

The Miraculous Bible

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Introduction:

The **Holy Bible** is without question the greatest book ever written. Our English word *Bible* is a transliteration of the Greek *Biblia*, meaning simply, *The Books*. Throughout history no other name has been necessary to define it. The Bible is distinguished from mere human literature by its sacred character:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3: 16-17)

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1: 21)

The Bible alone is the fountainhead of all truth, knowledge and wisdom. Theology, education and the study of the sciences may be accepted as fact only to the extent that they are supported by God's Word. Natural laws and moral precepts are absolute only because of the testimony of the Scriptures.

The Bible is the complete and final authoritative revelation of God to man. Creation, the fall of man and God's plan of salvation are all revealed in the Scriptures. Nothing is hidden, omitted, lost, or withheld in the Scriptures. Something so important as God's Own Word was not spoken casually, to be passed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth; God wrote it down! The Bible is the complete record of what He said.

The miraculous care and preservation of the Bible from its ancient beginning to the present is sacred testimony to God's promise to keep His Word pure throughout all generations:

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. (Psalms 12: 6-7)

Because of God's promise, we know the Bible is trustworthy. But *which* Bible? Bookstore shelves are filled with new versions which read much differently from the old King James Bible. Why? Is it really the attempt of modern revisers to make the text more readable, or is there another reason, with much more sinister implications, why so many words are omitted and so many verses are completely missing from these new bibles? Unmasking the counterfeit is only possible by knowing the genuine.

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We believe the Bible is the verbal, plenary-inspired Word of God, that it is inerrant, infallible and immutable, and that God has preserved it for the English language in the Authorized, King James Bible of AD1611. The following is a study of how our Bible came down to us.

1. The Divine Character of the Bible:

A. The Bible Does Not Merely *Contain* the Truth, it **Is Truth**:

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (John 17: 17)

B. The Bible Is **Eternal**:

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (Psalms 119: 89)

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1: 23, 25)

2. The Theme of the Bible Is Jesus Christ:

From Genesis to Revelation the central theme of the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prophets foretell, in *type* and in *symbol*, the promised Messiah. The New Testament gospels reveal that Messiah; the epistles unveil the meaning of His death, burial and resurrection, and His relationship to man through the new birth. The Revelation presents Him in His glory, past, present and future:

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24: 25-27)

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5: 39)

3. How God Gave Us the Bible:

A. The Bible Was Given by God to Man by **Divine Inspiration**:

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All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3: 16-17)

Inspiration is from the Greek *Theopneustos*, which means by interpretation, *God-breathed*, or *Divinely breathed in* by God. The theological doctrine of Inspiration is defined as follows:

1. The Bible Is **Verbally** Inspired:

Verbal inspiration means that *every word* in the Bible is *God-breathed, word-for-word!* The Scriptures are not a mixture of God's inspired words *intertwined* with the personal philosophies of the writers, who numbered approximately forty men. Often, the prophets were themselves curious as to the implications of their text:

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1: 10-12)

God Chose the Men Who **Wrote** the **Words** That **God Gave**:

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1: 21)

The writers were diverse in economic backgrounds, in religious ideologies, in personal circumstances, in geographic origins and in historical times, yet the unity and harmony of the Bible text dramatically demonstrate that it was from a *singular Author*, The Holy Ghost.

2. The Bible Is **Plenary** Inspired:

Plenary Inspiration means that the Bible is complete; nothing has been omitted, or yet remains to be revealed. There are no *lost books*, and no *new revelations* from God!

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3. The Inspiration of the Bible Is **Inerrant**:

The Bible is the very word of God. Knowing then that our Lord cannot lie, or contradict Himself, or make a mistake, the inspiration of the Scriptures is understood to be inerrant; there are no errors, mistakes or contradictions in the Bible.

4. The Inspiration of the Bible Is **Infallible**:

Infallible inspiration signifies the absolute and authoritative truthfulness of God's Word. If God has spoken, every word, every promise, every prophecy will be fulfilled exactly as God declared it:

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. (Isaiah 46: 9-10)

5. The Inspiration of the Bible Is **Immutable**:

Immutable Inspiration means that the Bible is eternal and unchanging. The opinions of men are soon cast off and forgotten but God's Word will stand forever:

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matthew 24: 35)

B. The Bible Was **Transcribed** from Man to Paper:

1. Understanding How God Transmitted His Words Through Men to Paper:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets..." (Hebrews 1: 1)

The Old Testament Scriptures are punctuated throughout by Divine signatures of God speaking to man. Such phrases as *Thus saith the Lord, It is written, The Lord appeared unto,* and *The Angel of the Lord Spake,* all characterize the various ways in which God transmitted His Words through men to paper:

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God Revealed His Word by **Direct Voice**:

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

(Exodus 20: 1-2)

God Often Revealed His Word Through **Angels**:

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. (Daniel 9: 21-22)

God Sometimes Revealed His Word Through **Dreams**:

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. (1 Kings 3: 5)

God Revealed His Word Through **Visions**:

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (Genesis 15: 1)

2. How the New Testament Was Transmitted:

The New Testament Scriptures Were Spoken by Our Lord Jesus Christ:

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. (John 12: 49-50)

