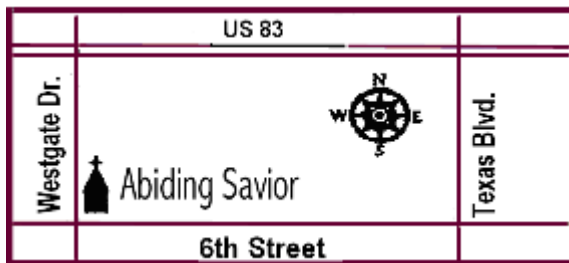
- 1) Incorrect
- 2) Incorrect
- 3) Correct
- 4) Correct
- 5) Incorrect

Page 7 –

- 1) C
- 2) A
- 3) C

Introduction: “Which way?”

- We all receive directions from time to time. Let’s imagine that a person calls up Abiding Savior Ev. Lutheran and wants to know how to get there. They are coming from Harlingen.



- Over the phone, the pastor tells them – “Go east on Highway 83 and then take a right and go South on Westgate Drive in Weslaco.”
- “Wait a minute, which way?” they say. “A right turn? Then we would be going north and you just said that we are to go South on Westgate Dr. Do you even know where your own church is located?”
- How would you respond?

-
- At times we do slip up and say something wrong that contradicts something else we just said. But what did we just see about contradictions above?
 - Why was the pastor able to show that there was no contradiction in what he said?
 - What is the lesson here?
 - Don’t jump to conclusions. Especially when you’re dealing with someone you **trust**, someone who knows more than you do. Recognize that an **apparent contradiction** may not be a contradiction at all!

Aim:

Many people today say that the Bible is full of contradictions. They don’t want to believe that the Bible is God’s Word, His inerrant (without error) Word. They will come up with all sorts of lists of “apparent” contradictions. So in this lesson we want to answer the question –

How do we handle Bible Verses that Seem to be Contradictory?

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Lesson Two - Handling Apparent Contradictions



The Truth:

- Keeping in mind what was just said, when it is especially important not to jump to the conclusion that a mistake has been made?
- Who is the wisest of all and most worthy of trust?

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. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

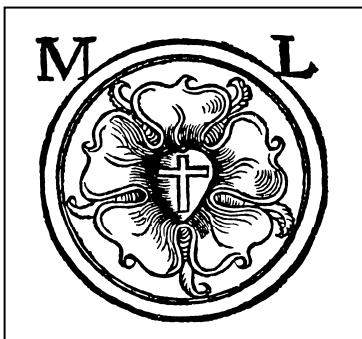
“the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35)

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

- What does 1 Thessalonians have to say about the Bible?
- What does John 10:35 have to say to us about the Bible?
- What does Jesus call the Bible?

- So what does this all tell us about the claim that there are real contradictions in the Bible?

Since God is completely _____, there can be no real _____ in His book.



“Gottes Wort kann nicht fehlen”

“... we know that God does not lie. My neighbor and I — in short, all men — may err and deceive, but God’s Word cannot err.”¹

- What comfort is ours because God does not lie, nor can His Word err?

¹Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord: The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (444). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

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Dealing with the “apparent” contradictions:

- Lets look at some examples of seemingly contradictory statements. Keeping in mind that God’s Word is truth and that He does not lie, how will the following be reconciled?

They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. (Matthew 21:7)

1As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’ ” 4They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” 6They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.

(Mark 11:1-7)

- How many animals were brought to Jesus?
- Did one of the writers make a mistake?
- How would you explain, then, what St. Mark wrote?

Frequently when we describe an event, we leave out details that are not necessary for understanding what happened, and the inspired writes of the Bible do the same. St. Mark doesn’t mention the second animal, but that this not the same as saying that there was no second animal. There is no contradiction here.

Or consider the following:

We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. (1 Corinthians 10:8)

but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000. (Numbers 25:9)

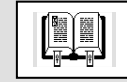
- What difference do you notice?
- Is this a real contradiction?
- Can you clear up the difference in the number of those who died?

- So what is another thing to keep in mind when we come across an apparent contradiction in the Bible?

_____ passages that seem contradictory to see if a solution can be found.

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Lesson Two – Handling Apparent Contradictions



Difficulties:

- Yet, sometimes we can't figure out an answer that satisfies us, no matter how long we study the verses. Then we must remember not to twist the meaning of the words to come up with a solution. Remember the basic rule in reading the Bible:

Stick to the _____ of the Words of Scripture.

Consider what the following says about Jesus:

<p>23Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli. (Luke 3:23)</p> <p>5And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. (John 17:5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ According to Luke – how old was Jesus at the start of His ministry?➤ According to John – how old was Jesus at the time of His ministry?
<p>“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:36)</p> <p>The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ According to Matthew, what is one reason why Jesus didn't tell the disciples when the world would end?➤ According to John, what does Jesus know?
<p>44Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. 45When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. (Mark 15:44-45)</p> <p>17Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What are we told about Jesus in the Mark passages?➤ According to 1 Timothy, can God die?

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Application:

- Respond: Some have said that Jesus wasn't really a man, but only seemed to be one.
- Respond: Some have said that Jesus wasn't really God, but used only temporarily by God.

- What if Jesus was not really a man?
- What if Jesus was not really God?

So what does God want us to do when two clear statements of the Bible seem to contradict each other and we can't find a solution without doing violence to the words?

**When two clear passages seem contradictory, even after much study, _____
both of them without _____ either one.**

***** *****

Some more examples for your consideration:

<p>17but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die. (Genesis 2:17)</p> <p>5Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.(Genesis 5:5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some say that this is a contradiction. They say that Adam was told on the day that ate of the forbidden fruit, on that day he would die. Yet, we find that he lived to 930 years! ➤ Is this a contradiction? ➤ Adam did literally die on the day he ate of the fruit. How? ➤ What was Adam now subject to after eating of the forbidden fruit?
<p>12“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. (Exodus 20:12)</p> <p>26“If anyone comes to me (Jesus)and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is there a contradiction here? ➤ Was Jesus saying that we no longer have to honor our parents? ➤ What point is Jesus making in the Gospel of St. Luke?

