

Study Methods

“ 101 “

**Study series as posted at the website
and originally e-mailed to the subscribers.**

© 2004, 2006

**A Voice in the Wilderness
P.O.Box 9531
Spokane, WA 99209 USA**

www.a-voice.org

The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Study Methods

Contents:

05	-Introduction
07	-Repetition
09	-Scriptural Interpretation
12	-How to Interpret the Scriptures
12	-Literal
16	-Allegory
19	-Visions
20	-Topical Studies
21	-Charts
27	-Outlines
31	-Verse-by-verse
33	-Word Studies
37	-Sentence Analysis (grammatical structure)
40	-Context
43	-Correlation with other Scripture
45	-Historical/Cultural Background
47	-Overall study of a book
48	-Who/what/when/where/why/how?
49	-Inherent Dangers
51	-Holy Spirit: our Teacher
53	-Reviewing the Repeatables

Addendum:

54	How to Study the Bible?
56	Study Tools & Methods
58	Charismatic Signs? Mark 16:17-18 out-of-context

INTRODUCTION:

"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will also be able to teach others... Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to argue with empty words to no good, to the destruction of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will proceed to more ungodliness." (2Tim2:2,14-16)

Regarding the Scriptures Paul gives essentially two exhortations: Scripture should be 1) read (1Ti4:13) and 2) preached/taught (Tit1:3) One of the gifts given to the Church is that of "pastors and teachers". (Eph4:11) There are some who would suggest that the Greek really means "teaching pastors". But the passage does actually contain the conjunction "and". But even so, I would ask: How can a person be a pastor, if they are not "able to teach"? (1Tim3:2) Teaching is one of the required qualifications of a pastor. And how does one teach, if they do not know how to study?

It is one thing for this ministry to continually feed the reader with God's Word. But there will come a time when this global technology will break down. There will come a time when the powers of darkness will censor the proclamation of God's Word. When that time comes, how will the young-in-the-Lord know how to keep clear of what Paul calls "empty words to no good"? How will they know how to sort out the "profane and idle babblings"? How will they know how to give "diligence" in "rightly dividing the Word of Truth"?

There's an old saying: Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; Teach a man how to fish, feed him for a lifetime. If you know HOW-TO study God's Word, when you become separated from the Godly teachers you've grown to trust, you will find you don't need them, because God's Holy Spirit will "guide you into all truth". (Jn16:13) You will find that "...you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will remain in Him." (1Jn2:27) And as you learn how to study for yourself, many of you will become able, further in turn, to teach others.

SCRIPTURAL STUDY METHODS:

Scripture does not contain a book among the 66 called "Bible Study Methods". But it does tell us how Paul "reasoned" with people from the Scriptures. (Ac17:2) By definition, that would be "inductive", wouldn't it. God speaks to Israel "let us -reason- together" (Is1:18) While there is the 'spiritual' (Romans ch8), God also gave us "minds" (1Cor14:15), and one of the characteristics of the Christian life is that of having a "sound mind". (2Ti1:7) These minds were God-given to us to -USE-. There are certain concepts that have become understood over the years regarding 'how' people learn things. This series will attempt to give an overview of the most commonly understood principles.

REPETITION:

One principle that is probably the most-understood is that of 'repetition'. When the powers-that-be wanted to create a climate wherein it would be easier to implement rules and laws for governmental infringements upon individual American 'privacy' and liberties, for the purpose by the powers-of-darkness towards governmental dominance, they took a national tragedy (9/11) and replayed those video images over and over. For an entire week NBC network totally pre-empted all other programming and did nothing but cover the initial attacks, playing those images over and over, and continually talked about the sorrow of the victims, elevating to the status of "hero" the police and firemen, etc. You Americans remember...you were here.

Companies gain name-recognition by 'repeating' their commercials, continually placing their logos repeatedly in view of people.

How does a child learn his 'lines' for the school play, or memorize things like the Gettysburg Address, Preamble, Pledge of Allegiance, etc? Or learn all the states and their capitols, or for civics class the counties and county seats? (if they even learn those things anymore?!) REPETITION.

If I can insert a little anecdote here: I'm reminded of years ago when I drove school bus, there was little "Andy" in his wheel chair. The place his chair would 'fit', where it could be strapped in for safety, was directly behind the driver (me). Nobody had yet told him that his handicap was supposed to be a source of sorrow, grumbling and self-pity; that he was in a sub-category of human called, "victim"; but he was always cheerful and would happily sing songs all-the-way-home. One day it would be the Alphabet song. Another day, "tomorrow, tomorrow, I love you, tomorrow..." over and over and over and over.....and over again. However many times he could sing the song, in the time it took to get from Grand Forks out to the Air Base west of town...that's how many times he'd sing it over and over. REPETITION!

Of the various things we will observe in this series, this point is the one with strongest Scriptural support...

As God gave the Law, what was said about man's relationship to it? "But the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (De30:14) How was it to get there into the hearts of them and their children? "And these Words which I am commanding you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

(De6:6-9)

If you think about what these verses say, it's just like commercials that pop up all over in front of us: on TV, billboards, newspaper and magazine ads, flyers in the mail box, etc. REPETITION. What the world does with commercial advertisements, is how the Christian is to hide God's Word in our hearts (Ps119:11)

God's Word is learned the way children learn. A child learns to talk by 'repeating' the sounds he hears from the adults. A parent teaches a child the alphabet by repetition. Counting...by repetition. As God says to Israel: "To whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand the message? Those weaned from the milk and removed from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little;" (Is28:9-10) This is how children are taught. And Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven." (Mt18:3)

Precept upon precept; line upon line; here and little, there a little.

In other words, a person cannot read a verse here or there, -once-, and assume he knows-it-all. Nor can one do like I've heard some proudly proclaim: I've read through the -entire- Bible once, and I've got a pretty good idea of its teachings.

No. Our learning of God's Word is like Jeremiah says, "Your Words were found, and I ate them; and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Jehovah the God of Hosts." (Jer15:16)

Show me one person who can eat but one meal for their entire life, and survive... and I will then also agree that all a person needs is to read through the Bible -once-. No! We eat regularly, daily. We -repeat- the daily rituals of breakfast, lunch and dinner/supper. Same with God's Word.

SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION:

When we actually get into the Scriptures, and start digging into its truths, possibly of more importance than anything else is this matter of interpretation.

As I was collecting together the topics for this series, I also looked up my old notes (class syllabus) from a similar class in Bible school years ago, to be reminded about what we might have been taught back then, to see if I had missed any concept that should be included. In amongst everything else, the printed notes and my written notes, there was one point the instructor made, which he repeated; and we as students would repeat to each other:

"There is only ONE -TRUE- INTERPRETATION of any given passage of Scripture" (Repeat this to yourselves a few times. Let it sink in.)

There might be several applications; as Scripture itself will often expand some passage during different times of history, to different people, in different ways. (Heb1:1) But as Joseph says to Pharaoh, of the two dreams about cows and grain, "the dreams are one". (Gen41:25-26) John sees groups of "sevens" in his vision; and yet, when one compares the "trumpets" (Rev8) to the "bowls" (Rev16), one sees a similarity. We'll look at this specific example further when we discuss "charts".

God is "one". (De6:4) His Word is one. (Jn17) God does not change. (Mal3:6) Jesus Christ remains "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb13:8) Whatever was holy or unclean in Genesis, is so today. Just as Abel was saved "by faith" (Gen4:4, Heb11:4), so it is for the N.T. Church (Ac16:31) and us today. The Scriptures did not come about through "personal exposition". (2Pt1:20) KJV says "private interpretation". There is a difference...

Between the VW-edition and the KJV we can come to understand a truth that today's apostasy would do well to understand; which they reject at their own eternal peril. Scripture is not interpreted by going around the circle asking: "What does it mean TO YOU? Well, TO ME it means..."

No! No! No! That method of so-called "Bible study" is at the very heart and soul -core- of today's apostasy. It is its curse!

The question that needs to be asked is: "What did -GOD- mean?"

When a person gives their own 'private interpretation', what in essence they are doing is giving their own 'personal exposition'. That verse actually says that Scripture did not 'originate FROM OUT OF man'. That's what "exposition" means: a "setting forth" of meaning. From the latin:

"ex", "out of"; and "posit", to "put or place". (See? We're doing a little "word study" here; one of the study methods we'll discuss later at length) In other words, Scripture did not originate from within and out of man, out of his own heart and mind, to become proclaimed. No. Holy men of God wrote as the Holy Spirit "propelled" them along.

That word "propelled" is a word having the same idea as an object like a tumble weed being blown along by strong gale force winds, or the winds of a storm blowing things along. It is with a certain 'vehemence' that the holy men wrote at the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is like riding a motorcycle through a "dust devil" (a mini-tornado on a hot summer day): when it is hovering over the middle of the highway you cannot see it because there is no dust for it to kick up, so you don't realize it's there until you ride through it, at which point it knocks you back and forth violently; even on a big motorcycle travelling at speed.

KJV's use of "interpretation" is not quite accurate to our modern understanding of the word. It suggests an "explaining of the meaning" of the Scriptures that's there. However, 2Pet1:20-21 is actually speaking of Scripture's -ORIGINS-, not its interpretation.

However, when people don't actually 'like' God's Word, but would never admit to it for fear of exposing themselves as being unbelievers, while pretending to be christians, they "interpret" the Scriptures as "what it means to me". In other words, they are not seeing what the text -SAYS-; but rather, picking-and-choosing some words to their own liking, and manipulating things around in their minds to deceive themselves into thinking they are 'studying' the Bible; when in truth, what they are doing is finding 'excuses' to explain-away their sin and rebellion against God's holy standards. When it boils right down to the nitty gritty of the matter, when they proclaim "it means to me"...in their hearts they are actually WRITING THEIR OWN BIBLE. It is NOT -God's- Word; it is their own. It is "a false vision and a worthless divination, and a thing of no value, and the deceit of their heart." (Jer14:14)

When an "interpreter" is speaking on behalf of another person of another language, he is "translating" into the language of the hearers. Often, in going from one language to another, there is no word that conveys the exact meaning of a certain word in the original. Or, the speaker uses a colloquial idiom of his native tongue, for which there is no parallel in the language of his hearers... so the -translator- must sometimes "interpret" what he has said, in terms familiar to the hearers. The interpreter does not hear the speaker's words, and then add his own ideas to those words.

For an example, the speaker might have said something like: You folks need a water tower for your town, and my corporation is providing the funds so you can get right to it; your lives are at stake if you don't

drill this new well, and change your water source; since your present water source is contaminated; that's why so many of you have these health issues.

So, the interpreter says: You townspeople have many options for resolving your health issues, one of which, if you should so-choose and decide, you can organize a fund-raiser for the expenses to divert the waters from this river that snakes around over here and dam them up as a reservoir. Others of you may wish to seek out doctors and other holistic healers to get those boils and sores looked at.

Let's see, there was -some- similarity between the two: they both talked about "water" and their "health" issues and about "getting healed" and the "costs" involved. So, see...?? Same thing... right?

This is how the matter was 'interpreted'. But the truth is that the townspeople are not receiving the message AS GIVEN by the original speaker. The speaker is offering to 'give' the town a solution that will work, and the interpreter is speaking of the townspeople doing it themselves with different less-than-optimal results.

But this is the exact same sort of thing people are doing with God's Word when they express their own "personal interpretation" of the Scriptures.

So, let us continue...

How to Interpret the Scriptures:

Three Methods: as indicated by the text

- literal (actual events as recorded or prophesied)
- allegory/parables (clearly stated in passage/context)
- visions (clearly stated in passage/context)

Literal:

A few years ago, next to my sign shop in the same building, used to be a shipping/postal company. The entrance where their customers would enter were of the double swinging door variety; over on the end of the building and around the corner from my shop. The proprietors had bolted the one door stationary, with a sign on 'it' pointing to the 'other' door, indicating to their customers to use that 'other' door. The 'other' door also had a little sign on it saying, "Please Use This Door". Over the course of years I lost count on how many of their customers would come through my door, looking for a way 'in' to their establishment. On a couple of occasions they would even walk in, look me straight in the face in all seriousness, pointing with their outstretched arm off to the side and pointed finger at my neighbors, asking if 'this' was 'that' place over there. You think -that's- funny! Well, how about this, then...

