

Living in God's Power, Part II
Hour 1: No Private Interpretation; The Cry of Triumph

Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II* – Hour 1¹

- I. Introduction (John 8)

- II. The Bible is of no private interpretation. (II Peter 1:20; *I Samuel 13:19; Acts 13:22; Psalms 119:161,117; Proverbs 13:13; II Timothy 2:15*)

- III. The Bible interprets itself in the verse.
 - A. Right where it is written, as we read it (Genesis 1:1; John 3:16; Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 13:5; III John 2)
 - B. According to biblical usage (Joshua 9:5; I Thessalonians 4:15; Hebrews 13:5; Luke 17:9; Jeremiah 4:22)
 - C. A word must be in harmony with the other words in the verse as well as all other Scriptures on the same subject.
 1. “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30; 17:11,20-23; I Corinthians 3:6-8)
 2. “The Cry of Triumph” (Matthew 27:46; John 16:32; 8:29; 6:38; II Corinthians 5:19; John 10:30; Matthew 26:53; *Exodus 14:19; 23:20-23; Matthew 26:54; John 18:11; Matthew 26:39; Matthew 27:46; Hebrews 13:5; II Timothy 4:10,16; Acts 2:27; Romans 9:29; Acts 24:27; Romans 11:4; Psalms 22:1; 27:10; 37:25,28; Leviticus 19:10; Ruth 2:15,16; Ezekiel 24:21; John 4:34; Luke 2:49; Psalms 22:1,2; John 11:41,42; Psalms 22:19,21; Acts 28:1-4; Psalms 22:22,25,30; 118:17,18; 22:8,15,16,18; Matthew 27:35; Psalms 22:31; John 12:27; 11:41,42; Matthew 26:54; John 18:11; Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 26:50; John 13:26,27; Psalms 40:8; Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 2:14,15; John 19:30; II Corinthians 5:21)*

Introduction

I trust that the keys that you will learn in this part of *Living in God's Power* will allow you to unlock the storehouse of the riches of the knowledge of God's Word so that you will never be without the strength and comfort of God's Word.²

It is very difficult if not impossible to develop a true and vital spiritual relationship with our heavenly Father without developing a vital relationship with His Word. It is the Word of God that makes known God and His wonderful love for us. In this part of the Christian Family Fellowship's Foundational Truths of God's Word Teaching Series we will be looking at “How the Bible Interprets Itself.” I trust that what you will learn in the next few hours will aid you in enjoying the Bible and developing your relationship with God.³

¹ For an outline of Part II, “How the Bible Interprets Itself” in its entirety see Appendix 3, page 113.

² Romans 15:4

³ Suggest reading Appendix 1, “Uncovering the Word of God” before listening to the tapes in Part II.

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Course Content: In Part II of the Teaching Series on “How the Bible Interprets Itself,” we will be specifically looking at four major points of teaching:

- ◆ **First**, we will establish the foundation that the Bible is of no private interpretation.
- ◆ **Second**, we will look at the three ways all Scripture interprets itself.
- ◆ **Third**, we will look at biblical truths to which we must adhere when allowing the Scripture to interpret itself.
- ◆ **Lastly**, we will see the importance of these keys in maintaining likemindedness and establishing a strong household from which we can reach out to the world with God's wonderful, matchless Word bringing His love and deliverance to people who are hungering and thirsting for the truth.

The Bible is of No Private Interpretation.

The foundational key to the Word's interpretation is found in II Peter 1:20.

II Peter 1:20:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.

When it comes to reading and studying the Bible, the first thing we must know is that it is of no private interpretation. “Prophecy” is the noun derived from the verb “prophesy,” which means “to speak forth.” It is used of the declarations, exhortations, and warnings spoken by the prophets by revelation of God. Prophecy can be spoken in reference to the past, the present, or the future. More and more the current usage of “prophecy” tends to be associated with predictions of the future, but it is used in the Bible to refer to that which is spoken forth and can relate to the past, present, or future. “Scripture” refers to what was written by revelation from God. The phrase “prophecy of the scripture” refers to that which was spoken forth and which was also written. It refers to the entire Word of God from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

The word “private” is a translation of the Greek word, “*idios*.” The King James Version of the Bible that we are using in this class translates the word “*idios*” 113 times. II Peter 1:20 is the only place it is translated “private.” The vast majority of times it is translated “one's own.” The word “interpretation” is a translation of the Greek word “*epilysis*.” This is the only place it occurs in the Bible. It literally means an “unloosening” or a “release.” Hunters at times release their dogs upon game. This letting loose is not appropriate with the Scripture. One does not let loose of his thinking; letting his mind run wild to any possible interpretation.

The Bible is not of one's own interpretation. If no one can interpret it, then why read or study it? Are not we doomed to failure before we even start? After all, if there is no

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interpretation possible we might as well quit right now and avoid the frustration and aggravation. **BUT**, it does not say there is no interpretation possible. It says, it is of no one's own interpretation. Herein lies the foundational key to the Word's interpretation: **The Bible interprets itself.**

Although there were many writers of God's Word, there is only one Author, God. The prophecy of the Scripture, as it was originally revealed to holy men of God, was composed of God-breathed words. Since the Author is perfect, His Word must also be perfect.

This original God-breathed Word is without error or discrepancy. God's Word is inherently and inerrantly perfect. It is inherently perfect; meaning that perfection is an inseparable quality or characteristic of God's Word. Perfection is innate or intrinsic. After all, if it is God's Word, it would have to be perfect for God is perfect. It is perfect in and of itself. Man need not and cannot bring anything to it to perfect it.

It is also inerrantly perfect. It is fixed, having no mistakes, unable of being wrong. "Errant" means "roving," "wandering," "straying," or "erring from what is right." Regardless of what people may say about it, this wonderful Word of God, when rightly divided, will never lead us down the wrong road. We can always count on it and rely on it, for it is God's perfect Word of truth.

Because it is inherently perfect, we approach the Word of God with reverence and awe. The Psalmist David, a man after God's own heart,⁴ had great reverence for God's Word. The magnificent 119th Psalm speaks, in the original texts, of God's wonderful matchless Word in every verse. In Psalm 119:161 David⁵ said, "My heart standeth in awe of thy word," and in verse 117 he also says, "...I will have respect unto thy statutes continually."

David's son Solomon also knew of the benefits of reverence for God's Word.

Proverbs 13:13:

Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth [reverences] the commandment shall be rewarded.

We revere God's Word, and He rewards us. It is the living Word of a living God. Can we add to it? Dare we subtract from it? If a Scripture is unclear to our understanding dare we say, "Thus saith the Lord." when we do not know? As workmen of the Word, we compare one word with another word and one Scripture with another Scripture. We

⁴ I Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22

⁵ Although there has been much dispute over who wrote Psalms 119. I agree with Spurgeon who said: "We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression, and it tallies with David's experience in many interesting points. In our youth our teacher called it "David's pocket book," and we incline to the opinion then expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life. No, we cannot give up this Psalm to the enemy. "This is David's spoil." After long reading an author one gets to know his style, and a measure of discernment is acquired by which his composition is detected even if his name be concealed; we feel a kind of critical certainty that the hand of David is in this thing, yea, that it is altogether his own." *The Treasury of David Volume III*, page 130, C.H. Spurgeon, MacDonald Publishing House McLean, VA

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do our absolute best to rightly divide it, and until we can “lock it in,” we say we do not know. Our reverence and respect for God's communication of Himself in His Word demands that we be diligent to not bring our private interpretation into the Scripture.

You may say I know such and such is true because I experienced it in this or that way. However, experience is no guarantee for truth. Only when we let the Bible interpret itself, do we have the rightly divided Word of truth of which II Timothy 2:15 speaks.

Because it is inerrantly perfect, we give the utmost of diligence to rightly divide it. There cannot be any discrepancy or deficiency in God's Word. The truthfulness and faithfulness of God guarantees that He would not set forth any passage in His Word that would contradict any other passage. **Therefore we may not expound, explain, or interpret any Scripture so as to be incongruous with, repugnant to, inconsistent with, or contradictory to any other Scripture.**

All apparent difficulties arise from not understanding what is written or an improper and inaccurate translation from an earlier text or the lack of the original text. The workman of the Word must allow the Word of God to interpret itself fitting one Scripture with another, each complementing and contributing to the whole of the royal tapestry of God's Word.

All Scripture will interpret itself in one of three ways. The words of the Word will either interpret themselves in the verse or in the context or where it has been used before. These three keys will allow us to unlock the storehouse of God's Word and let its beauty, comfort, and strength permeate our lives. To the casual or inattentive reader, the Bible may be very difficult to understand and rightly divide. But to the workman of the Word who is willing to pay attention to its detail and honestly approach it, it can be a most rewarding and fulfilling pursuit.

The Bible Will Interpret Itself in the Verse.

Right where it is written:

First, we will look at how the Word interprets itself in the verse as we read it. Most of the Scripture interprets itself in this manner.

Genesis 1:1:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Matthew 11:28:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Hebrews 13:5:

...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

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III John 2:

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health....

If the interpretation is so obvious, why has the Bible been so misunderstood? First of all, it has not been read. Secondly, we have not remembered what we read, when we did read it. Thirdly, we have misread it, leaving words out when reading or adding words when reading. It is very important that we read what is written. Then, if we do not understand what is written or there appears to be a contradiction with other Scriptures we know, we can move on to other keys to unlock the correct interpretation.

According to biblical usage:

A second key to how the Word interprets itself in the verse grows from the understanding that the usage of words may vary over time. The meaning we are concerned with is the biblical usage. What was the meaning of the word in the verse at the time that the King James Version was written.

Joshua 9:5:

And old shoes and **clouted** upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* mouldy.

Today you might hear about someone with **clout** meaning someone with power or influence. Or, you may hear about how McGuire "**clouted**" a homerun out of the ballpark. Biblically "clouted" meant "patched." How do I know? I looked it up in a good English dictionary. The one I am using now is Webster's New World Dictionary. It lists a usage introduced with the words "archaic" or "dialectal." It reads, "to patch or mend coarsely." When using a dictionary, meanings noted as "archaic" (which means belonging to an earlier period, ancient, or antiquated) or "dialectal" (which means any form of speech considered as deviating from a standard speech) are often that for which we are looking. Sometimes you may see the abbreviation [*obs.*] for obsolete, meaning it is no longer in use or out-dated.

I Thessalonians 4:15:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not **prevent** them which are asleep.

Today "prevent" means "to stop from happening." Back when the King James Version was written it meant "to precede." In my dictionary it does not say "archaic" or "dialectal" or "obsolete." It simply says "formerly" followed by "precede."

Hebrews 13:5:

*Let your **conversation** be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Today "conversation" means "the act or instance of talking together." Biblically it means "manner of living or behavior." It is noted in my dictionary with "archaic."

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Luke 17:9:

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?

I **trow** not.

This word has almost completely gone out of current usage. Biblically it means "to think or suppose."

Jeremiah 4:22:

For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* **sottish** children, and they have none understanding....

"Sottish," biblically means "stupid or foolish."

In Appendix 1, on page 101, is a list of some of these words whose biblical usage has changed over time. This list is not exhaustive. As you run across others in your reading of the Scriptures you may want to add them to the list.

A word must be in harmony with the other words in the verse as well as all other Scriptures on the same subject:

When we know the current and biblical usage of the individual words in the verse, we must be careful not to import private interpretation by making conclusions that are contrary to other verses of Scripture. This third point of how the Word interprets itself in the verse is that the words in the verse must be in harmony with all other verses pertaining to the same subject.

"I and my Father are one."

First, we will look at an example of an apparent contradiction due to an error in understanding.

John 10:30:

I and *my* Father are one.

We understand the individual words in this verse, but this verse is interpreted by some to mean that God and Jesus were one and the same. They say that somehow they are identical. This contradicts so many other Scriptures that show that God is our Father and Jesus Christ is His only begotten son. They are not identical or one and the same. Rather, they are one in purpose. They have unity of purpose.

Jesus' desire for his disciples was that they would be one with God as he was.

John 17:11:

And now I am no more in the world, but these [referring to his disciples] are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, **that they may be one, as we *are***.

If Jesus and the Father being one made them identical, what does that make the disciples? Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one with the Father just as he was. That did not

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make them God, but it showed that it was available for them to work in unity of purpose with God and His son, Jesus Christ. If you were of the opinion that God and Jesus being one meant they were one and the same, these next verses will really blow your mind. Jesus' prayer continues and includes not only his disciples but you and I, too.

John 17:20-23:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; **that they may be one,** even as **we are one:**

I in them, and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

God loves you every bit as much as He loved His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Why would not we want to have unity of purpose with a God like that! The word "one" does not mean "equal to" or "identical with," but rather, it signifies "unity of purpose." When you and I are "one," we have unity of purpose pertaining to the matters in which we are mutually involved. This unity of purpose is noted in our efforts to share God's Word with others.

I Corinthians 3:6-8:

I [Paul] have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Now he that planteth and he that watereth **are one:** and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Are Paul and Apollos one and the same? Of course not. But, they are one in purpose as they move the Word over the world. There is no contradiction in John. God and His only begotten son Jesus Christ are not one and the same. Rather, they have unity of purpose, and this unity of purpose is available to all of us born-again of God's spirit.

The Cry of Triumph:

As we allow the Word to interpret itself in the verse, it is important to have a scope of God's Word. A verse that interprets itself must be in harmony with all other verses on the same subject. There can be no contradictions in God's Word. So, remembering what we have read before, will aid in allowing the Word to interpret itself as we read it now.

Matthew 27:46:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

We understand this verse word by word except for the foreign words. "*Eli*" means "my God." "*Lama,*" or "*lemana*" means "why" or "for what purpose" and always introduces a question. It, [#1584], occurs 53 times in the Aramaic-English Interlinear New

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Testament, and it is translated “why” 45 times, “what” 5 times, and “for what purpose” 3 times. “*Sabachthani*” comes from “*sebaq*” meaning to “leave,” “forgive,” “allow,” “reserve,” or “spare.”

It does appear from reading this verse that God forsook Jesus while he endured the agony of the cross. How could a loving heavenly Father do such a thing? A key question to ask is, “Is this verse in harmony with the other verses on this same subject?” If this verse contradicts other Scriptures on this subject it must be suspect, because God’s Word cannot contradict itself.

John 16:32:

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered [Jesus is talking to his apostles.], every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

Jesus was talking about the time of his crucifixion and death, and he said, “the Father is with me.” Although Jesus knew everyone else would forsake him, he took comfort knowing that his heavenly Father would be with him. He knew God had always been with him, why would God forsake him at this crucial hour.

John 8:29:

And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

Was Jesus pleasing his Father when he endured the cross?

John 6:38:

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

Whose will was Jesus doing when he was dying on the cross? He was doing his Father’s will then, too.

II Corinthians 5:19:

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself....

If God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, how could He have left him?

John 10:30:

I and *my* Father are one.

God and Jesus Christ were one in purpose. They were acting together to accomplish the same purpose. How could God forsake Jesus and they still have unity of purpose? Look at what Christ said at the time he was taken captive.

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Matthew 26:53:

Thinketh thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

Twelve legions of angels is 72,000 angels. The Father would have given Jesus 72,000 angels. When God brought His people out of Egypt, an angel went before them to keep them in the way.⁶ What could Jesus have done with 72,000? Jesus could have walked right out from among this group of men if he had wanted. But he did not. Why?

Matthew 26:54:

But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

Jesus asked this rhetorical question to confront their thinking. He told Peter to put his sword away because he knew what the Word said. Jesus was more concerned about the Scriptures being fulfilled than that he be tortured and die. Jesus' desire was to do God's will. He wanted the Scriptures fulfilled. He always did the Father's will, so he must have been doing God's will when he was dying upon the cross.

In John 18:11 when the soldiers came to take Jesus he asked a similar question, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Again Jesus asks this rhetorical question to confront Peter's thinking. Jesus had spent some agonizing time in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane when he had asked the Father three times "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*."⁷ Jesus did not want to endure the torture and death he saw ahead of him, and asked God if there were some other way. When he knew there was no other way, he submitted to the will of his Father, making God's will his will.

Yet Matthew 27:46 says, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This verse contradicts the rest of the Word on this subject. God did not forsake Jesus. He was in him reconciling the world unto Himself. Jesus knew what his Father's will was, and he was determined that it be fulfilled. He was carrying out his Father's purpose, and God was with him throughout this horrendous experience.

People teach that Jesus became sin, and God cannot stand sin. Therefore, He had to forsake His son in his hour of need. If God forsook Jesus Christ because of sin, what chance do you or I have. How could you or I ever believe Hebrews 13:5 where it says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," if, in fact, He forsook Jesus at any point. Remembering those other clear Scriptures that are not in harmony with this one stops us from wrongly dividing this Scripture.