For further study see *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?* by W. Arndt; Concordia Publishing House – St. Louis, MO.

Next Week: Law and Gospel

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Lesson Two – Handling Apparent Contradictions



Practicing at Home – Handling Apparent Contradictions I.

Mark the statement true or false, and defend your answer.

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- 1) _____ The Bible contains real or actual contradictions, but none of them do any harm to the main message of the book.
 - 2) _____ The main reason we do not speak of real contradictions in the Bible is that we assume any ordinary author knows what he is talking about and deserves the benefit of the doubt.
 - 3) _____ The main reason we do not speak of real contradictions in the Bible is that we know the Bible is God's Word, and God is completely truthful and absolutely reliable.
 - 4) _____ If we cannot solve an apparent contradiction in the Bible after studying, we should conclude that it is a real contradiction.
 - 5) _____ We should expect that we will be able to find a satisfactory solution for every apparent contradiction in the Bible.
 - 6) _____ When we cannot figure out apparent contradictions in the Bible, we should praise God for being wiser than we are and remember that He has his reasons for revealing His truth in a way that looks contradictory to us.
 - 7) _____ When we cannot figure out apparent contradictions between two clear teachings in the Bible, we should believe both teachings without twisting the meaning of either one.



Practicing at Home – Handling Apparent Contradictions II.

Read the explanations marked: a, b, c and d. These four explanations can be helpful in solving apparent contradictions. Then read exercises 1-4 below them. Each exercise describes an apparent contradiction in the Bible. In the blank space provided, write the letter of the explanation (a, b, c or d) which is most helpful for solving the apparent contradiction. Explain your choice.

Explanations

- a) When two writers describe the same event, one writer may decide to mention only the people and happenings that were most important, while the other writer may choose to include other details as well. One gives more information than the other, but both are accurate in what they say.
- b) Circumstance may change with the passing of time. What is true at one time may not be true later.
- c) The same person may have more than one name.
- d) When you have someone else do something for you, it can be regarded as though you had done it yourself. I may say, “The boss sent me a letter,” even though it was the boss’ secretary who typed and mailed the letter to me.

Exercises

- _____ 1) In 2 Samuel 14:27 we read, “Three sons and a daughter were born to Absalom,” but 2 Samuel 18:18 says, “During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King’s Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, ‘I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.’”
- _____ 2) Both Matthew and Luke record the miracle of the healing of the centurion’s servant. But Matthew 8:5 begins by saying, “When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help,” while Luke 7:1-7 says that after Jesus entered Capernaum, “the centurion head of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant” because the centurion did not consider himself worthy to come to Jesus.
- _____ 3) Mark and Luke have different descriptions of what the women saw in Jesus’ tomb on Easter morning. Mark 16:5 says, “They saw a young man dressed in a white robe,” while Luke 24:4 says, “Two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.”
- _____ 4) We have two seemingly contradictory stories about the tax collector who was called to become a disciples of Jesus and then held a great banquet for Jesus in his home. Matthew 9:9 identifies the tax collector as Matthew, while Luke 5:27 says it was Levi.

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Lesson Three – Law and Gospel



Answers to pages 13-14.

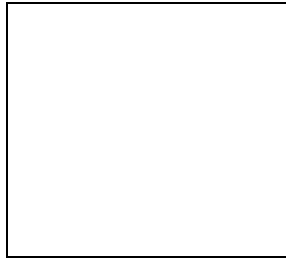
Page 13 –

- 1) False
- 2) False
- 3) True
- 4) False
- 5) False
- 6) True
- 7) True

Page 14 –

- 1) b
- 2) d
- 3) a
- 4) c

Introduction: Details



- Michelle was making cookies. She was careful not to spill any of the ingredients. She was careful to measure the amounts called for in the recipe. She even made sure that she baked the cookies at 350, not 325 or 375.
- But when the cookies were done, she bit into one and almost choked. Why?

[Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte](#)

- The picture to the right is one painted by Georges Seurat. Seurat was an artist who excelled in what is called – “pointillism” – making dots to make a picture.
- What can happen if a person simply looks at the details, like pointillism, in a picture? What do they miss?

- When some people read the Bible, they are very careful to interpret the little details correctly, but they fail to handle the most important teachings of the Bible properly.
- The most important teachings of the Bible are
 -
 -
- If you don't interpret these properly, it doesn't matter how careful you are about the rest of the Bible, the result will be a disaster, just like baking cookies or fail to appreciate the overall unity of the Bible.

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Lesson Three - Law and Gospel



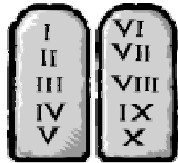
Aim:

In this week's lesson we will learn the basics about interpreting Law and Gospel. But first we need to know the difference between the two and then see how God wants us to use these teachings.

How do we handle statements of Law and Gospel in the Bible?

The Law:

- What are some of the things we are forbidden to do by the laws of the government?
- What are some of the things the government tells us we must do?



- The Ten Commandments are a summary of God's Law.
- What are some of the things God commands us not to do in the commandments?
- What are some of the things God commands us to do in the commandments?

"If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you." (Joshua 23:16)

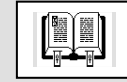
"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

- These verses were spoken to the Israelites, but are also applicable to us today.
- What does God threaten His people with if they do not keep His commands?
- What does God demand of each person? Why?

The Law tells us how we must live to _____; in it God threatens, accuses, condemns and punishes sinners.

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Lesson Three – Law and Gospel



The Gospel:

16I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

- What does the word “gospel” mean?
- According to vs. 16 – what result can the gospel bring about?
 - ⇒ Who has the power to make that happen?
- **A/D** – God does all the work needed in a person’s salvation.
 - ⇒ Explain your answer with the verses to the left.