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. (Hebrews 1: 1-2)

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Much of the New Testament was transmitted through certain apostles and disciples chosen by our Lord:

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (Revelation 1: 11)

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 14: 37)

C. The Bible Is **Applied to the Heart** by the Holy Spirit:

The Bible's hallowed work in the heart is the ministry of the Holy Spirit exclusively, who is the Author of the Scriptures (2 Peter 1: 21). He *illuminates* man's heart with Bible truth, first in conviction, next in cleansing, then in empowering him to live in a way which brings glory to God:

1. The Bible Is the **Book of Life**:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4: 12)

2. The Bible Is the **Book of Light**:

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. (Psalms 119: 105, 130)

3. The Bible Is the **Book of Learning**:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with

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spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2: 12-14)

4. Canonization - the Books of the Bible:

A. Determination of the Canon of Scriptures:

The books of the Bible are not sacred merely because they were declared by man to be canonical. They were accepted as canonical because they are the inspired words of God. The following criteria were observed, in part, to determine the canon of Scripture:

1. **The Writer:**

Who wrote the book? Israel was certain of the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures. God spoke only through prophets, priests and kings. His Word was often delivered with the Divine signature, *Thus saith the Lord*.

The New Testament church was privileged to receive the Scriptures directly from our Lord Jesus Christ, His chosen apostles and certain other disciples who accompanied with them.

2. **Substance:**

What did the book teach? Did the book *compliment*, or *contradict* the established Scriptures? Did the book bear the witness of the Holy Spirit? Was the book, in fact, *sharper than any two-edged sword*? (Hebrews 4: 12). Did the book supernaturally inspire, convict and edify believers?

3. **Acceptance:**

Was the book accepted? It was the responsibility of the Levitical Priesthood to gather and care for the Old Testament Scriptures (Deuteronomy 31: 24-26). They were led by God in determining which were sacred and which were to be rejected.

At Calvary, the Levitical Law was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and with the rent of the temple veil the Old Testament priesthood was abolished. There is no special order of New Testament priests; every born-again believer is a priest unto God:

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But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2: 9)

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1: 5-6)

B. The **Language** of the Bible:

1. The Old Testament:

With the exception of certain Scripture passages in Ezra, Jeremiah and Daniel (written in Aramaic), God selected the Hebrew language to transmit the Old Testament. Hebrew is a poetic, pictorial and personal language.

2. The New Testament:

Greek was the universal language of the civilized world when the New Testament Scriptures were written. It is a precise, expressive language which permitted meticulous transmission of the Bible text.

C. Finalization of the Canon of Scripture:

1. Completion of the Old Testament Canon:

The Old Testament consists of thirty-nine books. The writers numbered approximately thirty-two men. The earliest Old Testament book is Job; the latest book is Malachi.

With the prophecy of Malachi, the Holy Spirit closed the Old Testament era. The prophet Ezra was prominent in gathering the Old Testament canon. He was most instrumental in safeguarding the Bible during the Jewish captivity and subsequent return to Jerusalem. Read also Ezra 7: 6-25.

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2. Completion of the New Testament Canon:

The New Testament consists of twenty-seven books. The writers numbered only eight men. The earliest New Testament book is James; the last book is Revelation.

The early church gathered first the Epistles of Paul, then the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, then finally the remaining apostolic epistles. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were accepted exclusively as sacred by the churches long before they were declared canonical by the Third Council of Carthage, AD397.

D. **Non Canonical** Writings **Excluded** from the Holy Scriptures:

The most notable of the non canonical writings is the *Apochrypha*, a collection of fourteen extra-Biblical writings that was rejected and excluded from the canon of the inspired Scriptures, which includes:

First and Second Esdros

Tobit

Judith

Additions To Esther

Wisdom Of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus

Baruch

Song Of Three Children

Story Of Susanna

Bel and The Dragon

Prayer Of Mannaseh

First and Second Maccabees

1. The Apochrypha and the **Bible**:

Although never accepted as canonical, the Apocryphal writings were regarded as historically significant and therefore of some value in study. Early editions of the English Bible frequently inserted them between the Old and New Testaments for reference. This placement denied them equal status with the sacred canon, and the practice was halted by protest from Puritan church leaders in AD1825. The Apochrypha has been a part of the official Roman Catholic bible since AD1596.

2. Why the Apochrypha Was **Rejected** as Inspired:

It was rejected by the Old Testament priesthood. After the destruction of Jerusalem, AD70, the Apochrypha was labeled as spurious, and was systematically destroyed by Hebrew copyists. It was never quoted by either Old Testament or New Testament writers, and the early church rejected it. None of the writers of the Apochrypha claimed

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Divine authorship; some even disclaimed it. The most compelling reason for rejecting it is because the writings contain serious errors, both theological and historical.

5. The Bible Preserved - God's Providential Care for His Word:

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. (Psalms 12: 6-7)

The Bible uses the word *preserve* to describe God's supernatural care for, and protection of, His inspired Scriptures through the ages. Because God has promised to keep His word pure, believers can be assured that no generation has been without the true, pure, preserved word of God. Not one truth has been corrupted, lost or omitted from the Scriptures through the transmission of the manuscripts:

For verily I say unto you, Till a heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matthew 5: 18, 24: 35)

Further, God has preserved the complete and final revelation of the Bible. There are no new books; there will be no *new revelations* added to God's word:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22: 18-19)

The Bible We Now Possess Is the Pure, Accurate Text of God's Holy Word.