The difficulty with Matthew 26:47 is due to an error in translation. "Forsaken" is the wrong choice for the translation in this verse. The Greek word translated "forsaken," "*enkataleipō*," can mean "to leave" in the sense of forsaking and abandoning, or "to

⁶ Exodus 14:19; 23:20-23

⁷ Matthew 26:39

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leave” in the sense of sparing or allowing to remain. The context determines the meaning.

II Timothy 4:10,16:

For Demas **hath forsaken** (*enkataleipō*) me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* **forsook** (*enkataleipō*) me: I *pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge.

Both of these verses use the same Greek word, “*enkataleipō*,” in the sense of forsaking or abandoning. Demas forsook Paul; he physically left him. At Paul’s first trial all forsook him. This is one usage of this word. However there is a second usage of this word.

Acts 2:27:

Because thou **wilt not leave** (*enkataleipō*) my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

On the Day of Pentecost Peter quotes David speaking prophetically of the Messiah. God did not allow his soul to remain in the grave. God raised him from the dead.

“*Enkataleipō*” is used in Acts 2:27 in the sense of “allowing to remain.”

Romans 9:29:

And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth **had left** (*enkataleipō*) us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

God did not forsake or abandon a seed; He spared one. They were not forsaken; they still remained. Had they not been spared, we would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah. This too, is an example of “*enkataleipō*” used in the second manner, meaning “to spare” or “to allow to remain.” The Lord spared a seed or allowed a seed to remain for us.

Similarly the Aramaic word “*sebaq*” has the same two meanings. It occurs in II Timothy 4:10 and 16 (as did the Greek word “*enkataleipō*”) with the first usage. It is also used with the second meaning.

Acts 24:27:

But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix’ room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, **left** (*sebaq*) Paul bound.

The word “left” in Acts 24:27 does not mean Felix forsook Paul. Rather, he left him in prison. Paul remained bound as a favor to the Judeans.

Romans 11:4:

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I **have reserved** (*sebaq*) to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal*.

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The word “reserved” in Romans 11:4 is “*sebaq.*” Here it carries the second meaning also. These seven thousand men were not forsaken. They were left after the rest succumbed to the pressure to worship Baal. These seven thousand remained. They were reserved or spared because they did not bow the knee to the image of Baal.

Jesus Christ fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. In his final hours on the cross, his mind was most certainly encouraged by the Psalmist who remained faithful to God through the torturing pressures of life. Jesus’ cry of triumph was a quotation of Psalm 22:1.

Psalm 22:1:

My God, my God, why **hast** thou **forsaken** (*azab*) me?....

The words “hast forsaken” in this verse is the Hebrew, “*azab.*” This word also has these same two meanings. It also is used of “forsaking” or “abandoning,” and it is used of “remaining,” “reserving,” or “sparing.”

Psalm 27:10:

When my father and my mother **forsake** (*azab*) me, then the LORD will take me up.

Note “*azab*” is used in Psalm 27:10 in the sense of “forsake” or “abandon.” The Psalmist says that father and mother could forsake him, but he knew the Lord would take him up. Even the dearest most loving of people could forsake or abandon us, but not our loving heavenly Father.

Psalm 37:25:

I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous **forsaken** (*azab*), nor his seed begging bread.

Again, “*azab*” is used in the sense of “forsake” or “abandon.” The Psalmist says he has not seen the righteous forsaken. Do you think Jesus qualified? God would not have forsaken His son.

Psalm 37:28:

For the LORD loveth judgment, and **forsaketh** (*azab*) not his saints; they are preserved for ever....

This should establish the truth that God does not forsake or abandon his saints. He did not forsake David in Psalm 22, and He did not forsake Jesus on the cross either. “*Azab*” also carries the second meaning.

Leviticus 19:10:

And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather *every* grape of thy vineyard; thou **shalt leave** (*azab*) them for the poor and stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.

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God instructed them to leave or reserve some of the grapes for the poor and the stranger. They were to leave some; to let some remain on the vine. The word “leave” in Leviticus 19:10 means leave in the sense of “reserving” or “sparing.” It is also used in Ruth in the same way.

Ruth 2:15,16:

And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and **leave** (*azab*) *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not.

Boaz instructed them “to leave,” “*azab*,” handfuls on purpose for Ruth to glean. They were to be left on purpose. They were reserved for Ruth. They were spared, so Ruth could glean them. It is not only used of grapes and grain but also of people.

Ezekiel 24:21:

Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye **have left** (*azab*) shall fall by the sword.

“Left” in Ezekiel 24:21 does not mean “leave” in the sense of “forsaking,” but in the sense of “remaining.” The sons and daughters that had been spared so far were going to fall by the sword. In all three of the biblical languages we have seen that the words translated “forsaken” could also be translated “spared,” “reserved,” or “remaining.”

If I knew you were coming and I saved a piece of pie for you, it would be left. Not in the sense that I abandoned it, but in the sense of it being reserved or designated or set aside for you. It was left for a reason or a purpose—to bless you. I allowed it to remain. I watched over it, making sure no one else ate it, so that it remained for you. I reserved it for you.

Jesus was not forsaken rather he was left on the cross for a purpose. He had to remain there until his Father’s business was fully completed. In John 4:34 Jesus said, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.” When the work was completed, Jesus recognized it, and said, “It is finished.” and he gave up the ghost. It is interesting to note that, chronologically, the first recorded words of Jesus in the Bible are found in Luke 2:49 where he said, “How is it that ye sought me? wist [knew] ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” The last words before he died were “It is finished.” He had finished the work his Father had given him to do. All the time in between he was about his Father’s business.

There are many prophetic statements in Psalm 22 that were fulfilled while Jesus hung on the cross. David spoke these words by revelation of his own experience and his own circumstance. Not all of Psalm 22 can be said to be prophecy regarding the Messiah, but much of it is.

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Psalm 22:1,2:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Notice the italics in verse one. This last phrase could be translated, "Far from helping me *are* the words of my roaring." He cried day and night wondering if God even heard him. Nothing David said seemed to avail anything. He knew that only God could bring his deliverance. These words were true regarding David, but were they true regarding Jesus Christ? Would Jesus have ever confessed that his Father did not hear him? No! On the contrary, he declared that He always did.

John 11:41,42:

Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Jesus confidently asserted that God always heard him. Therefore, Psalm 22:2 could not have been spoken prophetically of Jesus. Yes it was true of David. He was not sure that God heard his cry, but Jesus could have never said that. David continues to describe his anguish and despair until verse 19 when he begins to praise and worship God in spite of the circumstances. In verse 21 David recovered from the anguish of his doubt and realized and confessed that God had heard him. David expected God to save him from this situation as He had done many times previously.

The opening question in Psalm 22:1 could also be translated, "Why hast thou spared me?" For a while in David's life he was on the run, and it seemed like he would go from one crisis situation to another. It was proverbially as if he escaped from a lion and a bear met him. Paul could have asked this same question after he was delivered from the shipwreck and then bitten by the viper (Acts 28:1-4). Why did you spare me from the shipwreck—so I could die from this viper bit? David's heart was asking, "Why did you spare me from the last trouble? When I find myself in this one?"

This question in Psalm 22:1 is also rhetorical because David already knows the answer. He answers the question and states the purpose later in the Psalm. In verse 22 he says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren..." In verse 25 he says, "I will pay my vows..." In verse 30 he says, "A seed shall serve him..." The answer is clear. Man has a purpose to live for God although at times things may appear to be gloomy. This is clearly stated in Psalm 118.

Psalm 118:17,18:

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

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As Jesus hung on the cross he found strength in Psalm 22. Jesus understood that many of the statements in this Psalm spoke prophetically of him. His "Cry of Triumph" showed his recognition that he was fulfilling this Word of God as he laid down his life. Verse 8 has the exact words the religious leaders cast at Jesus as they passed by the cross.

Psalm 22:8:

He trusted on the Lord *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

In verse 15 the Psalmist described the dryness of his mouth saying, "And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Jesus' next words after this "Cry of Triumph" were, "I thirst." He had refused other drinks offered him that day, but requested this one. Verse 16 says, "They pierced my hands and my feet." This was literally true of Jesus that day. Verse 18 is cited in Matthew 27:35 in reference to the soldiers gambling for his clothes after he was crucified.

Psalm 22:18:

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

The final words in the King James Version of Psalm 22:31 are "that he hath done *this*." The Hebrew words used here may be translated, "It is done." or "It is finished." These were Jesus' final words from the cross. Salvation and redemption were finished. For what purpose was he spared? To finish the work God sent him to do; to die for all mankind; to be the Passover lamb.

Therefore, since God's forsaking His only begotten son at that moment would contradict not only God's loving nature, but also many other Scriptures. The question from the cross was not "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" Rather, it was "My God, My God, Why did you spare me?" Or, "My God, My God, For what purpose have you left me here?" But why was the question asked? Jesus knew the answer.

John 12:27:

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

The question mark in this verse is wrongly placed after "say." It should appear after "hour." The question should read, "What shall I say, Father save me from this hour?" The New American Standard Version does just that:

John 12:27: (NAS)

Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

This question was posed a few days before his crucifixion, and he immediately answered it: "...for this cause or purpose came I unto this hour." That was the answer to the question then, and it was still the answer to the question a few days later when he hung

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on the cross. Therefore, the question on the cross in Matthew 27:46 is a rhetorical question.

The answer was obvious. "My God, My God, for what purpose have you spared me?" "For this purpose have I come to this hour!" His purpose was to finish his Father's business. Jesus Christ as the Passover lamb was sacrificed for us.⁸ His purpose was to suffer and die for all mankind. He paid the price for us. His was not a cry of despair, but a cry of triumph, in that he was fulfilling his whole purpose, shedding his blood as the Passover lamb. Others forsook Jesus, but not his Father.

Jesus knew the literal answer to his question, "For this purpose you spared me!" He said it in the form of a rhetorical question for emphasis. He knew why! He wanted the others to ask the same question? He was confronting their thinking so they too would consider why he was there. It was put in the form of a question not to obtain information or to seek a reply, but to cause those that were present and heard him to think and to consider the matter. Remember Jesus' statement in John 11?

John 11:41,42:

Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

And I knew that thou hearest me always: **but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.**

That is the same reason Jesus made his "Cry of Triumph." He cried with a "loud voice." There was great intensity in his voice, and he spoke with great effort. Not because he wanted God to tell him the purpose for which he was spared and allowed to remain on the cross, but rather so those who were there would believe that God had sent him and that he was fulfilling God's Word while remaining on the cross.

Jesus frequently used rhetorical questions to encourage people to think and consider things more indepthly. We already looked at two rhetorical questions he spoke to Peter when the soldiers came to take him. He asked, "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"⁹ and "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"¹⁰ When his disciples came to him when they were in the midst of a storm at sea he asked, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"¹¹ After Peter had walked on the water he saw the sea boisterous, became afraid, and began to sink when Jesus caught him and asked, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"¹² When Judas came with the soldiers to betray Jesus, Jesus asked, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"¹³ Jesus was not seeking information. He knew why Judas was there. When asked at the last supper who it was who would betray him he answered, "He...to whom I give a sop." He later gave it to Judas and told him "that thou doest, do quickly."¹⁴ When Judas came to Jesus

⁸ I Corinthians 5:7

⁹ Matthew 26:54

¹⁰ John 18:11

¹¹ Matthew 8:26

¹² Matthew 14:31

¹³ Matthew 26:50

¹⁴ John 13:26,27

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in the garden to betray him with a kiss, Jesus knew what he was doing, but he asked a rhetorical question to confront Judas' thinking to get him to consider what he was doing. Jesus knew, and he wanted Judas to think about it.

However, not only was this cry a rhetorical question, but it was also a gnome, a quotation from the Old Testament. As a gnome, it directed their thinking to the appropriate Word of God that would allow them to come to the correct conclusion. Surely this "Cry of Triumph" brought to their remembrance this familiar Psalm. Then they would see that the mocking of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders was foretold by God. Instead of causing doubt, this mocking should have helped them to realize that this was transpiring in fulfillment of God's Word. The parting of the garments and the casting of lots for his vesture further documented the truth that he was the Messiah. The combination of these two figures of speech was a most emphatic presentation of the truth. "For this cause or purpose had he come to this hour!"

It was about the ninth hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, when Jesus spoke these words from the cross, "*Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani.*" By this time Jesus had gone through nearly forty hours of interrogation, mockery, beatings, and suffering without so much as murmuring one complaint. Why, would he accuse God now? He did not. His was not a cry of despair implicating God as an irresponsible and uncaring Father. Rather, this was a cry of triumph. This was the culmination of his purpose and the consummation of the work the Father had given him to do. Jesus knew he was "drinking the cup" his Father had prepared for him. He knew he was doing his Father's will, dying as the Passover lamb.

Jesus endured this agony and suffering to fulfill the Word of God. He took our place. He was our substitute for sin. He paid the price of his innocent blood to redeem you and me. It was not the rope tied around his midriff or the nails driven through his hands and feet that kept him on that cross. Rather, it was his uncompromising and relentless love for his Father and His Word. He delighted to do God's will,¹⁵ and for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross despising the shame.¹⁶ He could have walked away from the cross if he wanted, with twelve legions of angels at his command.

Why did Jesus keep hanging on the cross? Because he loved us. They did not take his life that day. He so loved us that he gave himself for us. Through every moment of this agonizing death God was with him providing him strength and comfort. What was the joy that was set before him? He knew that he was fulfilling his Father's plan of salvation that would pay the price for the sin of all mankind.

Jesus knew his purpose and the culmination and consummation of his Father's business. He could have literally said, "For this purpose you spared me!" "This is why I came unto this hour!" But, because he wanted those present to also see his triumph from the Word,¹⁷ he put this declaration in the form of a question which brought the minds of the people present back to God's wonderful Word in Psalm 22. He knew the agony he was

¹⁵ Psalms 40:8

¹⁶ Hebrews 12:2

¹⁷ Colossians 2:14,15

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enduring was the fulfillment of the Scriptures, and he wanted those present to also see and understand what was transpiring before their eyes.

With his “tongue cleaving to his jaw being brought to the dust of death,” he asked for a drink. After receiving that drink, he mustered his strength and declared “It is finished!”¹⁸ What was finished? Your redemption and mine. Jesus Christ had given his own life. He who knew no sin had become sin so that you and I might become the righteousness of God in him.¹⁹ All his life he had been about his Father’s business, and finally he had finished it. Then he gave up the ghost. They did not take his life; he laid it down for you and me.

God like any loving parent stayed with His son. This was not only their triumphal hour, but ours also. For it was at this point that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, fulfilled all the legal requirements for our redemption and salvation. This was Christ’s purpose. Jesus’ cry did not implicate God as an irresponsible and uncaring Father. Rather, it declared Jesus Christ’s faithfulness to God’s plan of redemption and his concern for all mankind. Now we have an accurate translation of Matthew 27:46, one of the most difficult verses of Scripture in the King James version, “My God, My God, Why did you spare me?” For people who have eyes to see and ears to hear the answer is obvious.

¹⁸ John 19:30

¹⁹ II Corinthians 5:21

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Living in God's Power, Part II
Hour 2: Others Crucified with Jesus; Peter's Denials

Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II* – Hour 2

- I. “Make disciples of all nations in my name.”
(Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5)

- II. The Bible interprets itself in the verse with Scripture build-up or narrative development.
 1. The others crucified with Jesus (Matthew 27:35-38,44; Mark 15:24-27,32b; Luke 23:32-34,38-43; John 19:18; Revelation 22:2; John 19:32; *Psalms 34:20; Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12*)
 2. Peter's denials (Mark 14:72,30; Matthew 26:34; Luke 22:34; John 13:38; Matthew 26:57,58,69-75; Mark 14:53,54,66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:13-18,24-27; Mark 14:72; Matthew 26:74; John 18:27; Luke 22:60; John 13:36-38; Luke 22:31-34; *Genesis 41:32; Matthew 26:31-34; Mark 14:30,31; Luke 22:60-62; Mark 14:30,72*)

“Make Disciples of All Nations in My Name.”

Matthew 28:19:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

When reading this verse right where it is written, it seems to interpret itself very plainly. However, the phrase “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” has been the source of much confusion. Many question the authenticity of this phrase because there is no Scriptural evidence that this type of baptism was ever carried out. Certainly it would seem, that if these were among the last words of Jesus Christ before his ascension, the apostles would have remembered them and carried them out. However, these words “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” never occur in the Book of Acts. Throughout the Book of Acts people were baptized with the holy spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. Never were they baptized with the Trinitarian formula from Matthew 28:19.

On the Day of Pentecost, which happened not many days after the apostles heard the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19, Peter taught in the temple and spoke of baptism.

Acts 2:38:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be **baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

One would think that if Matthew 28:19 recorded the very words of Jesus, Peter at this important occasion would have been faithful to carry them out. Rather, Peter said, “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.”

When Philip preached the Word of God in Samaria, the people were born again, but they did not speak in tongues. Peter and John went down to find out what the problem was

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and help them receive the holy spirit into manifestation. Verse 16 is a parenthesis to explain what had happened.

