

# Hermeneutics

## Interpreting the Scriptures

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# Your “Worldview” and the Bible

## Lesson 1

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### A. What is a “worldview”?

**Note:** Everyone has a “worldview”, whether they are conscious of it or not.

A “worldview” is a set of assumptions that we hold (that is, beliefs, things we suppose to be true) about the basic makeup of the world, or just about life in general.

**Our goal in this course is to become conscious of our personal worldview... and then to *change our personal worldview where it is not rooted in biblical truth.***

### B. Your “worldview” causes you to reach certain conclusions

Each of us has a worldview ... and that view of the world has a great deal to do with our “conduct and actions” and what we “see”.

**Example:** The Sadducees had a worldview in which there was no such thing as the supernatural.

This belief blinded them to the truth of the reality of eternity.

**Read Mark 12:18-27**

**Read Acts 4:1-2 and Acts 23:8**

We used the example of the Sadducees ... but all of us have “blind spots”.

### C. “Worldview” and Culture

A worldview provides an explanation of *how and why things are as they are, and how and why they continue to change.*

These explanations of “how and why” are passed on from generation to generation, sometimes through a nation’s history books, or through folklore (legends), myths and stories.

They also give culture a subconscious legitimacy in the minds of the people of that culture. That is, people in a certain culture believe the things that make up their culture are valid and true ... because everyone around them has the same beliefs, the same opinions and the same customs.

### D. A “worldview” serves as a basis for values

A worldview serves as the basis for values, judging and validating (confirming, authenticating as true or good).

It is a **yardstick** or measuring line, with which people measure events and circumstances in their culture, providing criteria or standards for acceptability, importance, value and worth.

**For example:**

<b>Cultural Feature</b>	<b>Assumption / “Worldview”</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
Clothing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Immodest to go naked (West)</li> <li>2. One covers one’s body only if hiding something (Gava people, Nigeria)</li> <li>3. For ornamentation only (Higi people, Nigeria)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must wear clothes even to bed.</li> <li>2. Go naked to prove yourself.</li> <li>3. Wear on “occasion” only. Rearrange or change in public.</li> </ol>
Buying	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Impersonal, economic transaction (Western World)</li> <li>2. Social - person to person (Africa, Asia, Latin America)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fixed prices. No interest in seller as person. Get it over quickly.</li> <li>2. Banter over price. Establish personal relationship.</li> </ol>
Youthfulness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Desirable (Western World)</li> <li>2. Tolerable. To be overcome (Africa).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Look and act young, cosmetics.</li> <li>2. Prove yourself mature, don’t act young.</li> </ol>
Age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undesirable (Western World)</li> <li>2. Desirable (Africa)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dreaded, old people unwanted.</li> <li>2. Old people revered.</li> </ol>
Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Primarily formal, outside home, teacher-centred (Western World)</li> <li>2. Primarily informal in the home, learner-centred (Africa).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formal schools, hired specialists.</li> <li>2. Learn by doing, discipleship, folktales.</li> </ol>
Family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Centred around spouses (Western World)</li> <li>2. For the children (Africa)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compatibility of spouses important.</li> <li>2. Mother-child relationship paramount.</li> </ol>
Rapid Change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Good, change=progress (Western World)</li> <li>2. Threat to security (Africa)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage rapid change and innovation.</li> <li>2. Conservatism valued. Aim at stability.</li> </ol>

## **E. Worldview and Personal Identity**

A worldview reinforces identity. **It creates the “we ... they” dynamic**, (i.e. my culture ... as distinct from your culture).

That is, through a common worldview, people in one culture identify with their society as opposed to all other societies. **It produces a sense of community and belonging, a sense of membership in the clan, or tribe, or nation.** As the worldview of a culture is continually reinforced, the community is strengthened.

## **F. A worldview is a filter**

A worldview serves as a filter for new information, values, philosophies and experiences. However, not all new experiences that are new to a particular culture’s worldview are rejected; some create a change in the culture’s worldview.

**In this respect, worldviews can change. However, some worldviews are more resistant to change than others.**

**Example:** Islamic cultures' worldview resists change by isolating people from the rest of the world, making their cultures difficult to penetrate.

## **G. Coming into a biblical worldview**

Correcting our inherited personal worldviews brings us to the purpose of the following principles of Hermeneutics.

It is vitally important that each of us realises that the culture or society we have grown up in has influenced our values, what we consider "normal", even our interpretation of right and wrong.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will try in this course to get into the Biblical worldview, the true view of reality ... and become as saturated as possible with its language and thought.

*Our purpose is to think the way people thought in Bible times, so that we may see God's world in God's way through the "eyes" of revelation.*

**Read Ephesians 1:18**

**Read 2 Corinthians 2:14**

# Part 1: Hermeneutics

## Lesson 2

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### A. Introduction

#### 1. Hermeneutics.

- a) From the Greek word "hermeneuo" which means "to interpret".
- b) 2 Timothy 2:15, "to rightly divide the word of truth". Greek "orthotomeo" which means "to cut a straight line", i.e. to guide the word of truth along a straight line.
- c) Correct interpretation of the Bible is the most important factor in teaching/preaching/application.

#### 2. "Bible" From the Greek words "Biblios" and "Biblion", which mean "the Book".

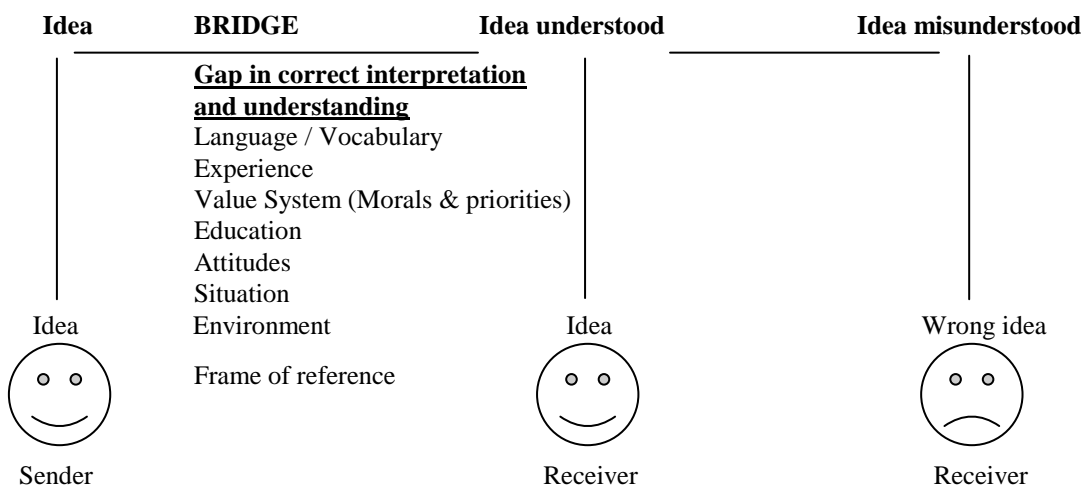
#### 3. Communication.

How can this man get to the other side of the river to visit his friends?

Now he can visit his friends – Because there is a BRIDGE!



Whenever communication takes place between one person and another it is important to realise that the message being communicated can be **misunderstood** by the person listening or reading. That is, there may be **an understanding gap**. In order for communication to be successful and accurate, there must be A BRIDGE which both the speaker or writer and the one listening or reading can use. For us to understand the Bible, the **rules of interpretation, or "Hermeneutics"**, supply us with the bridge across this gap.



## B. Definition of terms

1. Therefore, we can define **Hermeneutics** as the set of rules employed in the correct interpretation of Scripture.
  - a) Not only the written word, but also things not spoken of – for example, **signs and symbols**.
  - b) We need to understand what a text means in accordance with:
    - i) **The covenants of God** – Old Testament or New Testament under the New Covenant.
    - ii) **Christo-centric** – the whole Bible is centred on Jesus, the Messiah.
    - iii) **God's redemptive plan** – God's plan has always been to redeem man.
    - iv) **God's unchanging nature** – He remains the same.
  - c) We must also take into account foundational elements such as language, custom, context.



Women carrying water jars

Eastern Bride

Men's clothing

Women's clothing

- d) **The Word of God** is the centre of ministry, therefore a mature, working knowledge of correct interpretation of Scripture is **the basis of MINISTRY**.

### Read 2 Timothy 3:16

**The Word of God: Scripture** The Word of God, written

**Exegesis** The Word of God, understood

**Preaching** The Word of God, made relevant for today.

2. **Scripture:** The written Word of God.  
"Scripture" from a word which means a measuring rod, or a standard.
  - a) **Canon** – the books that together make up the written Word of God.  
**Tests for a book to be included in the Canon** (i.e. the Bible)
    - i) Is it "**authoritative**" – did it come from God?
    - ii) Is it **prophetic** – was it written by a man of God?

- iii) Is it **authentic** – the early church had a policy "*If in doubt, throw it out*".
  - iv) Is it **dynamic** – did it come with the life-transforming power of God?
  - v) Was it **received, collected, read and used** – accepted by the people of God? (2 Peter 3:16)
  - vi) **The New Testament** – was it written or approved by the apostles under the Lord's authority?
- b) **During the Reformation** (1517 – 1600AD) The church accepted the following:
- i) **The Old Testament**: The Jewish Scriptures, which were fulfilled in the person of Christ in the New Testament.
  - ii) **The New Testament**: Apostolic documents containing the truth of Christ and the church based upon apostolic authorship or authentication.

### 3. **The Traditions of Men versus the Authority of Scripture.**

As the Middle Ages drew to a close, various groups began to differ with Roman Catholic doctrines. One of the most important of these was that **The Roman Catholic Church** claimed that their interpretations of the Bible were the only accurate interpretations and that their church traditions were more authoritative than Scripture.

**NB** This is still the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church today.

**The Reformers** rejected the Roman Catholic Church's authority to define the Scriptures and maintained that the reverse was the way God intended. They maintained that the teachings of all churches, including "holy mother church" (which is what the Roman Catholic Church calls itself) need to be tested by Scripture.

**NB** The Bible should define the church, its traditions, doctrines, etc.

**Read Mark 7:11**

- NB**
- a) *Tradition must not add to Scripture and must be tested by Scripture.*
  - b) *The Bible remains the decisive and final authority, by which all the teachings, traditions, and the church itself, is to be tested.*

## C. **Unique features of the Bible**

### 1. **The Spiritual Factor.**

- a) God communicates with mankind by the Holy Spirit, who illumines the mind and witnesses to the truth of Scripture.
- b) **BUT – the man who is reading must be born again.**

## Read 1 Corinthians 1:22-29 and 2:6-10

### 2. The Unity Factor.

There is harmony throughout the Bible as it centres on Jesus Christ and our redemption and revelation, which depend on Him.

### 3. Progressive Revelation.

- a) God takes man where He finds him, with whatever understanding he has of God, morality, etc., and then God seeks to lead him closer and closer to Himself. In other words, God meets man where he is and then leads him on.
- b) As time passes, the purposes of God become clearer and fuller.
  - i) Any tension between older revelation and new: the old must give way to the new.
  - ii) **There is no uniformity of importance of passages in Scripture.** That is, some passages are more important than others. Example: John 3:16 and Numbers 1:13

## D. The basis for all interpretation

### 1. The Self-Interpretation of Scripture: Scripture interprets Scripture.

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*i.e. The whole of Scripture interprets the part of Scripture and therefore no part of Scripture can be so interpreted as to change or modify the teachings of the whole of Scripture.*

Example: Acts 20 – end.

Did Paul disobey God by going to Jerusalem? Did he keep the Law while telling others not to? Was his death a result of "appealing to Caesar?" Was he disobedient? We must take into consideration Paul's life as a whole, his determination to carry out his commission, and the information contained in other Books he wrote such as Romans and his statement there that the "*letter of the Law kills*" and Acts 9:16, "*for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake*".