On one occasion, when a lady realized she was not where she wanted to be, expressed that those signs on the doors told her to: Go left and come around the corner. Huh? She was not reading the signs 'literally'. If she had, she would have gone directly in the correct door, without walking clear half-way around the building to my place.

Literally, the one sign said to "use other door" and had an arrow -pointing- to the other door. And if there was any question, the other door said, "Use -this- door". How much clearer could it be? There was -nothing- to suggest "going around a corner". Here again, she was like so many claiming to be christians: making the Bible 'say' that which agrees with how they are already living their lives. In her mind, since she had walked around the corner and down the side of the building... that's what the signs said... even though they didn't really (literally)

A very high percentage of Scriptural text is "literal". The only times Scripture is NOT literal, is when the TEXT ITSELF SAYS SO. (Here again, please read that last sentence a couple of times to let it sink in and understand it fully. We'll address this further, a bit later.) When it says that Noah built an ark out of wood, that's what he built. Its remains are there, preserved high-up in those mountains. When the Bible says that Solomon built the temple, that Herod built a temple, the remains are there to this day. When it speaks of other historical events involving Israel, Babylon, Syria, Rome, etc. there is archaeological

evidence to support Scripture. When I studied Latin in high school, we would translate stuff about the Appii Forum and Three Taverns, same places Paul -literally- saw when he got to Rome. (Ac28:15) When God promised that after being dispersed into all the nations, Israel would again become a nation, that's -literally- what has happened; Israel is in the daily news, proclaiming Scripture's fulfilled prophecies. Israel is a -literal- nation.

Literalness is to have a statement which accurately reflects the facts. If I walked down to the store to buy some groceries, a -literal- representation of that event of my walking to the store would be a sentence something like: "I went to the store and bought some things". The statement says that "I went", because, in fact, that's what I did; I went. And it says that my destination was the store, because indeed, there is a store over there that I went to; you can go and see the store for yourself if you are of a mind to verify my statement. And the veracity of my having "bought" some things is proven by seeing those things now sitting on the kitchen table where I placed them when I first walked in the door, with the receipt sitting next to them.

I could speak of the store being the "Riveridge" Yoke's over there on "W. Wellesley", across the street from the VA hospital. Now if you go past the store you end up at the cemetery. If you were to continue straight, you would end up going over the cliff, down to the Spokane River. But if you follow the cemetery paths around, like I do sometimes for bicycle rides, you can end up in a wooded area with little trails, and if you follow them around, you end up at the Joe Albi stadium parking area... If you are a local, you know 'exactly' the places I'm talking about. If you're not from around here, you could conceivably look up some online directories and see that, indeed, there is a grocery store at the W.Wellesley address called, "Riveridge Yoke's". You could verify that the VA hospital exists there, and that that is where the stadium is situated. In the same way we can know that the tribal borders for Israel in the latter half of Joshua were -literal- boundaries.

However, let us also look at one Scriptural example of 'literalness' that the scoffers stumble over:

God's creation of this "heavens and earth" (Gen2:4) was accomplished in six (6) -literal- days. How do we know this? By looking at the text. Genesis repeats a word pattern: "...the evening and the morning: Day One" (Gen1:5) Scoffers argue: how could there be day/night in vs5 when the sun, moon and stars weren't yet made until vs14....therefore, they say, it's not "literal".

Here's where a "word study" is in order. In vs3 we see that God created "light". It would do no good to create "luminaries" (vs14) if there was not such a thing as "light" by which to see them. As God queries Job: "Where is the way to where light dwells? And darkness, where is its

place...By what way is light diffused, or the east wind scattered over the earth?" (Job38:19,24) (And in looking at these verses from Job, we have also just engaged in "correlation" with other Scripture) Notice, God does not ask Job where the sun is; but rather, where is 'light'? "Light" is not the same thing as the "sun". So then to complete that question, how could there be "evening and the morning" without a sun?

Let us not forget that "God is light" (1Jn1:5); and also remember that in the new heavens and earth, it says of the New Jerusalem that there won't be sun or moon, because why? "for the glory of God illuminated it; and the Lamb is its light." (Rev21:23) What could we suggest, except that when God said, "Let there be light", that during those first couple days of creation God, Himself, was illuminating the earth, in preparation for His living creation? God, in His own essence, doesn't require light, as it says of Him that He was in the "thick darkness" (Ex20:21), that that is His dwelling. (1Ki8:12) When He created the earth, before He made light, it says that His Spirit was "hovering over the face of the waters" in the -context- of "darkness on the face of the deep" (Gen1:2) But since we also know He dwells in "unapproachable light" (1Ti6:16), perhaps His creation of "let there be light" was His special manifestation of Himself for the sake of man, whom He was about to create? MYSTERIES to yet be fully revealed in God's own time, I suspect.

This is just one possible explanation. Thus...just because we don't initially 'understand' something, we should not dismiss that which Scripture presents 'literally'. There might be some other explanation that God hasn't yet revealed to us. But when the passage itself spells it out, "evening and morning", is that not the very definition of the cycle of a -literal- earthly "day"?

Word studies aid in understanding the literal. If we don't understand the words, we do not know what the literal -is-. In seeking to understand the literal, we need to take care to 'faithfulness' to the exact text. This is why the matter of 'translations' is sooooo important; that I continually harp on. There are several translations that claim to be "literal", but in each case that I am aware of, they each have errors here and there in their word choices...using English words that do not really quite mean what the texts say. If a person uses a translation in which words have been altered from the true meaning, any efforts at -literal- interpretation have already been defeated before a person's study ever gets started.

Unlike "allegory" or "visions", with "literal" interpretation, words mean exactly what they say. Certain words are in the text, because when their definitions might be looked up, their meaning is what God intends for the reader to understand. Black is black; white is white; righteousness is righteous, and evil is evil. Doing what God commands is obedience; and disobedience calls down His judgment. Black does not

mean, "shades of gray". Obedience does not mean, "if you feel like it".

God's promise of "death" for Adam's disobedience (Gen2:17) is -literal-. And there is only "one true interpretation" to that matter. There are certainly two applications: physical and spiritual. If sinful man does not believe in such a thing as spiritual death, he should at least observe the physical; the earth is littered with cemeteries, proving the 'literalness' of the physical. Should he not open his eyes to understand that spiritual death ("the things which are not seen" right now), thus, is also 'literal' (and "eternal/everlasting" 2Co4:18, Dan12:2)?

At the time this was being written, a subscriber of the 'mixed multitude' wrote to complain about something, and quoted from that utter abomination "The Message" which says: "Anyone who doesn't love is as good as dead" (1Jn3:14). God's Word says, "He who does not love his brother remains in death." "as good as dead" suggests -life-, not "death". The word "death" is -literal-. "as good as dead" weasels around God's judgment.

"Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His Words, that He not judge you and you be found a liar." (Pr30:5-6) "...and if anyone takes away from the Words of the Book of this Prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this Book." (Rev22:19)

Earlier we posed a question that should be asked: "What did -God-mean?"

Well, the answer is easy... What did He -say-?

Allegory - Parables:

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: The kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Mt13:24)

Remember, previously we stated: "The only times Scripture is NOT literal, is when the TEXT ITSELF SAYS SO." In this quoted example (and Scripture is full of similar parables) notice that the text itself tells us that Jesus is telling a "parable". And the text also tells us clearly that it is allegory when it says "is like".

Just a sideways snide remark, here, about today's youth: They are all a bunch of allegories and not real, judging by the extent of their vocabulary: "I mean... -LIKE-... you know... dude!" (OK: Ha, ha!)

First of all, what is a parable? According to the dictionary: "a simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson" Jesus taught the multitudes extensively with parables. (Mk4:2) The kingdom of Heaven is not a -literal- "farm", but Jesus used the illustration of the wheat and tares to teach Heavenly Truth. We started this series with what might be called a mini-parable, regarding 'teaching a man to fish'. This series is not about baiting hooks, and learning where to go fishing for fish with scales and fins; just like Jesus used fishing to illustrate what the disciples would be doing in witnessing to people when He says, "From now on you will be catching men". (Lk5:10b) But the illustration helps us see that which we are enmeshed in, by seeing something else at a distance with objectivity. So often our lives are so muddled up that we cannot see straight...but if we see a parable that contains parallel concepts, it gets us out from ourselves, seeing the same truth from a different angle, and then we can apply the basic concept to ourselves.

Notice the words "basic concept". One very important thing to understand about parables is that they are different from 'literal' teaching. With literal teaching a person nit-picks, looks at precise word meanings for all the little details; every jot and tittle. But with parables one only looks at the 'general' and 'obvious' lesson being taught. One does not develop a complete doctrinal thesis by nit-picking parables. That is not their intent. They are given for the -basic- 'simple' understanding of the Truth being taught. One reason some cult-like groups go into the tangents they do is because they focus in on and treat parables literally, and ignore that which is supposed to be literal.

One parable that is likely abused more than any other is the one about the "Ten Virgins", five having oil, five not. There are so many fantastical false doctrines on eschatology that are taught from it, distinguishing Israel vs Church, looking in intimate detail at Jewish wedding customs; some even, who believe in the so-called "post-trib" false doctrine, taking the part where the five are told to go "buy" oil for themselves (Mt25:9) as being supposedly the exhortation to stock up

survival supplies to last through the so-called "tribulation". Whereas the 'simple' teaching of that parable is identical to the teaching in Matthew ch7: that not everyone who calls out "Lord, Lord..." we did so many things in "Your name", but will be told, "I never knew you" (vs23) is the genuine article. That a tree is known by its fruit. (vs16-20) Not all are genuine. Just as with the virgins: they were virgins, and had 'lamps'...they 'appeared' to be genuine, but five did not have oil (Holy Spirit), they were not saved. (Rom8:9) They call out, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" but the Lord answers the same thing, "I do not know you". (vs11-12) And essentially, that is -all- that parable is teaching.

If a person looks at the 'context' (another study principle we will discuss later) of Matthew ch25 at the other parables told, one notices that they all teach essentially the same thing: When Christ returns, some will be revealed to have been faithful and will receive blessing; and others who had rejected Christ and were contrary to Him, judgment.

The basic engine of parables, also, is "allegory". Again, looking in the dictionary: "A literary, dramatic, or pictorial device in which characters and events stand for abstract ideas, principles, or forces, so that the literal sense has or suggests a parallel, deeper symbolic sense" You say, "Huh?"?

We cannot see satan with our eyes, nor can we yet physically see the spiritual world of the "spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph6:12b) So Peter uses an allegory to illustrate the seriousness of satan's threat: "...your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1Pt5:8)

Notice that satan is not said to -be- a "lion"...but that his activity is "like" a lion. How does a lion get its food? It hunkers down to be invisible to the prey, it stalks, and when the time is right it pounces, at which point it grabs the prey, chokes the life out of it or breaks its neck, and then the pride proceed to rip the carcass apart as they feast.

Whenever you see the text say that something is "like" or "as", you can be pretty sure it is not 'literal'. That is usually the textual -label- that it is allegory. And so, also, be careful how you mold your doctrines around such passages. Quite often the text itself will also explain the meaning, as in this case of the wheat and tares (the opening passage to this section)(Mt13:36-43)

We already understand that parables help clarify truths. This is how children are taught many things, through stories and fables. A child may have self-confidence issues, but if the story of the "little engine that could" is told, the child can incorporate for themselves next time they are stiving to accomplish a goal: "I think I can, I think I can..."