Acts 8:16:

(For as yet he [it, the holy spirit] was fallen upon none of them: only they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**)

Again in Acts 10 when Peter went to the household of Cornelius, they did not use the Trinitarian formula.

Acts 10:48:

And he commanded them to be **baptized in the name of the Lord.** Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Finally, in Ephesus, an explanation was made of what happened when the disciples received Apollos' teaching.

Acts 19:5:

When they heard ~~this~~, they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

In no place in the Book of Acts is the Trinitarian formula from Matthew 28:19 used. Scholars have been very ingenious in their explanations of why the Book of Acts records baptism in the name of Jesus Christ instead of following the apparent Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19:

- ◆ Some have thought that the apostles had gotten used to baptizing in the name of Jesus before the Day of Pentecost and having become accustomed to it, continued to use it during their lifetimes in spite of Jesus' apparent instruction to change.
- ◆ Others declare that the records in Acts of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ or in the name of the Lord Jesus indicated simply that the rite was Christian distinguishing it from the pagan rite and even the water baptism of John.
- ◆ Others assert that the Trinitarian formula was always used, but that the accounts in Acts are merely brief summaries that simply fail to mention it.
- ◆ Another explanation asserts that baptism in the name of one was sufficient evidence of baptism in the name of all three.
- ◆ While yet others declare that Matthew 28:19 does not actually give the very words of Jesus, but puts in his mouth what was commonly used at the time that Matthew was written, which was much later than the Book of Acts.

Whatever theory is used to explain away the absence of the formula in Acts, they all acknowledge the apparent contradiction between the words of Jesus in Matthew 28 and the record of the Book of Acts. It would only be logical to ask if the words were really recorded in the original text of the Gospel of Matthew. The truth is that this Trinitarian formula does not even occur outside the Bible until the fourth century.

In the fourth century, Eusebius was asked by the Emperor Constantine to make fifty copies of the New Testament on fine vellum. None can be found today—most likely they

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have been amended, mutilated, lost, or destroyed. There are only two extant manuscripts from the fourth century which contain Matthew 28:19 and none from previous centuries. However, there is evidence from the early writings of the Church fathers who quoted this verse that the phrase “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” was not in the original text. Instead, it simply read, “...make disciples of all nations in my name, teaching them...” Aphraates of Nisibis quoted the verse without the words “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Eusebius quoted this verse correctly eighteen times without using those words prior to the Council of Nicaea, where the subject of the person of Christ was brought to a head. After the council, Eusebius quotes it three times using the Trinitarian formula. This shows the political and religious impact of the Nicene decision. There is evidence that Justin Martyr, who lived in the mid-second century, did not have these words in his manuscripts? These men were quoting from manuscripts that were older than any that we now have. This clearly indicates that the original of Matthew 28:19 read, “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations in my name.” The remainder of the verse was added later.²⁰

Certainly, if Jesus had told his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, the son, and the holy spirit the disciples would have gladly obeyed and done as they were instructed. The God-breathed Word in Acts gives no indication that the apostles ever followed that instruction. The quotations of the early Church fathers of this verse did not include the Trinitarian formula. Therefore, they must have had access to texts that were older and closer to the original God-breathed Word given to holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit than what we have now.

Simply reading Matthew 28:19 without remembering what was recorded in the Book of Acts could lead one to the private interpretation imposed on the text by the translators. However, having a greater scope of the Word and remembering other verses that deal with the same subject allows us to rightly divide this verse without any private interpretation.²¹ The principle is that God's Word interprets itself in the verse, understanding that the verse must be in harmony with all other verses on the same subject.

The Bible Interprets Itself in the Verse with Scripture Build-up or Narrative Development.

The final key to how the Word interprets itself in the verse is the principle of Scripture build-up or narrative development. There may be several passages of Scripture on an identical incident. These may augment the information given in each other. Each passage of Scripture relating to the same incident may not give the same details, but the Scriptures must complement and agree with each other or we do not have the true Word of God. If there are truly identical incidents recorded in Scripture, the details of one Scripture would add to the other, but it would never contradict that which the other states

²⁰ *Jesus Christ Our Passover*, American Christian Press, New Knoxville, OH, pages 371-372

²¹ Colossians 3:17: “And **whatsoever** ye do in word or deed [Would that also include “baptizing?”], **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

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or the situations would not be identical. If the situations are identical, that which is set forth in one Scripture cannot contradict that which is set forth in the other.

The others crucified with Jesus

The crucifixion of Christ is recorded in all four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John speak of the very same incident, but each record gives different details about the crucifixion. Once all four narratives are put together, we get a total, expansive picture with no flaws in it.

Matthew 27:35-37:

And they crucified him [Jesus], and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

And sitting down they watched him there;

And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Here is the sequence of events according to time:

1. They crucified Jesus.
2. They parted his garments.
3. They sat down and watched him.
4. They set up over his head an accusation.

To get that accusation, they may have had to go back to Jerusalem to get permission and then they had to make the sign. All of this takes time. That is exactly what Matthew is pointing out.

Matthew 27:38:

Then [after all that] were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

The King James says "two thieves." The Greek words are "*duo lēstai*" of which "*duo*" is "two," and "*lēstai*" is "robbers." The Greeks used an entirely different word for a thief, "*kleptos*." A thief is one who acts stealthily, while a robber is one who deliberately plans and openly confronts the victim. In legal terms robbery is a worse crime than thievery. Thieves would be punished but not by such an extreme sentence as crucifixion. Robbers could receive a crucifixion sentence because of more extreme actions. "*Duo lēstai*," "two robbers," were crucified with Jesus after a period of time.

Matthew tells us that the soldiers took Jesus and crucified him. They parted his garments, casting lots. They sat down and watched him. They placed over his head his accusation. **Then** they crucified two robbers, one on the right hand of Jesus and the other on the left.

There is another interesting observation which should be made about the record in the Gospel of Matthew from verse 44.

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Matthew 27:44:

The thieves [the robbers, the *duo lēstai*] also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

The gallery of people at the crucifixion were saying, as the verse before indicates, “He trusted in God, let Him deliver him, if He will have him.” Soon the two robbers became involved in the conversation and both of the robbers “cast the same in his [Jesus'] teeth.” They said something in the essence of “If you are really the Son of God, come down off that cross?” Both of the robbers reviled him according to the record in Matthew.

The next Gospel record on the crucifixion is found in Mark. It contains many of the same details of Matthew, but without focusing on the element of time, it simply lists what happened without noting the timing. It speaks specifically of the two thieves as did Matthew and also notes that they reviled him.

Mark 15:24-27,32b:

And when²² they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And with him they crucify two thieves [*duo lēstai*]; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

...And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

Thus, all these details are established.

Luke 23:32:

And there were also two other, malefactors [*kakourgoi*, malefactors, not robbers], led with him to be put to death.

When Jesus Christ was led out of Jerusalem toward Calvary, they led with him (according to Luke) two malefactors. A malefactor is an evil-doer. A robber, for instance, would be a malefactor, but not every malefactor would be a robber. A murderer, for instance, is an evil-doer, but not every evil-doer is a murderer. When Jesus was led out of Jerusalem, according to the Gospel of Luke, two malefactors were led with him to be put to death.

Luke 23:33,34,38:

And **when** [Note again a temporal conjunction is used. Luke is again talking about time factors.] they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

²² The Greek word, *hote*, “when” is not in the texts. Berry’s Interlinear translates this first phrase, “And having crucified him....”

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And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

The word “malefactors” is the Greek word “*kakourgoi*,” the word “robbers” is “*lēstai*.” Luke uses an entirely different word because entirely different people are involved. They were not two robbers; they were two *kakourgoi*, malefactors, who were brought at the **same time** as Jesus to be crucified. Remember, the robbers show up later after the parting of the garments and casting lots for the vesture, and are crucified. However, these malefactors were crucified before all that was done.

Matthew	Luke
Crucified Jesus	WHEN they crucified Jesus, they crucified two malefactors with him.
<i>Parted Jesus' garments</i>	<i>Parted Jesus' garments</i>
<i>Cast lots for his vesture</i>	<i>Cast lots for his vesture</i>
<i>Set up his accusation</i>	<i>Set up his accusation</i>
THEN crucified two robbers	

Luke 23:39-43:

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him [the first malefactor], saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Both of the robbers, according to Matthew, “cast the same in his teeth.” But in the Gospel of Luke, only one of the malefactors spoke revilingly to Jesus. The other reproved him saying something in the essence of, “You had better be quiet because you are in the same condemnation as he is.” How can anybody logically say that the two robbers as recorded in Matthew are the same as the two malefactors in Luke. In Matthew, the soldiers crucified Jesus, parted his garments, sat down, put up his accusation, then they brought the two robbers. While according to Luke, the soldiers led the two malefactors with him to be put to death. They crucified Jesus and the malefactors at that time. Then they parted the garments, casted lots for his vesture, sat down, and set up the accusation.

Putting together the two records of Matthew and Luke is simple. When Jesus was led out to be crucified, they led two malefactors with him. The soldiers crucified Jesus and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then they parted his garments, casting lots. They also sat down and watched him awhile. Then two robbers were brought and crucified with him, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Both of the robbers reviled Jesus, but only one of the malefactors reviled him. Could the

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two robbers and the two malefactors have been the same people? No! Scripturally, they are called two different things. They were crucified at different times. They also acted differently toward Jesus while hanging there. See how the Word interprets itself when we pay attention to the details of Scripture build-up. There is no private interpretation, we just read what is written and remember what we read.

According to the accurate Word of God, how many men were crucified with Jesus? Two malefactors plus two thieves makes four people. All the teaching that we have had picturing Jesus was on the center cross with one culprit to the right and the other to the left is proven faulty. Yes, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all speak of two people. Yes the two robbers were similar to the two malefactors. But, were they identical? No! The reason we have believed this is that rather than remembering what we have read in one account, we have proceeded to the next account without sufficiently noting the details that God had written in the different accounts. When a person goes to the Word of God and sees the narrative development of Matthew and Luke noting the temporal connectives involved with the identical situation, he sees very plainly that the robbers and malefactors are not the same. There were four crucified with Jesus.

The crucifixion record from the first three Gospels is an example of how the Scripture interprets itself in Scripture build-up or narrative development. In reading Matthew and Luke in detail we watched the time. One Scripture told some details and the other told others, but the one Scripture dares not contradict what the other Scripture says. From Matthew, Mark, and Luke one observes that there were a total of four men crucified with Jesus.

However, we still have one Gospel record left to consider. Matthew and Luke were specifically concerned about time while John is concerned about the place in which the action occurs.

John 19:18:

Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Matthew informed us that there were two robbers crucified, and Luke informed us that there were two malefactors crucified. That totals four men. But John says, "Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one." If there was only one on either side, one plus one makes two. Now we have an apparent discrepancy.

One small word from John 19:18 hints at the problem, and that is the word "midst." It means "middle." The word "midst" is a key word because grammatically one individual would not be crucified in the "midst" of two. With the use of the word "midst," four, six or eight are indicated. When a person is situated with one on either side, he is not in the midst. He is between. A person is between two, but in the midst of more.

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Hour 2: Others Crucified with Jesus; Peter's Denials

John 19:18							
o[pou	aucto.n	evstau,rwsan	kai.	met			
auctou/	a;llouj	du,o					
Where	him	they crucified	and	with	him	others	two
evnteu/gen	kai.	evnteu/gen,					
me,son_de.	to.n	VHsou/n					
on this side	and	on that side	[one]	and in the middle	the	Jesus	

An interlinear translation (sample above) of the Stephen's Text²³, from which the King James was translated, reads in John 19:18, "and with him, others two on this side and on that side." Then there is the word "one" in English, but no corresponding Greek word is above it. To indicate that the translators added the word "one," it was put in brackets. The King James translators also added the word "one." If the word "one" is not in the critical Greek texts, why is it in the King James? Because by 1611 the Western world had been so indoctrinated by paintings showing Jesus on a cross with one evil-doer on either side of him that, when the translators were translating this particular verse of the nineteenth chapter of John, they inserted the word "one." They wanted to make the two robbers and the two malefactors the same people so they added the word "one." That is private interpretation. Carefully reading what is written allows the workman of the Word to see the apparent discrepancy. Once the difficulty is noted, then the proper keys can be applied to unlock the difficulty. The difficulty is with the word "one." It was added by the translators and should not be there.

Take out the commas and the word "one," and read the verse again. "Where they crucified him and two others with him on either side and Jesus in the midst." Two on both sides make four! We can count properly and we do not need to ignore the detail God had written in His Word. Rather, we can appreciate it.

God had four different people write it, at four different times, and four different places, and not one of them contradicted the others. That is because God is the Author. These men did not write it from their own mind. They did not have to collaborate and figure it out. God told people what to write, and He never contradicted himself. It fits together with mathematical exactness and scientific precision.

The same words, *enteuthen kai enteuthen*, are used in Revelation 22:2.

Revelation 22:2:

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river....

Enteuthen kai enteuthen is translated "on either side." These are the same words as in the Gospels with the exception that John has the word *duo*. *Duo enteuthen kai enteuthen* equals "two on this side and two on that side and Jesus in the midst." If there were just

²³ See *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, George Ricker Berry, Zondervan, GrandRapids, MI, 1958
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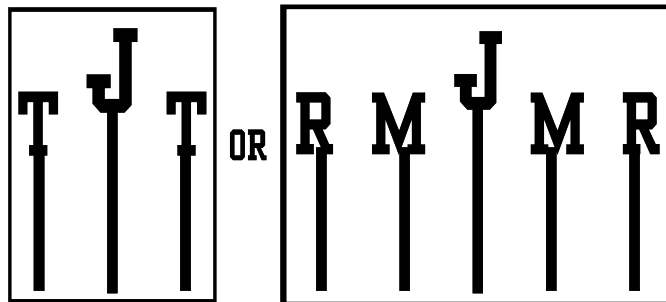
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one on either side, it would be written like it was in Revelation 22:2, but it is not. John adds “duo,” showing that there were two on either side. What great accuracy from God's Word. However, we are not finished. There are more details still to come.

John 19:32:

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. [From Luke we learned that it was the malefactors that were crucified with Jesus.]

If there was only two crucified with Jesus we have another problem (please note charts below). The soldiers broke the leg of the first, then they must have covered their eyes tiptoed around Jesus to the other. Then broke his legs. Then they went back and saw that Jesus was dead already. Now does that make sense. No! But if we picture the four crosses around Jesus we can clearly see this illustration. The accuracy of the Word presents a clear picture. The soldiers came and they broke the legs of the first (robber) and of the other which was crucified with him (the malefactor). Then progressing in the row, the soldiers came to Jesus in the third place, and they found him already dead.



It does make sense that the ones who were crucified when Jesus was crucified were placed closest to him. Then, when the two robbers were brought later, they were placed on the outside one on the right hand and the other on the left. Furthermore, the Word records a conversation involving Jesus and the malefactors. This is facilitated when we realize that they were crucified inside the robbers because they arrived at the scene first. Later, when the robbers arrived, they were crucified outside of the three already there.

The word “other” in verse 32 adds additional support. There are two different words translated “other” in John 19 and Luke 23. One word is *heteros*, and the other word is *allos*. Both *heteros* and *allos* are translated “other” or “another.” They are used with either a generic or numeric significance.²⁴ In these instances they are used numerically. Numerically, “*heteros*” means “other when only two may be involved,” while “*allos*”

²⁴ *Heteros* may be used either generically or numerically. When it is used generically it means “another of a different kind,” and when it is used numerically it means “another when only two are involved.” *Allos* may also be used either generically or numerically. When it is used generically it means “another of the same kind,” and when it is used numerically it means “another when more than two are involved.” The context in which these words occur determine their usage. The English word “heterosexual” borrows *heteros* from the Greek and uses both the generic and the numeric significance—of a different kind when only two are involved. The English word “allomorph” means any of the crystalline forms of a substance existing in more than one form. Both the generic and numeric significance is seen in that the allomorphs are of the same kind where more than two may be involved.

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means “other when more than two may be involved.” The word “other” in John 19:32 is “*allos*.” *Allos* is used when more than two may be involved. Two malefactors, two thieves and Jesus are involved, making five. So the soldiers broke the legs of the first and of the other (*allos*) of the five involved. In Luke 23:32, “other” was also used. “And there were also two other (*heteros*), malefactors, led with him to be put to death.” In Luke the word is “*heteros*,” because only two malefactors are referred to. This is the sharp accuracy of God's Word.

When Jesus was led forth, they led two malefactors with him. Later, after the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they parted garments. They cast lots. They sat down. They put up an accusation, and then finally, they brought two robbers, and they crucified them. When the soldiers came, they broke the legs of the first and of the other (the *allos*, more than two involved), but having come to Jesus, they found that he was dead already. Why? Because the prophets of old had prophesied that no one would ever break the Messiah's legs. (Psalm 34:20; Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12) The Jews and soldiers did not take Jesus' life upon Calvary's cross. He laid it down. He gave up his life. He did not die because they crucified him. He died because he gave himself for you and for me. This is the accuracy with which the Word of God fits.