### 2. The Supernatural.

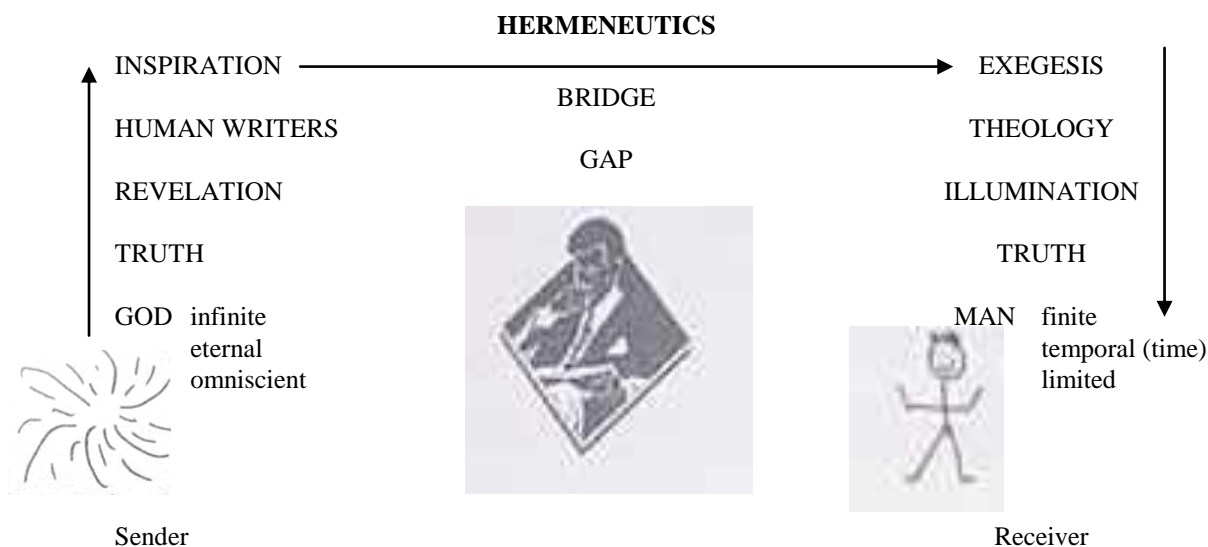
All reports of the supernatural in Scripture are not some kind of misunderstanding, but are accepted as God's intervention into man's environment.

### 3. The Communication of Scripture.

If there can be a gap in understanding between one person and another, how much more must it apply to communication between God, who is omniscient, etc., and the mind of man who is limited to time and space. In addition, God communicated His truth through human writers, using the things they would be familiar with at the time in which they were living. This makes accurate interpretation even more necessary.



## THE COMMUNICATION OF SCRIPTURE



**NB** About 35 different writers, from all walks of life, wrote the Scriptures over a period of about 1600 years (from Moses to John) and in three different languages!

- 4. God is:**
- a) Spirit, not flesh.
  - b) “Anthropomorphisms”: The attributing of human emotions such as anger, grief, joy and physical characteristics such as arms, ears, etc., to God. These attributes need to be understood in the context of imperfect expression of eternal truth, which enable us to better understand God. **Read** Hebrews 3:8-9, 15 and Psalm 91:4.

Example: He "hears" us – Job 27:9

Hearing requires – sound waves  
– an ear to receive  
– a nervous system which converts sound waves to patterns which the brain can interpret  
– memory, etc.

Obviously when God "hears" we are not saying He has all the physical organs, etc., or that He depends on the atmosphere and sound waves – He "hears" us even when we pray silently.

Example: David’s refuge “in the shadow of God’s wings” Psalm 57:1. Does God have wings and feathers, etc.?

- c) Inhabits ("dwells in and fills") eternity.
- d) Is completely unique – unlike anything or anyone.
- e) We call Him "Father" – used to communicate certain truths about God.

## E. The illustrative language of the Bible

God spoke to, and through, men ...

**"In many different ways"** (Hebrews 1:1)

1. **A Dream** (Numbers 12:6; Joel 2:28; Matthew 1:20)
2. **A Vision** Something "seen" while awake, without the usual means of seeing with our natural eyes. A supernatural appearance that brings a revelation. (Numbers 12:6; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; Acts 9:10,12)
3. **The Angel of the Lord** Sometimes meaning an actual appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ or a manifestation of a certain angel. (Genesis 18; Exodus 3; Judges 6 and 13)
4. **A Shadow** A faint and imperfect representation; a foreshadowing. (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 10:1)
5. **A Pattern** The first of its kind; the original mould from which a thing is made; an original item deserving of imitation. (Exodus 25:9; 1 Chronicles 28:11,12,19; 1 Timothy 1:16; Hebrews 8:5)
6. **A Mystery** That which is secret; truth which can be known only by revelation. (Ephesians 1:9; 3:9; 5:32; 1 Timothy 3:16; Revelation 1:20)
7. **A Dark Saying** A saying whose meaning is not clear at all and which must be searched out. (Numbers 12:8; Psalms 49:4; 78:2; Proverbs 1:6; Daniel 8:23)
8. **A Riddle** A puzzle requiring some thought and understanding to solve it. (Judges 14:12; Ezekiel 17:2)
9. **A Proverb** A short saying stating practical truth in a forceful way. (Proverbs, Luke 4:23; 2 Peter 2:22)
10. **A Parable** A short story conveying a spiritual truth or a lesson. "An earthly story with a heavenly meaning".
11. **Prophecy** To speak under inspiration concerning the present (forth telling) or concerning the future (foretelling) either to proclaim or predict.
12. **Symbols** We can speak "literally" of facts: places, people, actions, events that happened and we can use comparisons in order to better describe them. And when we speak of **ideas or concepts** we find we must resort to the use of figures of speech in order to get our meaning across.

**NOTE:** **For the correct interpretation of symbols we must know what those symbols meant at the time and place of writing!**

**NOTE:**           **The less the idea or concept of a symbol is related to the common experience of the reader, the more important it becomes to understand what the symbol represents.**

Example:           a)   Describe what "chocolate" tastes like.  
                      b)   Explain what an aeroplane is to someone who has never seen one.  
                      c)   Explain what it means to be happy.

Examples of symbols:

- a clock face
- the keyboard on a typewriter
- a page of piano music
- numbers – for instance, the number 3 can be a number in sequence (one, two, three); or it can be a bus that goes to a certain place; or it might mean a particular rugby player; it can also be a date (3/4/93); and even a measurement (4m 3cm).

The human mind is able to set the symbol against its CONTEXT and interpret what the symbol means almost immediately.

**13. Types**           In the Bible certain revelations of truth are presented through symbols which at a future time are to be replaced by reality – such a symbol is called a "type".

Whatever is used as a type will have qualities representative of a particular person or something to come. It may be a prophetic representation.

Examples:

- The Tabernacle – symbolic of the presence of God. Please note, He inhabits eternity (2 Chronicles 6:18) – but in the tabernacle the Lord was present in a special way.
- The Temple – was built according to the pattern of the Tabernacle.
- The Tabernacle of David – a form of relationship with God, expressed in praise and worship. (Note: this is the only temple/tabernacle God said would be rebuilt.)
- The Lord came in person – Jesus – so the symbol became unnecessary. (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11)

# Interpretation

## Lesson 3

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### A. Interpreters

In the last lesson we saw that a gap exists between the person reading – and let us call him “the interpreter” on the one side, and what is written – or “the material to be interpreted” on the other side. Rules for interpretation must be set up to bridge that gap. There must be protection against arbitrary (inconsistent, subjective, dictatorial, unrestrained) interpretation, made because of culture, a particular church’s doctrine, personal preference, or preaching styles.

#### 1. Two examples of wrong interpreters:

##### a) Legalistic Interpreters.

Acts 13:27 *"For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him".* (AMP) READ also John 5:39-40.

The Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, priests – those who were the official interpreters of the Old Testament, because they focused on the letter and legalities, misinterpreted the voices of the prophets and ended up by crucifying the Messiah. This shows us that it is possible to know the Scriptures very, very well but yet, because of legalistic interpretation, to misunderstand completely. (John 5:39-40)

##### b) False Interpreters. 2 Corinthians 4:2; Ephesians 4:14; 2 Peter 3:16.

There are people who deliberately misinterpret Scripture *"ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"*, they deceive themselves and mislead their followers.

#### 2. True Interpreters.

- Born of the Spirit of God, with a renewed mind, a hunger to know God and a respect for His Word.
- Having an attitude of humility, accepting the inspiration of the Scriptures; approaching in faith, not reasoning power;
- in prayer and meditation.
- Intellectually honest, recognising the unity of the Spirit and the Word, the harmony and unity of progressive revelation;
- understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments;
- able to use good study resources and
- possessing a sound mind.

## **B. Unreliable methods of interpretation**

### **1. The Allegorical Method.**

This view says that the true meaning of what God said lies hidden underneath what is plainly written. Scripture is interpreted with no consideration to its grammatical or historical meaning. What the author was trying to communicate is ignored and what the interpreter wants it to say is forced upon it.

Where the error lies: Believing that what God said in plain language is not really what He meant.

### **2. The Mystical Method.**

This method looks for many, many meanings in such things as the numerical value of letters and has also been referred to as "spiritualization".

Example: Adding up letters of words and giving the sum spiritual significance.

Where the error lies: Assuming that God meant many things other than those He actually said. If that was true, then how can we discover which meanings are more important? This form of interpretation turns Scriptures into riddles.

### **3. The Dogmatic Method.**

This reduces the Bible down to a collection of "proof texts" and is used by a lot of cults – Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Science in particular.

Example: Matthew 5:18 – "jots and tittles" of Law not passing away is used as support for continuing the Mosaic Law in every detail, but Jesus was speaking about the teachings of the Scriptures. Some of these were already fulfilled and were passing away even as Jesus spoke.

Where the error lies: The Bible is not seen as a whole, but in pieces.

### **4. The Devotional Method.**

This view says that Scriptures can be accurately interpreted as they pertain to each individual's life. It should be noted that of course there is personal application of Scripture, but this method goes beyond personal application and into personal interpretation. It is the "yes, but my case is different" method.

Example: Matthew 10:9,10,19 to mean that Christians do not need to bother about material provision or spiritual preparation.

Where the error lies: The interpreter singles himself out as a special case and ignores the context or intention of the writer.

### **5. The Rationalistic Method.**

This method limits the Bible only to what human reasoning and nature can

understand.

Example: Lazarus did not die but was in a coma. Jesus only appeared to be walking on the water but actually He was walking on the shore in a certain way that the disciples thought He was on the surface of the sea.

Where the error lies: Unbelief.

### C. The only safe and sensible method of interpretation

**THE LITERAL METHOD:** The basic meaning of any passage is what the writer intended us to understand. "Literal" means the understanding that any person of normal intelligence would get without any special "code" or "key".

**NB** This does not mean that figures of speech are to be taken literally.

- Examples:**
1. **Read** Joel 2:31 – "moon turned to blood" – means colour.
  2. **Read** Jeremiah 1:15 – "I am calling all the tribes .. of the north" – does not mean ALL – every tribe on earth to the north.
  3. **Read** Jeremiah 1:18 – "a fortified city, an iron pillar, bronze walls..." – means that Jeremiah would stand strong.

**NB** A reader or hearer can make the error of making the Bible say what he wants it to. Every sect or cult can support its doctrines with the Bible. It is the **hermeneutics used, the methods of interpretation that are applied which make for truth or error.** This is especially true of prophetic passages.

We must be anchored to a literal interpretation first. That is, that the writer had a message, that he used language to convey that message, like anyone else, and that what he literally said, he literally meant.

The Literal method assumes that the meaning of what God has said is evident and reliable and was intended to be understood by everyone who believes. The "literal sense" is the usual, customary and socially accepted meaning in their contexts. A word may have different meanings in different contexts and therefore must be interpreted in the light of its contextual usage. It is also called the **Historical – Contextual – Grammatical Method**, or H-C-G.

### D. A brief history of Hermeneutics

#### 1. Jewish Hermeneutics.

From Ezra (considered to be the Father of Hermeneutics, he was a scribe and along with help from a number of Levites, he undertook the great task of translating and interpreting the Scriptures into Aramaic – Nehemiah 8:1-8; Ezra 8:15-20) to this present day.

Important: We are in the New Covenant; New Testament Christians. The majority of the Jews rejected their Messiah, therefore *Jewish Hermeneutics differs from Christian Hermeneutics.*

- a) **History:** The Jews in captivity in Babylon had no temple, no ceremonies, etc., and therefore the Law and Prophets became their comfort and strength, and the source of their identity. The remnant returning to Jerusalem desired to again build the temple and city in order to restore the glory of their inheritance in Moses.