The Gospel tells us what God _____; in the Gospel God loves, forgives, blesses and saves.

Application: Law or Gospel?

- ⇒ **Matthew 12:36** – But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.
- ⇒ **Deuteronomy 6:5** – Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
- ⇒ **Isaiah 53:5** – But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.
- ⇒ **Exodus 22:22** – “Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan.
- ⇒ **Amos 9:8** – “Surely the eyes of the Sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth— yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,” declares the Lord.
- ⇒ **Psalms 103:8** – The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.
- ⇒ **Mark 10:45** - For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Side Note: Three Purposes of the Law:

1. _____ God’s law helps to preserve order in the world by keeping the wicked actions of all people within bounds.
2. _____ God’s law shows all people their sin and their need of a Savior.
3. _____ God’s law instructs Christians how to live a God-pleasing life.

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Lesson Three - Law and Gospel



Law and Gospel:

“You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.” (Joshua 24:19)

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— 3who forgives all your sins” (Psalm 103:2-3)

- Look at the verses to the left.
- Which is law? Which is gospel?
- What problem do you see when comparing both verses?

Remember one of the “rules” we talked about earlier:

When two clear passages seem contradictory, even after much study, _____ both of them without _____ either one.

Application:

- ⇒ **Respond:** According to the Law God doesn’t forgive. According to the Gospel, He does. If both are true, how can we know where we stand in God’s eyes?

There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24)

- If God did not punish sin, what would that say about God?
- How did God show His just anger and justice at the cross?
- If God wanted only to enforce His law and punish sinners, what would He never have done?
- So what does this tell us about both teachings of Law and Gospel?

Application:

- ⇒ **A/D** – Christians still need to hear the Law.
- ⇒ **A/D** – A Sermon should never end with the Law.
- ⇒ **A/D** – When a conscience is struck by the Law, no more Law should be spoken to the person.

Conclusion:

Listen to the Law as a true _____ about sin and condemnation of us sinners, but always let the _____ have the last word to replace law-fears with gospel-faith.

Next Week: Using Context for Meaning

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Lesson Three – Law and Gospel



Practicing at Home – part I.

The Law tells us how we must live to satisfy God. In His law God threatens, accuses, condemns and punishes sinners.

The Gospel tell us what the Lord has done. In the gospel the Lord loves, forgives, blesses and saves sinners.

Read each of the following verses and identify each as Law (L) or Gospel (G).

-
-
- 1) ____ “There is no peace,” says the Lord, “for the wicked.” (Isaiah 48:22)
 - 2) ____ No one whose hope is in you (God) will ever be put to shame. (Psalm 25:3)
 - 3) ____ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. (Exodus 20:2)
 - 4) ____ These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. (Matthew 15:8)
 - 5) ____ Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. (Isaiah 41:10)
 - 6) ____ Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:14-15)
 - 7) ____ Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. (1 John 3:15)
 - 8) ____ Jesus said, “I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:20)
 - 9) ____ For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

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Lesson Three - Law and Gospel



Practicing at Home – II

Read each of the following verses and label them Law (L) or Gospel (G). Then read the statements after each letter and label each one true or false.

-
-
- _____ 1) For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Ephesians 5:5)
- a) _____ Christians need not listen to these words because this sort of warning is meant only for unbelievers.
 - b) _____ I should listen to the verse and learn that my impure and greedy thoughts and actions are condemned by God's Law and will keep me out of the kingdom of God unless I receive forgiveness for them.
 - c) _____ God wants me to remain in doubt about whether my sins of impurity and greed will keep me out of heaven.
 - d) _____ After I take this verse to heart and realize how sinful I am, God wants me to believe that in spite of my sins I can be sure of going to heaven because Jesus has taken all my sins away.
- _____ 2) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 1:7, 2:2)
- a) _____ Whenever God's Law makes me feel guilty about my sin or afraid that I may go to hell, God wants me to find comfort in believing what this verse and says and to know that He will take me to heaven for Jesus' sake.
 - b) _____ If a person sins a lot, he shouldn't pay attention to verses like this but stick instead to the ones that tell him to stop sinning or he'll go to hell.
 - c) _____ This is the only kind of verse Christians should give serious attention to.
 - d) _____ If a person reads this verse and doesn't think it is very important, he should study God's law to realize how much he needs these gospel promises and then come back to them.
- _____ 3) Jesus said about some who hear God's Word – "They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away." (Luke 8:13)
- a) _____ Jesus says this to scare people, but it really isn't true because once a person becomes a believer he is sure to remain a believer for life.
 - b) _____ God wants us to realize that we could lose our faith and fall away like these people.
 - c) _____ God wants us to overcome our fear of falling away by trusting in gospel promises such as "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:8)

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Lesson Four – Using Context for Meaning



Answers to pages 19-20.

Page 19 –

- 1) Law
- 2) Gospel
- 3) Gospel
- 4) Law
- 5) Gospel
- 6) Gospel
- 7) Law
- 8) Law
- 9) Gospel

Page 20 –

1 – Law	2 – Gospel	3 – Law
a – false	a – true	a – false
b – true	b – false	b – true
c – false	c – false	c – true
d – true	d – true	

Introduction:

Bob was taking his brand new Ford F150 out for a test drive. He was coming up on a sharp curve on a country road. Suddenly a car came around the curve in Bob's lane. Bob braked and swerved and barely missed striking the other vehicle. As the driver of the other car went by he yelled at Bob, "Pig!" Bob was angry! Angry because he almost crashed his truck. Angry at the other driver for what was said! Filled with anger, Bob got back on the road and accelerated around the curve and ran straight into the large pig standing in the middle of the road.

Other than letting his anger get the best of him, what was Bob's mistake?