Some may say “What difference does it make?” “The center cross the most important!” Yes, the center cross is the most important. But, if God was mistaken at any place in the Scripture, He could not be trusted at any other place in the Scripture. God's Word is perfect. It can be trusted. Regarding the others crucified with Jesus, the Word interprets itself right where it is written taking into account Scripture build-up or narrative development.

God has protected the interpretation of His Word with its perfection. Every word of God's Word is pure and is there for a reason. The workman of the Word pays attention to its detail. We observed that Matthew and Luke used temporal conjunctions which noted the time involved. While John used a local conjunction that painted a beautiful word picture of the place where it occurred. Together, the four Gospel accounts are a beautiful tapestry interwoven with intricate precision and detail. An important key to note is that things that are similar are not necessarily identical. Putting all four Gospel accounts together showed us a center cross with two on either side. Remember when comparing Scriptures on an identical incident, the Scriptures can complement each other but never contradict each other if we have the true Word. The picture that we saw clearly was Jesus on a center cross with two on either side.

Peter's denials:

Mark 14:72:

And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

The Gospel of Mark records that Peter remembered what Jesus had told him would happen in Mark 14:30.

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Mark 14:30:

And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Mark is the only Gospel to note two cockcrowings. Matthew, Luke, and John note only one.

Matthew 26:34:

Jesus said unto him [Peter], Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Luke 22:34:

And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

John 13:38:

Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Mark mentions two, the other Gospels only one. Was Mark correct? Did the cock crow once or twice? Does it make a difference? This will become evident as we progress.

Jesus had just told the twelve that they would all be offended and would be scattered abroad. However, Peter said he would never be offended. He said that he would go with Jesus both into prison and to death. He said that he would lay down his life for Jesus' sake. Jesus' response to Peter's statements was to tell him that he would deny him thrice. The traditional teaching is that Peter only denied Jesus three times. Indeed, each of the Gospel accounts records exactly three denials. If there were truly only three denials, then the accounts in the four Gospels would have to be identical? If so, the details will augment one another, but never contradict each other. However, when the details are read, we will see that there could not be only three denials.

Matthew 26:57,58:

And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

The account of the denials in Matthew records that they happened when Jesus was before Caiaphas.

Matthew 26:69-75:

Now Peter sat without in the palace [courtyard]: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

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And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

All three of these happened before Caiaphas. In the first and second denials Peter was accused by two different women, and in the last he was confronted by several people (they that stood by). The first was in the palace, and the last two were on the porch.

Mark 14:53,54:

And they led Jesus away to the high priest: [that was Caiaphas] and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

The account of the denials in Mark records that they happened when Jesus was before Caiaphas.

Mark 14:66-72:

And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is *one* of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art *one* of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth *thereto*. But he began to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

The details in Matthew and Mark are consistent. All three of these happened before Caiaphas. In the first and second denials Peter was accused by two different women, and in the last he was confronted by several people (they that stood by). The first was in the palace, and the last two were on the porch. There are no contradictions between Matthew and Mark. It is important to note however, that Mark adds the detail that the cock crew both after the first and after the third denial.

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Luke 22:54-62:

Then took they him, and led *him*, and brought him into the high priest's [that is Caiaphas] house. And Peter followed afar off.

And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, **Man**, I am not.

And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this *fellow* also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.

And Peter said, **Man**, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Like Matthew and Mark, all three of these happened before Caiaphas. However, Luke notes that in the first, Peter was accused by a woman, and in the second and third he was accused by a man. This is the first apparent contradiction. Luke also says that the second and third confrontations were by a man, and Matthew and Mark said the second was by a woman and the third was by the group of people standing by.

John 18:13-18:

And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

Verse 17 notes that the first accusation was by a woman before Annas. The other three Gospels assert that all three confrontations happened before Caiaphas. This is the first mention of one occurring before Annas.

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John 18:24-27:

Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied *it*, and said, I am not.

One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Summarizing John, the first denial happened while Jesus was before Annas, and the last two happened before Caiaphas. In the first Peter was accused by a woman. In the second it was several people together. In the last he was accused by a man. The first was in the palace, and the location of the last two was not specified.

Now putting these accounts together we find that John records a denial while Jesus was before Annas and the other Gospels record three denials while Jesus was before Caiaphas. Already we have at least four denials. Matthew notes that Peter was accused by two different women while Jesus was before Caiaphas, and John records Peter being accused by a woman when Jesus was before Annas. That makes three accusations from women. Luke notes that he was accused by two different men. Lastly Matthew, Mark, and John record an incident of Peter being accused by several people together. Three accusations from women plus two accusations from men plus one accusation by a group equal six. Three plus two plus one equal six. From this we see that there must have been at least six denials. There is no way that the traditional teaching of three denials could possibly be right. God's Word does not contradict itself, so these can not be identical situations. Although each Gospel records exactly three denials, these denials are only similar. They are not identical because the details contradict. Let us put these Gospel accounts together and we will see there were actually six denials and two cockcrowings and no contradictions in God's Word.

Summary of Peter's Denials

1. The first denial occurred while Jesus was before Annas. Peter was accused by a young female doorkeeper as he entered the door from the street to the courtyard. A disciple "known unto the high priest" made arrangements for Peter to be allowed in. (John 18:15-18)
2. The second denial occurred while Jesus was before Caiaphas. The accuser was a young maiden who served the high priest. The location of this denial was by the fire in the courtyard. Peter was sitting. This denial was made before all in that area. (Matthew 26:69,70; Mark 14:66-68a; Luke 22:55-57)
3. The third denial also occurred while Jesus was before Caiaphas, also by the fire in the courtyard. The accuser was a man. (Luke 22:58)

Mark 14:68b records the first cockcrowing.

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4. The fourth denial occurred while Jesus was before Caiaphas. It happened in the porch area, where the large door or gate was. The accuser was a maiden who served the high priest, a different maiden from the accuser who prompted denial number two. Judging from the location, she may have been one of the doorkeepers. (Matthew 26:71,72; Mark 14:69,70a)
5. The fifth denial occurred while Jesus was before Caiaphas. It happened in the courtyard area again with Peter standing next to the fire. This time there were several accusers that challenged him, citing his Galilean dialect as evidence of his discipleship to Jesus. After this denial, Peter began adamantly cursing and swearing, probably as an act to convince them he was not a disciple. (Matthew 26:73,74a; Mark 14:70b,71; John 18:25)
6. The sixth denial occurred immediately after the fifth at the fire in the courtyard. The accuser was a servant of the high priest who had been present at the arrest in the garden. There he had seen Peter and now he confidently and quickly affirmed the fifth accusation by recognizing Peter. While Peter yet spoke this denial, the cock crowed. (Luke 22:59,60a; John 18:26,27a)

Second cockcrowing (Matthew 26:74b, Mark 14:72a, Luke 22:60b, John 18:27b)

This second and final cockcrowing is mentioned in each of the Gospels.

Mark 14:72:
And the second time the cock crew....

Matthew 26:74:
...And immediately [*eutheōs*, directly, forthwith] the cock crew.

The last denial recorded in Matthew 26 is the fifth one, and the cock is said to have crowed “immediately” or “directly” after the fifth denial. How could this be? What happened to the sixth denial? It had to occur between that fifth denial and the cockcrowing. The accuracy of this becomes clear from the other Gospels.

John 18:27:
...and immediately [*eutheōs*, directly, forthwith] the cock crew.

Luke 22:60:
...And immediately [*parachrēma*, along with the thing itself], while he yet spake, the cock crew.

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Mark 14:72 gives us the information that this was the second cockcrowing. Matthew said that the cock crew immediately or directly after the fifth denial. John uses the same terminology to tell us the cock crowed immediately upon the sixth denial. The key is in Luke where we find that the cockcrowing occurred "while he yet spake" the sixth denial. The final cockcrowing occurred immediately after the fifth and while he yet spoke the sixth. The fifth denial, sixth denial, and final cockcrowing occurred in rapid succession, but the crowing happened while the sixth denial was still on Peter's lips. The minute accuracy of God's Word is amazing.

The Word of God records on three occasions that Jesus told Peter that he would deny him. The first time was after they had eaten the last supper, but while they still remained at the scene of the supper.

John 13:36-38:

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

God had shown Jesus he was going to have to face his crucial hour alone. Jesus knew Peter's intentions were good, but God had shown him that even Peter would deny him. Jesus needed to drink this cup by the freedom of his will, and God wanted Him to know "the score." He was going to have to do it without the help of any of his closest friends.

This account is also given in Luke, but with some additional information included. Look at how tenderly Jesus spoke to Peter at this time.

Luke 22:31-34:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

This was the first prediction and corresponds to the one in John 13. Jesus prophesied of it while they were still at the scene of the last supper. In Luke, we see another reason for God telling Jesus that Peter would deny him before it actually happened.

It was not so Jesus would confront Peter or scold Peter or tell him what a weakling he was. He did not tell Peter to just shut up and stay home and do not try to follow. Jesus knew Peter's heart and his love for him. He knew how devastating these denials were going to be to Peter. Since there was nothing that he could do to stop them from

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happening, he prayed for Peter to make it through this tragedy and come back even stronger than before.

In verse 32, Jesus prayed for him so that his faith or believing would fail not. "Fail" in the Greek means "to cease," "to stop," or "to quit." Most people would not have made it through what Peter was about to go through. We will see later that Judas went through a similar situation, but he did not make it back. Peter did turn it around and come back.

Sometimes hurts can be so devastating that people just cease to believe. They give up. They quit on God. The confusion and the turmoil and the despair gets so bad they just quit fighting. Instead of facing it and being more than a conqueror, they just give up and quit believing God. Jesus knew that was the temptation that Peter would face. After his bold and brash statement egotistically claiming that he would follow Jesus to the death, he had "to eat some humble pie." Peter had to come to grips with his own weakness, and when he did, it would provide an experiential strength that would not only help him to prevail in the contests of life, but would allow him to help his brethren do the same. "Converted" in verse 32 is intransitive, and as an intransitive it means "to turn one's self about," "to return," "to turn back," and "to come back." Jesus prayer and believing was for Peter to make it back and be more than a conqueror.

Jesus was aware that Satan desired to have Peter. Satan wanted to deliver "the knock out punch" that would send Peter to "the mat for the count." However, Jesus prayed for Peter and lovingly told him that he was believing for him to succeed. He wanted Peter to respond and strengthen his brethren, also. Peter was to lead the early church and to establish them in the greatness of God's Word. Peter brashly declared his determination to follow Jesus even unto death, but Jesus forthrightly told him he would not. This was the first of three times that Jesus told Peter that he would deny him thrice before the cock crowed.

After leaving the scene of the last supper and on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus talked with his people and tried to help them understand what to anticipate in the following hours and days. He was still teaching and helping his people as best as he could. Matthew records the second prediction of Peter's denials. This established that it would happen and that it would come to pass soon.²⁵

Matthew 26:31-34:

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended.

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

²⁵ Genesis 41:32

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Again Peter, denies that he would ever be offended, even if everyone else was. As they continued on toward the garden, Jesus emphatically predicted a third time that this would happen.

Mark 14:30:

And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

This is a different prediction than the one in Matthew because it uses the word “twice.” This third prediction made it complete, including the extra detail of a second cockcrowing. Even from the time before they left the site of the last supper, the disciples, especially Peter, had continually insisted that they would never desert Jesus. In countering this, Jesus twice told Peter that he would deny his master three times before the cock would crow. However, Peter persisted in saying that he would not. Finally Jesus unequivocally declared that Peter would deny him three times before the cock crowed twice. Peter ultimately denied him a total of six times despite this final warning—three times before each cockcrowing. Peter’s reaction to Jesus’ final prediction was one of even more strenuous disagreement. The other disciples also sided with Peter in refuting Jesus’ pronouncement.

Mark 14:31:

But he [Peter] spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Indeed, Peter did deny his lord six times. The denials occurred in the area of the porch and courtyard of the palace where Annas and Caiaphas were located. With each accusation and denial, Peter grew more uneasy and more afraid of being detected. Surrounded by enemies, he restlessly stood up, sat down, stood up again, and walked back and forth from the fire in the courtyard to the porch. Finally, several of those at the fire began to accuse him. He brashly denied the accusation with cursing and swearing. Then a man who had seen him at the arrest in the garden stepped in and confidently identified him. Just as Peter was pronouncing his final denial, the cock crowed the second time. The next event is heartrending.

Luke 22:60-62:

And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Peter, standing at the fire, must have gotten a glimpse of his master through a door of the palace. Immediately after the sixth denial and the final cockcrowing, his eyes met those of Jesus. By this time Jesus had already been badly beaten. He was already wounded and bloody. In an emotionally charged moment of internal turmoil and tension, Peter caught sight of his beaten and humiliated lord, the one whom he had just denied. That

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Hour 2: Others Crucified with Jesus; Peter's Denials

moment was seared into Peter's memory. His mind instantly recalled each prophecy Jesus had made of his denials. Distressed by his own cowardly behavior and broken at the sight of his tortured lord, Peter turned, went out into the street, and wept bitterly.

Peter was not really a coward. He did have the courage to follow Jesus to the courtyard of the high priests, while the others scattered. Yet in his master's time of great need, he had utterly failed to be true to him or even to acknowledge that he knew him. What a testimony to the frailty of man! Peter went away, harboring this realization in the very depths of his being. Peter had to come to grips with the reality that he had succumbed and denied his lord. However, Jesus' prayer and believing for Peter were realized. Although Peter rejoined the other disciples behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, he did bounce back. He was with Jesus after his resurrection those forty days. And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, it was Peter who was the spokesman and boldly held forth the greatness of God's Word. He had made it back from the heartbreak of denying his lord and strengthened his brethren.

Again we see that things similar are not identical. The accuracy of the word shows that there were six, not three, denials. The first three occurred before the first cockcrowing, and the last three occurred after the first and before the second.

Mark 14:30:

And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Mark 14:72:

And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

If we simply move the comma from after "twice" and place it before "twice," we will again have the accuracy of the Word as it interprets itself: "Before the cock crow, twice thou shalt deny me thrice." Two times three is six, and we see again that the Word fits from every possible angle. This Word of God fits with great beauty and precision interpreting itself as we faithfully apply the keys to its interpretation.

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Hour 2: Others Crucified with Jesus; Peter's Denials

Living in God's Power, Part II

Hour 3: In the Context; As Used Before

Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II - Hour 3*

- I. The Bible interprets itself in the context. (Psalms 14:1; Daniel 3:25; *Matthew 1:18*; Daniel 3:28)
 - A. The Parable of the Tares (*Matthew 13:24-31,36-43*)
 - B. "In the resurrection" (*Matthew 22:23-32*; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 5:28,29; Ephesians 1:20,21; Romans 6:9; Colossians 1:18)
 - C. The vision of Elijah and Moses (*Matthew 17:1-9*)
 - D. Considering the remoter context (*Judges 3:16,31; 5:8; 14:5,6; 15:14-16*; I Samuel 13:19-22)
 - E. Words defined in their context (*Exodus 12:21*; *Leviticus 23:4,5*; *Luke 22:8-13; 22:1*; John 8:32)

- II. The Bible interprets itself as it has been used before.
 - A. Paul's thorn in the flesh (*II Corinthians 12:7-10*; Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:13; *Judges 2:3*; *II Corinthians 12:7*; Acts 14:19; *II Corinthians 11:24-28*)
 - B. Pure from the blood of all men (*Acts 20:17-38*; *Ezekiel 33:1-9*)

- III. Doing word studies (*Deuteronomy 29:29*; *Romans 11:33*; *Ephesians 3:8*; *John 5:39*; *Proverbs 25:2*)

The Bible Interprets Itself in the Context.

One of the easiest ways to wrongly divide the Scriptures is to take a text out of its context. Any text taken out of its context may become a pretext. A pretext is something that is put forward to conceal a true purpose or object. Perhaps you have heard someone say, "The Bible says, 'There is no God.'" Indeed, the Bible does say, "There is no God." However if you turn to Psalm 14:1 and read, it says, "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*"

We learned in Part I, that God has a purpose for everything He says, where He says it, why He says it, how He says it, to whom He says it, and when He says it. The order of the words in the Word is perfect. Every verse is set in a specific context, and the consideration of the context in examining any verse or passage is of the utmost importance. One cannot place too much importance upon a close study of the context. Removing a Scripture from its context is dangerous. All Scripture must fit in the verse and must cohere with its context.

The second way in which the Word of God interprets itself is "in the context." If a Scripture does not clearly interpret itself in the verse, then read the context. The verses surrounding a Scripture do much to determine its exact meaning. It is often necessary to read "the whole story" to understand the situation or background relevant to a particular verse.