But, in Babylon, they had learned a new language – Aramaic. They no longer knew Hebrew! Therefore there was a **language gap**. Ezra, the scribe, accepted the responsibility of translating and interpreting the Writings. (Nehemiah 8:1-8; 10-18; Ezra 8:15-20)

**Important:** When Ezra taught the people about the laws, he applied God's instructions quite literally in the lives of the people – they were to put away foreign wives, keep the feasts, etc. That is, he told the people to DO these things. Therefore we see Ezra using Literal and Practical methods of interpretation.

- b) **Lesson:** Correct interpretation is based on bridging the language gap.

## 2. Jewish Authority.

- a) **The Sanhedrin:** Originally people gathered together in a "**synagogue**", which was just a place where they could meet. The Jews then formed a council of 120 members who gathered together to interpret the Law. By the time Jesus was born, this had developed into The Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin consisted of:

- i) The High Priest as President.
- ii) The Chief Priests or heads of the various groups of priests.
- iii) Scribes or Lawyers, who interpreted the Law.
- iv) Elders, who represented the ordinary people.

Large numbers of people now needed instruction; therefore they began to meet in synagogues. The main objective of these meetings was **instruction in the Law, NOT PUBLIC WORSHIP. Local synagogues could not interpret the Law, they could only repeat what the Sanhedrin said – THEREFORE WHEN THE SANHEDRIN REJECTED JESUS, SO DID THE SYNAGOGUES ... and (most of) the people in them.**

**NB** The same walls that lock truth in can also lock new truth out.

- b) **The Scribes:** These men were the "official interpreters" of the Law. They accumulated many, many traditions, which they placed alongside the Law of Moses and gave their traditions equal importance to the Law.
- c) **The Mishna:** These traditions of the Scribes were written down and called the Mishna.
- d) **The Gemara:** The Mishna was then commented on and these comments were written down and called the Gemara.

- e) **The Talmud:** These two, the Mishna and the Gemara together, were called the Talmud.

**NB** These leaders added to the Word of God.

**3. Hermeneutics during the time of the Apostles** (from the ministry of Jesus to the death of John).

- a) **Jesus:** He was the bridge between God and man. He continually rebuked the Pharisees because their legalistic approach to the Word of God, which included their own traditions, brought the people into total bondage and also because they ignored the power of God, His intentions and the spirit of what He meant.
- b) **The Apostles:** They rejected and condemned Jewish traditions, endless genealogies, false knowledge and philosophy.

**4. Medieval Hermeneutics.** (From 600 – 1517 AD)

During this time interpretation of God's Word had to submit to the tradition and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. The Bible was only used to support what the church "fathers" said. If it contradicted what the "fathers" said, then the Bible had to bow to church authority. Church leaders claimed that Scripture's true meaning was ONLY to be found in the Roman Catholic Church.

**5. Reformation Hermeneutics.** (From 1517, Martin Luther – to 1600 AD)

The Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic Church's insistence that it alone was gifted with the grace of interpretation and therefore knew instinctively what Scripture meant. Courageous men and women rejected this claim and set in its place the rule that **Scripture is its own interpreter.**

"**SOLA SCRIPTURA**" – Latin for "**only Scripture**" was the cry of this period.

The **whole** of Scripture interprets the **part** of Scripture, and therefore no part can be interpreted in such a way that it contradicts the teaching of the Bible as a whole.

Martin Luther, 1517 AD, attacked the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, translated the New Testament into German and put it into the hands of the masses.

**The Reformers believed that:**

- a) The Bible is the inspired Word of God.
- b) The Scriptures should be studied in its original languages.
- c) The Bible is infallible (not capable of error), but the church is fallible (capable of being wrong).
- d) The church is to submit to the Bible. The church does not decide what the Bible teaches, but the Bible determines what the church teaches.
- e) All understandings, preaching and teachings must be based on what the whole of Scripture reveals, not just on certain parts of Scripture.



## 6. Post Reformation Hermeneutics. (From 1600 – 1800 AD)

Sadly, after the great Reformation, the very same people who had rejected the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church now fought each other about their own doctrines and interpretations. They studied the Bible to find verses with which they could prove their various ideas and theology or traditions.

**NB This is “Eisegesis” (“Eise” = “putting into”; not “exe-gesis” = “taking out of”). That is, Eisegesis allows doctrine to control the interpretation of Scripture. Exegesis allows God’s Word to form doctrine and is the basis for all true, meaningful, accurate preaching.**

## E. Foundations for interpretation

### Bridging the gap:

The goal of Hermeneutics is to understand the meaning of the Word of God. The foundation needed to reach this goal is to correctly bridge the gap between our minds, today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and the minds of the writers of the Bible, who lived thousands of years ago.

This gap consists of four basic areas:

1. **The gap of language:** The Bible is composed of documents written in languages which are no longer spoken: Ancient Hebrew, Ancient Chaldee and Koine Greek.
  - a) **Vocabulary:** For example, the word “adoption” to us today, refers to the legal transferring of a child from one family to another; but in Hebrew culture it referred to a child coming of age in his own family.
  - b) **Grammar:**
    - i) English and Hebrew stress word order – where words appear in a sentence is important – i.e. whether the subject, object, etc. Example: “He gave it to her”, has a very different meaning to “she gave him to it”.
    - ii) Koine Greek: the ending of words determined the role it played in a sentence. Example: “anthropos” = “a man”; “anthropo” = “to a man”. This determines the difference between – a man made a statement, and a statement was made to a man.
2. **The gap of culture:** Different writers lived in different cultural settings. For example: the Israelites were influenced culturally by the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans.
  - a) **Materially:** Such things as housing, food, cooking utensils, agricultural tools, weapons, animals, etc., were quite different to how they are today. For example: it is impossible to properly interpret Jeremiah 2:13 without understanding what a “cistern” represented in that cultural context.

- b) **Socially:** The manner in which the people of that society relate to one another. The way they make their living, how they worship, recreation, family customs, civil laws, legal practices, etc. For example: Jacob would not have been so easily deceived had he known the marriage customs in the land of Nahor (Genesis 29:26).

**NB:** The way in which a people live within their environment moulds their way of thinking. For example: if someone lives in a small community and the biggest church he has ever seen is a church of 50 people, then a church of 150 people is huge. But in Korea there is a church of 700,000 and a church of 150 is considered very small.

3. **The gap of geography:** From the wilderness of Sinai to Rome, Babylon, etc. Some places mentioned in the Bible no longer exist or are not called by the same name.

- a) **Political:** 1 Kings 18:42-46, Elijah ran from Carmel to Jezreel. It is helpful to know where these places were.
- b) **Names:** of cities, rivers, etc., may have changed.
- c) **Botanical:** plant and animal life are different from our experience. For example: Proverbs 30:19-31, Luke 13:32.

4. **The gap of history:** The historical context of Bible authors was very different to ours today.

- a) **World powers:** Do you remember that Syria and Assyria are two different countries? Can you locate them on a map? What about Phoenicia? Egypt? Babylon? Rome? Mesopotamia? Canaan? ... etc.
- b) **Economies:** Example: the economic wealth and need in the early church played a major role in fusing the Jewish and Gentile believers, Acts 11:27-29.
- c) **Religions:** Societies have always been greatly influenced by their religion. Throughout Scripture God's people are always seen in relation to other religions around them as either being influenced by them or in conflict with them. Example: Leviticus 18:9-14; Acts 19:24-41.

These gaps can be bridged by the use of Lexicons and Dictionaries, Books on Manners and Customs of the Bible, an Atlas, Books on Geography and Bible History.

# Part 2: Principles of Interpretation

## Lesson 4:

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### A. The Context Principle

Context – “con” means together.

*Correct interpretation of any verse is determined by putting it together and considering it as part of a line of thought, which runs through a portion of Scripture or even the whole of Scripture.*

Example: **Read Ecclesiastes 10:19.** Could this be used as an excuse for selfish, drunken greed? No. We must base our interpretation on knowing its context – written by a man (Solomon) who was backslidden, discouraged and disillusioned with the world’s ability to give meaning to life.

1. **Fresh Revelation** – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writers of the Bible wrote new thoughts, previously unknown to them.

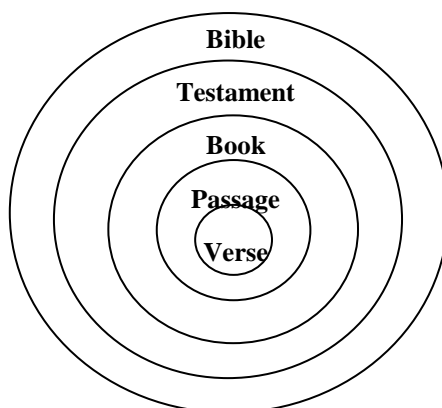
Example: Jeremiah 31:31-34. God revealed to Jeremiah that there would be a New Covenant. No one had ever known that before.

Ephesians 2:11 – 3:21. Paul writes of the mystery of the body of Christ, the Church.

2. **Woven Revelation** – The writers of the Bible sometimes took new revelation and added it to what God had already said which gave them greater understanding of what God had previously revealed. In other words, they wove together new revelation and what was known to them before.

Example: Romans 3:9-18. Paul weaves together six quotations from the Old Testament (Psalms 14:1-3, 53:1-3, 10:7, 140:3; Proverbs 1:16; Isaiah 59:7-8) which show the universality of sin and the need for redemption apart from keeping the law.

**The Context Principle teaches that Scripture interprets Scripture** – therefore a part of Scripture can never be understood outside of the context of the whole of Scripture. This rule, or principle, can be illustrated like this:



## Read Psalm 119:160

**The context of a verse is the passage.** In order to understand the verse, you must read the passage it appears in. *What is the main point the writer is trying to make?*

**The context of a passage is the book.** Who wrote it and when? To whom? What was the reason it was written? Did it have any effect? How does it apply to us today? Or, does it apply at all?

**The context of the book is the Testament.** What covenant were God's people under when it was written?

**The context of a Testament is the whole Bible,** because God does not change, therefore His intentions, purposes, goals and plans remain the same today as they were when Abraham, or David, or Hosea lived.

### 1. **The whole of Scripture context:**

No one verse should be used on its own apart from its relationship to the whole of the Bible. The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture.

### 2. **The Testament context:**

Each of the two Testaments has its own distinctive character and emphasis: In the Old Testament the general emphasis is the Law; the general emphasis of the New is the grace of God through Jesus – the fulfilment of the Law. The dividing point between the Testaments is the Cross. As a general rule, the New is the interpreter of the Old. “The New is in the Old contained, the Old is in the New explained”.

Note: The point where the New Covenant started is the Cross of Christ. Jesus lived His life as an Old Covenant Jew.

### 3. **The Book context:**

Within the Bible and its two Testaments, the context of any verse is the specific book where it is found. Each of the books has its own specific purpose, message and style. (The general theme of Romans is the “justification that comes from faith”; James is “works which flow from justification”.)

### 4. **The Passage context:**

Each book is divided by subject matter (in other words what the writer is talking about) into passages. Each passage consists of a group of consecutive verses pertaining to a particular subject – today we call these “paragraphs”. Any sentence or verse must be interpreted in the light of the subject-context of the paragraph it is in. (For example: Romans 11:26 must be interpreted in the light of the subject context of Romans chapters 9 through 11.)

**NB A text without its context is your own invented text!**

**APPLICATION** (correctly applying what we read to our lives)

### 1. **Luke 24:49. READ**

This verse was used as instruction to hold long meetings (sometimes repeated meetings for days or weeks) where people would “tarry” or “wait” for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

**NB** If we accept that we are to “wait” then we must also wait in Jerusalem because that is where they were. But we do not see “waiting” as being necessary for the saints written about in Acts. They received the Holy Spirit just by asking and immediately they were filled.

## 2. **Hebrews 10:38. READ**

Where does this passage start and finish? (10:19 – 12:2 – notice that the passage context can cross into another chapter)

Chapter 11 Historical examples of faith.