A. Preservation of the **Old Testament** Scriptures:

Two groups were responsible for the care of the Old Testament Scriptures. The *Levitical priests* taught the law and oversaw the copying of the manuscripts (Deuteronomy 17: 18, 31: 12, 24-25). The *scribes* were the actual copyists of the Scriptures. They also produced Jewish commentaries and written traditions. By the beginning of the New Testament era,

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their role had grown to include teaching the law and traditions, blind adherence to which influenced their rejection of their own Messiah rather than lose their position and religious prominence.

One sect of Jewish scribes, the *Masoretes*, or *Traditionalists*, from the fifth century AD, is prominent for their extraordinary care in copying the Old Testament Scriptures. Their work preserved the traditional, or *Masoretic* Hebrew text from which our English Old Testament, as well as the accepted Hebrew Bible is translated. They are a vivid testimony to God's providential care for the true Old Testament Scriptures.

Two other translations of the Old Testament Scriptures are of historical and theological consideration:

1. The Greek **Septuagint**:

The Septuagint is a Greek translation from the Hebrew Old Testament, *supposedly* completed at Alexandria, Egypt, about BC250, for Greek-speaking Jews of the dispersion. Both the early date and the translation are disputed. Some Bible scholars attribute the Septuagint to Origen (AD185-254). The text, which includes the Apochrypha, contains critical errors and omissions in translating the Hebrew Old Testament.

2. The Latin **Vulgate**:

Many translations were made of the Bible into Latin during the second and third centuries AD. One text, commonly known as the *Old Latin*, followed the traditional Hebrew Scriptures. The *Latin Vulgate* of Jerome (AD340-420), supposedly a fresh translation of the Hebrew, actually introduced many of the errors of the Septuagint into the Latin text. Jerome's Latin Vulgate was adopted as the official Roman Catholic bible in AD1546. It also includes portions of the Apochrypha.

B. Preservation of the **New Testament** Scriptures:

Unlike the Old Testament Levitical priesthood, the New Testament Church has no special class of priests to care for the Bible. Rather, every believer is a priest unto God. This *universal priesthood* of believers is led by the Holy Spirit concerning the Scriptures:

1. Consider the **Guardian Ministry** of the Holy Spirit:

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

Guided by the Holy Spirit, believer-priests of the early church did for the New Testament Scriptures what the levitical priesthood had accomplished for the Old Testament. Directed by the Spirit, They gathered the true canon of Scripture, rejecting non canonical writings. By the Spirit they discerned the true manuscript readings and rejected corrupt readings. They were guided by the Spirit to copy and distribute to the churches faithful and trustworthy manuscripts of the true Bible text.

2. The **Providential** Role of the Church at **Antioch, Syria**:

One local church played a pivotal role in the preservation of the Scriptures. From the martyrdom of Stephen until the destruction of Jerusalem, AD 70, the church at Antioch grew to assume great prominence among the early churches. There, believers received the name that would forever identify them with the Saviour:

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. (Acts 11: 26)

The love and fidelity of Antioch believers led them to the most profound accomplishments of the early church period. Antioch sponsored the great evangelistic and missionary journeys of Paul and Barnabas. Antioch also sent relief to other local churches suffering persecution, most notably the church at Jerusalem.

Antioch became the center of traditional Bible believers in the early church era, standing against the claim of the Roman Church to a position of authority over other local churches. Antioch accepted the responsibility of preserving the true, traditional text of the Greek New Testament, often referred to as the *Byzantine* text, because of its acceptance by the early churches of that period (AD452-1453).

C. The Rise of **Textual Criticism** and **Corruption** in the Early Church Period:

During the third and fourth centuries AD, two centers of textual criticism emerged which denied the historical, accepted Bible text of the early church.

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The *Alexandrian School*, so named for its location in Alexandria, Egypt, was in the heart of a city known for its pursuit of *pagan* Greek philosophy. Greek scholars such as Origen, Clement and Philo, introduced the Alexandrian philosophical heresies into their Bible translations. These manuscripts, although in agreement with the traditional text 90-95%, invariably corrupted the Scriptures which affirm the person, work and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is from these corrupted texts, rejected by true believers and relegated to the shelves of this heretical school, that Westcott and Hort, in AD 1881, discovered and promoted for translation of the *Revised Version* (and followed in the *RSV*, the *ASV*, the *NEB* and other English versions of the Bible.)

The *Western School* followed the corrupt philosophies and intellectual errors of the Alexandrian School, and in fact, worsened the corruptions of Bible texts translated there. Because of its location in the city of Rome, the Western School ultimately fell under the domination of the Roman bishop.

The Bible texts of the Western School *demean* the doctrine of *Grace*, and the *Deity of Christ*, exalting instead the *traditions* and *authority* of the Roman church. These texts, along with the *heretical* Alexandrian manuscripts, form the basis for all modern English translations since the King James Bible, including the “New King James Version.”