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I heard a man teach a sermon once entitled, "Who was that fourth man?" He was sharing about the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace. When he got to Daniel 3:25, he read where Nebuchadnezzar gazed into the furnace and said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Next, he asked the question: "Who was that fourth man?" Then he launched into quite an expansive explanation that Jesus Christ was that fourth man. Of course, Matthew 1:18 says, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise...." Jesus had a beginning in Bethlehem of Judah on September 11th, 3 B. C.²⁶ Therefore, it could not have been Jesus in the furnace.

Daniel 3:25:

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is **like** the Son of God.

The key word in the verse is "like." It was not the son of God, it was **like** the son of God. "Like" indicates the figure of speech simile. This is the only place in the King James Version of the Old Testament that the phrase "the son of God" is used. However, when we read it in context, it is very clearly explained.

Daniel 3:28:

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent **his angel**, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Reading the entire context clears up the difficulty. It was an angel that Nebuchadnezzar saw in the furnace. Now there is no private interpretation as we allow it to interpret itself.

The Parable of the Tares:

Matthew 13:24-31:

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

²⁶ For a detailed explanation see: *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*, American Christian Press, New Knoxville, OH, 1982

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Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Another parable put he forth unto them....

Verse 30 ends the Parable of the Tares. Now we ask ourselves, what does it mean? So I ask you, what is the good seed? What is the field? What are the tares? In a group of five people we might have five different answers. Who is right? If everyone is guessing, no one is right. That is not letting the Word interpret itself. Guessing is nothing but private interpretation. We just need to keep reading to get the whole context. If these verses have not interpreted themselves in the verse, the next place we check is the context.

Matthew 13:36:

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

The disciples had the same problem we did. What Jesus spoke was not clear to them. Sure, they could have guessed, but they did not. They asked him to explain it. There is a key. If you do not know, ask. That is what the disciples did. They needed more information. So do we, and we get it from the context as we keep reading.

Matthew 13:37-43:

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*;

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Where does the parable interpret itself? It interprets itself in the context.

In the Resurrection:

Matthew 22:32 is often taken out of context and quoted to prove that when a person dies he is not really dead.

Matthew 22:32:

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

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God is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Since God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, they conclude that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must not be dead. They must be living. However, a check of the context shows us that Jesus is not talking about immediate life after death, but the resurrection of the dead.

Matthew 22:23-28:

The same day came to him the Sadducees, **which say that there is no resurrection**, and asked him,

Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

And last of all the woman died also.

Therefore **in the resurrection** [This is the subject.] whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They presented this hypothetical situation to Jesus to assert how ridiculous belief in the resurrection was. If there was a resurrection whose wife would she be?

Matthew 22:29:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

Jesus' response to those Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection was, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." They did not know the Scriptures which clearly taught of the resurrection, nor were they aware of the power of God to resurrect the dead. This is exactly why people are still so confused today. They do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. The teaching that when one dies he is really not dead because he is alive some place else, is error. To not believe in the resurrection of the dead still shows that we do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Matthew 22:30-32:

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage but are as the angels of God in heaven.

But as touching **the resurrection of the dead**, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Jesus quoted this phrase from Exodus Chapter 3, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" to substantiate or prove the resurrection. Jesus concludes that, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Therefore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be resurrected. When is God not the God of the dead but of the living? Not now, but at the time of the resurrection. This argument does not prove that the dead were already alive? It proves just the opposite. If Abraham is alive now, then no resurrection

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is needed. The conclusion is perfectly clear. If God is the God of the living, then Abraham must live again in the resurrection.

Where is Abraham now according to the Word of God? The Bible says he is dead. Where is Isaac? He is dead. Where is Jacob? He is dead. How long will they remain dead? They will remain dead until the resurrection, and the resurrection has not yet come. At the time of the resurrection, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be made alive. Jesus quoted this verse to prove that God intended to resurrect them. They are not already alive and living with Him, or there would be no need for a resurrection. They are dead and will stay dead until the resurrection. The truth is just the opposite of how it is misused. Instead of teaching that there is immediate life after death, it teaches that there is a state of death in which people who have died reside until the return of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, there would be no need for the return of Christ.

If you or I were to die we would sleep until the return of Christ and our gathering together unto him.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which **sleep** [This is figurative. It is a euphemism for death.] in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are **asleep** [again figuratively referring to the sleep of death].

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the **dead** [That is the literal truth.] in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Those born again since the Day of Pentecost will be part of the gathering together. Why is death spoken of as sleep? It is a continuing state of unconsciousness from which one will awaken when Christ returns. Since the dead have no consciousness, there is no awareness of time for the dead person. Therefore when one dies the next **conscious** moment **for him** is the return of Christ, at which time the dead will rise. However, within the dimension of actual time, the moment of a man's death is neither his gathering together unto Christ nor his resurrection. In actual time he does not go immediately to heaven, but descends into "gravedom," the state of the dead. The dead, who were born-again after the Day of Pentecost, will rise at the gathering together. Those believers who died before the Day of Pentecost are awaiting the resurrections described in John.

John 5:28-29:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

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And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Jesus spoke of the resurrections in the future. The resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation have not occurred yet. They are still in the future. Christ has not returned yet, but just as surely as he was here the first time, he is coming back again. Our Lord will return, and when he does the dead will rise again.

All who have died have remained that way and will stay that way until the gathering together or the resurrection of the just and the unjust. All, except for the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it says in Ephesians 1:20 and 21 that, "God raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Jesus Christ is the only one who was raised from the dead and "dieth no more" as Romans 6:9 says. Colossians 1:18 also says "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence" or be the prominent one. Everyone else who has lived and died will stay dead until the return of Christ, either the gathering together or the resurrections.

The Vision of Elijah and Moses:

So you ask, if the dead are dead how could Elijah and Moses come back and speak with Jesus? That is a good question, and it too is answered as we read it in the context.

Matthew 17:1-9:

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
And was transfigured [changed in appearance] before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias [That is Elijah.] talking with him.

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the **vision** to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Reading the entire context we see that Moses and Elijah were not actually there. This was a **vision**. This was revelation that came via a panoramic picture of the situation. Another key word is "appeared" in verse three. Moses and Elijah **appeared** unto them. The Greek word is "*optomai*," which means "to see objectively." It refers to the

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impression on the mind, and not the physical perception with the eyes. Moses and Elijah were impressed upon the minds of Peter, James, and John by revelation. “*Bleptō*” is the Greek word which means “to use the eyes to look at” and refers to the physical organs of perception. Peter, James, and John did not see this vision with their eyes, but rather with their minds. The physical sense of sight was completely bypassed. Moses and Elijah were not actually there. They are dead awaiting the resurrection.

Reading these verses in their context clearly shows that the dead are dead and will remain dead until the gathering together and the resurrections. Again, we see the Word of God interpreting itself as we read it in the context.

Considering the remoter context:

Sometimes going beyond the immediate context to the more remote context will also contribute significantly to our understanding of accounts.

Judges 3:16:

But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

Ehud was a judge who made a dagger and killed Eglon king of Moab with it.

Judges 3:31:

And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.

Shamgar was another judge who brought deliverance from the Philistines killing 600 with an ox goad.

Judges 5:8:

They chose new gods; then *was* war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?

When Deborah judged Israel, there was an army without shield or spear. That is not the best way to go into battle.

Judges 14:5,6:

Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

Samson defended himself from the lion bare-handed. God delivered him even though he had no weapon.

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Judges 15:14-16:

And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

Later Samson killed a 1,000 men with the jawbone of an ass. Again we see him fighting without a typical weapon. Throughout Judges we have seen incident after incident of a weaponless Israel. The remoter context sheds light on what was going on.

I Samuel 13:19-22:

Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears:

But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.

So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

The Philistines subjugated and oppressed Israel, and to do so they disarmed them. This will always be the case. In order to enslave a people, one must take away their means to defend themselves. That is what the Philistines did to Israel. There was no smith in Israel. If they needed metal forged they had to go to the Philistines to get it done. That is why our forefathers had the second amendment, the right to bear arms, incorporated into our constitution. For a nation to remain free it has to have the means to defend itself and its freedom. Reading the remoter context casts more light on those other Scriptures we read.

Words are also defined in their context:

Many words used in the Bible have different shades of meaning, different usages. When we speak of a biblical “use,” we speak of an occurrence of a Word. When we speak of a biblical “usage,” we speak of one of several meanings of a word. Although the meanings are usually related, the only way to determine which **usage** is intended in a specific **use** of Scripture is to read the context.

We have already covered an example of this when we looked at Jesus’ Cry of Triumph. We saw that the translation “forsaken” was wrong because the translators used the wrong usage of the Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew words. By reading other occurrences of the words and reading their different contexts, we were able to see a different usage. “Forsaken” was the wrong choice. “Spared” or “reserved” was a better choice as we rightly divided the Word, so there was harmony with the other Scriptures.

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Let us look at another example with the word "Passover." "Passover" is used to mean the Passover lamb. It is used of the holy convocation which included the slaughtering of the lamb on the 14th of Nisan. It is used of the Passover meal which was eaten in the night beginning the 15th of Nisan. It is also used of the entire seven-day Feast of the Unleavenbread. These are four major usages of "Passover" in the Bible. They can only be ascertained by reading the verses in which "Passover" occurs in their context.

Exodus 12:21:

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.

They were to kill what? The lamb. "Passover" in this verse means "lamb."

Leviticus 23:4,5:

These *are* the feasts of the LORD, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S Passover.

"Passover" refers to the event celebrated each year which included the action of slaughtering the Passover lamb on the 14th of Nisan.

Luke 22:8-13:

And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?

And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

Clearly this refers to the Passover meal which was to be eaten in the night beginning the 15th of Nisan.

Luke 22:1:

Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

This verse shows us that the entire seven day Feast of Unleaven Bread was called the Passover. Only by seeing how a word is used in its context can we determine exactly what it means. To say that "Passover" always means the same thing would be incorrect. This word will interpret itself as we read it in its context.

Remember, if a Scripture does not clearly interpret itself in the verse where it is written, the next place to check is the context. Reading the entire context will add much light and

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understanding to any verse of Scripture. I started this class sharing John 8:32 with you where it said that “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” It was reading that verse in context that day that enlightened the eyes of my understanding and brought God’s deliverance by the power of the Word.

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The Bible Interprets Itself as It Has Been Used Before.

If Scripture does not interpret itself in the verse or in the context, then the interpretation is found in its previous usage. In the first usage of a word, expression, or idea, the explanation is usually complete enough to carry through in all other references in the Bible. If God ever changed the usage of a word or expression, He always explains it.

Paul's thorn in the flesh:

II Corinthians 12:7:

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

This verse does not say what Paul's thorn in the flesh was, but it tells us who sent the thorn. The people who teach that Paul's thorn in the flesh was sickness which was sent by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ must have been mistaken because this verse says that it was sent by Satan. Why did Satan send it? To hinder and obstruct Paul in his work.

II Corinthians 12:8-10:

For this thing [the thorn in the flesh] I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

And he [God] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, [It does not say sicknesses.] in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.

The thorn in the flesh still has not been explained. We could read the rest of Corinthians, and it would not be explained. None of the remaining New Testament explains the thorn in the flesh. So what do we do? We have to turn in our Bibles to the place at which the expression "thorn in the flesh" is first used.

Numbers 33:55:

But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land [unbelievers] from before you; then it shall come to *pass*, that those which ye let remain of them *shall be* pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

The inhabitants, the people, shall be "pricks in their eyes" and "thorns in their side." Do you mean that a Canaanite was hanging in one's eye and another Canaanite was attached to one's rib? What are "pricks in your eyes and thorns in your side?" They are figures of speech and are not to be taken literally.

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This one verse alone, since it is the first usage of the expression in the Bible, says that “pricks in your eyes” and “thorns in your sides” are people. Previous usage explains Paul’s thorn in the flesh. We do not need guesswork or private interpretation. Satan sent Paul a thorn in the flesh to hinder him in his work. What hindered Paul? People. This verse in the book of Numbers interpreted the figure of speech so that we can understand II Corinthians 12:7.

Joshua 23:13:

Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they [nations, which are made up of people] shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

Joshua shows the same truth because people again were “snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes.” Can you imagine a nation of people like the Amorites being in one fellow’s eye? That is not what it means. The thorn in the flesh always represents people who are pricking and trying to buffet and discourage.

Judges 2:3:

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them [the people] out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

This figure of speech follows through each occurrence. The people were spoken of as “thorns in their sides.”

II Corinthians 12:7:

And lest I should be exalted above measure through [because of] the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me....

Why does God not need to explain the phrase “thorn in the flesh” here? Because He explained it in its first occurrence and that follows through here in II Corinthians. What was the thorn in the flesh? People. Everywhere Paul went, people constantly tried to alter the Gospel which he preached. These people who followed him were thorns in his side, pricks in his eyes, thorns in the flesh. People were the messengers of Satan sent to buffet him, to obstruct his ministry, to weaken his work.

Acts 14:19:

And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Had this happened to me, I would be praying too for God to remove this thorn in the flesh. The earlier context of II Corinthians 11 also adds insight to how people buffeted Paul.

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II Corinthians 11:24,25:

Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.

Five times he was whipped, and three times Paul was beaten with rods. Once they stoned him and left him for dead. Paul went to God about this. I am sure we would have, too.

II Corinthians 11:26-28:

In journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils by the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren:

In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Who was responsible for all these things happening to Paul? Satan, the Devil. He inspired and possessed people who obstructed Paul. What was God's answer to Paul's prayer. "My grace is sufficient for thee..." Paul's conclusion was: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." That is the figure of speech oxymoron. An oxymoron is a figure in which what is said at first glance appears to be foolish, yet when we consider it in depth we find it exceeding wise. Some things are so rich that language falls short in expressing the truth. Since language falls short God resorts to oxymoron to try to describe it, so we can understand it. God's grace allowed Paul to be strong in situations in which he was without strength. Paul took on life's challenges "head-on." Paul's strength was made perfect in his being challenged to handle the situation. There is nothing that humbles one more than looking one of life's biggest challenges in the eye and taking it on. When we know we cannot handle it by ourselves, we are much more likely to rely on God's grace to pull us through. What are "thorns in the flesh?" They are people who try to hinder us as we do our best to live for God and move His Word over the world. However, God's grace is always sufficient and we can be more than conquerors in every situation.

Pure from the blood of all men:

Acts 20:26 is another illustration of how previous use is necessary in allowing the Word to interpret itself.

Acts 20:17-27:

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: [There is that the thorn in the flesh, again.]

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And how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Verse 26 does not tell us what it means to be “pure from the blood of all men,” but it tells us why he was “pure from the blood of all men” in verse 27. He declared the counsel of God to them. Let’s continue in the context to see if it will help explain it.

Acts 20:28-38:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.

Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him,

Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Verse 26 uses the phrase “pure from the blood of all men.” The rest of the immediate context does not explain it. What does it mean to be “pure from the blood of all men?”

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We must go back to where the phrase was used before and allow the Word to interpret itself.

Ezekiel 33:1-9:

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people:

Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

In Acts 20:26 Paul said he was pure from the blood of all men. Paul, as a good watchman, saw the evil coming and warned the people. He fulfilled his responsibility as a watchman. Their blood was no longer on him. Since he had warned the people about what would happen, their blood was on their own heads.

Paul could say he was pure from the blood of all men, because he fulfilled his responsibility before God to warn the people. As good ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ we are to speak His Word. Then people will have the opportunity to make their own decisions and decide their own destiny. That is the freewill choice God has given to every man. As watchmen we can beseech, implore, and beg people to do the Word. We give them the Word and warn them, but they have to make the decision to do the will of God themselves.

These are the three ways that Scripture interprets itself. It will interpret itself in the verse in the context, or where it has been used before. God has protected His Word. The workman who is diligent to apply these keys will unlock the storehouse of God's abundance and rightly divide the Word of truth.

Doing Word Studies

One of the greatest ways for the workman to work God's Word is doing word studies. Since we believe that throughout the Scriptures we have the words of God and not merely

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Hour 3: In the Context; As Used Before

the words of man, many difficulties disappear. God, as any other author, may quote, repeat, and readapt the words that He uses in His Word. He could choose different words or even coin new ones. However, when He is pleased to repeat His own word or words, introducing them in different contexts, with new applications, and connotations, it behooves and obligates us to study each repetition in the contexts, paragraphs, and sections in which they occur. We compare the contexts of each occurrence of the words in the Word to see if its usage is in a new sense or if it repeats a previous usage.

Deuteronomy 29:29:

The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

The greatest satisfaction of the workman of God's Word is to fathom what can be searched out from the Word of God. There are things of God which are secret or untraceable, and these cannot be explored or found out. The workman of the Word pursues what can be tracked, and quietly accepts that there are things which cannot be tracked. The Greek word, "*anexichniastos*," means "untraceable," "unsearchable," "past finding out," and "incomprehensible." It occurs twice in the New Testament.