Chapter 12 Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

What is the context of the book of Hebrews? There is some uncertainty as to the author, but we know that it was written to some Jews who had stepped out of Judaism into Christianity, but who now wanted to revert to Judaism in order to escape persecution from their countrymen. They were probably living in Rome and this letter was written to them sometime between 64 and 68AD. Purpose: to show Christ as superior to – the Aaronic priesthood, animal sacrifice, Melchizedek priesthood – He was the perfect sacrifice. There is more to be gained in Christ and the writer encourages them to press on.

What is the context of the Testament? The Old points to Christ, the New points to faith in Him. The New is “better” – see above, a “better” priesthood, a “better” and perfect sacrifice, etc.

The New Testament is a part of the Bible, where we are shown that the sin of unbelief destroyed man’s relationship with God. Righteousness (our relationship to God restored) comes by faith in Christ who bore our sin. We are justified – now part of the family of God.

## **B. The First Mention Principle**

We can help our understanding of a verse by **considering the first time its main idea appears in Scripture.**

**NB** God demonstrates principles in His Word. This is not the first mention of a word, but the first demonstration of a principle. God demonstrates the principle before He labels it, for example:

**Read Genesis 1:1-3** The first mention of the agreement of the Spirit and the Word.

**Read Genesis 3:21** The first mention of a “substitution” sacrifice.

**NB** The same is true for symbols, persons, places and prophecies.

For example: **Read Isaiah 7:14** – the first mention of this prophetic stream is found

in Genesis 3:15 (**Read**) which aids in interpreting the prophecy in Isaiah.

**IMPORTANT:**

1. The first step is to accurately locate the first mention.
2. NEVER refer only to the first mention of a word, rather try to discover the principle that word contains.
3. No later mention of that subject should be used in contradiction of that first mention.
4. This principle should never be used alone to interpret a verse.

**Scriptures for consideration:**

1. **Romans 3:24-25** *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood...."*

Subject                    justification by grace through faith in the blood of Jesus  
First mention        Genesis 3:21

2. **Romans 5:12** *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned".*

Subject                    the entrance of sin and death into the world by one man.  
First mention        Genesis 3:1-7 and Genesis 2:17

3. **Luke 1:17** *"And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

Subject                    Elijah  
First mention        1 Kings 17:1-7  
Elijah pronounces judgement according to the Word of the Lord in order to bring about repentance in the nation of Israel. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, calling the nation to repentance.

**C. The Comparative Mention Principle**

A certain verse or verses in a passage can be interpreted by comparing it with another verse or group of verses – or by contrasting it with another verse or group of verses.

"to compare"        means to look at how they are the same.

"to contrast"        means to look at how they differ.

**IMPORTANT:**

1. This principle should be used whenever there is more than one verse or passage that deals with the same subject. In other words, when studying a subject in the Bible, all that the Bible has to say on that subject must be taken into consideration.
2. No doctrine should be formed on the basis of one verse or passage of Scripture.
3. Passages may be compared only when they are shown to deal with the same

subject.

- 4. Passages cannot be compared when the conclusion would conflict with other clear statements of Scripture.
- 5. When comparing verses, go from the meaning of clear passages to those that are not clear then **interpret the unclear ones in light of the clear.**

**Examples:**

a) **Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-18**

Tables of Stone

Stone  
 Written with the finger of God  
 Death  
 Letter kills  
 Glory to go away  
 Old Testament  
 Condemnation  
 Veil on face of Moses

Tables of Heart

Heart  
 Written with the Spirit of God  
 Life  
 Spirit gives life  
 Glory to remain  
 New Testament  
 Righteousness  
 No veil, face to face

b) **Read Luke 17:26** What were the “days of Noah” like?

c) **Read 1 Corinthians 15:45-49** First Adam ..... Last Adam

**D. The Progressive Mention Principle**

It is important to understand that the Word of God is a progressive revelation. God did not give full truth all at once, but He unfolds it to man step-by-step, detail-by-detail – continually giving more and more understanding.

**Read Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2 – Christ is born.**

**IMPORTANT:**

- 1. Because truth is progressively unfolded in Scripture, no one verse contains the whole truth on any given theme. No doctrine can be built on one verse.
- 2. Caution must be used in comparing or contrasting verses. Only when those verses or passages clearly speak of the same idea can they be legitimately put together.

**Example: Read Galatians 3:29**

The subject of this verse involves Abraham. His role in God's plan to redeem man is progressively revealed in the Bible.

**Can you follow the steps in the Messianic Prophecy?**

Genesis 3:15      The seed of woman

Genesis 12:3      The seed of Abraham

Genesis 49:10      .....

Numbers 24:17      .....

Deuteronomy 18:15	.....
Psalms 22	.....
Psalms 110:4	.....
Isaiah 7:14	.....
Isaiah 53	.....
Micah 5:2	.....
Zechariah 12	.....
etc.	

### E. The Complete Mention Principle

The interpretation of any subject is based on gathering all the references to it in the Bible and considering them – only as these parts are pieced together can the full truth be seen correctly as a whole. This principle is very similar to the Progressive Mention Principle we have just studied:

- First Mention                "first the blade"
- Progressive Mention      "then the ear"
- Complete Mention        "then the full corn"

#### Example: The Symbol of Leaven

Ex.12:15	Put away leaven from your house, for whoever eats leavened bread... shall be cut off.	Lev.23:17	They shall be baked with leaven
		Deut.16:3	Eat no leavened bread
Ex.12:19	Whoever eats that which is leavened... cut off	Deut.16:4	No leavened bread seen with you
Ex.12:20	You shall not eat anything leavened	Hosea 7:4	Kneaded the dough until it be leavened
Ex.12:39	For it was not leavened	Amos 4:5	Sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven
Ex.13:3	No leavened bread eaten	Matt.13:33	The Kingdom of heaven is like leaven; till the whole was leavened
Ex.13:7	No leavened bread be seen with you... Neither leavened bread be seen with you	Matt.16:6	Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees
		Matt.16:11	Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees
Ex.23:18	Not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread	Matt.16:12	Not beware of the leaven of bread
Ex.34:18	The feast of unleavened bread you shall keep	Mark 8:15	Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees
		Mark 8:15	And of the leaven of Herod
Lev.2:11	No meat offering.. shall be made with leaven; burn no leaven	Luke 12:1	Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees
Lev.6:17	It shall not be baked with leaven	Luke 13:21	It is like leaven which a woman took.. until the whole was leavened
Lev.7:13	Offer for his offering leavened bread	1 Cor.5:6	A little leaven leavens the whole lump
Lev.10:12	Eat it without leaven beside the altar	1 Cor.5:7	Purge out therefore the old leaven
		1 Cor.5:8	Not with old leaven; neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness
		Gal.5:9	A little leaven leavens the whole lump

Conclusion: leaven is often used to symbolise sin or sinful habits.



**HOMEWORK**

Interpret John 6:56 on “the blood”, using all the references to this theme from the books of Genesis and Exodus only.

1. Locate the first mention.
2. Gather the links in the chain by using the Progressive Mention Principle.
3. List your observations.
4. Give a summary interpretation of the verses in your own words.

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# The Principles of Election and Covenant

## Lesson 5

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### A. **The Principle of Election** (some refer to this as “predestination”)

This refers to *God's selection of certain persons or nations for His purposes.*

#### **Types of Election:**

1. The election of a certain TIME. God chooses certain nations, individuals or groups to fulfil His purposes at a particular time in history.
2. The election of each of us having a free will, and making our own choices, which will endure for eternity.

#### **Election and Redemption** (salvation)

1. Election is a sovereign act of God. God did not *have* to save anyone, since all of us had lost our position of acceptability because of sin.
2. What God does for us is entirely because of GRACE. (Romans 9:11, 11:5-6) We are utterly unworthy. God chose to save us ONLY out of His love and grace.
3. Election (or predestination) is according to, and totally based on, God's foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:1-2). God "chose" those He knew ahead of time would accept Christ.

### NB 4. **Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God created any man to be elected or predestined for hell.**

**IMPORTANT** when considering a particular part of Scripture:

1. Does the passage or verse you are considering have any connection with God's elective purposes? This principle will not necessarily be of assistance to every verse or passage, rather it applies only where the truth of election is involved.
2. THE PRINCIPLE OF ELECTION GOES HAND IN HAND WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF COVENANT. Therefore these two should be considered at the same time.

#### **Scriptures**

Malachi 1:2-3 "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau....."

Genesis 25:19-34 Even before their birth, God spoke to Rebecca saying, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from your womb; and the one shall be stronger than the other; and the elder shall serve the younger..." Even though Esau was born first, God chose Jacob above Esau.

Why? Because He foreknew what Esau was like; He knew his character, knew he would treat his inheritance casually or in an off-hand manner.

Romans 9:6-24, verse 11 *“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”*.

**Conclusion:** God could love Jacob and hate Esau before their birth because He foreknew their characters and the history of their nations.

## **B. The Principle of Covenant**

Interpretation is determined by considering its Covenantal setting.

Note: The word "covenant" in the Bible means an agreement or a contract between men or nations, or between God and man. We find that men often made covenants with each other – for example, Genesis 21:27 Abraham and Abimelech.

God comes to man declaring His will and seeking man's acceptance and obedience to the terms. It is a contract between God and man drawn up by God and presented to man. Man can either accept it or reject it, but he cannot change it in any way.

### **Two kinds of Covenants:**

1. **Conditional:** A covenant which depends on man's fulfilling certain conditions. "If ..... then ...." Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 28:58.
2. **Unconditional:** This is a covenant in which God has chosen to fulfil the promises of the covenant regardless of man's response; a covenant whose fulfilment does NOT depend upon man fulfilling certain terms or conditions. "I will..." Exodus 6:3-8; Genesis 9:11.

### **The two major parts to God's New Covenant with man:**

1. **Salvation** – based on believing and faith (given by God).
2. **Inheritance** – based on obedience.

### **The elements of a Covenant:**

1. The **Words or promises** of the covenant.
2. The **Blood** of the covenant.
3. The **Seal or sign** of the covenant.

## **COVENANTS IN SCRIPTURE**

### **1. THE COVENANT IN EDEN (Edenic Covenant) Genesis 1:26-30.**

From a “dispensational” point of view, this would be known as the “Dispensation of Innocence”. (A “dispensation” is a period of time in which God reveals a particular purpose, to which men respond in faith and obedience, or unbelief and

disobedience.)

- a) **The words or promise:** The word "covenant" is not specifically mentioned, but it is still obvious that there is a covenant. It was made before sin entered.

The Promise:     DOMINION  
The Terms:        OBEDIENCE

This covenant was **CONDITIONAL**.

- b) **The Blood:** Adam was made a living soul. The life is in the blood. Adam originally had sinless blood.
- c) **The Seal or Sign:** The tree of eternal life.

## 2. **THE COVENANT WITH ADAM (Adamic Covenant) Genesis 3:15.**

(From a dispensational point of view, this would be known as the “Dispensation of Conscience”.)

This covenant was made after the entrance of sin. It is **UNCONDITIONAL**.

- a) **The words or promise:** The promise of redemption for man and the ultimate crushing of Satan’s authority.
- b) **The Blood:** The first death in the Bible was the death of the animals to cover Adam and Eve. It was also a substitute death – the innocent for the guilty.
- c) **The Seal or Sign:** The coats of skin. Adam and Eve had used fig leaves, but these had to be thrown away. Instead they wore coats of skin, a covering acceptable to God and provided through the death of an innocent victim. These were a shadow or type of the righteousness of Jesus available to us. (John 1:29; Romans 4)

## 3. **THE COVENANT WITH NOAH (Noahic Covenant) Genesis 8 – 9.**

(This would be known as the “Dispensation of Human Government”.)

- a) **The words or promise:** This is the first specific mention of the word “covenant”. The promise was that God would never again destroy the earth with water.

This covenant is **UNCONDITIONAL**.

- b) **The Blood:** Noah sacrificed to the Lord burnt offerings of every clean beast and fowl.
- c) **The Seal or Sign:** The rainbow.

#### 4. **THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15,17, 22.**

(This would be known as the “Dispensation of Promise”.)

- a) **The words or promise:** Abraham is the father of all who believe (Romans 4:16). God's promise was salvation through Christ, the seed of Abraham (Matthew 1:1, Galatians 3:16).

This covenant is **CONDITIONAL**.

- b) **The Blood:** Genesis 15: there are five sacrifices in this passage, which Abraham made, according to God’s requirements.