D. The **Textus-Receptus** (*Received*) Greek New Testament Text:

The *Textus-Receptus* was the first printed Greek text of the traditional, or *Byzantine* New Testament of the early church. Three groups of texts comprise the Textus-Receptus, Erasmus (AD1511), Stephens (AD1550), and Elziver (AD1633).

During the Protestant Reformation God used the Textus-Receptus for the translation of the Bible into German and English. The King James Bible (AD1611), is translated from the Textus-Receptus Greek New Testament text.

Several early English translations which followed the Textus-Receptus were the *Tyndale* Bible (AD1525), the *Coverdale* Bible (AD1535), the *Matthews* Bible (AD1537), the *Great* Bible (AD1539), the *Geneva* Bible (AD1560), and the *Bishop's* Bible (AD1568.) By these, God provoked a thirst for the Word among English-speaking Christians which led to the translation of the blessed King James Bible.

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E. Our Basis for Accepting the **King James Bible**:

We accept the King James Bible because of its *textual basis*. Its Old Testament translation is from the Masoretic (*traditional*) Hebrew text and its New Testament translation is from the Textus-Receptus (*received*) Greek text, both coming from the early church.

The theological basis for adhering to the King James Bible is evident in the witness of *God's blessing*. Every great *revival* or *spiritual awakening* in the English-speaking world has been the result of preaching from the King James Bible. Every pastor, teacher, evangelist or missionary who has accomplished anything for God has used the King James Bible.

The King James Bible bears the witness of time. It is *time-tested* and *God-honored*! It has withstood the eye of *hostile criticism* amid the treachery of Satan for over four hundred years! When the King James Bible is preached God blesses it with eternal results. The fruit of the King James Bible is the *great host of souls* won to our Lord Jesus Christ.

F. Why We Reject **Modern** Versions of the Bible:

We reject all modern versions introduced since the King James Bible because the textual basis for their translation has, without exception, followed the *corrupt* texts from Alexandria and Rome. Such Bibles are most often associated with false doctrines which cannot be supported in the inspired Scriptures. These are the same manuscripts embraced by Roman Catholics, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.

We reject the modern versions because of the *sponsors* of these texts, most of which are the products of religious organizations financed and supported by the *World Council of Churches*, which is Anti-christ and Anti-Bible. The higher critics of apostate schools create an intellectual elitism in seminaries which has filled church pulpits with apostate Bibles. Such schools deny the inspiration of *any* current translation, and elevate educational scholarship to a position of supremacy concerning Bible interpretation and doctrine. Their influence has spread to many evangelical denominations, sadly including many Baptists.

We see the *fruit* of modern Bible versions. The growing apostasy in most theological schools is a direct result of the humanistic textual criticism which was designed by Satan to destroy trust and confidence in God's Holy Word. This assault is as old as the Garden of Eden, where *hath God said* (Genesis 3:1), was first used by the devil to tempt man to question God's word. It worked then, as now. It has resulted in several generations of theologians, preachers and church leaders who have no confidence that the bible in their

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hand is the infallible Word of God. Apart from that assurance, they have no boldness, power or authority other than the word of the scholars who deceived them. God has never blessed the preaching from these bibles.

Listening to speakers use the King James Bible text to *explain* the convoluted wording of a poor revision is commonplace on Christian radio, television, and in the pulpit today. That alone gives the lie to the claim of revisers that their new bibles are *easier to understand*. Since this premise is proven false by their own adherents, we are brought to speculate what the real motives of the publishers are. Since the new bibles are all copyrighted there is no doubt a desire to profit from a new translation. Behind it all, we believe it is the work of the devil to corrupt Bible truth and confuse people about which translation they can trust.

6. How to Study the Bible:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2: 15)

The science of correct Bible interpretation is known as *Hermeneutics*, from the Greek *Hermeneuo*, which means *to interpret, to explain*. The admonition to *rightly divide the word*, implies that there exists the danger of *wrongly dividing* the Scriptures and introducing error into church doctrine. Hundreds of religious groups identify themselves as Christian, all claiming the Bible as their ultimate source of authority. Yet many of the vastly differing theological and doctrinal beliefs contradict the clear cardinal truths of God's Word.

Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded, *Search the Scriptures* (John 5: 39). That is, to avoid reading into the Scriptures something that is not there but rather to discern from the Bible the truth that God has given. Correct interpretation is not the application of isolated Scriptures taken out of context to prove some denominational point, but the truthful Spirit-led accommodation of all doctrine to the whole of Bible truth.

A. Why God **Commands** Believers to Study the Bible:

Bible study is essential to God's approval. The greatest compliment to any author is to say, "I've read your book!" A reverential devotion to God's Word demonstrates such an attitude. That God approves is far more important than the approval of man. Bible study equips the workman for his task. Preparation for Christian service is founded upon the wisdom born of knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. Confident faith is knowing *what* to believe, *why* to believe it, and the *Biblical authority* for believing it.

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B. God's **Purpose** for Giving the Bible:

All Scriptures is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3: 16-17)

The Bible is the only source for doctrine. The Scriptures are the basis for, and final authority for theological beliefs, personal convictions and church government. Any practice contradictory to, or without clear Biblical foundation is error.