But also...and this is important to understand about the Scriptures: Not all of Scripture is intended to be understood by all people. (Another sentence worth repeated a couple times) As God knows the rebellious hearts He says, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, that they should not understand with their hearts and be turned, and I should heal them." (Jn12:40) This is why Jesus told so many parables: "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." (Mt13:34-35)

Again, why? "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not at all understand, and seeing you will see and by no means perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull, their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, that they should not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their heart and convert, and I should heal them." (Mt13:13-15)

(I suspect this is one reason the parable of the Ten Virgins is distorted by so many...in order to 'fit' with the other false doctrines of their hard hearts...when in actuality, that parable is talking about them. Only...they don't see it! -They- are the virgins without oil!)

But to those who have put their trust in Christ, Jesus says: "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." (Mt13:16-17) "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things are in parables," (Mk4:11)

Thus, dear Believer: If in your witnessing and proclaiming the Truths of God's Word, it seems like you are ramming up against a brick wall and they JUST DO NOT UNDERSTAND, do not fret. That's part of God's design of the Scriptures. Always remember that God's Word accomplishes exactly what God intends. (Is55:11) As God's Word abides in us (1Jn2:14) as we witness, for some the Word is the "...aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life." (2Co2:16)

Visions:

This one, now, is easy; and yet, not. Most visions in Scripture are followed by explanations, except for the latter chapters of Daniel and most of Revelation.

Joseph sees dreams of sheaves and stars bowing to him; which was fulfilled when he became ruler in Egypt and his family came to him, bowing. Pharaoh sees dreams of sevens of cows and stalks of grain, and Joseph interprets the seven years of plenty followed by famine. (Gen41) Nebuchadnezzar has visions of a statue and a large tree, which Daniel explains as world history, and Nebuchadnezzar's own life before God. (Dan chs2&4)

Ezekiel has visions of God and the Holy Spirit. Were they literal 'wheels'? Ezekiel continually explains his vision with words: "appearance like" (Ez1:14, etc) There, we don't know -exactly- what Ezekiel saw, but we are given a 'sense' of its awesomeness.

Paul had a vision of the "third heaven" where he saw and heard remarkable things. (2Cor12:1-4) In spite of the magnitude of Paul's ministry in writing most of the N.T. epistles, and his understanding of things, he came away from that vision expressing, "whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows".

And then, there's one of Scripture's greatest stumbling blocks for the unsaved, the book of Revelation. Am I being presumptuous in saying that? Surely God would never lay a stumbling block for people?! "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense..." (Rom9:33) "And He shall be a sanctuary for you; but a stone of stumbling, and a rock of falling to both the houses of Israel; and a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." (Is8:14)

Remember that the entire book of Revelation is John's record of the -vision- he was given. He was "in the spirit" (Rev1:10) And it, being at the very end, has not yet been fully explained. Some of it surely is literal. But a good part of it, being a vision, is figurative and symbolic. Some of it has already been fulfilled, but other has not. But if we have seen how other Scriptural visions were explained and fulfilled, as we see world events unfolding and coming to preparation for fulfillment, we see them portrayed in Revelation.

If Daniel could write down his visions and conclude: "...I heard, but I did not understand" (Dan12:8), and Paul would say, "...I do not know, God knows.." (2Co12:2-3) then who are we to be presumptuous regarding as-yet-unfulfilled prophetic Bible visions..! We need to be careful when attempting to 'interpret' prophecy. Some things are clear; others are not...by (God's) design.

TOPICAL STUDIES:

Well, this one is pretty much self-explanatory. What does the Bible say about... (fill-in-the-blank) ...? Salvation, marriage, the church, angels, heaven, hell, creation, child-rearing and development, etc.

In keeping with the concepts of "interpretation" that we have already spoken of, this is likely the MOST DIFFICULT of all methods...if one's goal is to be TRUE to God's Word. If a person is a brand new 'baby' Christian, it is likely wise for them to not try this at first. We're going to talk (later) about "context" and "correlation" with other Scripture. But in order to have an accurate understanding of a topic, one needs to know the -whole- of Scripture. "...the whole counsel of God" (Ac20:27) That means, having read it through from cover-to-cover AT LEAST ONCE. But to -really- know 'all' that is contained in the Bible, considering its vastness, a person truly needs several years of having read the Bible through at least several times. In addressing a 'topic' one needs to be familiar with all-angles. And the various study tools with their 'search' capabilities do not do justice to what a person stores in their heart from having had the Holy Spirit put it there, through reading and meditating on it. (Ps119:97)

But otherwise, for those who are past the "milk of the Word" (1Pe2:2), 'how' a person puts together a topic study will be based on the concepts that follow. There is likely not any "ONE-right-way" to put a topic together. As with most things in life, that will be based on 'what' the topic is, who is putting the study together, and who the audience is.

CHARTS:

Here, too, there is likely not any -one- 'right' way to do charts. It will be determined by 'what' the subject is, and the goals one wishes to fulfill. If a teacher is putting together a chart to teach others, the methods will be different than for a person doing so for their own personal growth.

Charts serve basically a couple of functions: 1) To track the progression of things and events, and 2) To make comparisons.

A most noteworthy sort of 'progression' is a Timeline. At the website is a timeline that resulted from my own personal notes years ago. Within it you will see both 'progression' and 'comparison'. That 'chart' started out as sheets of paper and pencil, next to my Bible. One particular read-thru of the Bible I made a special point of notating every time any reference to 'time' was mentioned; usually in "years". People being born, dying, building of Noah's ark, the time Israel was in Egypt, years of the reigns of judges and kings, Israel's time in Babylon, etc. Then, once I had reached Revelation, I compiled all those notes, using a calculator, and (back when I did it was before I had a computer) taped sheets of typing paper together, head-to-tail, and with a typewriter typed spaces and dashes down the left side to represent the years...so-many-years represented by a dash and carriage return. Then, with careful calculations (all of the simple 'addition' variety), starting at "0" for Genesis 1:1, assigned a 'year' to each person, item or event of my notes; and then plotted them on the chart. It ended up being a long scroll.

I mentioned "comparison". You will notice that when Israel was split into northern and southern kingdoms, that their respective kings are listed in two columns in synchronicity with each other, because each king is mentioned in relationship to the 'year' of the king of the other kingdom. You will also notice the various O.T. prophets interspersed, so a person can see which kingdom each prophet spoke to, and also which prophets were contemporary with each other. And if you want to get carried away, over in the far-right column you will see certain other historical markers, as one might study them in world history, synchronizing Israel's Biblical history with some of the primary world philosophers, etc.

And of course, you can also buy complex charts that others have compiled, like the one I've got on my office wall, with 15 concurrent timelines, representing all the various regions of the world through the past 6000 years. But that gets a little beyond strictly -Bible- study.

What are some other things a person might wish to -compare? An obvious one is the Life of Christ, as presented by the four Gospels. One can compare how "synoptic" events are retold by each writer. I'm not going to do any comparing of the Gospels for you here, but let's borrow from my earlier trip to the grocery store, shall we, to see how we might make our observations:

During my trip to the store the wind was blowing pretty briskly. At the gray house, the little black-and-white cat came out to greet me, meowing, and I stopped briefly and stooped to pet it and talk to it like I usually do when it comes out. The next block at the one house some people were outside in their yard raking leaves, and we greeted each other. When I got down to the arterial, it took me a few extra seconds to get across the street because the traffic was thick and furious. At the store I bought a bag of pre-packaged salad, a block of cheddar cheeze, and a gallon of milk. When I got home, I initially put everything on the kitchen table.

So one person tells about my shopping trip: They saw me walking down the street, zipping up my jacket. A bit later they saw me wiping my hands off on my pants. At a certain point in the store they saw me picking out a block of cheeze.

Second person observes: I crossed the street rather quickly, as though I was in a hurry. Then I was over at the produce aisle at the store, and then they saw me walk out the doors.

Third person remarks about how hectic the traffic was that day. They also saw a little cat meowing.

Fourth person informs us: PB was born in Tokyo, Japan of missionary parents, was saved at age 5, was always engaged in some sort of 'ministry' activity throughout his life, even from a child. In his earlier life the ministry was mostly in music, but since his life was turned upside down almost 13 years ago, and he met God afresh and was forced to face all the crud that had collected in his own heart, the life-long 'call' upon his life from God is now being used to proclaim God's Word in written form.

Now you see...each one of these people is making observations about the -very- 'same' shopping trip. But if you heard only one of their accounts, you might have a totally different picture of my meanderings that afternoon, than what -all- the facts were. One speaks of me wiping my hands on my pants....that's because the cat that the other person mentioned seems to live mostly outdoors and doesn't get brushed very often by its owners, so I was brushing its sheddings off my hands. I was in a "hurry" to cross the street, because the traffic was busy, so I was catching a clear spot, to get across before the next vehicles came along; I was not in a "hurry" at all, just getting across without getting run over. According to one account one might think that all I

bought was "cheeze". According to the other, who-knows-what? And nobody even mentioned the "milk". That doesn't mean I didn't get some milk; just... nobody mentioned it. Not to mention the zipping of the jacket: why did I zip the jacket? The reality was that the wind was cold. But in just hearing the narrative, a person might not know (for sure) without being stuck with mere conjecture or speculation.

And then, as with the four Gospels, the fourth departs from the others in its scope, and tells us about the person. In this example, PB.

The first three Gospels detail many of Jesus' activities and teachings as He ministered -to- man. John presents Jesus's activities and words that let us know the -nature- of 'who' Jesus is: Deity, the Son of God, the I AM.

As we noted earlier about the six "literal" days of creation, or the mis-interpretations of the parable of the 10 virgins; I suspect another primary item of stumbling for the scoffers is related to the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion, burial, resurrection and meetings with the various disciples. That's because each writer has recorded various perspectives and 'segments'. None of them individually give the -entire-complete timeline of events. Remember that John gives a disclaimer that it was not possible to write -everything- down, that the world could not contain all the books necessary to do so. But what is written is done so, so that we might read and "believe" and have "life in His name". (Jn20:31)

Thus, as we observed before, for those whose hearts are -hard-, God has put the various accounts together in such a manner so as to cause -stumbling-. For those whose hearts God knows, there is also sufficient upon which to base our faith. Remember that FAITH is "the certainty of things hoped for, the evidence of things NOT SEEN." (Heb11:1) "Blessed are those not seeing and yet believing" (Jn20:29)

With the Gospels one can see Jesus from four different perspectives in terms of: Matthew speaks much about the "kingdom"; Jesus is King. Mark always sees Jesus in a hurry with the repeated words "and IMMEDIATELY"; Jesus the servant. Luke speaks of the Son of Man, and is the one who mentions Jesus' sweat as "drops of blood"; Jesus' humanity with human emotions. And John presents Jesus as the Son of God; the "Word was God", as Jesus the "I AM"; the One with God's power to throw the multitude backwards to the ground at the mention of His name. (Jn18:6)

Another obvious comparison can be made between Revelation's three groups of seven: seals, trumpets, bowls.

Seals (Rev6-8)

- 1 wht horse/conquering
- 2 red horse/no peace/killings
- 3 blk horse/commerce
- 4 palehorse/death/sword/hunger/beasts
- 5 martyrs under altar
- 6 earthquake/stars falling
- 7 silence/prep for trumpets

Trumpets (Rev8-11)

- 1 hail/fire: third of vegetation burned up
- 2 mountain into the sea: third of sea blood/death
- 3 falling star: third of rivers bitter/death
- 4 sun/moon/stars: third darkened
- 5 angel of bottomless pit/locusts/sting-torment of unbelievers
- 6 army of 200-million fire/smoke/brimstone
- 7 Christ takes over world's kingdoms

Bowls (Rev16)

- 1 sores on unbelievers
- 2 blood in the seas
- 3 blood in the rivers
- 4 sun -scorching men with heat
- 5 darkness upon the beast's kingdom
- 6 Euphrates dried up for the "kings of the east" Armageddon
- 7 It is finished! Falling of the nations

Due to space limitations of this medium, these three don't fit side-by-side. (here's where I want that "chalk board") As you look at these three groups, what do you see? Do any of them have similarities to each other?