- c) **The Seal or Sign:** Circumcision.

**Galatians 3:29** – *“And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise”*. Remember that children were automatically included in a covenant and when they reached an age where they were old enough to decide for themselves, they could choose whether they wanted to remain in the covenant, or reject it.

The Abrahamic Covenant is in two parts: one concerning Abraham himself – and these promises were for land, possessions and seed. The second part has to do with the whole earth – the Messiah, and all the nations of the earth.

#### 5. **THE COVENANT WITH MOSES (Mosaic Covenant) Exodus 20 – 40.**

(This would mark the beginning of the “Dispensation of Law” – which ends with the death and resurrection of Jesus.)

- a) **The words or promise:** This covenant was made with the nation whom God had chosen to demonstrate His greatness and His character through. The words were summarised in the Ten Commandments, the civil and ceremonial laws God gave to Israel. It required the keeping of Sabbaths, festivals, eating certain meats, etc.

Therefore it is **CONDITIONAL**.

- b) **The Blood:** Sacrificial blood was shed and sprinkled on the people and the book of the Law.

- c) **The Seal or Sign:** Exodus 31:12-18 The seal or sign of the covenant was **THE SABBATH DAYS**. It pointed to the true Sabbath rest, which would be found in Christ. (Matthew 12:1-13; Hebrews 3 – 4)

**NOTE: Galatians 4:10 "You observe days, and months, and times and years".**

Paul is writing to the church of Galatia, which had gone back to keeping the Law. This verse can only be understood by knowing that, according to the Mosaic covenant, Israel was to keep the Sabbath and feasts, etc. In Galatians

Paul is referring back to these special days as belonging to the Law Covenant. For the church to go back to keeping these special days was to go back to the Law and the covenant of Moses. They would be rejecting the New Covenant of grace.

6. **THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT Deuteronomy 27,28,29,30.** (Especially Deuteronomy 29:1)

- a) **The words or promise:** This covenant was made with the generation of Israel who were about to enter the Promised Land.

**It was a CONDITIONAL covenant.**

For Israel to live and remain in the land was conditional on the terms God stated in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 – 29. If these conditions were not met, then they would be put out of the land.

- b) **The Blood:** Deuteronomy 27:1-8. The day the new generation of Israel entered the land, an altar of stones was built to the Lord and sacrificial offerings were made.
- c) **The Seal or Sign:** Upon their obedience to His laws of the land, God's seal on Israel was to bless them with fruitfulness by sending the rain upon their land. The early and the latter rain. When God withheld the rain it was the evidence of His withholding the seal of His blessing. This seal was a shadow of the coming Holy Spirit and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. (Joel 2:23-32)

**NOTE:** Jeremiah 25:11 "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years".

What was the reason Israel had to go into captivity and be taken away to Assyria and Babylon? Because under the terms of the Palestinian Covenant, God said that if Israel broke this covenant, He would remove them from the land and send them into captivity.

See Deuteronomy 29:1-29. Their idolatry and refusal to repent brought the judgement of God upon them because this covenant is **CONDITIONAL**.

7. **THE DAVIDIC COVENANT (Covenant with David) 2 Samuel 7:4-29, Psalm 89.**

- a) **The words or promise:** This is an **UNCONDITIONAL** covenant, which God made with David and which involved the coming of Jesus, who was of the seed of David as well as the seed of Abraham (Matthew 1:1). He would take the throne of David and rule and reign upon it as a righteous King forever.

- b) **The Blood:** David offered sacrifices to the Lord at the return of the Ark.

- c) **The Seal or Sign:** Psalm 89:27-37. The sun and moon were to be the sign of the Davidic covenant. God promised David that as long as the sun and the moon existed, the seed of David would sit upon his throne. It finds its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.

**8. THE NEW COVENANT Matthew 26:26-29, Hebrews 8-9, Jeremiah 31:31-34.**

(The death and resurrection of Jesus marked the beginning of what the dispensationalists call the “Dispensation of Grace”. The point is no longer legal obedience to the Law as a condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ.)

- a) **The words or promise:** This is the covenant of GRACE and it is everlasting. This covenant is the consummation or summing up of all the other covenants.
- b) **The Blood:** The blood of Jesus is the blood of the New Covenant.
- c) **The Seal or Sign:** 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Revelation 7:1-4; 14:1-2.

Baptism is the sign of this covenant – baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus had the seal of God on Him (John 3:33-34) and the believer in Christ is also to receive the seal of God (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30).

(The Dispensational view has one additional dispensation – the Kingdom, which is the last of the periods of time of human life on earth. It involves the establishment of the Kingdom promised to David and includes the nation of Israel’s salvation, restoration and inhabitation, and includes the 1000 years of Christ’s rule on earth.)

**Can you match the covenants with their dispensations without looking at your notes?** (Fill in: MOSAIC, NEW, ABRAHAMIC, ADAMIC, NOAHIC, EDENIC)

- Innocence = ..... covenant
- Conscience = ..... covenant
- Human government = ..... covenant
- Promise = ..... covenant
- Law = ..... covenant
- Grace = ..... covenant

**IMPORTANT APPLICATION OF THE COVENANTAL PRINCIPLE:**

1. We need to understand which covenant or covenants are in effect and being referred to during the passage under consideration.
2. The covenantal principle is really only used when the passage or verse is about promises or terms or the results of a broken covenant, etc.
3. All covenants (and all dispensations) are interpreted in the light of the New

Covenant.

**Scripture Exercises**

Revelation 22:14 "Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life".

In order to understand and correctly interpret this verse we must look at the covenant made in Eden. Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat of the tree of life because they had sinned by disobeying God. They did not "do His commandments" and lost the right to the tree of life (Genesis 2:8-17; 3:22-24).

Romans 16:20 "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly".

What covenant do we need to consider in order to understand this verse? .....

**HOMEWORK**

Using the covenantal principle, determine which covenants are being dealt with in Acts 15. Remember! Look for "covenantal language" and not necessarily the word "covenant".

List them and explain why you believe the covenants you listed are correct.

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# The Ethnic Division Principle, etc.

## Lesson 6

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### A. The Ethnic Division Principle

The interpretation of a verse or passage may be assisted by the understanding of God's appointed ethnic divisions.

**NB** The word "**ethnic**" has to do with the basic divisions of mankind by culture. It is a community of persons; nations; folk; people – "**offspring, family, nation, many individuals of the same nature, kind, sort**".

**A community of persons sharing the same ancestry and participating in the same culture. These words are used of:**

**ISRAEL/JUDAH, THE GENTILE NATIONS, AND THE CHURCH.**

#### 1. God is no respecter of persons, but He uses three distinctions in mankind in 1 Corinthians 10:32:

**"Give none offence,**

- a) neither to the **Jews**
- b) nor to the **Gentiles**
- c) nor to the **Church of God**"

#### 2. The Chosen Nation.

God chose Israel to bring the good news of God to the nations of the world. They were to be a special people for Himself above all other people on earth because of His love and the covenant He had made with Abraham, who responded to Him in faith, and to Isaac and Jacob – all men of faith (Deuteronomy 7:6-9 and 9:1-6).

**NB:** Remember: God responds to faith ... not to race!

- a) The Division – Israel was united from the time they left Egypt until the end of Solomon's reign. After that the nation was divided into two parts, two kingdoms, two nations; known as Israel and Judah (2 Kings 11– 12).

It must be recognised that from then on there were *two kingdoms and two destinies* – two different kingdoms or world powers took them captive, at two different times, and they went to two different places.

Israel – to Assyria

Judah – to Babylon

- b) **THEREFORE** – To interpret the prophetic books of the Bible correctly, the difference of whether it is written to, or spoken of, Israel or Judah **MUST** be kept in mind.

Jeremiah prophesied that God would make a New Covenant with the nations of Israel and Judah – and Ezekiel prophesied that God would make the two of

them one, in the hand of the Son of man (he used two sticks).

**Read Ezekiel 37:15-19**

**This can ONLY come about through the New Covenant in the Lord Jesus.**

3. **The Gentile Nations** – Meaning ALL peoples not in covenant relationship with God. Read Ephesians 2:11-12.
4. **The Church** – 1 Corinthians 10:32 – "the church of God".

The "church" = Greek word is       EKKLESIA (from EK and KALEO)  
  EK – means "out of"  
  KALEO – means "to call"

Therefore, EKKLESIA means "the called out ones".

**NOTE:** We are not only called "out of" we are also called "in to".

Jesus is not the Saviour *from* the world – He is the Saviour *of* the world. Churches that encourage people to give up their unsaved friends, and have long lists of “don’t do this” and “don’t go there”, etc., are designed to keep people in and reality out. Remember the mistake the early scribes made (p14). The same walls that are built to lock in also lock out.

We are called to live “in the world” without becoming “of the world”, or removing ourselves “out of it” (John 17). Substitute the word “water” for “world” and the word “boat” for “church”. The boat belongs in the water. If the boat takes on too much water, however, we become of the water and quickly sink. (From *Soul Tsunami*, by Leonard Sweet.)

That is why what a person is saved *into* is more important than what he is saved *out of*. (Think about that.)

God can save anyone – murderer, thief, adulterer, whoever ..... it is all the same salvation. But the kind of church they go into for discipleship, encouragement and training ... can either build them up, or stunt their growth!

5. **The People of the Church.**

The church is made up of both Jew and Gentile – as God called Israel as a nation from all the nations of the world. It is the same today as God calls a church to Himself from all the nations of the world.

**National divisions are determined by natural birth, but by spiritual birth all national distinctions cease to exist, because “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).**

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15).

**IMPORTANT:**

The first step in using this principle is to decide if the verse or passage is referring to any of the three divisions: Israel/Judah; Gentiles; or Church.

1. Does this verse refer to the united nations of Israel; the **whole** house of Israel?
2. Does it refer to the 10 tribes of Israel, the northern kingdom?
3. Does it refer to the 3 tribes of the southern kingdom, Judah?
4. Does it refer to the Gentile nations?
5. Does it refer to the Church, chosen out of every nation?

**NB** The Church is the spiritual Israel of God – Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6. There is the danger of exalting natural birth, or first birth, above the Church or spiritual birth, second birth (born again).

**HOMEWORK**

**Part 1** Using the five questions at the top of this page, answer the following:

1. Which ethnic division does Jeremiah 3:6 refer to? .....
2. Which ethnic division does Jeremiah 3:8 refer to? .....
3. Which ethnic division does Jeremiah 31:31 refer to? .....
4. Which ethnic division does Joel 3:9 refer to? .....
5. Which ethnic division does Zechariah 2:11 refer to? .....

**Part 2** Using the ethnic division principle, study Genesis 12:3 with Galatians 3:8-29, and prove how Paul can justify his statement that “the seed of Abraham” refers to Christ and the Church.

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## B. The Principle of Time, or “Ages” or “seasons”

The principle of understanding certain verses or passages according to which "age" or time they refer to.

### Divisions:

**Past Ages:** The Eternal Ages Past.  
The Age of Creation.  
The Age of the Patriarchs (a time of Promise – from Adam to Abraham).  
The Age of the Chosen Nation (a time of Law – from Isaac to Christ).

**Present Age:** The Messianic Age (from Jesus’ first coming to His second coming).

**Future Age:** The Age to Come (Eternity).

## C. The Breach Principle

The principle that the **interpretation of certain verses or passages of Scripture is made easier by considering breaches of promise and time.**

### Definition of "Breach"

#### 1. According to the Dictionary, a "breach" is:

- a state of being broken, a break or a gap
- a hole or opening as in a wall or fence, made by breaking or parting
- an interruption of continuity, a blank space
- a break or interruption in friendly relations

#### 2. Kinds of breaches:

- Breach of faith a failure to keep faith.
- Breach of privilege an act in violation of rules, orders, or privileges of a legislative body.
- Breach of promise failure to fulfil a promise.
- Breach of trust violation by fraud or omission of any duty imposed on a person who is in a position of trust.

**Together these words provide us with a basic meaning of a "division", or "gap".**

#### 1. Breach of promise concerning ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND:

Two years after leaving Egypt, Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea on the border of the land of Canaan. Twelve spies were sent into the land, ten came back with an evil report saying that, although the land was good, the obstacles were too great to be overcome. This report made the entire nation rise up in unbelief and rebellion, and reject the land God had given them, the land of promise. In doing this they turned their backs on the Abrahamic covenant. The New Testament clearly states that they could not enter into the promise because of their unbelief.