The Bible is the only authority for reproof. The Scriptures provide both the *message* and the *method* appropriate to deal with doctrinal or moral misbehavior. One's spiritual character may be measured by his reaction to scriptural reproof:

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. (Proverbs 9: 8)

A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent. (Proverbs 15: 5)

The Bible Is the **Only Guide** for *correction*, as revealed in the following scriptural formula:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (Matthew 18: 15-17)

The Bible Also Defines the Proper **Motive** for Correction:

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Galatians 6: 1)

The Bible is God's instruction in *righteousness*. In the Scriptures, the word *righteousness* has a twofold meaning; it signifies *right clothing*, and *right living*. At the new birth,

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believers are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5: 21)

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. (Revelation 19: 7-8)

Right-clothing equips the believer for a pattern of good works. The Bible furnishes everything necessary for believers to please God. The Scriptures reveal God's will, and by illumination the Holy Spirit reveals God's perfect will for each individual. *Right living* is the result of having the *right clothing*! Believers grow to maturity through a consecrated life. To be *perfect* in the Biblical sense means *to be mature, to come to full age*. It does not mean *sinless perfection*.

C. The **Danger** of Doctrinal Error by *Wrongly Dividing* the Word of God:

1. Error Concerning the **Plan of Salvation**:

Incorrect interpretation of the Scriptures has led many to a false perception of God's love. The Bible says that *God is love* (1 John 4: 8), but to reason that a God of love *would never send anyone to such a place as hell*, ignores the sober warning of judgement against sin:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3: 36)

The *Predestination* heresy wrongly claims that God has already decided who will be saved and who will be lost. It is a basic tenet of religious cults to teach that salvation is based upon membership in their group alone. Such errors deny the Bible doctrine of God's grace, mercy and love upon *whosoever will*.

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6: 40)

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Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3: 20)

The Bible plan of salvation is by grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ alone, plus nothing and minus nothing. Those who substitute the false doctrine of good works, represented by church membership, baptism, the sacraments, or any other efforts by man to save himself, are teaching error:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2: 8-9)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Titus 3: 5)

2. Error Concerning the **Motive** for Christian Service:

The false teaching of salvation by good works is almost always accompanied by the unscriptural belief that in order to merit eternal life, believers must *hold out faithful to the end*. The Bible truth is not that *man must endure*, but that God will preserve the believer because He has saved him! It is *eternal security* by God's grace, not by man's work:

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (John 10: 28-29)

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8: 38-39)

One of the worst elements of the *Predestination* heresy is that most of its supporters see no need to seek the lost and win souls if God has already decided who is going to be saved. It is a false doctrine which fosters laziness and unconcern, and denies the Great Commission:

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Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28: 19-20)

3. Error Concerning the Destiny of Souls:

Most religious cults teach that heaven is reserved for the members of their sect only, or that it is not for man, but for the heavenly host only, thus denying the Bible truth of an eternal home for the saints of God:

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14: 2-3)

Those who pervert the Scriptures about heaven usually teach false doctrines concerning hell. Some cults flatly deny the existence of hell and eternal damnation. Others say that hell is merely the grave or that death results in the immediate *annihilation* of the soul. Such doctrines contradict the clear Bible truth of everlasting conscious punishment for those who reject Jesus Christ:

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9: 47-48)

*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.
(2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9)*

D. Spiritual **Qualifications** for Bible Study:

1. The **Necessity** of the **New-birth**:

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The Bible is a spiritual book, requiring spiritual understanding. Unsaved man is *spiritually dead*, and is incapable of discerning spiritual truth:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.
(Ephesians 2: 1)

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2: 13-14)

2. A **Reverence** for the Word of God:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is under-standing. (Proverbs 9: 10)

The Bible word *fear* means *reverential trust and respect for God and abhorrence of evil*. For believers it is not a dread of losing one's salvation, nor is it a fear of falling out of God's favor. It is the overwhelming **awe** of being in God's very presence.

3. A **Sincere Thirst** to Know God's Word:

The Scriptures Are a **Hedge** Against Sin:

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
(Psalms 119: 11)

The Scriptures Are the **Source** of Faith:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
(Romans 10: 17)

The Scriptures Are **Food** for Spiritual Growth:

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. (1 Peter 2: 2)

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The Scriptures **Assure** Believers of Eternal Life:

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5: 13)

4. The Importance of **Unbroken Fellowship** with God:

The believer's relationship with God may be described as a *union* by the new birth so strong that no power can break it, yet *communion* so sensitive that the presence of unconfessed sin will interrupt it. Sin hinders prayer, the vital ingredient to *illumination* of the Scriptures:

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59: 2)

5. Bible Study Requires **Prayerful Dependence** upon the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit Is the Believer's *Teacher* and *Guide*:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14: 26)

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

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2: 13)

The Holy Spirit Reveals *God's Plan* for Believers:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2: 9-10)

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The Holy Spirit *Intercedes* When Believers Pray:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8: 26-27)

E. The Workman's **Tools** for Bible Study:

1. The Bible, God's Holy Word:

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6: 17)

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4: 12)

The majestic simplicity of the Authorized Version is the purest example of *King James English* grammar (the form of English taught in every public school in the United States today). The readability of the King James Bible is at the *fifth-grade* educational level, yet it reveals God word with reverence, beauty and dignity.