Observe -- between the Trumpet and Bowl chapters, we have:

- ch12 -woman and dragon (6000 year history of God/Satan/Israel/Christ)
- ch13 -beast with 7 heads and 10 horns, the mark, martyrdom, 666
- ch14 -144,000, gospel preached to the world, winepress God's wrath
- ch15 -picture of heaven and the martyrs; source/preparation of wrath

Remember when Pharaoh had two dreams? He dreamed about cows, and -then- about stalks of grain. That was not indicating a timeline from the cows -to- the grain. Joseph explains to him, "the dreams are one" (Gen41:26) with the further explanation: "And the dream was repeated

unto Pharaoh twice because the thing is determined by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." (vs32)

Thus, do you understand the fallacy of making Revelation into a "timeline" like so many do? When Revelation is treated like a timeline, it causes all sorts of eschatological errors. Most of the so-called "post-trib" doctrines, among other things, also treat Revelation as one gigantic timeline. When a 'pattern' of something is suspected, a simple 'chart' helps make "comparisons" to sort things out.

What is God's reason for repeating the seven Trumpets with the Bowls? What did Joseph say to Pharaoh? Here is God's message: Now please 'act' on this knowledge to "save" people through the horrendous time that is about to come. (Gen41:33~) What is God's call to action based on the two sevens of Revelation?

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; also, do homage to Him who made the heavens and the earth, the sea and springs of water." (Rev14:7)

Now, in the midst of comparing with charts, one can also do a word study with these three 'sevens'. And as we've been seeing throughout this series, no single study method usually stands alone, without help from other methods; because in all of this, we are dealing with words and language. What about the imagery (allegory?) of the three expressions: seals, trumpets and bowls? We didn't really address this in the "visions" section. And perhaps it should fit under the "allegory" section? Since we can't decide, let's talk about it here. This might make another interesting study to sort out with the use of another chart..?

What do seals represent? Usually something 'official'. Official documents were sealed with the official state seal of the ruler. Pharaoh gave his signet ring to Joseph, by which to carry on the business of Egypt. Haman's official status was transferred to Mordecai. Jesus, buried in the tomb, the stone was sealed with a Roman seal. When a ruler sealed something, only a ruler could unseal it. Remember, the book is called the "Revelation of Jesus Christ". The One who was the meek Lamb of God, slain for the sin of the world, now about to take over the kingdoms of this world. As ruler He has the 'right' to open those seals.

Trumpets were used for many occasions: to usher in each new month, at sacrifices and worship, to summon the congregation for important gatherings, to make important announcements, to muster the troops for war and direct their battle movements.

Bowls were used for washing away uncleanness, for collecting the blood of the sacrifices, and after ritual sprinklings had been done, whatever was in it, representing uncleanness and sin and its atonement, was poured

out on the ground next to the altar. And in the case of Solomon's temple, where they poured the blood, there was a conduit system for all these pourings to be carried away, somewhat like a sewer system.

Perhaps: the seven trumpets to 'announce' the final judgments, and the bowls symbolizing their 'fulfillment'? The bowls symbolizing Christ's flushing all the world's uncleanness and filth 'down-the-toilet'? As there is other colorful descriptive language about the evil ones being "swept away" (1Sa12:25, Jer46:15, Is28:17) and the "winnowing shovel" of harvest time (mt3:12) as the wicked are blown away like chaff. (Ps1:4)

While this mentions these topics, this is not intended to be a 'study' of Revelation. These are addressed as -examples- of 'what' a person might dig into, to investigate further and look up relevant Scriptures, if one were studying this part of Revelation...using some sort of charts to keep track of what they found as they researched. Perhaps a chart investigating the different kinds of trumpets and their use? Another to investigate bowls and lavers? Another for seals and signet rings? Each one of these, individually, would result in some rich studies.

OUTLINES:

Outlining is likely one of the 'best' ways of looking at a book or passage in terms of helping to organize one's thoughts around the text, and sorting out what it actually 'says' in a logical manner. Remember? God gave us "minds" to "understand the Scriptures". (Lk24:45)

They speak of "left-brain, right-brain". Outlining is an analytical manner of approaching the Scriptures. Remember that lady who thought the sign on my neighbor's door said to "go round the corner"? She was all flustered -emotionally-. She was not thinking logically. And not to appear 'chauvinist' here, but, by Creator design men tend to be more "logical" and women more "emotional"; that's just the way we're each wired. God put the man together with a wife because they "complement" each other. (Gen2:18,20) The woman gives emotions to the relationship that perhaps the man lacks, and the man supports the woman with logic, where she might tend to go overboard with emotions, making emotional decisions, instead of rational ones. But God made -man- the 'head'. (1Cor11:3) If there is a question as to 'which' takes precedence, it is the "sound mind". (Rom12:3, Tit1:8, 2:6) And notice that that last Titus reference is addressed to "the young men". Thus, do we understand one of the reasons Paul says that women are not to usurp authority to teach over men? (1Tim2:11-14) When the serpent approached Eve, she reacted with her emotions, and did not rely on Adam's logic...she went for that which "felt good" at the moment. Thus, also, in the context of the topic of "charismania" Paul tells the women to "keep silent in the churches (meetings)" (1Cor14:34) Charismania gets its start with -emotions-, and in the days of its infancy, it was more likely than not, that a -woman- was leading the congregation in their ecstasies. Just as the lady thought she was to come "around the corner", when Scriptures are approached only with emotions, as sure as not, there will be doctrinal errors; because the person will not accurately see WHAT IS THERE...WHAT IS WRITTEN. Jesus countered satan with, "It is written". (Mt4:4) Eve did what the lady did... 'added' to God's Word. She added, "...nor shall you touch it.." (Gen3:3) God hadn't said that; He had only said not to "eat" it. (Gen2:17)

And as a little side-bar current-day observation: Have you-all noticed how today's apostasy, pagan occult, and female-god religions are all pushing and promoting "emotions"? Even the secular news reporters, instead of focusing in on, and reporting "facts", are continually asking people, "How did you -feel- about that (event)?" Or like I heard in one case recently, the reporter just came out and asked the person about the situation in so-many-words, "And what were the emotions?"

So with that as introduction...

If you study "outlining" in a typical English class, you will learn the

official "right-way" to outline. They teach that if a heading is to have a sub-heading, sub-headings -MUST- be at least 2 or more. At least, that's what they taught back in my school days:

I Main topic
 A Sub-heading
 B 2nd (required) Sub-heading
II Next topic
 etc,etc.

Forget that! Outline -whatever- the passage contains. How does one determine what the topic headers should be? Where are the divisions? A person might use chapter numbers; but not all chapter divisions are accurate to the topic. e.g. Ephesians 2:1 does not really begin a new thought, but actually trails towards the end of one that began in 1:15. You might try using the paragraph marks that are found in most Bibles; but there, too, so often, I have found that they are not always totally reliable. The Scriptures were not written in chapters and paragraphs. Those markings were all added years later by copyists and translators. The paragraph marks used by the Online Bible software were compiled by Matthew Henry. They are all some man's ideas. For you that are using it, you will see that the VW-edition has removed the paragraph marks from the html, pdf and palm files.

If you are outlining by 'topic', the website Library has examples of a more narrative outline approach in the Soteriology and Covenants series. The "Seven Churches" has both strict outlines, as well as narratives. The various epistles have been done more-or-less following chapters. Romans was chapter-by-chapter. John, more-or-less by chapters.

For this study let's take a couple of generic ideas that we haven't yet addressed in the mailings, and approach them more the way you might do for private study, or in preparation to teach a Bible class:

Jonah is small enough book to look at here, that might lend itself to a 'chapter' outline, thus:

- Ch1 - God's first call to Jonah
- Ch2 - Jonah in the fish's stomach
- Ch3 - God's second call to Jonah
- Ch4 - Jonah is angry

This is the book's basic overview. From there we might break each heading down into sub-topics something like this:

- Ch1 - God's first call to Jonah
 - A. God's call
 - B. Jonah flees the opposite direction
 - C. God sends a storm
 - D. Prayer
 - 1. Pagans pray
 - 2. Jonah does not
 - E. Jonah found out
 - F. Testimony of an unfaithful witness
 - G. Continued rebellion
 - H. Jonah into the fish

This might be what chapter 1 looks like. In later sections on culture and context we'll come back and look at "why" Jonah might have fled, from sub-topic "B". But notice the sub-sub-topics for D. This is just a sample, not an actual study of Jonah. As you would go through that first chapter you would likely find other things to make into sub-sub-topics. You might use different words/phrases than I did. An outline like this can be as detailed, or as general as you wish it to be, as the thrust of your studies want to take you, or the level of acceptance of an 'audience' you might be teaching, and their maturity level. You might take "G" and change it into a sub-topic under "F", along with another sub-topic addressing the conversion of the sailors. Again, there is not necessarily a right or wrong way to outline, as long as a person is reading WHAT IS THERE, and seeing accurately what God's Word - SAYS-.

Remember: An outline is not God's Word; it is merely a 'tool' of logic to help a person sort out an accurate picture. If you are teaching, don't get so wrapped up in your outline, that you forget that you are actually teaching God's Word. Some teachers like to print out the basic form of the outline as a skeleton, run off copies to give to the class, whilst having their own outline fully filled in. And then, as the study progresses, the audience can fill-in the blanks on their copies if they so-choose. Writing or 'doing' something related to a study is a tremendous aid to learning and remembering, next to repetition.

But always remember: it is God's Word. And if the Holy Spirit steers the

lesson differently because of audience questions and needs, don't be so-glued to your outline that you cannot follow where the Holy Spirit takes you. I've heard many preachers tell about having extensive detailed outlines and notes for their sermon, and at the moment they stepped up to the pulpit, the Holy Spirit in that instant 'changed' the sermon entirely, and they preached on something totally different, and their notes got tucked under the cover of their Bible.

VERSE-BY-VERSE:

While outlining may be the best way to look at an entire book or passage, verse-by-verse is the best way to travel through a passage or book. It's like one of my music history professors told about when he was in college: One of his professors had given an extensive reading assignment in a rather substantial (big) book. Many pages and not many pictures. Apparently there was an outcry from the students, asking "how" they could possibly read ALL THOSE PAGES! The professor is said to have replied something like: Take the book, find yourself a comfortable chair, place an adequate light source that will illuminate the pages, sit down in the chair, open the book to page 1 and start reading. When page 1 is finished, move to page 2, and so-forth. Keep repeating this pattern until the final page of the assignment has been reached.

Our professor, of course, added a bit of 'dramatical' touch to his re-telling of it, such that we were chuckling. But that is the essence of doing anything. There are no "shortcuts". You do not plant a seed in the ground one day, and then the next go outside and expect to see a 60-foot high elm tree. In spite of science fiction to the contrary, a baby is not born one day, and the next he is a fully-matured adult with total cognitive and language skills fully developed. People buy books to tell them 'about' the Bible, and once they've read that book, they think they know the Bible. Others rely totally on their Sunday morning sitting-in-pew experience, and think that enlightens them. But no...

Remember the "repetition"? Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little. You don't start driving from Los Angeles, punch in "3000" to your odometer, and suddenly, Voila! you're in New York City. No. You start driving: mile 1 rolls by, mile 2, mile 3....etc. If your trip was intending to site-see, taking in all the scenery along the way; if you hopped, skipped and jumped here and there, you would miss most of it. If you want to see-it-all, you need to travel-it-all.

If you want to know -all- the Bible, you need to -READ- 'ALL' the Bible. That means every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, making grammatical note of every punctuation mark. A period is different from a question mark. They make the words preceding them mean different things. Jesus said, "For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled." (Mt5:18)

If you've not seen those periods, commas, apostrophes...how will you know that God's "Law" was fulfilled or not? How will you know you have the correct meaning? In a future section on "grammar" we'll look at some examples of this.