**Read Hebrews 3:7-11 and then verse 19**

**Read Numbers 14:30, 33-34.**

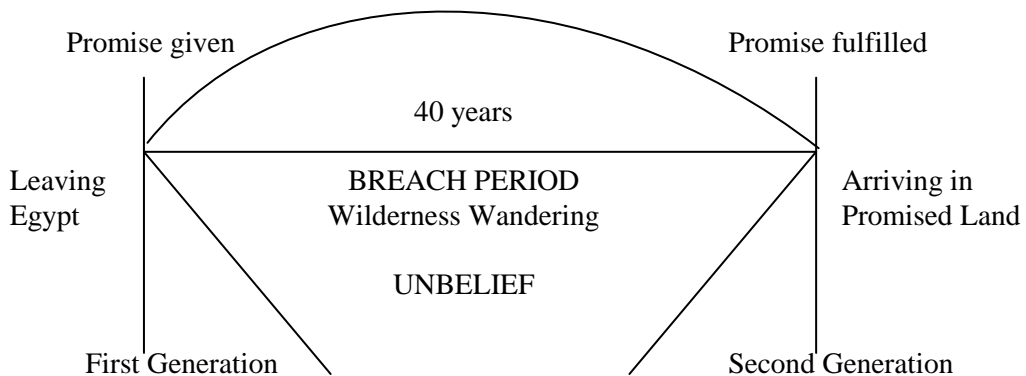
There is a **Breach of Promise** – and a lapse of time in the fulfilment of God's promise to the nation of Israel – a gap of 37½ years, during which the generation that had come out of Israel died in unbelief in the wilderness. (Remember: it had taken them about 2½ years after leaving Egypt to reach the boundaries of the Promised Land.)

The first and the second generation experienced the breach caused by being **out of covenant relationship with God**.

Circumcision was the seal of the Abrahamic covenant – for this reason the second generation had to be circumcised before they could enter into the blessings of the covenant. **Read Joshua 5:2-9.**

**The breach period was 40 years** – This time which was spent in unbelief was lost time as far as Israel was concerned.

**Illustration:**



**2. Breach of promise concerning DOMINION IN THE PROMISED LAND:**

God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their seed would also have dominion over the Canaanites but, after Joshua's death, a generation arose that did not follow the Lord and they lost dominion. The book of Judges relates this. They began to compromise with their enemies and lapsed into idolatry and immorality. Seven times during the period of the judges, Israel went through the cycle of:

- sin,
- servitude to their enemies,
- supplication to the Lord,
- a saviour-judge-deliverer,
- return to the Lord,
- death of the judge,
- departure from God again.

Of the 450 years covered in the book of Judges, approximately 111 years were spent serving other nations who had conquered them.

These years were lost time to Israel.

**3. Breach of promise about REMAINING IN THE PROMISED LAND:**

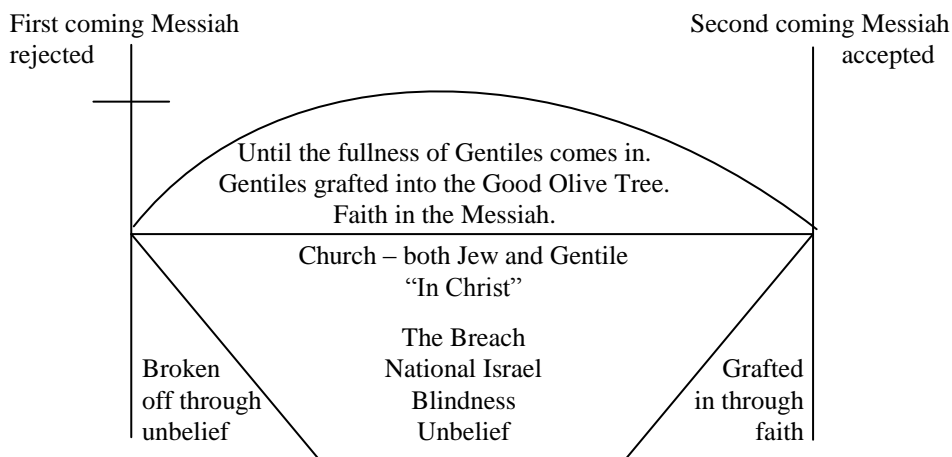
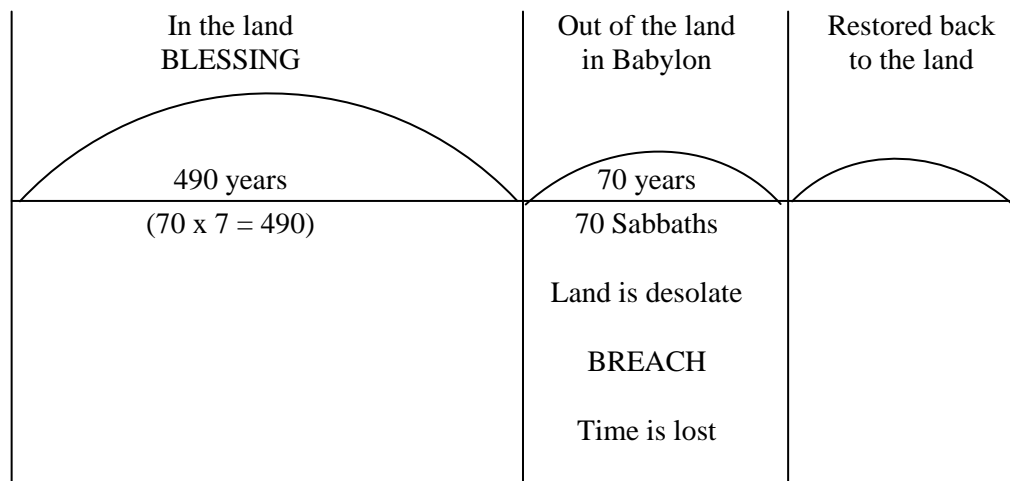
God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their seed would not only live in the land and have dominion over it but they would also remain in the land and have it for an everlasting possession. **But this promise was conditional!** One of the conditions for Israel to remain in the land was that they were to allow the land to keep its Sabbaths. In other words, they were to let the land lay fallow, not sowing or reaping, **one out of every seven years**. Also, **every 50th year** was to be a **Jubilee year**. ( $7 \times 7 = 49 + 1 = 50$ )

The jubilee was to be an extra Sabbath. God threatened to punish them if they did not keep these Sabbaths (Leviticus 26:15, 31-35, 40-42; also Deuteronomy 28:58-68).

**This actually came to pass!** God sent Judah into captivity to Babylon for 70 years.

**Read 2 Chronicles 36:21.** For approximately 490 years Israel had not allowed the land to keep its Sabbath rests. God removed the people from the land for 70 years then brought them back again.

**Read Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10; Daniel 9:2**



# The Principle of the Central Theme of Christ, etc.

## Lesson 7

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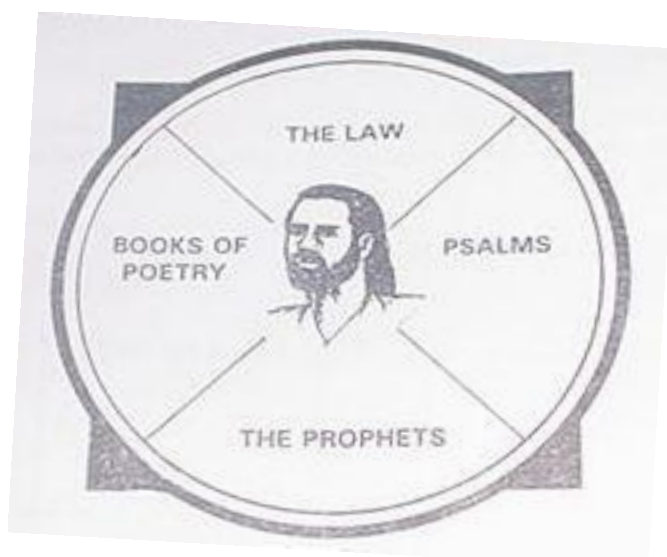
### A. The Principle of the Central Theme of Christ

This principle means that Scripture is interpreted in relation to its centre – Christ.

#### Explanation:

Christ is the central Person of the Bible. The entire written Word revolves around Him, the Living Word. Who He is and His work is the theme of God's written revelation. The Bible is like a wheel, with Jesus as the centre. All the spokes relate to Him, who is the Truth.

#### Illustration



#### 1. IMPORTANT.

It is important to recognise whether the verse being interpreted speaks of Christ:

- a) Descriptively    b) Prophetically    c) Historically    d) Doctrinally

**The Old Testament Scriptures, which contain characteristics of Christ, must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament's clear revelation of Christ.**

#### 2. Demonstration.

- a) Genesis 22:1-14      Characteristics:  
A Father/Son relationship  
An only Son  
The Son intended to be a sacrifice  
God providing a Lamb  
Three days

Compare      Hebrews 11:17-19    John 3:16

- |     |                            |   |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| b)  | Job 19:25-27               | Characteristics:<br>The living redeemer<br>Standing upon the earth in the last day<br>Though flesh decays, flesh shall see God  |
| c)  | Jeremiah 23:5-6            | Characteristics:<br>Raising unto David a Righteous Branch<br>A King, reigning and prospering, executing judgement<br>Judah and Israel saved<br>The Lord Our Righteousness |
| See | Matthew 1:1<br>Matthew 2:2 | Revelation 19:16<br>1 Corinthians 1:30  |

Remember: Christianity is a RELATIONSHIP with God. The danger of a course like Hermeneutics is that it becomes a study of a process rather than getting to know a person. I am not sure how much God wants to be studied ... but I do know that He wants to be known!

## B. The Moral Principle

The principle that the **interpretation of a verse can be determined by discerning the moral it contains.**

"Moral" – the practical lesson taught by any story; the meaning; lessons to be learned from right or wrong behaviour.

### 1. Lessons from the historical sections of the Bible.

- a) **The death of Saul.**  
1 Chronicles 10:13-14 We are exhorted not to follow Saul's example; who violated God's order by acting as a priest and who feared man more than he feared God. Remember, obedience is better than sacrifice.
- b) **The Miracles of Jesus.**  
John 20:30-31 That you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that you might have life through His name.
- c) **The Exodus in the Wilderness.**  
1 Corinthians 10:1-11 "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages are come".

### 2. Prophecy.

God shows His people that there are reasons for maintaining a right relationship with Him.

### 3. Proverbs.

Wise sayings containing a moral. They are instructional.



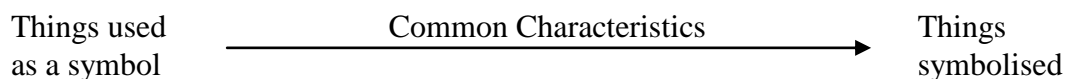
#### 4. **Parables.**

Jesus taught in parables to conceal their meaning from the proud. His purpose was to teach the humble. The moral of the parable is the key to its interpretation.