Evaluate:

- "Frank travels a lot."
 - What does this sentence mean?
- "Rachel couldn't find the bow."
 - What does this sentence mean?

Memory Aid: When you take the "_____" out of _____, you are left with a _____.

Aim:

These illustrations help us to see the second basic rule in reading the Bible. Remember the first rule – 1) Stick to the plain meaning of the words of Scripture. Context is just as important in the Bible as it is when you talk to each other, and it works in the same way. When words in the Bible can have a number of different meaning, we let the context decide which meaning fits best. This is the second basic rule in reading the Bible:

The _____ Bible is the _____ for each part of it since the Bible is a _____ or oneness.

We will see this when it comes to using context in finding the meaning to short statements in Scripture and also in following the line of thought in Scripture from verse to verse.

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Lesson Four – Using Context for Meaning



Take a look at the following:

<p>He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” (Luke 10:18)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When did Satan fall? How did it happen?
<p>Luke 10:1, 17-20 - After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the context or background of the above verse? ➤ Look at vs. 17 – What are the 72 talking about in this verse? ➤ Return to the original question. Does it fit here? ➤ When did Jesus see Satan fall?

Application:

- What danger is found when a verse is taken out of context in the Bible?
- Name some examples of how people today misuse Scripture by not considering the immediate context.
- **Respond:** A man came into the office upset. “Pastor, you haven’t been preaching the Bible correctly! You need to preach about how sinful it is to drink alcohol. The Bible says, ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’ (Col. 2:21) You’re being unfaithful and not holding to God’s Word!”

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Lesson Four – Using Context for Meaning



Colossians 2:20-23 - 20Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? 22These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23Such 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.

- Was the man using the verse correctly? Explain.
- In context, whose rules are being talked about here?
- What is the irony of using vs. 21 to forbid drinking alcohol?

- What is the lesson here?

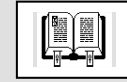
Use the context to find the _____ of _____ statements in Scripture.

Line of thought:

Introduction:

If you have spent anytime with teenagers, you know how they can “conversation jump” at times. For example. A group of 5 people are talking about the marvels of quantum physics and the teenager jumps in and says, “Jamie called last night and said that she is going to the Friday night football game.” Conversation stops and the group of five stand there with blank stares on their faces. Why?

- The writers of the Bible paid attention to the context they were writing so that they could stick to a meaningful line of thought.
- **III:** Lectio Continuo
- Take a look at the next page for some examples:



Philippians 1:12-18 - 12Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

13As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

14Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

15It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

18But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,

- What does Paul want us to know?
 - What has happened to Paul?
- What does the palace guard and “everyone else” know to be the reason for Paul’s predicament?
- So what is one reason why Paul can say that this all has served to “advance the gospel”?
- Look at vs. 14 – What is another way Paul’s predicament has served to “advance the gospel”?
- What does vs. 15 add to our understanding of what Paul means by those who “have been encouraged” to speak the Word of God?
- What does it mean “out of envy and rivalry”?
- Vs. 16 – Toward whom is the “latter’s” good will and love? Why?
- Vs. 17 – Paul explains further what he means. Why were the “former” preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry?
 - How would someone usually feel at such treatment?
 - Yet, what is Paul’s attitude in vs. 18 which ties back to vs. 12?
- So what can we learn for our own Christian life from this section?

➤ What is the lesson here? Ill: Sermons and Bible Class.

Use the context to follow the _____ of _____ in Scripture from verse to verse.

Next Week: Using Context for Meaning

The Skillful Bible Student

Lesson Four – Using Context for Meaning



Practicing at Home – part I.

Read each verse and the statements below it. Only one of these statements is correct. Study the context of the verse to find out which statement is correct. Put an “X” in the blank in front of the correct statement.

1) I will not put the Lord to the test. (Isaiah 7:12)

- a) The person who said this was praised for his obedience and trust in God.
- b) This sounds like a good thing for a believer to say, but under the circumstances it was displeasing to God.
- c) Jesus said these words when He was refusing to listen to the devil’s temptation to jump down from the top of the temple.

Read Isaiah 7:10-14 for the context.

Reason for choosing your answer:

2) Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. (1 Corinthians 9:9)

- a) Paul uses these words to support the idea that people have a right to a reward for the work they do.
- b) Paul uses these words to teach us to be kind to animals.
- c) Paul says that these words are a human teaching and not part of the Word of God.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:7-12 for the context.

Reason for choosing your answer:

3) He could not do any miracles there. (Mark 6:5)

- a) The reason Jesus couldn’t do any miracles was that He was too tired and weak on that occasion.
- b) The reason Jesus couldn’t do miracles was that God the Father did not give Him the special power to do miracles that day.
- c) The reason Jesus couldn’t do miracles was that He was unwilling to help any of the people in that town.
- d) The reason Jesus couldn’t do miracles was that most of the people didn’t believe in Him enough to seek His help.

Read Mark 6:1-6 for the context.

Reason for choosing your answer:

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Lesson Four – Using Context for Meaning



Practicing at Home – II

Read Acts 4:23-31. Study each verse in this context to see how all of them hang together and form a line of thought. The background of this section is that Peter and John had been arrested for preaching about Jesus, and the chief priests and elders had threatened them and told them to stop preaching, but then let them go.

- 1) When the Christians prayed (vs. 24), what three things did they ask God to do? (cf. verses 29-30)

- 2) In view of the threats that had been made against them, why did the Christians find it very meaningful to begin their prayer with the words we find in vs. 24?

- 3) The Christians recognized the events of the recent past as a fulfillment of the prophecy they quote in vs. 25-26. Look ahead to vs. 27 to find the fulfillment of these parts of the prophecy.
 - a. Who in vs. 27 are the “nations” and “peoples” prophesied in vs. 25?

 - b. Who in vs. 27 are the “kings” and “rulers” prophesied in vs. 26?

 - c. Who in vs. 27 is the “Anointed One” prophesied in vs. 26?