But to close this section, let us consider something a moment. If people

are communicating with each other, expressing thoughts, conveying feelings, recounting activities; how do they communicate? In words, in sentences...sentence-by-sentence. A person does not typically speak a sentence or phrase about shopping, then in mid-sentence speak of their sore back, then jump over and say the word "apple" (indicating something they had with their lunch), and then another couple words about shopping again. Some people do that, and there are special professional labels for such people: "schizophrenic" The dictionary says of such: " Of, relating to, or characterized by the coexistence of disparate or antagonistic elements" They are usually recognized as needing "help". A person who is "like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind" is a "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (~Jac1:6,8)

God speaks to man the same way mankind talks to each other. Words at a time, sentence after sentence...yes, verse-by-verse. When doing certain kinds of topical studies there will certainly be occasions to skip around looking for contextual/correlative passages. But on the whole, the "best" way to approach God's Word is the same way you would listen to your friend talking to you. Word-by-word....verse-by-verse.

WORD STUDIES:

Earlier we spoke of "topical" studying. One of the best ways to do this is with a good search tool, doing word look-ups, and word studies. This is also closely related to reading verse-by-verse. But word studies involve a narrow focus. With outlines we can have an overall general view of something and compartmentalize things. With word studies it is like that satellite photo where you see an entire continent; then you 'zoom' in on areas to see mountains and rivers; you zoom still farther till you see cities; you focus in on one city and zoom farther till you see streets; and if you got some good imagery, you can zoom even more and pick out specific buildings, vehicles and other such things. A word study is like seeing the vehicle, and scrutinizing further to see if it's a truck or car, and perhaps as detailed as the number on the license plate.

One might do a word search on things like love, endure/endurance, save/saved/salvation/redemption/etc. Whatever the word/topic of interest. If you are using a program like Online Bible, when you look up words, every verse in which that word exists pops up in a collective window and you can scroll down the window, verse-after-verse, reading the 'context' surrounding that word. When you find verses that speak to the subject that's on your mind, you can click/hit another combination and the verse's contextual passage pops up, and you can read what the general subject is, where that word fits into. If you do this sort of back-and-forth cross-checking of words, verses and contexts, you may have a pretty reasonable chance of learning accurate information about the subject that surrounds that word.

In studying English words in your English translation, a tool any good student cannot be without, is a good dictionary. I'm not going to try to play 'expert' and tell you where to find one. The one I'm using is American Heritage that I got years ago, and while it has a Windows3.1 version, I'm using it in its DOS mode, in a DOS window. Another is the Webster's 1828. Webster did a "Webster's" edition of the KJV in his day, and this 1828 dictionary is also somewhat taylored with KJV era words in mind, although it does not necessarily have all the KJV words in it. If you are reading from KJV, or an update that didn't quite get all the necessary words updated, using the Webster's will tend to define words as they were understood a couple centuries ago; closer to the time the KJV first came out, and certainly closer to the 1769 that most people use.

Why is a dictionary a necessity? There are many words we don't use in everyday life, that we may not have ever really considered in depth; and if you are a new Christian and didn't grow up in a church where these terms were preached on regularly, you probably won't know what they mean. Like: redemption? Propitiation? Sanctification? Atonement? etc.

And too: there are lots of words that we -think- we know, but when we look them up, we come to discover a whole treasure trove of added insight we might never have suspected.

And then, if you wonder how accurate your English version is, with computer programs the lexicons to the Hebrew and Greek are keystrokes/mouse-clicks away. By the way, if you are not familiar with the word: "lexicon" == "dictionary; A stock of terms used in a particular profession, subject, or style; a vocabulary" A music lexicon might specialize in words like Moderato, Pianissimo, Concerto, Oratorio. A lexicon in electronics might specialize in Amps, Volts, Ohm's law, IC circuit design, Op Amps, etc. In the case of the Scriptures the specialized "subject/style/vocabulary" is Hebrew and Greek. Thus, the Heb/Grk lexicons are "dictionaries" of the Heb/Grk words from which the English was translated.

Thus for example, if we were to, at random, look up the word "Jesus" (Mt1:21) we find in the Greek, "Iesous". The lexicon informs us it is of Hebrew origins "Yehowshuwa" which comes from "Yahovah" (the existing one) and "yasha" (to be saved/delivered). Thus, the explanation in Matthew, "for He will save His people from their sins". This was all looked up in the matter of 'seconds' by switching to the KJV window and activating "Strongs", and with OLB the links are already there, you just click them and it takes you immediately to the Greek, and from the Greek window directly to the Hebrew ones. Real easy.

By the way, for the uninitiated: "Strongs" is a numbering system that a man by the name of Strong devised years ago.

In Greek 1=alpha, 2=Aaron, 3=Abaddon,etc.
In Hebrew 01=ab, 02=ab, 03=eb, etc.

In such a manner every Hebrew and Greek word that appears in the Bible was catalogued A-Z, and those numbers, then, applied to the words throughout the Bible. This was done with the KJV as the base translation. Thus you often hear of "KJV w/ Strongs". And so each number, then, has its associated letter or word, with extensive definitions that cover those words. If you have software and are using another translation (hopefully the VW-edition?), you still want to have a KJV module with Strongs and associated lexicons, so you can do word studies.

Let's take a look at some examples that one typically sees, and understand 'why' word studies are sometimes necessary. While we progress through these next paragraphs it may seem like I'm promoting the VW-edition. Not so. But it may quickly become apparent that a big part of compiling a translation 'version' involves intensive "word study". And if you are trying to decide which version is "best" because it is most faithful to the Heb/Grk, the way that is done is with word studies; because translation editions are made up of 'words'.

In the opening paragraph of this series we quoted from 2Tim2:15 "..be diligent to present yourself approved unto God.." quoted from the VW-edition. KJV says, "Study to show..." When other versions have changed that word to "diligent", many KJV-onlyists have risen up in protest, complaining that God's Word was being "watered down" and promoting that people don't need to 'study' God's Word.

OK...let's do a word study on it: The Greek is "spoudazo" from "spoude". Both of these Greek forms are defined with words: "haste, earnestness, diligence, striving after, exert one's self" Nothing whatsoever to do with "scholarship" which is how we think of "study". Perhaps when KJV first came out the word "study" was appropriate; but even looking up in the aforementioned Websters, "to endeavor diligently" is a ways down the line of definitions in the 'second' instance of "study". While a modern definition of "study" may include adverbial modifiers of "study", the word itself does not mean "diligence, striving, etc" which is the Greek in that spot. The "study" part is actually conveyed in the part where the exhortation is to "rightly divide" the Word of Truth. We "study" (rightly divide) God's Word with DILIGENCE. Several different versions have updated this word correctly.

OK...for another one. Not to be 'picking' on KJV, but if you're not using the VW-edition, hopefully you're using KJV...in your KJV look up these three verses: Gen2:4, 15:2, Ps150:6. In each verse you see the word "Lord". Now if you looked up the Hebrew for these three instances of "Lord" you would find: 1) Yahovah 2) Adonay 3) Yahn Each of these three are 'different', but KJV (and many others) says "Lord" for each. (VW-edition distinguishes each of these everywhere they exist; which is why the Preface to it suggests that your need for word studies is greatly reduced if you read from it.)

Genesis 1:1 in most versions states that "..God created the heavens and the earth" However, if a person does a word study on the word "created" one discovers that it is "perfect tense". In other words, if it was rendered -analytically- 'literally', it should say, "..God -HAD-created.." And if you follow down the line through Genesis you will find a lot of 'perfect' tenses that are rendered in simple 'past' tense. And yes, the VW-edition retains the traditional in this. Why? Because going from one language to another I suspect that one thing that is hardest to convert, without totally mangling the language it is being translated 'into', is verb tenses. In order for perfect tense to 'work' throughout the Pentateuch, one needs to be sitting at Moses' writing table. Moses lived some 2500 years after Genesis 1:1. As He sits, wherever he sat (in the wilderness?) as he wrote, with Israel surrounding him in their tents, he is writing about things that happened millennia ago from his time. In his mind he might have been thinking: Here we are 'now', but way back in the beginning -this- is how it "had been". But we don't speak English that way.

I don't know of any such 'reliable' work for the O.T., but for the N.T. there is a work called the Analytical Literal Translation (ALT) that was compiled a few years ago. People have asked me about it from time to time. It is a good 'tool' for 'word studies'. In terms of word choices, it is not always very 'literal'; the word choices are sometimes wrong; and it shares that characteristic with the LITV. But in other places it is very good and includes parenthetical alternate word suggestions, such that, if you used it along with the VW-edition, you would find the combination to be not at all unlike an "amplified". One area in which it is superb is in rendering the correct Greek verb tenses into English. The VW-edition did not go that direction, because we don't speak that way. But in doing word studies, if you want to know what the Greek verb tenses sound like in English, the ALT is highly recommended. Perhaps the editor of the ALT will also do something similar for the O.T.?

Here's one more example of an O.T. verb tense issue, this one could alter one's understanding of the facts, and thus illustrates the need for more precision in tenses in some instances: In Gen12:1 KJV says, "Now the Lord had said..." But the verb tense is not "perfect" there. KJV makes it sound like God had said (way-back-when) that Abraham was to leave his family and country. One might think that his time in Haran, living with his father before he died, was disobedience to some prior command God had given him. Some might argue that other passages suggest this to be so, but Gen12:1 does not. "Now Jehovah said to Abram..." This allows our interpretation of the matter to be focused, perhaps, on other correlative passages...but it keeps 'this' passage more 'literally' accurate to what the text -says-.

Thus, our word studies might enable us to search out broad topics; and they can also help us in our verse-by-verse readings when we come to words that catch our attention...to look them up: the English in English dictionaries to understand meanings of words we are not familiar with; and the lexicons to see the definitions that are behind those English words... showing them to be accurate and we can understand them better, or to find they are not quite right (or in some cases, downright wrong) and to discover what 'should be' there. Again...all for the purpose of knowing WHAT GOD SAID.

SENTENCE ANALYSIS *(grammatical structure):*

Of course, 'words' do not exist alone. They are put together to form sentences. In the preceding section we already touched on this a little when we looked at verb tenses. But when Jesus spoke of every "jot and tittle" of the Law (Mt5:18), for us with English, that's like the dotting of the "i" and crossing of "t", and the commas and other punctuation marks.

For sentence analysis one of the best tools is likely 'diagraming'. Remember that from your English 'grammar' classes? (Do they still teach it? The way many people today speak and write, I have serious doubts.)

You can diagram Scripture if you want, but it's not necessary, if a person keeps in mind the basic sentence 'structure'. There are the two basic parts: 1) subject (the prime focus of the action) and 2) predicate (the rest of the sentence that the subject does, or is done to it, or modifies it) The predicate includes verbs, objects and modifiers (explainers). When one reads the latter half of Daniel, things get really confusing, as it is hard to keep track of WHO is DOING WHAT to WHOM. There are many places, which we won't address here, where a passage is full of pronouns (he/she/it/they/them/etc); and if the reader doesn't keep track of them carefully, one can mix up what God is doing/saying vs what man is doing/saying/responding.

Let's take a look at a couple of passages that have been sources of false doctrine, all because words and sentence structure have been mangled:

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1Co12:7 kjv)

What is this sentence saying? To keep this from getting too lengthy, let's assume you've already verified that you know the meaning of the words with a word study; so let's look at sentence structure. What is the 'subject'? "manifestation of the Spirit". In other words, according to this rendition, the -Spirit- and -it's- 'manifestation' is the focus of the sentence. The way many people understand words, a "manifestation" is a showing, revealing...as often recounted from dreams, visions, hallucinations and so-called 'anointings'. In other words, Let us 'see' the -Spirit-. A vision of the Spirit. As they call this "manifestation" a "spirit-filling", they proclaim that -everybody- is supposed to be "spirit-filled" (with their definitions of these words), and the result is allegedly that -everybody- is to speak in tongues, etc. In today's big media outlets (so-called "worship centers"), if they could project a huge image of the Holy Spirit up on the big screen and bow down to it, they would.