### C. **The Symbolic Principle**

**The interpretation of a verse or passage in Scripture containing symbolic language can be determined by correct interpretation of the symbol(s) mentioned.**

"symbol" – using one thing to represent another



#### **IMPORTANT**

1. If the language in the verse makes no literal sense, then it must be interpreted as having symbolic sense.  
For example **compare** Revelation 12:1-4; 13:1-2 with Daniel 7:1-4.
2. If it does make literal sense, then it can only be interpreted as having symbolic sense when the Scripture says this is the case.  
For example: The Tabernacle – **Read** John 1:14 The Temple – 1 Corinthians 3:17.
3. **Three basic principles of symbolism:**
  - a) **The significance of a symbol is its normal characteristics.**
  - b) **The symbol and that which it represents are very different from each other.** (For example: Jesus is referred to as the “Lion” of Judah. A lion is an animal, with a coat of fur, claws, a long tail, big teeth, etc. But the word “lion” is used to symbolise authority.)
  - c) **The link between a symbol and what it is representing is the characteristics they have in common.**
4. This principle must be used together with the Context Principles. Many symbols are used several different times in the Bible therefore each use of them must be compared in order to gain a complete understanding of the progressive unfolding of their symbolic meaning in Scripture.
5. **Generally the Bible interprets its own symbols. Therefore a search must be made to find out what the BIBLE says about the symbol.**
6. The symbol must be interpreted **with consideration of the original languages and customs.**

#### **Some examples:**

##### 1. **Objects as Symbols.**

Hosea 7:8

"Ephraim is a **cake** not turned"

Proverbs 18:10

"The Name of the Lord is a **strong tower**... "

Psalms 119:105 "Thy Word is a **lamp** unto my feet..."  
 Revelation 1:20 "Seven **stars** are seven angels ... seven **candlesticks** ... are seven churches"  
 Revelation 13:16 "receive a **mark** ... on their foreheads ... and hands"  
 Matthew 16:18 "Upon this **rock** I will build my Church"

**Symbol – Rock**

Psalms 18:2,31 "The Lord is my Rock ... who is a Rock save our God"  
 1 Corinthians 10:4 "That spiritual Rock that followed them: was Christ"  
 Deuteronomy 32:4,15, "God ... the Rock" (1 Corinthians 3:10-12)  
 18,30

<u>Symbolic Object</u>	<u>Common Characteristics</u>	<u>Symbolised</u>
Rock	solid, stable, strength, foundation	Christ

**2. Creatures as Symbols.**

Daniel 7:17 "These great beasts ... are four kings"  
 Hosea 7:11 "Ephraim also is like a silly dove... "  
 Luke 13:31-32 "Herod ... that fox.."  
 1 Peter 1:24 "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass"  
 John 1:29,36 "Jesus ... the Lamb of God"

**Genesis 3:1**

**Symbol - serpent**

Revelation 12:9 "That old serpent..."  
 Revelation 20:2 "That old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan..."  
 Genesis 3:14 "The Lord said to the serpent..."

<u>Symbolic Object</u>	<u>Common Characteristics</u>	<u>Symbolised</u>
serpent	crafty, deceptive, dangerous	the devil

**3. Actions as Symbols.**

Psalms 141:1-2 "The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice"  
 Joshua 1:3 "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you..."

**4. Numbers as Symbols.**

Revelation 13:18 "The number of a man; and his number is six hundred sixty-six"  
 Job 14:16 "for now Thou numberest my steps..."  
 (NB: we will study the Numerical Principle just now)

**5. Names as Symbols.**

1 Samuel 25:25 "For as his name is, so is he; Nabal (Fool) is his name, and folly is with him"  
 1 Samuel 4:21 "And she named him Ichabod (which means "the glory is

Hosea 1:9 departed") saying, the glory is departed from Israel"  
 "then said God, call his name Loammi: for you are not My  
 people, and I will not be your God"  
 Matthew 1:21 "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His  
 people from their sins". Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation".

**6. Colours as Symbols.**

Isaiah 1:18 "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as  
 snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as  
 wool"  
 Mark 15:17-18 "And they clothed Him with purple ... King of the Jews!"  
 Revelation 19:8 "In fine linen, clean and white ... the righteousness of  
 saints"

**7. Directions as Symbols.**

Ezekiel 43:1-2 "Toward the east, and behold, the glory of the God of Israel  
 came..."

**8. Persons as Symbols.**

Romans 5:12-21 verse 14 "Adam ... a figure (type) of Him to come"

**9. Offices as Symbols.**

Hebrews 5:1-10 "high priest ... as was Aaron, so also Christ..."

**10. Institutions as Symbols.**

Hebrews 8:1-5 "at the right hand of the Majesty ... in the sanctuary, the  
 true tabernacle"

**HOMEWORK**

Search the Scriptures and give one example with its reference, of each of the following,  
 then briefly interpret it. Do NOT use any of the symbols in your notes but discover others  
 from the Bible itself.

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Common Characteristics</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
1. Symbolic <u>object</u> :	.....	.....
2. Symbolic <u>creature</u> :	.....	.....
3. Symbolic <u>direction</u> : (for example "down")	.....	.....
4. Symbolic <u>number</u> :	.....	.....
5. Symbolic <u>name</u> :	.....	.....
6. Symbolic <u>colour</u> :	.....	.....

## D. The Principle of Types

Interpretation of a verse or passage containing types can be determined only through a proper understanding of the type or types involved.

**Type = A symbol representing an object which is to come in the future; a prophetic sign.**

Examples: John 1:14 – the key to interpreting many chapters about the Tabernacle of Moses.

John 1:51 – the key to interpreting the chapter concerning Jacob’s ladder.

Ephesians 5:22-23 – Adam and Eve are to be viewed as types of Christ and His bride.

**IMPORTANT No doctrine should be built on types alone, but types may be used to illustrate doctrines.**

## HOMEWORK

Using the Principle of Types, supply Scripture references used in these analogies, and explain what is symbolic between them.

1. Typical Person – MOSES AND CHRIST.....  
.....  
.....
2. Typical Office – DAVID AS KING.....  
.....  
.....
3. Typical Institution – THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID.....  
.....  
.....
4. Typical Event – THE DAYS OF LOT.....  
.....  
.....

## HOMEWORK

In the blank spaces, write down how Jesus fulfilled the shadow of the Tabernacle of Moses.

	<u>Tabernacle of Moses</u>	<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
1.	Gate	.....	John 14:6
2.	Brazen Altar	.....	Hebrews 5:9-11
3.	Laver	.....	Ephesians 5:26

<b>4.</b>	Door	.....	John 10:9
<b>5.</b>	Golden Candlestick	.....	John 8:12
<b>6.</b>	Table of Shewbread	.....	Matthew 26:26-28
<b>7.</b>	Altar of Incense	.....	Hebrews 7:25
<b>8.</b>	Veil	.....	Hebrews 10:20
<b>9.</b>	Ark of Covenant	.....	Matthew 1:23
<b>10.</b>	The Name	.....	Acts 2:36
<b>11.</b>	Mercy Seat	.....	Romans 3:25
<b>12.</b>	Aaron's Rod	.....	John 11:25
<b>13.</b>	Manna	.....	John 6:48-51
<b>14.</b>	Tables of Law	.....	Psalm 40:8

# The Numerical Principle, etc.

## Lesson 8

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### A. The Numerical Principle

The interpretation of a verse or passage is assisted by understanding the significance of the numbers involved.

**NB** Numbers can take on spiritual significance *in some instances* in the Bible. They are a special form of symbol. The following is a brief interpretation of some of the numbers most often used in Scripture. These are interpreted using **The first Mention Principle, the Progressive Mention Principle, the full Mention Principle and the Symbolic Principle**. The list is by no means complete and please note that there can be many degrees of significance to the numbers in it.

- ONE** The number of God: beginning, source, first, commencement – Genesis 1:1; Matthew 6:33  
The number of compound unity – i.e. Hebrew "echad" – John 17:21-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14  
The numerical one – Genesis 22:2; John 3:16
- TWO** The number of witness, testimony or agreement – John 8:17-18; Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16  
The number of division, separation or disagreement – Exodus 8:23; Genesis 1:6-8
- THREE** The number of the Godhead – 1 John 5:6-7; Matthew 28:19  
Completeness or perfect testimony – Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 12:40; Ezekiel 14:14
- FOUR** Number of the earth, creation, world – Genesis 2:10; Leviticus 11:20-27; 1 Corinthians 15:39; Revelation 7:1-2
- FIVE** Number of the cross, grace, atonement, life – Genesis 1:20-23; Leviticus 1-5 = five offerings; Ephesians 4:11 = fivefold ministry; Isaiah 14:12-14 = the five "I will's" of Satan
- SIX** The number of man, beast, satan – Genesis 1:26-31  
The six generations of Cain in Genesis 4:17-18; 1 Samuel 17:4-7; 2 Samuel 21:20; Numbers 35:15
- SEVEN** Number of perfection, completeness – Genesis 2:1-3; Jude 14; Joshua 6; Leviticus 14:7, 16, 27, 51  
The number of the book of Revelation
- EIGHT** Number of resurrection, new beginning – Leviticus 14:10-11; Exodus 22:30; Genesis 17:12; 1 Peter 3:20; John 20:26
- NINE** Number of finality, fullness, fruitfulness – Genesis 17:1; Matthew 27:45  
Number of the Holy Spirit – Nine gifts Galatians 5:22-23;

Nine fruits 1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
Nine months for the "fruit of the womb"

- TEN** Number of law, order, government, restoration  
Genesis 1 = "God said" ten times; Exodus 34:28; Daniel 2 = ten toes;  
Daniel 7 = ten horns
- ELEVEN** Number of incompleteness, disorganization, disintegration, i.e. one beyond ten, one short of twelve – Genesis 32:22; 35:16,18; Matthew 20:6; Exodus 26:7; Deuteronomy 1:1-8
- TWELVE** Number of divine government, apostolic fullness – Genesis 49:28; Exodus 24:4; 28:15-21; Matthew 19:28; Luke 6:13
- THIRTEEN** Number of rebellion, backsliding, apostasy – Genesis 14:4; 10:10 (Nimrod – 13th from Adam) Genesis 17:25; Esther 9:1  
Number of double portion – Genesis 48 (Ephraim – 13th tribe) (Judas and Paul, 13th Apostle)
- FOURTEEN** Number of Passover – Exodus 12:6; Numbers 9:5; Genesis 31:41; Acts 27:27-33
- TWENTY-FOUR** Number of priestly courses, governmental perfection – Joshua 4:2-9; 1 Kings 19:19; 1 Chronicles 24:3-5; Revelation 4:4-10
- THIRTY** Number of consecration, maturity for ministry – Numbers 4:3; Genesis 41:46; 2 Samuel 5:4; Luke 3:23; Matthew 26:15
- FORTY** Number of probation, testing – Numbers 13:25; 14:33-34; Matthew 4:2; Acts 1:3; Exodus 34:27-28; Ezekiel 4:6; Acts 7:30; 1 Kings 19:4-8
- FIFTY** Number of Pentecost, liberty, freedom, jubilee – Exodus 26:5-6; Leviticus 25:10-11; Acts 2:1-4; 2 Kings 2:7; 1 Kings 18:4; Numbers 8:25
- SEVENTY** Number prior to increase, or representative of a multitude – Genesis 11:26; 46:27; Exodus 1:5-7; Numbers 11:25; Exodus 15:27; 24:1,9; Luke 10:1
- SEVENTY-FIVE** Number of separation, cleansing, purification – Genesis 12:4
- ONE HUNDRED TWENTY** Number of the end of all flesh, the beginning of life in the Spirit – Genesis 6:3; Deuteronomy 34:7; 2 Chronicles 3:4; 5:12; Acts 1:15
- ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR** Number of God's ultimate in creation (12 x 12 = 144) – Revelation 21:17; 1 Chronicles 25:7; Revelation 7:1-6; 14:1-3
- THREE HUNDRED** Number of faithful remnant – Genesis 5:22; 6:15; Judges 8:4; 15:4
- SIX-SIX-SIX** Number of Antichrist, Satan, the damned – Daniel 3:1; 1 Samuel 17; Revelation 13:16-18; 14:9-11

**NB** It is a trinity of six (i.e. there are 3) and six is the number of

man. The “trinity” of six’s is symbolic of man needing no one and nothing but himself. “Body, soul and spirit”, or “heart, soul and mind”, are ruled by his own wants and needs. It is the fulfilment of the lie of the devil when he said “you shall be as gods”.

**Let us put into practice some of what we have learnt.**

## **HOMEWORK**

### **Read Revelation 13:18**

#### **1. What is the CONTEXT of Revelation 13:18?**

- a) The passage begins ..... and ends .....
- b) What is the main point of this passage? In other words, what is the point the writer is trying to make?  
.....
- c) Who wrote the book of Revelation? .....
- d) When did he write it? (Not just the date, but what were the circumstances?)  
.....
- e) Who did he write it to? .....
- f) What for? .....
- g) What is its message in general?  
.....
- h) What Covenant is it written under? .....

#### **2. Where is the FIRST MENTION of putting something on the forehead and hand?**

**Read Exodus 13:3-9** The Feast of Unleavened Bread and the instruction of children, making sure they understood what God had done when He brought them out of Egypt, was to be a sign, a reminder to them.