- 4) Judging from vs. 31, was the shaking of the meeting place a sign of God’s approval of their prayer, or did it show disapproval? Explain.

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Lesson Five – More Context for Meaning



Answers to pages 25.

Page 25 –

- 1) b
- 2) a
- 3) d

Introduction:

Come April 15, we all are required to pay our taxes. It can be a laborious process. If you have ever done your own taxes, you know the frustration that can arise as you try to decipher the instructions. “Write amount on line 40” – “For information on line 40, see page 521”. Paging back and forth, back and forth – you finally are able to understand just what amount you are supposed write on line 40.

In the Bible it is important to look at a verse in the context of how it fits in with the rest of Scripture. We call this the wider context.

For example, consider the following:

- Which prophet wrote Genesis?
- Which apostle wrote Romans?

Let’s say that Moses wrote something in Genesis about justification (definition??) that I don’t understand, so I read in Romans to see what Paul says about justification.

- How can I be sure that Moses and Paul won’t disagree with each other?

Aim:

The word “unity” means a condition of oneness; therefore, the unity of Scripture means that all the parts of the Bible can be used to help us understand any particular part of it. We call that using the wider context of the whole Bible. In this lesson we will practice the following principle:

Let _____ interpret _____ by using the _____ context of the Bible.

Take a look at the following on the next pages:



19“ ‘Keep my decrees. “ ‘Do not mate different kinds of animals. “ ‘Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. “ ‘Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.” (Leviticus 19:19)

- Is it ok for Christians to wear a shirt of cotton/poly or cotton/wool?
⇒ Why or why not?
- What are examples of other things forbidden by God in this verse?

Side note: The argument used by many today to dismiss God’s commands for all.

8“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
9Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
10but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. (Exodus 20:8-10)

- What day of the week is meant by the “Sabbath day”?
- What was forbidden on the Sabbath?
- A/D – It is wrong for a Christian to worship on any other day than Saturday.
- A/D – It is wrong for a Christian to work on Saturday.

The real answers to the above questions about blended fabrics and mules and Saturday jobs is found by using the wider context of Scripture, for there are passages in the New Testament which tell us how to understand these Old Testament passages as Christians. Look at the next page.

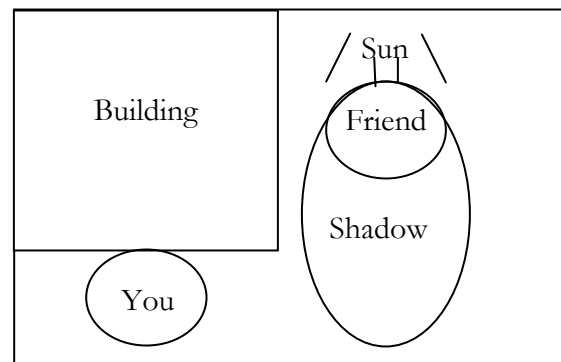


13When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

16Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Colossians 2:13-17)

- What is the “written code” in vs. 14?
- What did God do with the “written code” in vs. 14?
- So then what does St. Paul say about the Sabbath Day in vs. 16?
⇒ Why?



In the Bible, God’s Old Testament people are like the “you” in the above drawing. They were waiting for the “Friend.”

- So then, who is the friend the “Friend”?
- According to vs. 17, what is that shadow?

- Take the Sabbath day as an example of the way the Old Testament Law pointed ahead to Christ. First off, what does the word “Sabbath” mean?
- How were the Israelites reminded of rest every Saturday?

Consider the following on the next page as this applies to Christians today.



28“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
(Matthew 11:28)

- What is the Third Commandment?

- How does Jesus show that He is what the 3rd Commandment pointed to?

- So with the above in mind answer the following:
 - A/D – None of the Old Testament laws apply to us today.

8Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

9The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

10Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
(Romans 13:8-10)

- Some Old Testament commands are repeated in the New Testament as ways God wants us to do what?

- What can we learn about the law in the Old Testament from the wider context of the Bible?

Use the Wider Context to Learn whether an Old Testament _____ is still to be _____ by us.

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Lesson Five - More Context for Meaning



Types:

Discuss the Story of Joseph. How did his brothers treat him? What happened to him in Egypt? How did he treat his brothers when they came before him?

Compare Joseph's life with the life of Jesus. What are the similarities?

The Sabbath Day, the life of Joseph – these pointed ahead to the Savior Jesus. There is a special name for this: we call such a _____. This, in the Bible, is a predicting or forecasting picture of something else. For example: the Israelite rest on the Sabbath day was a type or picture which predicted the rest Jesus would give.

- Can you think of something else in the Old Testament which is a type, pointing ahead to Jesus' death on the cross?

Consider another example used during the Christmas season:

1“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. (Hosea 11:1)

- Look at the first part of the verse. To whom does God refer as the son He called out of Egypt?

⇒ Just looking at this verse, what is Hosea talking about?

- Yet there is a deeper meaning here when we look at the _____ context of the Bible.

13When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

14So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (Matthew 2:13-15)

- Who is meant in this verse by the “son” called out of Egypt?

⇒ So what is “Israel” in the Old Testament? It is a _____ of Christ.

Note: The 1st time God called His children out of Egypt, the majority did not live as His children; they disobeyed Him. So God started over and sent Jesus, His divine Son, who was called out of Egypt to carry out His mission to save. Jesus obeyed His Father and by His death, redeemed those who disobeyed after Egypt and also those of us who disobey today!

Summary:

Let _____ interpret _____ by using the _____ context of the Bible.

Next Week: The Scriptural Parable

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Lesson Five - More Context for Meaning



Practicing at Home.

Read the Bible verses. Choose the correct answer by writing the letter of the answer in the blank.