2. Prayer, **Communication** with the Bible's **Author**:

The Bible is a *spiritual book* and requires *spiritual discernment*. God promises wisdom to the reader. In preparation for study why not ask for it:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1: 5)

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5: 16)

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3. Sound Bible **Preaching** and **Teaching**:

Bible interpretation skills are not developed by *observing the wonders of nature* down at the lake or up in the mountains, but by hearing God's word faithfully and powerfully proclaimed in a Bible-believing local church. The importance of regular church attendance cannot be overemphasized.

4. Written **Aids** for Bible Study:

A Bible *concordance* features an alphabetical listing of every word in the Bible. Following each word is a list of its occurrences, by chapter and verse, with a brief citation from each Scripture text. Most large concordances include a Hebrew and Greek *lexicon* (definition of words), from which the English Bible was translated. One of the most complete and widely known is *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible*. It is recommended without reservation.

Two dictionaries should be included in the believer's library. A Bible dictionary, often called an *atlas*, provides a concise description of the people, places and subjects in the Bible. It helps to give a panoramic view of the words of the Bible. An English dictionary is indispensable to Bible study. Much of the misunderstanding and difficulty with the Bible text may be avoided by simply learning the correct meaning and pronunciation of English words.

A Scripture *commentary* is, as the name implies, a compilation of explanatory comments on the Bible, usually focused on a particular book or doctrine in the Bible, and most often arranged verse-by-verse, by notable Bible preachers or teachers. There are many wonderful commentaries available which reflect the insight of great, honest Bible theologians. Unfortunately, much has also been written by those who deny or demean the cardinal doctrines of the Bible.

Sound judgement is required when selecting commentaries or any written study aids. A Godly pastor who believes the Bible without reservation or apology, will gladly recommend fundamentally sound authors.

F. How to **Correctly** Interpret the Bible:

1. Observe These **Principles** of Bible Interpretation:

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Remember the **Sacred Character** of the Bible:

When Moses heard the voice of God from the midst of the burning bush, the Lord warned him:

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. (Exodus 3: 5)

Every word of God is inspired (2 Timothy 3: 16). Spirit-led believers approach Bible study with reverence and respect, accepting what God says by faith. Difficult passages, though sometimes not easily understood, are received without criticism or doubt, in a pure conscience of trust in God.

Consider The Importance of English grammar To Bible Study:

Exercise *proper diction* in Bible reading. The correct pronunciation of words will convey more accurately their true meaning, and the impact which God meant for them to have on the text. Keep a dictionary available for reference to unfamiliar words.

Observe the *punctuation marks* in the text. Sentences often end in the middle of a Scripture verse. Paragraphs dealing with a single subject may extend from one chapter to another. Periods, commas, colons, etc., are the tools of the English language used in writing to express the structure of the Author's message.

The King James Bible features clearly defined and numbered chapter and verse designations. Although such divisions are not in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, they bear the *undeniable approval* of the Holy Spirit. Almost without exception, quotations from the Bible are taken from the King James Bible. It's distinctive chapter and verse style is natural for rote memorization, and permits easy location of Scriptures references in preaching, teaching and personal witnessing. The value and blessing of such divisions is unquestionable. However, when reading the Bible, always properly observe the punctuation marks in the text. Artificially pausing after each verse, which fragments the natural flow of the text, adversely affects the level of reading comprehension.

Remember the **Harmony** of the Scriptures:

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The Bible reveals one system Of theology and truth. Because of this *unity* in the Scriptures all doctrine supports the whole of Bible truth. Since God is not the Author of confusion, correct interpretation demands that beliefs *augment*, and not *contradict* one another. For example, the apostle Paul writes:

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3: 28)

In His Epistle, the Apostle James Declares:

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (James 2: 17)

Is there a contradiction in the Bible? Who is right, Paul, or James? Both are right. Remembering that “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (2 Timothy 3: 16), No contradiction is possible if the believer *rightly divides* the word of truth. Paul writes that man’s *justification before God* is by faith alone. James describes man’s *justification in the eyes of the world*, explaining that inward faith is demonstrated to men by the outward evidence of good works. Paul addresses the believer’s standing *in the eyes of God*, while James speaks of his standing *in the eyes of man*.

The Bible Unfolds in a **Progressive Revelation**:

First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. (Mark 4: 28)

Bible theology is developed from its infancy in the Old Testament to its maturity in the New Testament. Prophetic mysteries and doctrinal truths are unfolded as the Scriptures progress to their full unveiling in the completed New Testament revelation. This concept is expressed in the observation, *The Old Testament is the New Testament enfolded, and the New Testament is the Old Testament unfolded* (author unknown).

The **Best Commentary** on the Bible **Is the Bible**:

An overall understanding of the books of the Bible; to whom they are written, what each book says, and their historical and theological order in the Scriptures, is invaluable in discerning their influence upon the whole of Bible truth. Apply the following rules to doctrinal study:

Obscure Passages must Give Way to **Clear** Passages.