#### **Now read Exodus 13:16**

##### **a) A sign on your hand.**

What do you do with your hands? Just about everything! Most of us use our hands to work, to touch, to feel, to caress, to applaud, to indicate ... in fact, some of us even use them to talk!

The Israelites were to put a sign on their hand so that wherever they went, whatever they did, they would be reminded ... of what?

Read verse 3 again.

Reminded that God did for them what they could not do for themselves – He



brought them out of slavery, destroyed the power of those who ruled them and brought them into a freedom they had never known.

b) **And a sign on their forehead.**

Where is your forehead? It is right in front of, and between, your ears! And behind it is your brain ... your mind.

Do you know that the Israelites actually did that? ... put reminders on their hands and on their foreheads?

These were called “phylacteries” and were strips of parchment with passages of Scripture written on them. Each strip was rolled up and placed in a small box and firmly attached with leather straps to the forehead, or rolled up in long leather straps and wound around the hand.

If you meet Orthodox Jews today (that is, Jews still living an Old Testament lifestyle), you may see men still wearing these same types of phylacteries.

**3. And PROGRESSING into the New Testament ... and a new COVENANT.**

**Read Exodus 28:36-38 again, just to review.**

**Now read 2 Peter 2:9**

**Read Romans 12:2** “renew your .....

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:16** “we have the mind of .....

**Read Matthew 23:1-5** Jesus said that the Scribes and Pharisees knew Scripture, but they didn’t live it.

**Read Proverbs 23:7**

On a priest’s hand and on his forehead ... on his mind and in everything he does, is the sign “Holiness to the Lord”.

“Holiness” – not like any other, separate or apart from, pure, hating evil, loving good, whole, sound, separated from all that is sinful or impure, morally perfect.

As a Christian, others should see that I don’t think the way the rest of the world does. I don’t live like they do. I don’t value what they value. My goals, my morals, the way I conduct business, the way I bring up my children, the way I relate to my neighbours, friends and spouse – all differ from the methods and goals of the unsaved world.

They need to see that my husband is the most appreciated, trusted, admired and encouraged man around. People need to see that I think he is the most wonderful man going, and that we are best friends. Gentlemen, people need to see that you cherish your wife, that you are understanding, respectful and devoted to her and that you support her and provide security for your home.

A Christian should make the best friend anyone ever had; the best husband a woman could dream of; the best wife a man ever came home to. Their children should be secure in their parent’s love and protection.

The world should see that even though a Christian is facing the same daily problems everyone does, he has an attitude of peace, joy and confidence. Even in times of hardship and suffering, he puts his trust in God.

For a Christian, God rules his heart, his soul and his mind. It is not man-man-man, but God-God-God.

### **Summary of the Numerical Principle:**

#### **IMPORTANT – please read the following carefully:**

1. The first mention of the number in Scripture generally conveys its spiritual significance.
2. God is consistent, and generally the significance of a number will be maintained throughout the Bible.
3. **This principle should be used in connection with many others, such as the First Mention, Full Mention and Symbolic Principles.**
4. **THIS PRINCIPLE MUST BE USED WITH DISCRETION AND KEPT IN BALANCE WITH THE OTHER PRINCIPLES IN ORDER TO AVOID INCORRECT, OR SENSATIONAL INTERPRETATION.**

## **B. The Principle of Parables**

**This is the principle by which any parable is interpreted by understanding its moral or central thought.**

**Definition – "Parable":** A short, simple story from which a moral lesson may be drawn. It is an earthly story or example with a spiritual truth or application.

### **Christ's Purpose in Using Parables:**

1. To reveal truth to those who were open and hungry.
2. To conceal truth from those who were closed and hard.

**NB Every parable** is designed to reveal or conceal **ONE fundamental spiritual truth**. All the details of the parable find their significance in relation to this one truth. **Therefore**, in interpreting parables, we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture by using the Context Principles, Moral and Symbolic Principles.

Since parables are drawn from the cultural background of the speakers, we must understand the manners, customs and culture involved at the time of the speaker.

Doctrine should not be formed only from parables, although parables may illustrate doctrine.

**Example: Matthew 21:33-41 The Parable of the Vineyard.**

<u>Parable</u>	<u>Interpretation of Parable by Comparative Scripture</u>
A certain householder Planted a vineyard and	God, the Father the nation of Israel – Isaiah 5:1; Psalm 80:9

hedged it around	
Dug a winepress, built a tower	winepress – Isaiah 5:1-7
Rented it out to workers	Rulers, kings, priests, elders of Israel
Far country	Heavenly country – Hebrews 11:11-16
Time of the fruit drew near	
Sent His servants	The prophets were sent – Hebrews 1:1; Jeremiah 35:15
Workers treated them badly	Killed and rejected the prophets – 2 Chronicles 24:21; 36:16; Matthew 23:34,37; Acts 7:52
Sent more servants	More prophets sent (Major and minor)
Treated them likewise	Jeremiah 37:15; 2 Kings 17:13
Last of all He sent His Son	John 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-2; Mark 12:6
They kill the heir	Heir of all things – Psalm 1:8; Hebrews 1:2
They caught Him	In Gethsemane
Cast Him out of vineyard	Outside the city – Hebrews 13:11-13
Slew Him	Slew, hanged on a tree – Acts 10:39-43
Lord of workers destroys those workers	Jerusalem destroyed in 70 AD – Luke 19:41-44
Lets out vineyard to others to get the fruits	Kingdom taken from Jews and given to nations (church) 1 Peter 2:5-9; who renders the fruit – Matthew 21:41-43

## C. The Interpretation of Prophecy

The interpretation of prophecy is one of the greatest challenges in applying hermeneutics.

**"Prophecy"** – Speaking for God in proclaiming or predicting events in the future, or interpreting events in the present, under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

### 1. The Development of the Prophetic Office.

- a) The Prophet Moses – The letter of the Law.
- b) The Prophets from Samuel to Malachi – The spirit of the Law.  
Note: The true prophets never contradicted the Law, they upheld it but, when it degenerated (sunk) into a dead form and just ritual, the Holy Spirit came upon them to inspire and revive the spirit of the Law.

### 2. General guidelines for interpreting Prophecy.

- a) The spiritual gap between the prophet and the interpreter must be bridged. The prophets were "in the Spirit" when they prophesied – the interpreter must be under the influence of the same Spirit when he seeks to interpret that prophetic word.
- b) The natural gap between the prophet and the interpreter must be bridged. God used what the prophet was familiar with – so the interpreter must be familiar with the language, culture, geography and history of the day and the situation of the prophet.
- c) The fulfilment of prophecy must be determined: Is it to be fulfilled – or has it already been fulfilled, or it has been fulfilled and will be fulfilled again.

### 3. How to use the principles of Hermeneutics to interpret Prophecy.

The guidelines for interpreting prophecy are the same as those for interpreting the whole of Scripture. Therefore, we refer back to the principles we have studied and apply them.

a) **The Context Principle.**

*"Scripture interprets Scripture"* – any prophecy must be interpreted by considering the Bible as a whole, the specific Testament and the book in which it is found.

**NB** Caution must be used in considering prophecy in the light of its passage context because prophets were often caught up in the vision God was showing them etc., and often did not weave together a logical train of thought or a chronological approach to events.

**Obscure, or unfamiliar, passages must be interpreted in light of clear passages.**

b) **The First Mention Principle.**

Consideration must be given to the first mention of the prophetic theme of the prophecy being examined.

c) **The Comparative Mention Principle.**

In interpreting prophecy, we should search the Scripture thoroughly to determine if there are any possible fulfilments of the prophecy we are considering. All prophetic passages that deal with the same subject must be brought together for consideration and comparison.

d) **The Progressive Mention Principle.**

Prophecy may progressively develop through Scripture. However, the prophetic theme may also be developed and we must differentiate between these two aspects.

e) **The Complete Mention Principle.**

In order to understand all that the Scripture says regarding a prophetic subject, the interpreter must bring together all relevant passages and each prophetic passage must be interpreted in the light of all the passages.

f) **The Election Principle.**

God's elective purposes are the foundation of prophetic revelation and so when interpreting prophecy regarding a specific nation; one must always have in mind God's elective purpose for that specific nation. Also, there is a difference between God's temporal purposes and His eternal purposes.

g) **The Principle of Covenants.**

All prophecy must be considered in light of its covenantal setting. The

development or progression of the covenants and their relationship to each other must be considered. **And all prophecy must ultimately be interpreted in the light of the New Covenant. All Old Testament prophecy must therefore be interpreted through the Cross and must never be used to overrule the New Covenant.**

h) **The Ethnic Division Principle.**

In order to discern which ethnic group a prophecy relates to we must first understand God's purposes for each and then ask the following:

- Does this prophecy refer to the united nation of Israel?
- Does it refer to "Israel" the northern kingdom of a divided nation?
- Does it refer to "Judah" the southern kingdom of a divided nation?
- Does it refer to the Gentile nations?
- Does it refer to the Church, chosen out of every nation?

**What is prophesied of one division cannot be applied to another division.**

i) **The Principle of Time.**

Prophets were often not aware of the time element of their prophecies (1 Peter 1:10-12). Sometimes passages involve a weaving together of past, present and future – sometimes speaking of future events as if they had already happened. Therefore we must be very careful in concluding that prophetic passages refer to a specific time.

The following questions help:

- Was this prophecy fulfilled during the time of the prophet who was prophesying?
- Was it fulfilled during the period of captivity of the divided kingdoms?
- Was it fulfilled during the restoration of Judah from Babylon? Or the Inter-Testament period?
- Was the prophecy fulfilled in the Messiah? The Church? The Jewish nation?
- Is it being fulfilled now in the Church?
- Will it be fulfilled in the last years prior to Jesus coming back?
- Or will it be fulfilled when He appears?
- Or is it for the future ages? The Kingdom of God on earth? Or the new heavens and new earth?

j) **The Breach Principle.**

Some prophetic passages deal with conditional promises, therefore sometimes a promise was fulfilled during the prophet's lifetime and sometimes it was delayed due to the conditions not being met and will therefore only be fulfilled in another generation.

Sometimes the prophet was not aware that there were to be long gaps between sections of the prophecy God was giving him and therefore he grouped together events which actually would occur very far apart.

k) **The Christo-Centric Principle.**

Prophecies concerning Christ must be interpreted in the light of New Testament revelation.

l) **The Moral Principle.**

The principles of God are timeless – therefore principles that apply to one generation apply to all. However, we must be careful not to confuse the meaning by ignoring the culture, language, etc., of the day or other principles of interpretation.

m) **The Symbolic Principle.**

Great care must be taken when interpreting symbols used in prophecy, as many times the symbols used are of unreal things – e.g. Daniel 7; Revelation 13. The first rule of Scripture must be used – Scripture must interpret Scripture, and if it doesn't, leave it alone.

**Read Deuteronomy 29:29** “the secret things belong to God”.

n) **The Numerical Principle.**

Numbers are significant in prophecy, but we must be careful not to force extreme significance on to them. Trying to find hidden meanings by calculating numbers and counting words are mistakes of the allegorical and mystical methods of interpretation. Giving extreme significance to numbers may distort prophecy.

o) **The Principle of Types.**

Actions, which are types, must be interpreted in their specific contexts.

Examples: Isaiah going naked for 3 years (Isaiah 20:2-4); Jeremiah putting a yoke on his neck (Jeremiah 27:1-14); Ezekiel lay on his side for over a year (Ezekiel 4).

p) **The Principle of Parables.**

There are relatively few parables used in prophecy. Care must be taken however, to interpret the symbols used in parables ONLY as they directly relate to the basic lesson the parable is teaching.

*It is hoped that this course has challenged everyone who seeks to interpret the Word of God accurately and with integrity. Sadly, it is possible to have all the correct hermeneutical principles and yet fail in correct interpretation because of a lack of intimacy in our personal relationship with THE WORD, Jesus. To have all the rules for interpreting the Word without the Living Word is like a ship without a helmsman to steer. There may be lots of motion, but no purpose or progress.*

*It is my prayer that you will grow closer to Jesus Christ in all the things you seek to know about Him who is eternal life. May this course be a helpful instrument towards that end. Amen*