1) Read Genesis 17:9-14

- a) God wants Christian parents to have their boys circumcised.
- b) According to Joshua 5:2-9, God never cared whether His people were circumcised or not.
- c) Galatians 5:6 and 6:15 tell us that the Old Testament law of circumcision no longer applies.

2) Read Leviticus 19:11

- a) We are free to lie and steal because these commandments were part of Israel's Old Testament law-code and therefore do not apply to us.
- b) Romans 13:8-10 proves that commandments such as the ones found in Leviticus 19:11 are part of our duty of love, and therefore are part of God's will for all people of all time.
- c) Acts 5:1-5 shows that God doesn't consider lying to be a bad sin.

3) Read Psalm 41:9

David wrote this psalm, and in verse 9 he speaks of being betrayed by a close friend who was a guest at his table. What do we learn about this verse from John 13:18, 21-26?

- a) In Psalm 41:9, David is a type of Christ, and the betrayal of David by a friend points ahead to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas.
- b) The betrayal of Jesus by Judas has nothing to do with David or Psalm 41.
- c) According to Jesus, the meaning of Psalm 41:9 is that anyone who shares your bread is an enemy.

4) Read 1 Corinthians 10:7

What is St. Paul's point in quoting the words, "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry" in connection with the command, "Do not be idolaters"?

- a) St. Paul means to show that eating and drinking are a temptation to idolatry because we can regard food and drink as being so important to us that we treat them like gods.
- b) The source of the quotation, Exodus 32:1-6, shows that God doesn't want people to enjoy food and drink.
- c) The source of the quotation, Exodus 32:1-6, shows that St. Paul is referring to the feast at which the Israelites worshiped the Golden Calf. In this way, he is reminding us that idolatry, which is bad enough in itself, can lead to other kinds of wickedness, such as obscene behavior (indulging in pagan revelry).

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Lesson Six – The Scriptural Parable



Answers to pages 32.

- 1) c
- 2) b
- 3) a
- 4) c

Introduction:

Ray was talking to his grandson, Jesse. He told Jesse – “Someday I’d like to be the Prime Minister of Canada!” Jesse asked, “What’s a Prime Minister?”

Ray thought for a moment. He could say what every good little Canadian learns in school – “The Prime Minister is the primary Minister of the Crown, chairman of the Cabinet, and therefore the head of government of Canada.” Or Ray could say, “The Prime Minister is like the captain of the Calgary Stampeders Football team. He decides what the team should do to get ahead, except that he’s got the whole country of Canada instead of just a few football players.”

Which explanation would be better to tell Jesse? Why?

When looking at parables, we need to keep the following overarching rule in mind:

Stick to the _____ of _____ .

Example:

Suppose I made this comparison: “When Chuey saw the grizzly bear, he took off like a shot.” Someone asked, “Oh? Was it a gunpowder explosion that got him moving, the way a bullet gets shot out of a gun?”

- What would you say about that interpretation?
- What would you take to be the point of the comparison?

This example shows you how to proceed when looking at similes in the Bible and also parables (which are, in a sense, extended similes) If the Bible says one thing is *like* another, think of ways in which the two could be alike, and see which one fits the context.

Stick to the point of comparison!

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Lesson Six – The Scriptural Parable



Biblical Example:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)

- What figure of speech do we have here?
- What is the point of comparison?
⇒ Explain.
- Look at vs. 7 – what figure of speech is found here?
- What is the point of comparison?
⇒ Explain.

Aim: Sometimes the Bible will make a comparison using figurative speech spun out at greater length in the form of a parable. Jesus, as the Master Teacher, used parables quite extensively in His ministry. The question for us to answer is this: What do we need to know to interpret parables?

First off - What is a parable?

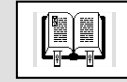
[Jesus] told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32)

- What figure of speech is contained in the opening words of the parable?
- What is the point of comparison?
- Many times Jesus talks about the Kingdom of Heaven and explains an aspect of it with a parable. What is Jesus saying in this parable about the Kingdom of heaven?
- A/D – A parable can be always be identified with the word “like.”

Point One: What is the first thing we need to know to interpret parables? We need to understand that a Parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

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Lesson Six – The Scriptural Parable



What is another important thing to know when interpreting parables?

3Then [Jesus] told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.

4As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

8Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:3-9)

- Can we find the point of comparison in this parable from these verses?
- How can we understand what Jesus is talking about in these verses? (Recall some of the earlier rules which we studied in previous lessons)

18“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

20The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

22The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

23But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (Matthew 13:18-23)

- In this parable, Jesus Himself tells us the point of comparison – what is it?
- Therefore, with the above in mind, we can apply the following examples Jesus uses to our own lives.

Application:

- ⇒ What soil are you?
- ⇒ What lesson can we learn from this parable as we “sow” the seed of God’s Word?
- ⇒ A/D – Some people by nature are good soil, and some are bad.
- ⇒ Jesus was not just warning the people about what could happen in their lives. He was also teaching His disciples what they should expect when they would sow God’s Word. The following people are working in some aspect of sowing the Word. Give them counsel based on what we have learned so far.

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Lesson Six – The Scriptural Parable



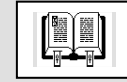
- John serves on his church’s evangelism committee. He becomes discouraged because after he presents the gospel to some people, it’s as if it doesn’t even register with them. Their conversation quickly turns to the weather or some other trivial subject.
- A pastor confirmed a young couple who made friends quickly in the congregation and whose spiritual lives seemed to be growing. Over the past year, however, they have become sporadic in their church attendance, and for the past few months they have not attended church. The pastor has visited them repeatedly but with no results. He feels he should have done more and is kicking himself for failing.
- The church council is bemoaning the fact that a few people are carrying more than their share of the load. They consider establishing quotas for giving and requiring people to join a committee or group.

Point Two: What is the second thing we need to know to interpret parables? Sometimes the Biblical Context will show the interpretation of the parable.

What final rule should we know when interpreting parables? Consider the following parable on the next page.