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No Scripture passage is rightly divided which contradicts the teaching of clear, established Scriptures on the doctrinal subject. Ambiguous passages with more than one choice of meaning must be interpreted to *harmonize* with unquestionable Bible doctrine on the subject:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation. (2 Peter 1: 20)

Generally, no doctrine should be founded upon Scriptures which are unclear, purely historical, or transitory in nature. Supposed *new light* derived from vague texts should be examined very carefully, remembering the old adage, *if it is true, it is not new; if it is new, it is probably not true!*

The Bible must Be Interpreted *in context* with the **Whole Text**:

Simply stated, *the part is interpreted by the whole*. No passage which is lifted out of its context to support some *foreign* theological concept may be said to be rightly divided. Note the general subject of the text. Scriptures which are applied to far-fetched doctrines not even remotely connected to the general theme of the text are usually wrong. Identify to *whom* the Scripture passage is addressed. Three distinct groups are identified in the Bible, the *Jew*, the *Gentiles*, and the *Church* (1 Corinthians 10: 32). Many prophecies, promises and covenants are *dispensational* to one group only. Misappropriation of these passages have led some into doctrinal error.

2. Remember These **Fundamental Truths** of Bible Interpretation:

Bible fundamentalists believe in the *literal* interpretation of the Scriptures. The cornerstone of faith and practice is that God *said what He meant and meant what He said*. Therefore, His message is to be accepted just as He gave it. Literal interpretation accepts the obvious and clear meaning of a Scripture text without attempting to assign a hidden, deeper *symbolic* meaning. Literal interpretation follows this rule: *If the text makes common sense, seek no other sense or you will have nonsense!*

The Distinction Between **Interpretation** and **Application**:

There is only one correct *interpretation* of a Scripture passage; there may be several spiritual *applications* made from it. Interpretation of a text reveals its doctrinal content, while application employs the text as an illustration of Divine truth presented

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elsewhere in the Bible. God's word is not a record of countless, specific do's and don'ts, but rather the revelation of holy principles which are to be applied to all matters of life.

Understanding the Bible in its **Literal Context**:

Literal Interpretation of **Eternal Truths**:

Much eternal, unchanging truth is set forth clearly from the beginning of the Bible and is constantly reaffirmed throughout the Scriptures. This includes those passages which reveal the attributes, character and nature of God; those which demonstrate the person, work and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and those which deal with the reality and realm of Satan. It also involves Scriptures which detail the creation, condition, and destiny of man.

Literal Interpretation of **Historical Events**:

Historical Scripture passages describe God's dealings with people and subjects *contemporary* with, or *immediate* to the time of the writing. Such texts report the frank, straightforward details of man's sinfulness and God's wonderful grace. They are for us today a benchmark testimony of God's sure judgement against sin.

Literal Interpretation of **Dispensational Ages**:

Scriptural *dispensations* are specific periods of time in Bible history. Each dispensation is characterized by covenants or promises established to order man's relationship with God. These truths are more clearly understood when they are interpreted in light of their dispensational times. The Schofield Reference Bible lists *seven* (7) such periods:

The Dispensation of *Innocence* began with Creation and ended with the fall of man. (Genesis 1: 28 through Genesis 3: 13)

The Dispensation of *Conscience* began with man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden and ended with the Flood. (Genesis 3: 22 through Genesis 7: 23)

The Dispensation of *Human Government* began with Noah's deliverance through the flood and continued until the judgement of the confusion of tongues at the tower of

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Babel. The ultimate end of *Human Government* will occur at Christ's second-coming and the Judgement of Nations. (Genesis 8: 20 through Genesis 11: 9)

The Dispensation of *Promise* began with the call of Abraham and ended with the giving of the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai. (Genesis 12: 1 through Exodus 19: 8)

The Dispensation of *Law* began at Mount Sinai and ended at Mount Calvary! At the vicarious death of the Saviour the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. (Exodus 19: 8 through Matthew 27: 35)

The Dispensation of *Grace* began at Mount Calvary and ends with the judgement of the apostate church during the Great Tribulation. Read also Matthew 27: 51 through Revelation 19: 10.

The Dispensation of *The Kingdom* begins with the second-coming of Jesus Christ in power and great glory, and ends with the Great White Throne judgement and the beginning of the eternal ages. Read also Revelation 19: 11 through Revelation 20: 15.

Literal Interpretation of **Bible Prophecies**:

Bible prophecy is the supernatural unveiling of future events in the most minute detail, which can only be explained by attributing its origin to God. Prophecy may foretell either *near* or *far* events. Some Scriptures have both a *near* and a *far* prophetic application.

Near prophecy forewarns of events to occur immediate to, or in the near future. *Far* prophecy foretells events taking place in the distant future. Such prophecy often concerns the fulfillment of dispensational covenants and promises. *Far* prophecy is often a mystery, not understood by the prophet, as illustrated in the end-time visions of Daniel (Daniel 12: 4-13.) These mysteries are alluded to by both Matthew (Matthew 13: 17), and Paul (1 Corinthians 2: 7-12.) Such prophecies are unfolded as the Scriptures progress to their fulfillment. Read also 1 Corinthians 15: 51; Ephesians 5: 32.