But that sentence in KJV is in error. It should be:

"But the manifestation is given through the Spirit to each one for the profit of all:" (VW)

Now, what is the focus? The word "manifestation". So then, based on the "context" (which we will address later), we can understand "manifestation" to be the things addressed in the surrounding contextual verses, NOT the -Spirit-. And this keeps us in line with what we will address under "correlation with other Scripture". Jesus had said that the Holy Spirit would not take glory and focus upon Himself, but would direct the Believers to Jesus Christ: "He will glorify Me [Jesus]". (Jn16:13-15) In this case "manifestation" refers to the -gifts- of -ministry-, wisdom, and everything this passage is addressing.

So then, what is the function of "the Spirit" in the sentence? A 'conduit' for the ministry gifts. Our focus is not the Holy Spirit, but ministry; and our ministry is done "through" the Holy Spirit. Again, this agrees with Jn16:13-15, 1Jn2:27, and other places. And this was exemplified most dramatically in Acts ch2 where, prior to that date, Jesus told the disciples to "wait" for the Holy Spirit (Ac1:4,8); and then when the Holy Spirit was given, they -ministered- to the people, most notably in -preaching- the Gospel of Salvation, and 3000 people got saved.

Another example from Mt16:19 "..and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (KJV)

Following sentence structure and word orders, when people have followed this for years, it is not surprising that there should be the false doctrines of Rome (this verse is preceded by vs18 about Peter). And also, this lends credence to charismania and variations of the "earthly-kingdom" cults and ecumenism, that claim to "command God" regarding this and that.

But let's look at a little better punctuation and verb tenses with:
"whatever you bind on earth will be, having been bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be, having been loosed in Heaven."

What does a comma do? It gives a little 'pause' in the flow of words. The words coming before the comma represent a little mini-complete thought. Thus, what God's servants do on earth will occur. But on what basis? Notice the perfect-passive-participle..."having been bound". That indicates action that had already happened 'prior' to the words ahead of the comma, which those words following the comma modify (explain). Notice how a simple detail like a comma (omitted in the KJV), and correct verb tense totally reverses the order and direction of events.

According to the KJV, 1) man originates an action, and 2) Heaven responds. According to correct words, 1) man does things, which 2) had already previously been decided in Heaven. And if we understand the other example we have just looked at regarding the Holy Spirit being a 'conduit' for ministry, we see that 1) Heaven originates the action, 2) the Holy Spirit brings the message to the minister's heart, and 3) the minister (one who is serving God) implements what comes through the Holy Spirit -FROM- Heaven.

Another example we addressed earlier from "The Message" which says: "Anyone who doesn't love is as good as dead" (1Jn3:14) where Scripture says, "He who does not love his brother remains in death." We already observed that the words, "as good as dead" suggests that the person is -actually- "alive", not (literally) "dead". Something else on sentence structure aside from the fact that TM leaves out "his brother", thus changing "love" into the universal nebulous "love-everybody" kind of luuuuv, from the "love of the brethren (fellow-believers)"(1Pt1:22) kind of love which Jesus commanded to the ones He calls, "My disciples" (Jn13:35); is the 'order' of things. TM would suggest that a person is already 'alive', but that the act of not loving would -make- the person "as good as dead". But notice God's Word, that the one who does not love a fellow-believer (brother) "-REMAINS- in death". We are not born as innocent angelic cherubs, but we STARTED OUT "..being dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph2:1) And so, if we claim to be Christians, but do not love the brethren, we show our claims to Faith to be false; such a person "REMAINS" in death, where he 'originated'. He was never saved.

This is why we said earlier in the series that it is sooo important to begin with a correct translation. Yes, a student needs to "rightly divide" the Word. But unfortunately many of the translators did not do so in compiling the works they did. And some works, like TM, are out-and-out deliberate adulterations of God's Word, into a tool of satan. One's study can be only as good as the text from which one is reading.

CONTEXT:

When I was younger there was this clever little hypothetical Bible reading scheme that was suggested, for how not-to-know God's will for one's life. It was told that this particular person, wanting to know the Lord's will, but not knowing 'where' to start looking, closed their eyes, opened their Bible wherever the pages opened, spun their finger around down to the pages and let their finger land wherever it might land. The verse said that Judas "went and hanged himself". (Mt27:5) Well, that certainly didn't seem like a very likely indicator of God's will. He wanted something with 'application', a 'command' for him to do; so he closed the Bible, closed his eyes, and started again, and this time: "go and do thou likewise" (Lk10:37) Oh, this really CANNOT BE! He tries one more time, and: "What you do, do quickly". (Jn13:27)

We can chuckle at such a fable/parable. But sadly, there are many people for whom that is their -only- Bible study method. Certainly, there are times that one opens the Bible and God makes it "happen-to" open at the right place for the person's needs of that moment. But that is not a Bible study 'method'. In doing as this fabled person, one sees these passages in totally erroneous lights.

In the first passage, looking at its -context-, it is a historical account. When Judas sees that Jesus is truly taken and being crucified, he takes the silver back to the temple, throws it on the floor, and does, indeed, go hang himself. History. That which -Judas- did.

Second passage, if one reads the surrounding verses, one sees the parable Jesus told of the "good Samaritan". Somebody had come to Jesus, testing Him, and then attempting self-justification upon hearing Jesus' answer. So when Jesus finishes the parable, he asks the questioner as to 'which' of the three people in the parable had been a "neighbor" to the one who had been robbed. The lawyer gives his answer, Jesus affirms his answer, and then gives application: You do the same.

The final passage? Well, Judas is scheduled to betray Jesus, and Jesus is telling -him- (Judas): Go, get on with it. Perhaps with the thoughts: It's time, let's get this over with. ?? To fit with His earlier expressed sentiments in Lk12:50? (correlative)

You see...the "context" of each of these passages. What are they -really- talking about?

However, there is also sometimes a -broader- context one might pursue. Earlier we started to 'outline' Jonah. We might have seen the immediate context of Jonah's being thrown overboard as being the storm, his refusal to repent, and him telling the sailors to throw him overboard. But what sorts of things might have contributed to Jonah rebelling in

the first place?

Jonah was contemporary with Jeroboam II, about 50-70 years before the northern kingdom was taken captive to Assyria. Even though Jeroboam II was an evil king, God allowed him to recover some of their territories back from Damascus. (2Ki14:23-28) Jonah was God's prophet to Jeroboam II.

So now, God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh. Where was Nineveh? If you look up on a map, you see it right smack dab in the middle of the Assyrian empire...what will become the Babylonian empire, which another 100 years later will carry Judah away captive. Don't you suppose he knew the direction the political winds were blowing!

What Jonah was being asked to do was as if he had been like Billy Graham giving counsel to US presidents, and then also goes to N.Korea and counsels them. Today, there seems to be nothing wrong with collaboration with the enemy, as left-leaning congressmen and media were shown having access to Saddam prior to the war, denouncing US intentions before the war, and Islamic 'pastors' are allowed to carry on treasonous interaction with Muslim POWs in Cuba, and we've had administrations that gave away our top secrets to the Chinese...and the list goes on. But back in those days, traitors and collaborators were executed... on-the-spot... no questions asked.

It was like it used to be in this country. During WW2 there was a hatred for the Japanese for their attacking Pearl Harbor, and their treatment of American POWs with starvation and death marches; they were derisively called "Japs" or "Nips" (you that are Japanese please understand that this is just merely historical fact, not my sentiments. In many ways, even though it's been so many years since I was there, in my heart, old Japan is more my "home" than America is, having been born and growing up as a child there. Even by 1960 when we came back to the US, I could not understand the hatred that still lingered, as people were still calling them "Japs". These were not the Japanese I knew and lived next to.)

During the cold war Russians and others of the Soviet Union were called "Commies"...and in some circles, the anti-Vietnam war activists were called "pinkos". To the Samarian mind, what were Syrians called? And if there was the mentality like what exists today in some so-called "christian" circles, Christianity and Patriotism go hand-in-hand. To some minds, if a person sees the truth regarding the nature of government, and speaks their mind, they would be labeled as heathen non-christians by some of these. And their hatred for America's enemies is (in their minds) a "holy" hatred; because, after all, this is a "Christian nation"! America's enemies are God's enemies, -because- they are America's enemies...therefore they are -our- enemies, too, and... "to hell with them all!" (Again: -their- mentality, not mine)

As we see how God pins Jonah's arm up against his back and forces him to go, he goes unwillingly, and preaches "doom and gloom", and then in ch4, goes off to sit...waiting for God's judgment...Onward christian soldiers! "Go get'em God!" And when God doesn't zap them from existence, Jonah pouts!

So, you see how "context" can be investigated within a small circle, just within the given passage. But depending on the subject matter, the context might also extend part-way around the globe. And in Jonah's case, while we see his rebellion against God, does the context bring it a little closer to home, such that some of us cannot be -quite- so smugly 'hoity-toity' in looking down our noses at Jonah; because he did what many of (collective) us would do in the same situation.

See Also Addendum: Charismatic Signs? Mark 16:17-18 out-of-context

Correlation with other Scripture:

This topic we have used so many times in conjunction with several of the other topics, that it's almost unnecessary to address it; except, that it is one of the important things to keep in mind; particularly when doing 'topical' studies. What does God's Word say about....? What is the "whole counsel of God"? (Ac20:27) What does the "whole" of Scripture teach about....? We need to have read -all- the Scriptures, and then, when addressing the topic, we need to reference 'all' the Scriptures.

When we correlated the vision concept of 'repetition' in Revelation (trumpets/bowls) to Pharaoh's two dreams (cows/grain), not taking Revelation just by itself, we can understand from Joseph's explanation that it was a matter of -emphasis-. God gave a double-dream to pharaoh for emphasis; John saw 'double'...it was also for emphasis; not a "timeline". That particular correlation spanned from Revelation clear back to the beginning at Genesis.

The book of Hebrews is correlative, harking back to the O.T. and its system of animal sacrifices. Hebrews ties together the O.T. and the Gospels, correlating, explaining how Jesus' death on the cross was the fulfillment of those O.T. sacrifices.

In Acts ch2 Peter quotes from Joel, as does Paul: "For everyone, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom10:13)

There is also another common error dealing with 'time' that we might never notice, except that Jesus pointed it out to His hearers; that is when a single passage seems to be talking about 'one' event, but in actuality a single sentence contains several events, sometimes separated by thousands of years.

The example Jesus expounded was Isaiah 61:2. The ancient Jewish scholars would scratch their heads trying to figure out how Messiah could all at one time proclaim the "acceptable year of Jehovah" and also "the day of vengeance" and also to "comfort all who mourn". These three things are all contained in one sentence, and can be read in one breath. And yet, when Jesus proclaimed that -He- was fulfilling that passage, He only read through the "acceptable year of the Lord" and then "closed the book" (Lk4:19-20) He clarified by saying, "TODAY this Scripture is fulfilled..." What? -ALL- of that Isaiah passage? No. Just the part He read. They didn't understand it then, but we do now: the day of "vengeance" is yet future. That sentence in Isaiah speaks of at least two events separated by 2000 years. And then, the "comforting" of the mourners....does that not define what happens in the Millennium.

Thus, by correlating this example regarding Jesus, we can also see a

passage like 1Th4:14-18 and realize, if we are studying the subject in context and correlation with other Scriptures, that the Rapture is not at the Second Coming, as some erroneously teach, "post-tribulationally". Around the time this study is being prepared, a person sent a treatise debunking the so-called "pre-trib" doctrine of the rapture. One of his proof-texts of support was 1Th4:14, speaking of those Jesus "brings" with Him, correlating with Zec14:5 where God comes "with" the "saints". This is a clever little "stumbling block" God has placed, for those who refuse to believe all the other contextual/correlative Scriptures that proclaim that the Church does-not-belong on the earth during the time of Wrath. Just as 2Ti4:1 speaks of Jesus' "appearing" and His "kingdom", and 2Th2:1 speaks of "His coming" and "our gathering to Him"; His appearing to gather the Church to Himself, and His coming when He sets up His kingdom; 1Th4:14-18 also speaks of His coming as He "brings" the dead-in-Christ, and also of the dead-in-Christ being gathered up -to- Himself, along with the (raptured) "alive" Believers. Now...does not logic (the reasoning of our minds) tell us that if He is "bringing" the saints who had been dead, that He first needs to resurrect them? Thus, the Rapture of the living saints, "at the same time" with those being resurrected, has to happen 'before' His Second Coming at the end of the 70th week, at which time He then sets up His kingdom.