Romans 11:33:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways **past finding out!**

Ephesians 3:8:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable** riches of Christ;

There is much about God that is past finding out, but there is also much in His Word that can be traced and tracked. Jesus commanded in John 5:39, "to search the Scriptures." The Greek word for "search" is "*ereunaō*." Bullinger says that it means "to seek out...track, trace, investigate." It is used in the Septuagint for Hebrew words meaning "to search by uncovering" and "to search minutely." It is used of tracing the footsteps of a man, and it is used of dogs tracking game.

That is what we do in a word study. We follow a word through its uses in the Word. We search minutely to uncover the fine points of how it interprets itself. Just like a dog tracking game or a man following footsteps, we arrive at the correct interpretation by following the words. That is how it interprets itself. God has left a trail in His Word that leads to the correct interpretation. If we are diligent to follow it, we can accurately allow the Word to interpret itself. A word study properly conducted leads the workman of the Word through the three ways the Word interprets itself. We start in a verse, continue into the context, and examine not only the previous use, but also every occurrence of the word.

This manner of working the Word is unsurpassed. Proverbs 25:2 says, "...the honour of kings *is* to search out a matter." The Hebrew word for "matter" is "*dabar*" which is

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usually translated “word,” and is used in Psalm 119 as one of the ten words for the Word of God. By the means of word studies we are able to search and allow the Scriptures to define its own words and interpret itself. Just as it is the honor of kings to search out a matter, it is the honor of the workman of the Word to search out the wonderful Word of God and see the great truths that God has for us.

Living in God's Power, Part II
Hour 4: Biblical Truths To Which We Must Adhere

Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II - Hour 4*

- I. The Word of God should be taken literally wherever and whenever possible. (*Galatians 4:15; I Timothy 5:23; II Peter 2:20*)
 - A. Figures of speech (*II Corinthians 12:7; Numbers 33:55; Exodus 23:13; Joshua 23:7; II Samuel 24:1; I Chronicles 21:1; Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 6:24; Ezekiel 28:12-15; John 10:35; Hebrews 2:14; Exodus 12:29,23; I Peter 5:8*)
 - B. Oriental customs and manners (*Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 10:42*)

- II. It is necessary to identify to whom a Scripture is addressed and to be aware of the administration in which or about which they were written.
 - A. Identify to whom a Scripture is addressed. (*I Corinthians 10:32; 1:22-24; Romans 9:24; 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:8; I Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; James 1:1; Acts 21:20; Galatians 5:1; Acts 15:10; Romans 10:9,10; I John 1:9; Romans 8:37-39; 11:21,22,13*)
 - B. Identify the administration in which or about which they were written. (*I Corinthians 9:17; Genesis 1:3; 3:24; Romans 2:12; Acts 17:30; Luke 16:16; Romans 10:4; Ephesians 3:2-10; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; II Thessalonians 2:1ff; Genesis 3:24; 15:6; Deuteronomy 6:25; Romans 3:20; 8:31-37; Psalms 44:22; I Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29*)

Biblical Truths To Which We Must Adhere

As workmen of the Word, there are certain biblical truths we must adhere to as we allow the Word to interpret itself. These truths will help guard against private interpretation, and help the workman of the Word prevail in rightly dividing the Word of Truth. They will serve as guidelines to keep the workman in his lane, so as not to get out of bounds.

- ◆ The Word of God should be taken literally wherever and whenever possible.
- ◆ It is necessary to identify to whom a Scripture is addressed and to be aware of the administration in which or about which they are written.
- ◆ We must make a distinction where God makes a difference.
- ◆ Difficult verses must be understood in light of the clear verses.
- ◆ Interpretation and application must always take into account “to whom” it is addressed.
- ◆ When we do not know how a verse interprets itself without being contradictory to other verses, we must admit it and hold that verse in abeyance until such a time as we can understand how it fits with the rest of the Scripture.

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Hour 4: Biblical Truths To Which We Must Adhere

**The Word of God Should Be Taken Literally Wherever
and Whenever Possible**

We should take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the context or other related Scriptures on the same subject indicate clearly otherwise. Remember Paul's thorn in the flesh? If "thorn" was to be understood in its usual, literal meaning, the context would not make any sense. Why would Paul repeatedly pray about it? He would have just removed the thorn. The context indicates that the literal meaning is unacceptable. Therefore, it is necessary to look beyond a literal meaning for a figurative meaning. However, the necessity of a figurative meaning does not afford one the opportunity to let his mind run wild.

Someone may remember Galatians 4:15 where Paul said, "If *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me," and suggest that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is poor eyesight. Someone else remembers Paul telling Timothy "to use a little wine for his stomach's sake" (I Timothy 5:23) and thinks the thorn was stomach trouble. However, II Peter 2:20 says, "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation," or of one's own letting loose. Figurative meanings and word combinations must be handled just as precisely as literal meanings. This brings us to the field of figures of speech.

Figures of speech:

The field of figures of speech can be approached with mathematical exactness and scientific precision. Figures of speech are departures from the ordinary or natural form of the laws of grammar and syntax. They are not mistakes due to ignorance or accident. Rather, they are legitimate deviations for a special purpose. Their forms are fixed and established, and they can be accurately cataloged and analyzed. There is absolutely no guesswork when figures of speech are handled properly. If a particular form of expression is a figure of speech, it can be precisely identified, and its purpose can be clearly delineated. To rightly divide the Word of Truth we must interpret literally what God intended to be literal and figuratively what God intended to be figurative. Learning to recognize figures of speech in God's Word allows the Word to interpret itself, keeping private interpretation from creeping into the Scriptures.

The expression, "thorn in the flesh" in II Corinthians 12:7 is the figure of speech *hypocatastasis*, or implication. There is an implied comparison to people who buffet Paul and a literal thorn in the flesh. Because the comparison was implied and not stated, we had to look at a previous use of the expression to understand the implication. We learned what these words meant when we went back to their previous use in Numbers 33:55. There it said that the inhabitants **shall be** "pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides." In Numbers God uses the figure *metaphor*, to make the comparison by representation using the verb "to be." In a metaphor both items of comparison are stated. Therefore, it was simple to see that people are "thorns in the flesh." Both *hypocatastasis* and *metaphor* are legitimate figures of speech whose form and function can be documented. The exactness in this field eliminates guesswork and continues to allow the workman of the Word to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

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Hour 4: Biblical Truths To Which We Must Adhere

There are many apparent contradictions in the Bible that stem from the erroneous idea of God hurting or killing someone. Most can be reconciled with the proper understanding of the figure of speech, *idiom*. An idiom is a colloquialism, a peculiar manner of speaking, or an expression with a meaning that cannot be understood from the words alone. An idiom can also be described as a usage of words in a culture that has a meaning different from a strict dictionary definition. In *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E. W. Bullinger explained that the Hebrew language has an idiom of permission, which is a unique usage of words where active verbs are sometimes used “to express, not the doing of the thing, but the *permission* of the thing which the agent is said to do.”²⁷

There are two major factors that contribute to the frequency of this idiom in God's Word. First, the adversary and his activities were not fully exposed until Jesus Christ made a show of them openly. Second, man's freedom of will to accept or reject the law of God, allows him to either accept God's Word and appropriate the blessings or to reject God's Word and receive the consequences. Seeing these two factors in the context of the Word further broadens our understanding of the use of this Hebrew idiom.

Although the believers in the Old Testament were not fully cognizant of the spiritual forces at work, they could still express what was going on by using this idiom of permission. Furthermore, and important to note, God specifically instructed His people on occasion to not even mention the name of false gods.

Exodus 23:13:

And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

Joshua 23:7:

That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear *by them*, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them.

Therefore, instead of saying that the Devil or Belial or Baal did something, the people would say that the Lord permitted it to be done. This figure allowed people to explain what was going on and still portray God as sovereign and in control of the situation.

The Books of Samuel are written from man's point of view, revealing man's limited awareness of the devil-spirit realm. In II Samuel we find the idiom of permission used in speaking of the numbering of Israel.

II Samuel 24:1:

And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he [the Lord] moved David [permitted David to be moved] against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

²⁷ In Appendix 2, you will find a more elaborate explanation of this idiom of permission for your further study.

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Hour 4: Biblical Truths To Which We Must Adhere

However, Chronicles, written from God's point of view and with the proper understanding of the spiritual forces at work in the world, states the literal truth.

I Chronicles 21:1:

And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

There is no contradiction here. Understanding the idiom of permission dissolves the apparent contradiction.

In addition to the Old Testament believers' limited knowledge of the adversary contributing to the frequent use of this idiom, the second major factor was the relationship between God's law and man's freedom of will. Man's freedom of will is a sacred trust from God that He never oversteps. God has allowed men to determine their own lives by controlling their thinking to either believe His Word and accept His will or to not believe it and reject it.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28:

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day:

And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

God gave us His Word to protect us from our adversary. When we respect Him and do His commandments, He can take care of us.

Deuteronomy 6:24:

And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear [reverence] the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

When God established free will, there had to be a choice. There had to have been an option other than the perfect beauty and order that God created and initiated. God's creation was perfect until the day when iniquity was found in Lucifer.²⁸ God did not make Lucifer evil. Rather, God allowed him the freedom of will to love and serve Him. With this freedom came the alternative of evil, which was first manifested in Lucifer. God gave this same freedom of will to mankind.

The Scripture cannot be broken.²⁹ Therefore when people break God's laws, they, in essence, break themselves on the law of God. God gave man His Word. When men believe and act on it, they are blessed and protected. When men rebel and refuse to listen to God's Word, God may no longer protect them. God recognizes the sanctity of freewill choice. He will never violate man's free will to choose. When man chooses to break the law of God, he receives the consequences of his disobedience.

²⁸ Ezekiel 28:12-15

²⁹ John 10:35

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If a man jumped off a cliff and killed himself, we would understand that the man was responsible for the consequence of his own death. Even though God is the One Who established the law of gravity, we would not say God killed the man, because the man broke God's physical law of gravity. Likewise, God is not responsible for the consequences when man breaks the spiritual laws of God. The fact that God declares what the consequences of unbelief are does not mean that He actively imparts them to mankind. Why would a loving God ever want to harm or to kill people? He does not! The Bible teaches in Hebrews 2:14 that the Devil holds the power of death. He is the one who brings and causes the calamity, not God.

Exodus 12:29:

And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.

Again, this verse contradicts all the clear verses on the subject. The proper understanding of this verse is that "...the Lord permitted all the firstborn in the land of Egypt to be smitten...." By taking a closer look at the context we will see that there is one verse of Scripture which handles the smiting of the firstborn both idiomatically and literally. The first part of the verse handles it idiomatically, using this Hebrew idiom of permission.

Exodus 12:23:

For the Lord will pass through to smite [permit the smiting of] the Egyptians....

The second part of the verse explains what literally happened.

Exodus 12:23:

...and when he [the Lord] seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer [permit] the destroyer [the Devil] to come in unto your houses to smite you.

The destroyer, the Devil, literally and actively killed the firstborn. God simply had to allow it to happen because the Egyptians did not obey His Word. God knew that the Devil would act in this manner, so He provided protection for His people in the Passover. God gave the people His Word. If they observed the Passover as He prescribed, putting the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintel, He would protect them and not allow the Devil, the destroyer, to kill their firstborn. If people did not obey, God could not protect them, and the destroyer was permitted to kill the firstborn.

The question often arises as to why the adversary would kill his own people. Again, the adversary's nature is to steal, kill, and destroy, and he succumbs to it even when it means the death of his own people at times. Furthermore, if there is an opportunity for him to kill, maim, or harm and cause God to receive the blame for it, he will. The adversary likes nothing better than to have people attribute evil to God. Now when you read of God actively causing harm, injury, or death, you can identify this as the Hebrew idiom of permission.

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Hour 4: Biblical Truths To Which We Must Adhere

Recognizing and understanding the Hebrew idiom of permission allows us to rightly divide God's Word and not to attribute evil, or folly, to God. The frequency of this idiom in the Old Testament was due in part to the lack of awareness of the spiritual forces at work. It was also due to specific instruction God gave Israel at times to not even mention the names of other gods. Man's free will to accept or reject the law of God also contributed to its frequent occurrences.

The proper understanding of the relationship of God's law and man's free will demonstrates that man brings evil upon himself when he breaks the laws of God and walks outside of God's protection. The very form of the idiom kept God always in control of situations and His sovereignty unquestioned. When man is outside the stronghold of God's protection, he is prey to the Devil, who as a roaring lion walks about, seeking whom he may devour.³⁰

For us to live in God's power we must have a clear mental picture of the goodness of God and the badness of the Devil. Let us drive into our minds the truth that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.³¹ By keeping a clear picture of the goodness of God before us, we can live in God's power. Our freewill choice to believe and do the Word appropriates God's blessings and keeps us in the center of His will, protected by the everlasting arms of our loving heavenly Father.³²

Oriental customs and manners:

Besides figures of speech, the workman of the Word must be aware of biblical customs and mannerisms. The Bible is an Eastern book, and the terms and descriptions in it were written for the Eastern mind. The illustrations used by the writers were drawn from their culture and way of life, which is much different from ours. There will be many truths recorded in the Bible which will remain hidden and obscured from full appreciation without a proper understanding of the customs and manners of the lands and times of the Bible.

Isaiah 55:1:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and be that bath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

This verse of Scripture certainly sounds strange to the Western mind. How can one buy anything without money and without price? To those uninitiated in Eastern culture, this seems to say that the merchandise will be given away because money and price are usually involved in a purchase. However, this is an example of a biblical custom. It is the cry of one who sells water, wine, milk, and the like in an Eastern market.

However, this expression is reserved for special situations. It is an expression of gratitude to God when a milestone is reached in one's life. When a person in the Western world has a birthday, he expects kindnesses from his relatives and friends. It is his day,

³⁰ I Peter 5:8

³¹ I John 1:5

³² Deuteronomy 33:27

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and he expects kindness to flow to him. Such is not the custom in the Bible lands in Bible times. In the biblical custom the person who has a birthday celebrates it to make others happy. He is taught that on his birthday he must show gratitude to God for sparing his life and allowing him to live another year. Since God does not need anything, he bestows kindnesses and gifts to others. The giving of even a cup of cold water to one who is thirsty is considered a gift to God.³³

The biblical merchant sells his goods to make a living, which he could not do by selling them without money and without price. Every item, in fact, does have a price. The water, wine, and milk spoken of in the text must be paid for. The vendor publicly announces the price much like those do who sell at a ball game. He will cry out the price per gallon of water, wine, or milk. The shoppers stop, negotiate, and pay the price for whatever they buy. At certain times, the seller changes his sales "pitch" from so much per gallon to, "come, buy without money and without price." But, why the change?

Remember that the birthday celebrant wants to make others happy to show his appreciation to God for His blessings to him. So, he approaches the vendor in the market place and makes a purchase of his goods. The seller will then begin to announce, "Come, buy without price." The easterner will immediately understand that someone is celebrating. He will also understand that anyone can come and buy without money and without price. That which is free to him, in reality, has been paid for. The people, as they fill their jugs or skins with water, milk, or wine, express their gratitude to the benefactor who stands by the vendor.

Isaiah used this common custom to effectually communicate to those to whom he spoke. They would recognize not only the custom, but also its spiritual significance. Man cannot pay the price to satisfy his spiritual thirst, he needs a benefactor. The Messiah would be the one to pay the price so God's people could drink freely. Jesus Christ is the one who brought the living water to quench the thirsting soul. Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman by the well of this living water. He is the benefactor who paid the price for us. He took our place on the cross. He paid our debt. The justice of God was satisfied. Through his sacrificial death, Christ purchased our salvation. This gift of God of everlasting life is now available to every one. Everyone who thirsts can now come and drink freely. Our benefactor, the Lord Jesus Christ paid the price. The cost to him was humiliation, rejection, anguish, and death. Thanks be unto God, through Christ we can drink of those "living waters" without money and without price.

When you are using the keys of in the verse, in the context, and used before to rightly divide God's Word remember when the literal meaning does not make sense or contradicts others Scriptures be alert and consider if what you are dealing with is a figure of speech or an orientalism. With the exception of figures of speech and biblical customs and manners all God's Word should be taken literally. God means what He says, and He says what He means. His Word is trustworthy, and He is faithful to it.

³³ That is what Jesus is speaking of in Matthew 10:42.

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Hour 4: Biblical Truths To Which We Must Adhere

**It Is Necessary to Identify to Whom a Scripture is Addressed
and to be Aware of the Administration In Which
or About Which They Were Written**

Identifying to whom a Scripture is addressed:

God classifies people into three groups according to I Corinthians 10:32.

I Corinthians 10:32:

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.

A person is either a Jew or a Gentile until he becomes born-again of God's spirit at which time he joins the Church of God. Once someone is born-again of God's spirit he is no longer Jew or Gentile, but has become part of the Church of God.