Exceptions to Literal Interpretation of the Bible:

Some Bible passages are not intended by the Divine Author to be rigidly literal in interpretation. The precise choice of words, by meaning and context, demands that the Scriptures be understood in a different light. How to identify such texts and interpret

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their meaning correctly is the believer's challenge. Note the following exceptions and how to recognize and apply them to Bible study:

Figurative Interpretation of the Bible:

In *figurative* interpretation, objects are often described by comparing their appearance with the attributes of other things. Words used to identify such figures of speech include "like", "as", "like-as", "like-unto", "likened", "as-of", "as-unto", "such-as", and "appeared-as." To illustrate, the apostle John describes the throne of God with a figure of speech:

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.
(Revelation 4: 3)

God's glory is expressed as being *like* a brilliant jewel. God is not said *to be* a jasper stone, but rather that His glory *appeared* in vision like a dazzling gem. The shekinah glory surrounding the throne in a rainbow is compared to the radiance of a beautiful emerald.

Inanimate objects are frequently used as figures of speech to describe the nature, character or attributes of *living things*. When our Lord Jesus said, *I am the door...*" (John 10: 9), He did not claim to be a *literal*, physical door, but *figuratively*, rather declared Himself to be the only entrance to salvation.

Spiritualized Interpretation of the Bible:

The term does not imply a distinction between *spiritual* versus *secular* study, but rather the illustration of truth which enriches and explains, rather than contradicts the inspired, literal meaning of a Bible text. It is most evident in the interpretation of *types* and *parables*.

Understanding Old Testament **Types**:

A *type* is an Old Testament figure which outlines, patterns or foreshadows some Bible truth. Types may be illustrated in people, events, objects, institutions or ceremonies. The *anti-type* (fulfillment of the type), is usually found in the New Testament. Most Old Testament types concern the deity or work of Jesus Christ (John 5: 39, Luke 24: 27).

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Some types are referred to as *innate*, because their fulfillment is specifically identified as such in the New Testament. For example, Jesus Christ declares Himself to be the fulfillment of Moses' *serpent of brass* (John 3: 14), lifted up to deliver His people from death.

Other types are said to be *inferred*, because although not specifically named as such, they are justifiably recognized as types by their nature to the New Testament fulfillment. Noah's deliverance through the flood is a type of God's preservation of a Jewish remnant through the judgements of the Tribulation. The translations of Enoch and Elijah are types of the rapture of living saints at the second-coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Caution: Types must not necessarily match their fulfillment in every minute detail. Attempting to accommodate every word to some theological framework often results in distorted, unscriptural views. Also, every historical incident in the Old Testament does not necessarily have a mysterious meaning. As a rule, doctrine should not be founded upon a type exclusively, especially if it contradicts clear Bible teaching elsewhere.

Interpreting Bible **Parables:**

Our English word *parable* is from two Greek words, *para* (along-side), and *ballo* (to cast). Together, they mean *to cast along side*. A parable may be defined as a *comparison of two objects for the purpose of teaching spiritual truth*. The parable, then, is an earthly story, drawn from nature or common life, which teaches a spiritual lesson. The *natural* story must be understood in order to interpret the *spiritual* message.

The New Testament parables of our Lord (read Matthew, Chapter 13, and Luke, Chapters 13-18), were vivid, yet mysterious, so as to provoke a spiritual thirst for understanding in the disciples; yet, others who followed the Saviour merely out of curiosity, turned away because of them. Christ's purpose for teaching in parables was two-fold: First, He used them to convey spiritual truths to spiritual men, and second, to hide spiritual treasures from unbelievers who rebel against the truth:

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and

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because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal thee. (Matthew 13: 3-15)

Interpreting the Bible **Allegorically**:

*Allegorical interpretation supposes and seeks a hidden, secret *real* meaning beneath the obvious, literal interpretation of a Scripture passage. An allegory may be described as *one object presented within the image of another, the principle truth being found in the hidden, rather than the literal meaning:**

Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the

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clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. (Isaiah 5: 1-7)

The story of God's Vineyard, above, may be considered an allegory because the principle truth is found in the *hidden* figure, rather than in the *literal* meaning of the text.

The Old Testament Book, *Song of Solomon*, though mysterious and difficult taken literally, is one of Scriptures's sweetest, most intimate views of the relationship between Christ and His church when interpreted allegorically.

Responsible use of allegorical interpretation must always be subjected to the first rule of Hermeneutics: *If the text of the Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense or you will have nonsense!*

7. Bibles Every Christian Should Avoid:

Bibles That Are **Unread**:

The only way to learn the Bible is to read it! Most Christians have several Bibles in their homes, most just collecting dust. There is no way to learn more about God and His word except by reading it.

Bibles That Are **Unused**:

The Holy Spirit manifests His power through the precious word of God. There is no substitute for knowing what the Bible says about matters of life and death. Many Christians cannot cite Bible truths that will solve the spiritual problems being faced by the people they love the most.

Bibles That Are **Unappreciated**:

The Scriptures are the *love letters* from God to his children. The Bible reveals everything a child of God needs to know to develop a vibrant, intimate relationship with his heavenly Father. A person who professes to know and belong to Christ, yet cares nothing about Him, may very well be demonstrating that he doesn't really know God at all! Be sure that you are genuinely saved!