We can easily understand this truth in 1Th4:14-18 by correlating the prophetic "time" concept to the explanation that Jesus Himself gave as it relates to Isaiah 61:2.

Otherwise, I think we'll leave this subject of "correlation" here; trusting in the other examples throughout this series to speak for themselves.

Historical/Cultural Background:

We've already mentioned the political historical climate of Jonah's day.

Another example we might look at, is when Sarah dies, and Abraham is seeking to buy a plot of land for burial. (Genesis ch23) The passage spends many verses for something that, to our western minds, might seem like a lot of useless jibber-jabber and double-talk. We tend to be of the mentality to go to somebody, look them straight in the face and: Can I buy that plot of land from you? Oh, sure. How much? XXX-dollars. OK, here you go (is a check OK?).

Having grown up in Japan I understand what is going on. It is a difference between eastern and western cultures. In Japan, in polite society, it would NEVER happen that a person would come to another with a gift, and the recipient would just boldly reach out and take it. There is a little social "dance" that must take place: Please take this gift. Oh, no, I really couldn't. Oh, please, you must. Oh, but, no I am not worthy. But, really, I insist. Well, OK, if you insist, thank you, your most gracious honorableness. (somewhat paraphrasing the sorts of sentiments that would be expressed) And this would be accompanied by much bowing back and forth. (I don't know if it is still this way in Japan. Things have changed so much there, and become westernized. But this was the 'old' Japan I grew up in.)

Thus, Abraham asks for the plot of land: Will you please ask Ephron for me. (Even though Ephron is sitting right there; Ephron is younger, so Abraham addresses the elders.) So Ephron replies: Oh, it's yours... "take" it. It's my 'gift' to you. And notice the bowing, "and Abraham bowed himself..." if you want to give it, listen to me, let me pay the full price. And after more back-and-forth, Abraham counts out the money, and the land is deeded.

That passage shows the -typical- manner in which people in eastern cultures would behave towards each other. Yes, it might have recorded Abraham's acquiring of land for burial; but it is also showing us an authentic 'eastern' interaction.

Scripture is full of 'cultural' depictions. These are things a person keeps in mind when studying. Our 'western' mind is not the "only way" to do things, even though we often think it is, as we try to change everybody else to our way; and westerners often make fools of themselves when visiting other cultures. God took Israel from out of those "eastern" lands, and dealt with them according to their "eastern" minds.

And so, when Elisha tells Gehazi: "If you meet anyone; do not greet him..." (2Ki4:29) he is telling Gehazi to ignore the usual cultural practice of stopping to converse with people he might encounter along

the route. Eastern conversations were usually never "short". They take up 'time', as they talk and bow back and forth, and the woman's little boy had died...Gehazi 'needed' to get there -fast-.

When the Levite stays four extra days, eating and drinking with his father-in-law, where the father has detained him...that, too, was an "eastern" scenario of hospitality. (Judg ch19)

So, you see why Elisha tells Gehazi not to dilly-dally on his way to the dead boy.

OVERALL STUDY OF A BOOK:

This section is just a set of personal 'suggestions'; but I think it follows general guidelines a person might expect to consider reasonable, that also make good 'sense'. It also follows guidelines that are taught in speech-making, when a person is speaking to an audience, to teach them. 1) Introduce what you plan to talk about. 2) Talk about it. 3) Review what you just talked about. Like the back-woods hillbilly said: Tell 'em whatcha gonna tell 'em. Tell it to 'em. And then tell 'em whatcha just done told 'em. Ahhh yes..."repetition".

If you are coming to a brand new book that you are not familiar with, and you've decided to do a -serious- study of it, here's a proposed outline:

- 1) Read through the entire book, straight through, non-stop
 - 2) Do a rough outline of the book
 - 3) Go through chapter-by-chapter, or according to your outline
 - 4) Do individual word-studies along the way as appropriate
- Finally: with all the detailed studies you've just done
- 5) Read through the entire book again

If you've done all these things with "diligence" (2Ti2:15), you should have a pretty thorough knowledge of the book.

Who/What/When/Where/Why/How?

Perhaps this topic should have been addressed earlier? If so...where? This is another of those things that gets smushed together in conjunction with all the other 'methods'.

The words of this heading comprise the basic objective of good journalistic practice. It used to be the foundation for good journalism. Today, it seems, the media's basic intent is not to 'report' the news, but to 'create' and to help the higher powers steer societies in the directions they want them to be. Today's journalists seems most occupied with "how did that make you feel?" and "emotions"...as they use their words to promote their ulterior agendas.

But study of the Scriptures is an 'investigative' and 'interrogative' process. Who is being talked about? Who did the actions? What did they do? How did they do it? How did others respond? And what did they do in response? When did it take place? Where? Why did the person do/say what they did? Why did the respondents respond as they did?

Typically, if these basic questions are asked, and their answers discovered, a person has likely learned what there is to learn.

INHERENT DANGERS:

Of course, for several of these methods given, there are also potential pitfalls, some of which have already been alluded to; and Caution signs that need to be raised and observed.

As was already suggested by its disclaimers, the "Topical" study is likely the most hazzardous; particularly for the new (baby) Christian. It is sooo easy to have an idea in one's head, and go looking for Scriptures to 'support' that idea. As the proliferation of false cults proves, a person can teach almost any doctrine imaginable, and find alleged "support" for it from the Scriptures.

Just one example: People see cute little babies and tiny children. They ignore the psalmist's observation that "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps51:5) That "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child" (Pr22:15) They have allowed psychology to so cloud their understanding, that they don't see the "tantrums" babies engage in, even during the early days and months. They don't like the bath, or the diaper changing process...so they make a fuss and throw a tantrum. It is assumed that babies are little "innocent" -cherubs-. They are 'angelic'. There is an entire modern philosophy that teaches the little child's "goodness" (even though they see the evidence to the contrary), almost to the point of -worship- of children. Modern culture has moved to the position the Nagano Olympics proclaimed a few years ago, "When Children Rule the World".

Is there Scriptural 'support' for this philosophy. Well, of course there is, don't be ridiculous! (Remember 70s TV sitcom's Balki from "Perfect Strangers"?) It says in the Bible...

"And a little child shall lead them" (Is11:6) See? They're right!

Well... NOT SO FAST, there bubba! They have quoted Is11:6 OUT-OF-CONTEXT! That passage teaches NOTHING-OF-THE-SORT!

Remember how we are supposed to "quickly" go and "hang" ourselves, just like Judas did? This is another one of those deals.

If you look up the passage, and then ask a couple of the previous 5-W questions: -WHAT- is the little child leading? And -WHEN- is it referring to?

WHAT? Wolf, lamb, leopard, kid, calf, young lion, fatling, cow, bear, lion, adder, viper. All these animals that now are predator and prey, and many dangerous to people, will all be in harmony with each other.

WHEN? "And a Branch shall go out from the trunk of Jesse, and a Shoot

shall grow out of his roots." (vs1) And the passage speaks of Christ's rule during the coming kingdom age.

We know that God does not lie. (Nu23:19) Thus, we also know that Scripture does not contradict itself; since contradiction, by definition, is a form of lying. So, even though we found a verse that 'seems' to support the child-leadership doctrine, closer scrutiny shows it to be mismatched. That Scripture says something else. The teaching in question, is a false doctrine.

Next: the danger of 'outlines' is that a person works too hard to make the passage 'fit' the outline, instead of seeing WHAT IT SAYS...and if necessary, make the outline NOT follow proper rules. That's why it was stated to "forget" the rules of 'proper' outlining. Outline WHAT'S THERE

Another form of outlining (arranging things in order) is 'acrostics'. There, again, some become so captivated by the concept of fulfilling the acrostic, that truth becomes 'deformed'.

Again, from personal experience: There was one professor in Bible school who was -heavily- into clever neat-looking outlines and acrostics. For a term project we were to create an entire file system on a certain subject, and 'begin' collecting clippings to file in those folders. Of course, being of an 'analytical' mindset as I am, I was able to come up with a nice 'looking' outline which pleased the professor, and I got an "A" for the project. However, this filing system, that was supposed to have formed the basis for a life-long tool in Christian education and counseling never got used. In fact, years later when I was sorting through things, most of those clippings were tossed in the garbage, the folders' labels blanked out and recycled for other uses. That clever outline that got me an "A" was totally -useless- for my 'real' life. I learned more God's Truth, and that outline, spawned by a course in "Christian Education", had no correlation to the Scriptures. And yet, so much of what we see in churches today is based on college/seminary courses in "education". Churches function based on the world's psychology and education methods, around which the Scriptures are "twisted" (2Pt3:16) to fit man's theories. Thus, is it any wonder that we don't see God's Word there anymore!

Also: A lot of people teaching study methods will suggest coming up with applicational questions to ask one's self, such as: What does this mean to my heart? What can I learn to apply to my life? How will my life change, now that I have learned these things?

Let me make a bold suggestion here: that such ritual questions are for the unsaved. Those pretending to be christians. Those who are merely 'acting' the 'part' of the christian. Why do I make such a statement?

For the answer, please continue to the closing section...

HOLY SPIRIT: *our TEACHER*

We closed the previous section by suggesting that "application" questions in Bible study is not for Believers

Why do I suggest such a thing? Because for the Holy Spirit indwelt Believer, the Scriptures were "propelled along by the Holy Spirit" (2Pt1:21), and God's Word "does not return void" without accomplishing what God intends. (Is55:11) Thus, I would suggest that ritual words of "application" are not necessary, because for the True Believer, when a person is immersed in God's Word, the Word -speaks- to the heart. It is "in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it." (De30:14) The 'doing' (Jac1:22-23) is related to the Believer's "works" -manifesting- that True Faith which resides in the heart, showing the faith "by/from" the works. (Jac2:18) It is the Believer's 'nature' to do what he learns from God's Word. If he doesn't, it's proof that he is not a True Believer. (1Jn2:4)

Thus, forget those 'application' questions. How do you know but what, if you limit yourself to those questions, that you will MISS OUT on what the Holy Spirit 'really' wants for your life. He speaks to us down at the level of "soul and spirit". (Heb4:12) So, just "be diligent...[in] rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2Ti2:15), and allow the Holy Spirit to make application in your life as He knows best. Don't "quench" the Spirit (1Th5:19) by placing such limits on your study and God's Word. Study 'methods' should never intrude upon the Holy Spirit. (Maybe that sentence should be re-read a couple more times?)

Having said that, do not be confused with worship and being "spirit-filled" and going into a demonic trances. Charismania has thrown all logic (the mind) to the winds. Where Paul exhorts that worship, prayer and exhortation function "with the mind" (1Cor14:14-15); eastern mysticism's charismania purposely "empties" the mind. That is the whole function of their so-called "worship"; to empty the mind, to allow themselves to be "spirit-filled". When the whole process is contrary to God's clear Word, such spirits are -demons-; and their manifestations testify to the "fruit" (Mt7) of those spirits. These are those "doctrines of demons" Paul spoke of for the "latter times". (1Ti4:1) We are -NOW- 'in' those "latter times"!

Remember, it says that Paul "...REASONED with them from the Scriptures" (Ac17:2) -Reasoning- is not the activity of an empty mind! 'Ever wonder why charismatics talk in circles and often seem confused? That's because they purposely turn 'off' their minds.