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Lesson Six – The Scriptural Parable



25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25-37)

8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:3-9)

- What is the point of comparison in this parable?
- How does the context help us to understand the point which Jesus is making?
- What point is Jesus making by mentioning the Samaritan bandaging the man's wounds, pouring on oil and wine, taking him to an inn, even paying the innkeeper to watch him until the Samaritan returns?

Application:

- ⇒ **Evaluate:** There are some who apply interpretations for every detail in this parable; for example...
 - The traveler represents man, who has left the heavenly city (Jerusalem) for the worldly one (Jericho)
 - The priest and the Levite refer to the Law and its sacrifices, which are unable to help
 - The inn is the church, the inn-keeper representative of the apostles; the two coins representing baptism and the Lord's Supper
- ⇒ **Evaluate:** Jesus tells us in the parable what it means to be a neighbor. Jesus demonstrated what it means to be a neighbor. In that sense, the Samaritan stands for Jesus.
- ⇒ **Evaluate:** The lesson is clear. Good deeds are absolutely necessary if we wish to obtain eternal life: we must love our neighbor as ourselves.

Point Three: What is the third thing we need to know to interpret parables? Find the main point of the parable and don't let interpretation of the details wander from that point or go against the wider context of scripture.

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Lesson Six – The Scriptural Parable



Review:

What is the overarching rule in interpreting parables?

⇒

What is the first rule in interpreting parables?

⇒

The second rule?

⇒

The third rule?

⇒

Next Week: Biblical Prophecy

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Lesson Six – The Scriptural Parable



Practicing at Home - I

Read the “Parable of the Weeds” in Matthew 13:24-30 and the interpretation of it in Matthew 13:36-43. Then match the parts of the parable with the spiritual meanings Jesus gives in His interpretation.

Parts of the Parable	Spiritual Meaning
1. _____ The man who sowed good seed	a. The sons of the kingdom (Christians)
2. _____ The good seed	b. The sons of the evil one (unbelievers)
3. _____ The field	c. The Son of Man (Jesus)
4. _____ The enemy who sowed weeds	d. The devil
5. _____ The weeds	e. The world
6. _____ The harvest	f. The end of the age (Judgment Day)
7. _____ The harvesters	g. The angels
8. _____ The burning of the weeds	h. The righteous living in the kingdom of God the Father (Heaven)
9. _____ The gathering of the wheat into the barn	i. The throwing of all evil-doers into the fiery furnace (hell)

Practicing at Home - II

Read the parable of the Friend at Midnight in Luke 11:5-8 and circle the letter of the correct answer to the following questions.

- 1) What topic is Jesus teaching in the context, Luke 11:1-13?
 - a) cursing
 - b) justification
 - c) prayer
 - d) love

- 2) In this parable Jesus instructs us about that topic by showing the importance of –
 - a) friendship
 - b) persistence
 - c) politeness
 - d) need

- 3) In the parable, the man asked his friend for three loaves of bread. Which of the following is the best way of handling this detail?
 - a) The request for three loaves of bread shows that we should always pray to the Triune God.
 - b) The request for three loaves of bread shows that we should always pray for three things.
 - c) The number three simply makes the story more vivid and easy to understand. It should not be given a special spiritual meaning, since that would depart from the main point of the parable.
 - d) Three loaves of bread is not a very large request to make, and so we should learn to keep our requests small enough if we want God to answer them.

- 5) In the parable, the man who was asked for three loaves of bread finally gave them even though he had to get out of bed to do so. What should we learn from this?
 - a) Since this man received help from one who would rather not be bothered, we can be that much more sure of help from God, who never considers our prayers a bother.
 - b) It is best to wait with prayer until it is convenient for God to listen.
 - c) Whenever anyone comes to us in need, we ought to help even if it is inconvenient for us.

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Lesson Seven – Biblical Prophecy



Answers to pages 39.

Part I

- 1) c
- 2) a
- 3) e
- 4) d
- 5) b
- 6) f
- 7) g

- 8) i
- 9) h

Part II

1. c
2. b
3. c
4. a

Introduction:

Look at the following:



How many of you have ever traveled through a mountain range in a car?

Ray was driving from to visit the majestic Rockie Mountains in Alberta, Canada. As he looked out through the windshield of his brand new mini-van, he could see the mountains. From a distance they all seem to be in a row, and he figured it would be no time until he was there, but what happened when he got closer?

As he reached the first mountain, what did he discover about the second, the third and so on?

How close the mountains are to each other depends on a person's _____.

Ill: Mesas in Arizona as a child.

Prophecy is like that. The prophet stands on the road of time, and God lets him see scenes from the future. He may see a number of different happenings, but can't tell *how far apart those happening are in time*. From his perspective, as he looks into the future, they may look as if they're all close together in time, and that is the way he describes them when he writes down his prophecy.

But then as God's people travel down the road of time toward those happenings described by the prophet, they begin to find out that those happenings are not as close together in time as they first seemed to be. Sometimes they are separated by many years or many centuries, like mountains that prove to be miles and miles apart as you drive farther into the mountain range.

This idea has a name. It is called _____. And we can summarize it in this way:

_____ lets you see _____ events without seeing the amount of _____ between them.

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Lesson Seven – Biblical Prophecy



Biblical Example:

- Joel was a prophet that lived hundreds of years before Christ. During his tenure as prophet – God’s people were struck with a plague of grasshoppers that ate up their crops. Joel prophesied that God would take pity on the people, send the grasshoppers away, and cause the crops to grow again. Then come the following verses.

28“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

30I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

32And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls.” (Joel 2:28-32)

- When would these things happen?
- How long before they would happen?
- Explain the “day” in verse 31.
- How much time does the prophet say elapses between the pouring out of the Spirit and the “day”?
- What happens to people on that “day”? Why?
- Was this prophecy ever fulfilled?