I Corinthians 1:22-24:

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

But unto **them which are called, both Jews and Greeks**, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Romans 9:24:

Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

The entire Bible is addressed to one or the other of these three groups. What is written to and about the Jew belongs to and must be interpreted of the Jew. What is written to and about the Gentile belongs to and must be interpreted of the Gentile. What is written to and about the Church of God belongs to and must be interpreted of the Church of God. What is written to one group is for the learning of the other groups. Romans explains:

Romans 15:4:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime [before the Day of Pentecost] were written for our learning, that we [the Church of God] through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Those things written before the Day of Pentecost are addressed *to* the Jews and the Gentiles. They are specifically and personally instructed. Those specific instructions however, are not for us. We can, however, learn much from them, because, as it states, they are *for* our learning.

No Scripture before Pentecost is addressed to the church since no one could be born-again and belong to the Church of God until it was established on Pentecost. In I Corinthians we are shown the same truth regarding to whom the Word is addressed.

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I Corinthians 10:11:

Now all these things happened unto them [Israel] for ensamples [examples]: and they are written **for** our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

The things that happened to Israel in the Old Testament are **for** our admonition. They were not addressed to us, and as such are not specific instruction to be applied by us. What about the laws of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers and the rest of those things in the Old Testament? Are they addressed to us? No. They are addressed to the Jews or to the Gentiles because the Church of God had not yet come into being. The Old Testament, therefore, must be for our learning. It is not addressed to us, but we can learn much from it. For instance, the Ten Commandments are not written to us, but we can learn from them. Yet, for the most part, the Protestant churches still teach as if the Ten Commandments were specifically written to us rather than for our learning. All Scripture before the Day of Pentecost is for our learning. So the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament are for our learning.

To this point, people usually understand. But how about the Gospels? They basically cover the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. To whom did Jesus minister?

Romans 15:8:

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision....

I do not belong to the circumcision, and neither do you if you are born-again of God's spirit. For if we are born-again of God's spirit, we belong to the Church of God in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Jesus Christ came as a minister to the circumcision. He was the completion, the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, the Old Testament.

Had the Gospels been placed in the Old Testament rather than at the start of the New Testament, much confusion could have been avoided. The New Testament actually begins with the book of Romans, with Acts being the book of transition between the Old Covenant and the New. The Book of Acts gives the story of the rise and the expansion of the Christian Church telling that on the Day of Pentecost men were born-again of God's spirit and filled with the power of the holy spirit and that the Church continued to grow. Then the book of Romans addresses itself to the Church with a few sections specifically directed to the Jews or Gentiles. All Scripture before Acts and Pentecost is for our learning.

We must be continually conscious of the part of the Word of God which is written *for* our learning and separate it from that part which is written *to* us. These two prepositions, *for* and *to*, make a critical difference between truth and error when it comes to rightly dividing the Word of God.

I Corinthians 1:2:

Unto the church of God....

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This letter is addressed to someone just as if I received a letter addressed to me. To whom is Corinthians addressed? The Church of God. That is what it says, and that is what it means.

Ephesians 1:1:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Who are the saints? The saints are the born-again believers. To whom is Ephesians addressed? It is addressed to the Church.

This is so simple. The entire Old Testament plus the four Gospels are addressed to either the Jew or the Gentile. But the Epistles such as Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians are addressed specifically to the Church as are the pastoral Epistles of Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Hebrews is not addressed to the Church in the sense that we know the Church established on Pentecost. Hebrews is addressed to believers who are born-again of God's spirit but who have never walked in the freedom or the greatness of the new birth. Hebrews is written for those who are still zealous for the law. Likewise the book of James is addressed to the same Old Testament-minded believers.

James 1:1:

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, **to** the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

Could God write the address any more directly? It is addressed to the twelve tribes who are scattered, the dispersed Jews. The reason James is so applicable to many believers today is that believers who are born-again of God's spirit still do not want to believe the Scripture which is addressed to them. They seem to want to put themselves under the law again. This was the problem in the early Church, too.

Acts 21:20:

And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law.

These Jews were born-again of God's Spirit, they were saved after Pentecost, but they were still zealous for the law. They never walked into the greatness of the revelation that came on the Day of Pentecost, which the Apostle Paul set forth and declared so boldly.

Galatians 5:1:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

The church is told to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." What is the "yoke of bondage?" If we go back to a previous use, we find that in Acts 15:10 it is the law.

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Those Epistles that are addressed to us are instruction specifically for us and are to be applied by us. All other Scripture is for our learning. We do not have to keep the Ten Commandments. They are not addressed to us. There is a greater law to the Church than the Ten Commandments. We have the law of the love of God in Christ Jesus. If we live love with the power of God and the renewed mind, will we keep the Ten Commandments? Definitely. We will not go around breaking the Ten Commandments for we live on a higher plateau. We live by a greater law.

What about the Lord's Prayer? Is it addressed to those after the Day of Pentecost or did Jesus teach it to his disciples before Pentecost? The Word of God declares in Matthew that he taught it to his disciples, to Israel. Yet almost every Sunday in all major denominations, the members stand and the minister says, "Now let us pray the prayer which the Lord taught us." He taught whom? "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." Why should I ask for my daily bread when the Epistles, which are addressed to the Church, say that God *has supplied* all my need according to His riches in glory. Certainly then God has supplied my daily bread. When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we are asking Him to give us something which He has already given to us.

It also says, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Why can I not accurately pray this? Because my forgiveness is not dependent upon forgiving others. Romans 10:9 and 10 says that I must confess the savior from sin. It says nothing about forgiving others. Likewise, I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In the Gospels their forgiveness was conditional. If they did not forgive others, God would not forgive them. In the Word addressed to me, this is not indicated.

Romans 8:37-39:

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I read that, and I am blessed. Nothing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Later, as I continue reading, I come to Romans 11.

Romans 11:21,22:

For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness **if** thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

As we read this verse right where it is written, it seems to interpret itself clearly. But do we really understand it. Romans 8 which is written to the Church of God says that

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nothing can separate me from the love of God. Yet three chapters later, Romans 11 says that if I do not continue in His goodness, I am going to be cut off. What is going on? To whom does the word “thou” in verse 22 refer? The key is to observe to whom Romans 11:21 and 22 is addressed.

Romans 11:13:

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles....

In verse 13 Paul changes and speaks to the Gentiles. Why should God spare the Gentiles, if He did not spare the Jews? Gentile and Jew alike must be born-again of God's Spirit. We are neither Jew nor Gentile; we belong to the Church of God and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. But if a person is a Gentile and not born-again, he should be cautious, “For if God spared not the natural branches [Israel], *take heed* lest he also spare not thee [the Gentiles].” Verse 22, “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them [Israel] which fell, severity: but toward thee [the Gentiles], goodness, if thou [Gentiles] continue in *his* goodness....” What does it mean for a Gentile to continue in His goodness? For the Gentile to continue in His goodness, he must to be saved, born-again of God's Spirit. Unless the Gentile continues in His goodness by making the confession of Romans 10:9, “...thou [Gentiles] also shalt be cut off.” All, both Jew and Gentile, must now be born-again.

Identifying the administration in which or about which they were written:

An administration is a period of time in God's historical and spiritual timetable during which God deals with man in a particular way. It is governed by principles or spiritual truths that may be unique unto itself. The second part of this tenet is to be aware of the administration in which or about which the Scriptures are written. We saw that the Gospels are addressed to the Jews and Gentiles as they are written about the ministry of Jesus Christ to Israel before the Day of Pentecost. Biblically, the Greek word “*oikonomia*” conveys this great truth. “*Oikonomia*” comes from the Greek word “*oikonomos*” meaning “steward,” “one who administers the affairs of the household.”

In I Corinthians 9:17 Paul says that “a dispensation [an administration] *of the gospel* is committed unto me.” The word “dispensation” is better translated “administration.” It is the administering of an entire era, as in one of our government administrations. The previous term of office was someone else's administration. In rightly dividing the Word of Truth, we must understand that these biblical administrations have to remain within the boundaries or confines in which God has placed them with His Word.

As far as I have been able to study the integrity of the Word of God, there are seven major administrations in the Word:

The **Original Paradise Administration** began in Genesis 1:3 and terminated very abruptly with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24.

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The second administration was the **Patriarchal Administration**. It started after Adam and Eve left the Garden in Genesis 4 and continued until the law was given to Moses. In this Old Testament period there was no written law or standard.

Romans 2:12:

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.

Acts 17:30:

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now [He] commandeth all men every where to repent.

“The times of this ignorance” refers to the patriarchal period when the standard was unwritten. It says that God winked at the time of this ignorance. That means that He figuratively just closed His eyes to it.

The third is the **Law Administration** which was initiated with the giving of the law to Moses and terminated when Jesus began his public ministry. John the Baptist was the last of the prophets to minister in the Law administration.

Luke 16:16:

The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

When Jesus began his public ministry preaching the kingdom of God, the law administration ended. This ushered in the **Christ Administration** also called “The Kingdom of Heaven” in Matthew. The difference between the Law and Christ Administrations is that Christ was personally present on earth to keep and fulfill the law. Now, I did not say that the law ended. I said the law administration ended. The law did not end until Christ had completely fulfilled it. Its fulfillment made way for the fifth administration.

Romans 10:4:

For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The fifth administration, the **Administration of Grace**, also called the **Administration of the Mystery**, began at Pentecost. The mystery of the Church was first made known several years after Pentecost to the Apostle Paul. This is the administration in which we now are living. It will close with the gathering together when the Lord shall descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise and we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Ephesians 3:2-10:

If ye have heard of the dispensation [*oikonomia*, administration] of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

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Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.
Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship [most of the critical Greek texts have *oikonomia* here, too] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

In verse two it is called the Administration of the Grace of God, and in verse nine it is called the Administration of the Mystery. It is called by other names, too. It is this fifth administration in which you and I live.

The sixth administration is the **Appearing Administration**. The Appearing Administration starts after the gathering together of those believers who were born-again after Pentecost during the period before the return of Christ. The record of the gathering together of the believers is given in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and II Thessalonians 2:1 and following. The Appearing Administration is also called the Revelation Administration from the book of Revelation. During this period Christ will appear, gather the Church, and come back to earth with his saints. The Appearing Administration ends when Satan is destroyed and the great white throne judgment takes place.

The final administration is the **Paradise or Glory Administration**. The Paradise Administration complements the Original Administration for that which was started in Genesis 1 and 2 and terminated with Genesis 3:24 takes up again in Revelation 21. Paradise will once more be on earth. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness, where there is no more sickness, no more sorrow, no more death.

This has been a brief overview of the administrations which are laid out in the Word of God. We must understand that the rules of life change in the various time periods so that we must see each administration within its distinct context. When we look to see to whom a particular Scripture is addressed, we must also see which administration governs the rules.

For example, Genesis 15:6 says that "Abraham believed the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." However, after the law was given, the rules changed. Righteousness then came from believing obedience to the law.

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Deuteronomy 6:25:

And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.

In the Patriarchal Administration before the law was given it was different. Deuteronomy 6:25 is one of the precepts of the Law Administration. For them to be righteous they had to observe and do the commandments of the law. What is the difference? The administration. Is this how it works today in the Grace Administration? If we observed all the commandments would we be righteous? No, not in our administration, because in the grace administration we operate under changed rules.

Romans 3:20:

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight....

On the surface, Deuteronomy 6:25 and Romans 3:20 appear contradictory. But they are not if we recognize that they are standards of different administrations. Deuteronomy is part of the Law Administration while the truth of Romans is part of the Grace Administration.

Romans 8:31-37:

What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 where it says: "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Then he refutes it. How can Paul do that? What is going on? These two Scriptures are not contradictory. They just pertain to different administrations. In the Old Testament under the law, Psalm 44:22 was correct. They were in very precarious situations. There was a legal standard for righteousness which no one could meet. However, after the accomplished work of Jesus Christ where he paid the price to redeem mankind, it is no longer true. We are no longer counted as sheep for the slaughter because Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us according to I Corinthians 5:7. He was the lamb of God who took away the sins of the world, according to John 1:29. We are no longer precariously counted as sheep for the slaughter, we are now more than conquerors in him that loved us and gave himself for us.

Not all the Bible is written to every person. God knows to whom He wants to speak and He addresses His Word to different people. He also has dealt with people differently at different times and He is clear about those differences. Remember God authored His

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Word, and there can be no contradictions in the original God-breathed Word. Unless we identify to whom a Scripture is address and are aware of the administration in which or about which a Scripture is written, it may be difficult for the Word to interpret itself. Believing that the entire Word of God is written to everyone throughout history has caused confusion and contradiction in rightly dividing the Word. There are some passages in the Word of God that just do not fit with other sections unless we understand to whom the passage is specifically addressed. That is why, as workmen of the Word, it is necessary to identify to whom a Scripture is addressed and to be aware of the administration in which or about which it is written as we rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Living in God's Power, Part II

Hour 5: More Biblical Truths; The Death of Judas

Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II - Hour 5*

- I. We must make a distinction where God makes a difference.
 - A. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5)
 - B. The same individual, place, or reality may be called by different names. (*Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-12*)
 - C. Different individuals and places may have the same name.
 - D. There is frequently great benefit derived from simple and general classifications.

- II. A difficult verses must be understood in light of the clear verses – *The death of Judas*. (Matthew 27:3-5; 28:16; Luke 24:33; John 20:24; I Corinthians 15:3-5; John 20:24-26; Acts 1:1-3; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:4-11; Revelation 3:20; Acts 1:15-20; *Psalms 109:8; Matthew 27:3-5; Mark 4:7,19; Matthew 18:28; Acts 1:18; Matthew 27:5-8; John 12:6; Acts 1:19; I Samuel 31:4; Romans 8:1-8*)

- III. Interpretation and application must always take into account “to whom” it is addressed. (Romans 12:3; Colossians 3:1,2; Romans 6:16; 16:26; II Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 2:13; 3:13; I John 1:9; Romans 8:1; Deuteronomy 6:25; Romans 10:1-11; Ephesians 2:8-10; II Timothy 3:16,17)

- IV. When we do not know how a verse interprets itself without being contradictory to other verses, we must admit it and hold that verse in abeyance until such a time as we can understand how it fits with the rest of the Scripture.

We Must Make a Distinction Where God Makes a Difference.

The third biblical truth we must adhere to as workmen of the Word is that we must make a distinction where God makes a difference. We must distinguish between things that are identical and things that are only similar. We have seen this truth in action on many occasions already. When we considered the two malefactors and the two robbers we saw that they were similar but not identical. When we considered the denials of Peter we saw that they too were similar but not identical.

It is important for the workman to discover harmony in the things that agree and disparity in the things that differ. Remember, sharing similar attributes does not necessitate identity, but one point of dissimilarity disproves identity. Understanding the following things will help in doing this.

Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other:

When we study the holy spirit field in Part V we will see that in Luke 24:49 Jesus said, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” In Luke, the promise of the

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Father is identified as “to be endued with power from on high.” Acts 1:4 and 5 records Jesus commanding them “that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” In Acts the promise of the Father is identified as “to be baptized with the holy spirit.” Therefore, “to be endued with power from on high” is equal to “to be baptized with the holy spirit.” These things are equal to each other because they were both equal to “the promise of the Father.”

The same person, place, or reality may be called by different names:

Peter was also called Cephas and Simon. Silas was also called Silvanus. Matthew was also called Levi. Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai are the same. The Sea of Galilee is also called the Sea of Chinnereth, the Lake of Gennesaret, and the Sea of Tiberius, among other things. Realities, like the new birth, may also have more than one name. Some people point to a contradiction in the Word in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9-12. Luke says Christ ascended from Bethany, and Acts says he ascended from the Mount of Olives. This apparent discrepancy is eliminated when one understands that Bethany is on the slope of the Mount of Olives. Therefore, Christ could not have ascended from Bethany without ascending from the Mount of Olives.

Different individuals and places may have the same name:

There are three men named James, four men named John, six women named Mary, ten men named Simon, and so forth. The name Jesus in the New Testament is the same as Joshua in the Old Testament. There are two Antiochs, two Bethlehems, at least four Ramahs. Young's Concordance lists thirteen different Obadaiah's. [Young's Concordance is a good reference to help you sort out different people and places by the same name.]

There is frequently great benefit derived from simple and general classifications:

It is important to distinguish between believing and works, law and grace, salvation and rewards, standing and state, to name a few. Keeping these concepts clear will help us see distinctions where God makes a difference.

A Difficult Verse Must Be Understood in Light of the Clear Verses. The Death of Judas

There may be one verse that stands out as difficult, while there are many verses on the same subject which are clear. Modern man has magnified the difficult one and forgotten the many clear ones. That is not honest. That is not rightly dividing the Word. We must see that the one fits with the many, not by squeezing it, but by working it. Sometimes one may wait several years to fit one difficult verse with the rest of the accuracy of the Word. Time is not important when studying a verse. The keys to the Word's interpretation are. To rightly divide the Word, we must understand that the one difficult verse must always fit in the light of the clear verses on the same subject.

Matthew 27:3-5:

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he [Jesus] was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the

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chief priests and elders,
Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said,
What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.
And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and
hanged himself.