But, just because Yoga, TM and charismania teach false doctrines regarding spiritual things, does not negate God's TRUE HOLY SPIRIT. All those things are done to detract from what is True, just as everything

else is designed to draw attention away from the Most High, by the one clamoring to be "like the Most High". (Is14:14)

(See? Satan has no chance of being God. The most he can hope for is to be an 'allegory'. To be "like" God. Allegories are not the real thing!)

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would "... guide you into all Truth; for He will not speak things originating from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will make known to you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will receive from what is Mine and make it known to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will receive from what is Mine and make it known to you." (Jn16:13-15)

This series on Bible study -methods- might be a set of some useful 'tools'; but never replace the Holy Spirit with them. These tools are tools for the 'mind'. But the Holy Spirit deals with our spirits. Jesus said about the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit breathes where He wishes, and you hear His voice, but do not know where He comes from and where He goes. So is everyone who is born from the Spirit." (Jn3:8) There is much the Holy Spirit does in our lives which we do not understand.

Yes, consider these studies as Paul said to Timothy, "Consider what I say, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things." (2Ti2:7)

Because...

"...the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will remain in Him." (1Jn2:27)

Amen!

REVIEWING the REPEATABLES:

- Read 'all' the Scriptures (1Ti4:13) Feed on them Jer15:16)
- Only ONE -TRUE- INTERPRETATION of any given passage of Scripture
(God is "One" -- the Scriptures are "one" with God)
- What did God mean? What did God -say-.
- Only times Scripture NOT literal, when the TEXT ITSELF SAYS SO.
- Not all of Scripture is intended to be understood by all people.
(e.g. unbelievers with hard hearts)
- Study 'methods' should never intrude upon the Holy Spirit.
(Study methods are merely 'tools' of logic for the "sound mind".)
- Holy Spirit is the Teacher. (Jn16:3, 1Jn2:27)

Addendum:

How-to Study the Bible © 2003

READER QUESTION:

Why do so many people, and books on "how-to study the Bible" use an academic approach to studying the Bible? i.e. by focusing on one book, break it down, and study verse-by-verse.

I have a hard time sticking to this academic, text-book-like approach. I may get through a few chapters, but am easily sidetracked to some other topic/passage, settle on that for awhile, and on to the next, etc. Sometimes I'll pick up my Bible, and think "hmm.. What should I look at today?", literally flip through, see something and say "Wow, I've never seen that before.." and just dig into it. That particular study may last one hour, or one week. I don't always feel like going back to the same book. Is this random, "wandering" through the Bible a lack of discipline? Can you recommend an approach?

VW ANSWER:

Well...there are -many- ways to study and read the Bible. If you were to attend a Bible college and took a course in "Bible study methods", what you listed above would be one of -several- different methods they would teach...the book/outline/verse-by-verse approach. For analytical study that is certainly a most effective method.

However, study methods are like people. No two people are alike. Some people are analytical...others are more emotional. And just like a person many not eat the same food everyday, day-in and day-out.... neither is their approach to Bible study going to always be the same.

The most important thing is that a Believer is -in- the Word, reading it and meditating on it. Ps119:15,78 Sometimes a person might read -through- a whole book or series of books. At other times they will do exactly what you are doing...jumping around.

Obviously you are "hungry" for the Word, and from your reaction to your time in the Word, it sounds like the Holy Spirit may be guiding you to things you need when you are needing it.

The "lack of discipline" (as you say), would be if you were not in the Word...when you are feeling 'restless', to put the Bible down and not read. From what you say, you are pressing on, and finding 'something' to read and spending time with.

The Holy Spirit wrote the Scriptures (2Pt1:21); and Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would also, "...guide you into all truth.." (Jn16:13) That includes not only the understanding of 'what' one is reading, but also - what- 'to' read at any given occasion.

Bible Study Tools and Methods? ©2001

READER QUESTION:

could you outline both the tools and methods you use to do your studies?
Guidance in this area would be much appreciated. Thanks for your help.

VW ANSWER:

Oh dear! How do I answer such a question!

The "tools" part of this question is easy. I use the Bible and the Strongs/Lexicons from Online Bible for word studies. The TSK (Treasury of Scripture Knowledge) is a very good cross-referencing tool. And of course, as I study, I have developed my own cross-references of many passages which, when I started using OLB regularly, I transferred all my scribbled notes from my printed Bible (margins) into OLB's user notes system. Bible study is from the Scriptures, itself. God speaks through His Word through the Holy Spirit. (Jn16:13, 2Tm3:16-17, 1Jn2:27) I don't use any commentaries of any kind for basic Bible study. It is -just- the Word. If I need to look up some historical/archaeological/cultural perspective, I will use whatever tools will help find the information, whether an encyclopedia, or various commentaries/dictionaries.

Now, "methods" is a little tougher to answer; because I find that, since VW began, I don't necessarily use (consciously) any of the "methods" I learned at Bible school. In fact, I'd have to go look up old class notes to even remember 'what' any of them are called.

For 'personal' group settings the best study method is verse-by-verse, sentence-by-sentence...sometimes word-by-word. If a person wants to know WHAT GOD SAID, that is the best way to learn it. Not jumping around willy-nilly here and there. And if a person is studying on their own, this is also quite effective. And while doing this, if a person is of a mind to be writing notes, often, formulating an outline of the passage helps to see the overall picture of a passage and/or book.

Topical studies can tend to be 'dangerous' for a newer convert, if they are not as familiar with the -whole- of the Scriptures. It can be terribly easy to stray down a wrong path if only isolated passages are used to base major doctrines upon.

Sometimes 'word' studies can be rather effective...particularly with the various Bible software programs that are now available. For instance, if a person wanted to know what the Bible says about "repentance", just do a search of "repent*", and then read each passage in context to see what it says about it; and then perhaps make lists of the various subtopics that come out of such a search.

Since you ask what I do... what I do for VW is a little different than when I am studying for just myself, or like I have done when in actual groups with people. On the Internet the audience is 'invisible'. I would dare say the vast majority of the readers are either unsaved, or at best baby Christians. Thus, the studies we do seem to turn out to be much less detailed or as in-depth as when I assume the group is supposed to be predominantly Believers (like in a fellowship). We have had the more verse-by-verse studies in 1John and Jacob (James). Matthew was somewhat passage-by-passage, but less-detailed than 1John was. Romans was chapter-by-chapter. Naturally, a lot of little details get overlooked in such a case. And more recently, Ephesians is turning out to be more topic-by-topic within the traverse through the book.

I find that VW writings do not follow the "norm" that I had been used to before VW began. Some writings are quite organized before writing commences, with many notes laid out. In many cases, when I sit down to actually write a given study, the only thing I know for certain is the passage and/or topic, but 'nothing' will have been on my mind/heart regarding specifics. And quite often in these cases, where I might have had an 'idea' of where it was going to go before I began, by the time I was finished, it was obvious that the Lord had -His- direction for the study...that was completely different from what I would have thought it might have gone.

In this ministry God has called me to not only be a teacher, but something I had never before imagined...a preacher/prophet (proclaimer) And thus, as such, the message from the Lord quite often focuses on specific topics of the need of the day/moment. Preparing the "way of the Lord" and exhorting people to "make His paths straight". Thus, some topics get 'harped' on. Even in this, I need not worry, because those who are 'strong' Christians are not limited by the 'simple' nature of what is mailed...they are faithfully in the Scriptures for themselves, anyway, being fed through the Holy Spirit. But repeating simple concepts is necessary ("safe" Phil3:1) for those who are yet on the "milk" of the Word (1Pt2:2), because they have not yet grown to maturity, and need continual reminders to counteract the continual prowlings of the enemy that would seek to lure them astray and forsake Christ. And as subscribers come and go, the newer ones haven't heard what has been repeated to others. Thus, what I do each time is to be led by the Spirit...and whatever direction He takes any given study, that's the direction I go. That means that, quite often, the "method" does not conform to any "method"... if you follow what I'm saying. God's ways are not always pigeon-holed into man's concepts of "methods".

My "method" is to follow God's call upon my life, "...and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah". (Ezek2:4)

Charismatic Signs? Mark 16:17-18 out-of-context © 2004

READER QUESTION:

I have a question for you...now that I've renounced my pentacostal, charismatic spiritual influences, (years ago, actually), how do I explain Mark 16:17-18 to my 8 year old daughter? "And signs will follow to those believing these things...they will cast out demons in My name, they will speak new languages, they will take up snakes, & if they drink anything deadly, it will in no way hurt them, they will lay hands on the sick, & they will be well." {The interlinear Bible} We were listening to the Bible on CD before bed, as always, & when she heard this verse, she wanted to go over it, word for word...I told her we'd go over it tomorrow, but I'm a bit at a loss...she said, "Mama, we're believers, are we going to do all these things? Do you?" Anything you can share would be much appreciated, thanks!

VW ANSWER:

In light of this week's Bible Study Methods lesson on "context", this question is most appropriate. These two verses are likely, quite possibly, two of the most-abused verses in all of Scripture. And all... because they are taken OUT-OF-CONTEXT. While it is true that "tongues" practitioners claim Paul to be saying the exact opposite of what he is actually saying in 1Corinthians ch14 to support their demonic practices; likely the whole pentecostal/charismatic error prooftexts their entire existence on these two verses. These two verses are the very kingpin around which charisma swivels. They might be able to exist on only their misunderstanding of 1Co14, but these verses, along with Joel ch2, which they also take out of context, are the very -key- to their existence.

However: A person cannot read just vs 17-18 by themselves...but they must be read in the -context- with 19-20 included. Notice that that entire passage condenses a very big time-frame within a few short verses, even the verses preceeding vs17.

So, notice what 17-18 say about signs and miracles. Then, Jesus is taken up. (vs19) and then the disciples "went" and "preached" (vs20) PAST TENSE. (Past Tense==it already happened) And indeed, the apostles (historically) -DID- do all those signs and wonders.

Just one example...notice that the "signs and wonders" were done by the hands "OF THE APOSTLES" (Ac5:12)

Thus, Mark was written as a 'history' -after- all these things had taken place. In other words, Jesus

- 1) commissions the apostles,
- 2) goes to Heaven, and
- 3) the apostles -did- what Jesus commanded,

and their work was authenticated by the signs Jesus promised. (Heb2:4) As... signs and wonders was God's special authentication to Israel (Is8:18, Num14:11) The miracles were the "signs of an apostle" (2Co12:12)...proof that the person was, truly, an apostle.

That's why such signs are not part of the realm for today, because, by definition, today there are no Scriptural apostles (leading in something "new"), since the faith has already been "once for all delivered to the saints" (Judas1:3) And since it was all delivered, Paul warned against anybody proclaiming a "different gospel" (Ga1:8-9) These that work their false "signs and lying wonders" (2Th2:9) today, do so to try to authenticate and deceive people with their -new- so-called "revelations" and "words of knowledge", etc. They are "accursed".

But God warned Israel about that several millennia ago, about false prophets and "dreamer of dreams" (aren't today's charlatans having all these visions?) who perform signs, and their signs even come to pass (indeed, many of these 'miracles' today are not fake, many of them are real). And God warns that the false prophet then, with the false authentication of the miracles he performs, leads his listeners away to false doctrine, to idolatry, to different teaching...God says, "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for Jehovah your God is testing you to know whether you love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul." (De13:1-4)

When these modern false prophets proclaim their visions, proclaiming different new doctrines, they are leading people astray to different gods. "doctrines of demons" (1Ti4:1) They are "departing from the faith" ...that which was already "once for all delivered". They are not content with God's Word and "sound doctrine" (2Ti4:3, Tit2:1) but in leading people astray, they proclaim themselves to be little gods...and people follow them like pied pipers. It is idolatry. Thus, today's charismania, when it boils right down to it, is the identical same sin Israel was guilty of...for which reason God dispersed them into exile around the world.

In Israel's day it was called "baal" worship. Today it is "charismania". Effectively, ultimately the outcome is identical!