Side note:

- ⇒ Do we see today - “sons and daughter” prophesying, “old men” dreaming dreams, “young men” seeing visions? Explain

Excellent Quote:

“...God used dreams, visions and the gift of His Spirit in Old Testament times *to reveal His will to men*. God reveals Himself today through the words of His Old Testament prophets and His New Testament apostles in the Holy Scriptures.”

(Eickmann, p. 162 – People’s Bible Commentary on Hosea, Joel and Amos)

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Lesson Seven – Biblical Prophecy



Simple Language:

How many of you have ever been on a big, fast roller coaster?



Ray was again talking to his grandson, Jesse. Jesse had never been on a roller coaster. After being in awe of the awesomeness of the United States and the large roller coasters found there, this little Canadian wanted to know what it felt like to ride one.

If you were in Ray's shoes, what would you tell Jesse?

- ⇒ God often does the same thing when He tells us about the future. If the future contains something we've never experienced before, God may describe it for us, using pictures taken from everyday life or by using experiences which we may all have had.
- ⇒ He often does this when he tells us about heaven. The joy and wonders of heaven are far beyond our present experiences – farther than a wild roller coaster ride is for a child who has never even ridden a bike. So we should remember how weak our understanding is when we read about heaven in the Bible. God comes down to our level by picturing heaven in various terms – can you name a few?
- ⇒ It would be foolish to think that heaven is exactly like that just mentioned, instead remember – God often uses pictures of the future in terms of the present, in terms we can understand.

Biblical Example:

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25-27)

- These verses are often read at funeral services – why, what did Job say would happen to him?
- Would Job have a body, or would he be raised as a bodiless spirit?

A/D – At the resurrection, our bodies will be just like the ones we have now.

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Lesson Seven – Biblical Prophecy



But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”

How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. (1 Cor. 15:35-38)

➤ St. Paul makes a comparison here to teach us about the bodies of resurrected believers. To what does he compare the human body of the believer that dies and rises again?

➤ Does a wheat plant look much like a wheat seed?

⇒ What is St. Paul’s point?

Summary:

- When reading prophecy in the Bible what two things do we want to keep in mind?
 - Prophecies are often written in _____
 - God uses _____ to picture the future or those things which we have not yet experienced.

Final Summary: Encouragement!

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Lesson Seven – Biblical Prophecy



Practicing at Home – I

Read Matthew 3:7-12 and answer the following questions by writing the letter of the correct answer in the blank.

-
-
- _____ 1) According to the context, the person speaking in Matthew 3:7-12 is
- a) Paul
 - b) John the Baptist
 - c) Jesus
 - d) Isaiah
 - e) Abraham
- _____ 2) The person who “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (vs. 11) is
- a) Paul
 - b) John the Baptist
 - c) Jesus
 - d) Isaiah
 - e) Abraham
- _____ 3) According to Acts 1:4-8 and 2:1-4, the baptism with the Holy Spirit prophesied in Matthew 3:11
- a) Took place when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River
 - b) Took place on Pentecost, a few days after Jesus ascended
 - c) Takes place whenever we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - d) Has not yet taken place
- _____ 4) When Matthew 3:11 speaks of baptism with fire, the context (vs. 10 and 12) shows that this baptism with fire refers to
- a) God’s final judgment upon unbelievers who do not produce fruits of repentance
 - b) The fire that came down from heaven upon Elijah’s sacrifice at Mt. Carmel
 - c) The fire of faith glowing in the hearts of believers
 - d) The fires of persecution which test the unfaithfulness of Christians
- _____ 5) Which of the following best describes the prophecy: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire”?
- a) We cannot know what the prophecy refers to since it has not yet begun to be fulfilled.
 - b) God is using familiar experiences from our present earthly life to picture for us something that will happen in heaven.
 - c) The prophecy is an example of prophetic perspective since it brings together events that are hundreds of years apart.
 - d) The prophecy refers only to a single event in the history of the Church.

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Lesson Seven – Biblical Prophecy



Practicing at Home – II

Read Amos 9:11-15 and answer the following questions by writing the letter of the correct answer in the blank.

-
-
- _____ 1) According to Acts 15:12-18, the prophecy in Amos 9:12 is fulfilled by
- a) The conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity so that they become part of God's people
 - b) The conquest of the nation of Edom by Israelites kinds during the Old Testament
 - c) The return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon
- _____ 2) Now interpret the rest of the prophecy in line with the interpretation James gave in Acts 15. When God says (Amos 9:11) "I will restore David's fallen tent,"
- a) The rebuilding of the run-down earthly kingdom of King David is being used as a picture of Christ's coming to establish His spiritual kingdom (Luke 1:32-33)
 - b) God was promising that He would literally patch up David's tent wherever it was torn or broken
 - c) We should expect that the modern nation of Israel will recover all the territory which David ruled over in Old Testament times.
- _____ 3) When God says, "New wine will drip from the mountains" (Amos 9:13)
- a) He is warning us about the dangers of too much alcohol
 - b) He is using the happiness of an abundant grape harvest that produces plenty of wine as an earthly picture for the joys of salvation.
 - c) He wants us to expect a time before the end of the world when the mountains and hills of Israel will be literally flowing with wine.
- _____ 4) When God says, "I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted" (Amos 9:15),
- a) This prophecy was literally fulfilled in Old Testament times by the return of Israelites from foreign exile to the land of Palestine.
 - b) This prophecy has been literally fulfilled by the establishment of the modern state of Israel, so that we can be sure the Jewish people will never again be driven out of their homeland.
 - c) This prophecy is a picture in Old Testament terms of the safety of believers in their heavenly home, from which they will never be uprooted

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Lesson Seven – Biblical Prophecy



Answers to pages 44-45.

Part I

- 1) b
- 2) c
- 3) b
- 4) a
- 5) c

Part II

1. a
 2. a
 3. b
 4. c
-
-