Many people assume after reading this verse that Judas went out immediately after casting down the pieces of silver and hanged himself. Indeed that is the picture that I had in my mind when I first read this verse as a child. I can still picture it. Our church showed the Cecil B. DeMille silent version of “The King of Kings” several times in the week between Palm Sunday and Easter. Our family usually went at least twice, seldom if ever missing the 3:00 PM Good Friday showing. I still vividly remember the center cross with one on either side. I can also remember Judas distraught over the betrayal of Jesus hanging himself during the storm surrounding the crucifixion. He hung himself from a tree with a rope. The branch of the tree broke under his weight in the storm, and the dead body fell and impaled itself upon a stake and his bowels gushed out. I did not know it at the time, but the portrayal of the tree limb breaking was an attempt to reconcile the apparent contradictions between the accounts of Judas’ death in Matthew 27 and Acts 1 where Matthew records that he hung himself and Luke records in the Book of Acts that he fell and burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

However, this cursory reading only promotes error and robs one of the truth of how Jesus loved Judas and extended to him every opportunity to recover himself. The accuracy of God’s Word teaches that instead of hanging himself before Jesus’ crucifixion, Judas was not only alive at the crucifixion, but he also saw the resurrected Christ and was also an eyewitness of his ascension.

Reading the context, even the rest of the Gospel of Matthew does not help much. Judas is not mentioned again in Matthew. However, Matthew 28:16 is interesting in context.

Matthew 28:16:

Then the **eleven** disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

Again most people doing a cursory reading would assume that Judas was the one that was missing. However, the Word does not identify which of the twelve was not present. The Gospel of Luke also mentions “the eleven.”³⁴

³⁴ “The eleven” is used to describe the collective group of the twelve apostles when one of them was missing or particularly mentioned or identified in addition to the others. You will find “the eleven” in Matthew 8:16, Mark 16:14, and Luke 24:9. Matthew 8:16 and Mark 16:14 do not clearly identify who was missing. Perhaps it was Judas, but it could have been one of the others. Using the principle of narrative development Luke 24:9, when put together with John 20, identify Thomas as the missing apostle. Acts 1:26 tells of Matthias being added to “the eleven.” Judas was the missing one whom Matthias was chosen to replace. Acts 2:14 is the final occurrence where Peter is singled out and the remaining eleven, including Matthias, were noted in addition to him.

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Luke 24:33:

And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

During this resurrection appearance Jesus presents his hands and his feet and encourages their inspection. However, the Gospel of John tells us it was Thomas and not Judas that was missing. The eleven share what happened with Thomas when he returns.

John 20:24-26:

But Thomas, **one of the twelve**, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: **[that makes twelve]** *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you.

This phrase “one of the twelve” occurs eight times in the Bible. This is the only place that Thomas is identified as “one of the twelve.” In all seven of the other places the phrase “one of the twelve” refers to Judas Iscariot (Matthew 26:14,46; Mark 14:10,20,43; Luke 22:47; John 6:71). It is significant that God so emphatically identifies Judas as one of the twelve, because I Corinthians 15:3-5 clearly states that Jesus was seen of the twelve.

I Corinthians 15:3-5:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of **the twelve**:

If the resurrected Christ was seen of **the twelve** after his resurrection, then Judas had to be alive during the appearances of Christ. This is also documented in John 20:26, which we read earlier.

The only two **apparent** records that refer to Judas' death are recorded in Matthew 27 and Acts 1.

Acts 1:1-3:

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments **unto the apostles whom he had chosen**:

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

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Who were “the apostles whom he had chosen?”

Luke 6:13-16:

And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;
Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,
Matthew and Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes,
And Judas *the brother* of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Judas was clearly one of the apostles whom Jesus had chosen.

Acts 1:2-11:

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments **unto the apostles whom he had chosen**:
To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:
And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.
For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.
When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.
And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;
Which also said, **Ye men of Galilee**, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Judas was the only apostle not from Galilee. He was from Judah. “Iscariot” comes from the Hebrew “*ish Kerioth*” (man of Kerioth) which was a village 19KM south of Hebron in Judah. Sometime between verses 10 and 11 Judas departed to take his own life, and God covers it with silence.

Acts 1:4 contain another oriental custom that is important to note. The phrase “being assembled together with them,” is the Greek word is “*sunalizō*” which is a compound word of “*sun*,” “with,” and “*alizō*,” “to salt.” It can be translated “salted together.” Many of you may find a center reference in your Bible that reads “eating together.” In the

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East when people ate salted food together they entered into a salt covenant. In the East a host normally would not eat with a guest. He would prepare and serve the guest food, but would only eat with them if they were family or the most intimate of friends. Because so much of the food was prepared and preserved with salt, eating salted food together involved entering into a salt covenant. That is why Revelation 3:20 uses eating together to show the intimacy of the relationship that the Lord wants to have with us. He wants to be part of our lives in a most intimate way.

Revelation 3:20:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.³⁵

The salt covenant dates back to antiquity and was a most solemn and binding agreement. One would never break a salt covenant, the consequences for doing so was death. With this understanding one can see why Judas, refusing to accept Jesus' offer to tarry in Jerusalem and be endowed with power from on high under a salt covenant, would go out and kill himself.

Outside of that one difficult verse in Matthew, there is no Gospel account of Judas taking his own life. The only mention of Judas death is in Acts which is clearly a post-ascension event.

Acts 1:15-20:

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Men *and* brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

When Peter addressed the others in the days between the ascension and the Day of Pentecost, he referred to Psalms 109:8 which instructed them to replace Judas. Had Judas died about forty days earlier, surely Jesus would have fulfilled this part of the Old Testament like he did all the rest of the law. He always did his Father's will and completely fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law. Therefore had Judas died before the ascension, then Jesus would have surely been the one to choose his replacement. After all, he chose them in the first place and would have been the most qualified to select a replacement. However, since Judas did not take his life until after Jesus' ascension, Jesus could not have replaced him. Furthermore, if Judas had died before the ascension and

³⁵ Figuratively, Jesus is willing to take the salt with us. He will absolutely keep his word and his commitment to do his Father's will.

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Jesus had not replaced him, Peter would have no reason to assume Judas needed to be replaced.

All the clear verses on the subject point to Judas' death occurring after the ascension instead of before the resurrection. The biblical truth to which we must adhere is to let the difficult verse be interpreted in light of the clear verses. What course of action does a person follow when he cannot make sense of a very difficult verse—when the verse, the context, and previous usage are not satisfactory in giving him understanding? One must not disregard the clear verses and hold to the difficult one. Rather, one must hold fast to the clear verses and wait until one learns enough regarding the difficult Scripture so that it harmonizes itself with the clear verses.

Matthew 27:3-5:

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he [Jesus] was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.
And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and **hanged himself**.

The problem is with the translation “hanged himself” in the King James Version. The Greek word is “*apanchomai*” from the Greek word “*apanchō*.” It is used only once in the New Testament. In classical literature, according to Liddell and Scott, it means “to strangle” or “to choke,” and it is used figuratively to mean “to choke with anger or grief.” The word “*apanchō*” is a combination of “*apo*,” “away from,” and “*anchō*,” “to squeeze or embrace.” Consequently, it carries a negative connotation, meaning “to squeeze from.” “Choking” is a literal “squeezing the life from.” Whereas “choking with grief” is figurative as in our English expression “all choked up.”

The Expositor's Greek Testament makes note of Grotius, who saw the difficulty with the two accounts and suggested that *apanchō* points to death by grief rather than literal choking? This is correct only to the extent that Judas did not die immediately in Matthew 27, but he was extremely grieved over the betrayal. He was carried away by grief and despair. Over a period of time he let this grief consume him until he could no longer tolerate it. This figurative usage is verified in the classical writings of Aristophanes.

In addition, various Greek manuscripts indicate difficulties others have had with the word *apanchō* by the deliberate change of the text to more familiar words like “*apeuchomai*” which means “to wish a thing away.” Judas wished he had never betrayed Jesus. This word fits with the word “repent” used in verse three. Judas regretted what he had done and tried to turn away from his actions in his mind, to wish his thoughts away. If “*apeuchomai*” was the correct word, it would clearly not indicate Judas' death.

Another manuscript has the word “*apopnigō*,” which is also used figuratively “to choke with vexation or rage.” A related word “*pnigalion*” means “nightmare.” Another manuscript uses the word *apagō*, meaning “to lead away.” All these variations in the text

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indicate misunderstanding of “*apanchō*” followed by deliberate and unwarranted attempts at clarification.

In Aramaic, the word translated “hanged himself” also means “choked.” It is used at other places in God’s Word and does not imply death at all. In the parable of the sower, the thorns (cares of the world) “choke,” the seed (God’s Word) so that it becomes unfruitful. The seed does not necessarily die, it is simply stifled from growing and bearing fruit (Mark 4:7,19). This Aramaic word is also used in Matthew 18:28 in a parable, where it is used of choking a person (but not to death) and then throwing him in prison. Neither the Aramaic nor the Greek word implies death at all.

After Judas realized his grievous mistake in betraying his master, he threw down the money at the priests’ feet and frantically withdrew himself from the people, being choked up or doubled over with grief. It was too much for him to cope with emotionally. Was Judas’ response in Matthew 27:5 so different from Peter’s, who upon realizing his weakness in denying the Master, withdrew himself from the people and wept bitterly? Both were emotionally distraught upon realizing their errors, but the difference is obvious. Peter was able to overcome his trauma and again follow Jesus. But Judas continued to let his emotions hold sway in his mind, so that when he saw Jesus Christ ascend, Judas Iscariot’s distraught mind and irrational thinking led him to the point of suicide. Then, when Judas departed, he went to his own property and killed himself.³⁶

³⁶ Acts 1:18 says that Judas “purchased a field with the reward of iniquity.” Some people confuse this field with the one spoken of in Matthew 27:6-8, since both are called “the field of blood” in the King James Version. Most people believe that the reward of iniquity was the thirty pieces of silver, which he got for betraying Jesus. This cannot be true because “he cast them down in the temple” according to Matthew 27:5. In John 12:6 we are told that Judas “was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.” Judas was the treasurer or the caretaker of the money of the apostles. It also instructs us that he “was a thief.” Judas stole money from the bag, and with this stolen money, which is called the “reward of iniquity,” he purchased a property. Acts 1:19 says that “the field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.” It could not have been called “the field of blood” when he purchased it or provided it for himself, but it was called this later because he killed himself on his own property.

The chief priests called the thirty pieces of silver “the price of blood.” It was the price that the chief priests had paid Judas to betray the Lord Jesus Christ and to deliver him to them. The chief priests, after due consideration and counsel, purposely decided to go to the open market and buy a potter’s field. They did not buy the property on which Judas killed himself for that was Judas’ own property. The chief priests took the thirty pieces of silver and deliberately purchased a field in which to bury strangers—meaning poor people, criminals, and those who had no other place to be buried. When the chief priests bought the potter’s field, it was not called “the field of blood,” but it was so called by the people later because the priests had purchased it with the thirty pieces of silver. The word “field” in Matthew is the Greek word *agros* meaning a larger area than the *chōrion*, property, purchased by Judas. Although both were referred to in the King James Version as “the field of blood,” they were not called the same thing in the Greek from which they were translated. The one in Acts was a *chōrion*, property, and the property was called “the property of blood” using the word *aceldama*. The one in Matthew it is called “the field of blood,” namely, *agros haimatos*.

There is no way that these two field were identical. They were purchased by different people, with different money, used for different purposes, and called different things.

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Understanding the meaning and figurative usage of *apanchō* in Matthew 27:5 allows the Word to interpret itself. Instead of the King James translation of “hanged himself” a more proper rendering would be “choked up with grief.” This leaves all four Gospels without mention of the death of Judas. Having seen Jesus condemned, Judas threw the thirty pieces of silver back into the Temple and departed, emotionally choked up with grief. Finally over forty days later when Jesus ascended, Judas reached the point of no return. Overwhelmed with internal turmoil, he left the other eleven apostles and committed suicide in a fashion common to his times. He impaled himself on a sharp instrument such as a sword or stake. His death was similar to Saul’s, Israel’s first king (I Samuel 31:4). As Peter described Judas’ death in Acts 1:18, “...he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.”

Now Acts stands alone in describing the death of Judas after the ascension. Jesus had forgiven Judas and allowed him back into the fellowship of the apostles. Indeed, his commandment to Judas to tarry at Jerusalem until he be endued with power from on high indicates God’s will that Judas rejoin the fellowship of the apostles and continue the ministry to which he had been called. What great love and forgiveness was extended to him. Jesus Christ did all he could to communicate God’s forgiveness and to encourage Judas to get it together and minister once again. However, Judas did not control his thinking and allowed something else to have priority over God’s promise to him.

Romans 8:1-8:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Peter and Judas had similar emotional responses to their sin. However, Peter was able to control his thinking and accept God’s forgiveness. He realized life and peace. Judas on the other hand did not. He did not control his thinking, and it led to his death.

There are no Gospel accounts of Judas’ suicide. Judas did not terminate his life until after the ascension, and consequently, Peter sought a replacement for Judas, assured that his master would have done the same had such a situation developed before he ascended.

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Interpretation and Application Must Always Take Into Account “To Whom” It Is Addressed.

Application of truth may be made only after the correct interpretation has been learned. There can be only one accurate interpretation, but there may be many applications. For example, we just worked Matthew 27:5 and saw that in order for the Word to fit without contradiction the proper translation of *apanchomai* should be “choked up with grief.” The correct interpretation is that Judas remained with Jesus through the ascension. Although Jesus extended every effort to reconcile Judas, even taking the covenant of salt with him, Judas did not overcome the emotional turmoil and eventually killed himself. The application of this lesson can be made to anyone in this administration as long as it does not contradict the Word of God addressed to them.

Examples of proper applications:

- ◆ We could teach an application of this truth for believers today to control their thinking and their emotions. This application would be acceptable because it would flow in line with verses in the Church Epistles addressed to us,

Romans 12:3:

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to **think of himself** more highly than he ought to **think**; but to **think soberly**, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

There are four Greek words for think in Romans 12:3.³⁷ It is figuratively as if God is yelling, “Control your thinking!” A literal translation according to usage of Romans 12:3 could be:

But I say, because of the grace that was given unto me for all of you, control your thinking not to get out of bounds by feeding your mind [*phronēma*, thinking] with respect to the measure of faith God has given to every man.

We are to control our thinking and set our affection on the things of God.

Colossians 3:1,2:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affection [*phronēma*] on things above, not on things on the earth.

Controlling our thinking and emotions are necessary for the manifestation of the more abundant life that Jesus Christ promised. Therefore, we could teach this application to believers in our administration from the death of Judas.

- ◆ We could also use the death of Judas to teach the salt covenant and one's responsibility to keep one's commitments to God in obeying His Word.

³⁷ The fourth Greek word for “think,” *sōphroneō*, is translated soberly in the KJV.

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Romans 6:16:

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to **obey**, his servants ye are to whom ye **obey**; whether of sin unto death, or of **obedience** unto righteousness?

Romans 16:26:

But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the **obedience** of faith:

II Corinthians 10:5:

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the **obedience** of Christ;

Obviously Judas did not do this. He did not cast down his imaginations. He did not take away every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. What was the knowledge of God? The knowledge of God was that he had been forgiven, that Jesus Christ allowed him back into the fellowship, and that Jesus Christ wanted him to come and be part of the movement of the Word and take up his ministry and move ahead. Jesus took the salt with him. But, Judas did not bring every thought into captivity. He did not go back and receive. See how important it is to do what we are told. When God tells us something in the Word we just obey and do it. God always has our best interest at heart.³⁸ Peter did. He accepted the forgiveness, went back, and received power from on high.

- ◆ We could also teach on the importance of accepting God's forgiveness and overcoming condemnation ourselves and also on the importance of forgiving others.

Ephesians 1:7:

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the **forgiveness** of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Ephesians 4:32:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving** one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath **forgiven** you.

What a great example of God's forgiveness we could teach from what happened to Judas. Look at how Jesus Christ forgave Judas. Judas was the one who turned Jesus over. He was the guide to them that took Jesus.

Colossians 2:13:

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having **forgiven** you all trespasses;

³⁸ Deuteronomy 6:24

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Judas must not have believed that. He just could not handle that. How important it is for us to believe it?

Colossians 3:13:

Forbearing one another, and **forgiving** one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*.

I John 1:9:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to **forgive** us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We do not have to be sin-conscious and confess sin all day long. But, if we feel somehow separated from God, we simply confess our sin, knowing that God is faithful and just to forgive our sin. If there is anything that would separate us from God in our thinking, we fix it. We do not let thoughts go through our heads that are contrary to the Word. We think what the Word says. We have been forgiven. We have been made righteous. We need to accept God's forgiveness and forgive others.

Romans 8:1:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

An example of an improper application:

- ◆ Remember **ALL** of God's Word was written for our learning. We may apply all that is written, so long as it does not contradict that which is specifically addressed to us.

Deuteronomy 6:25:

And it shall be our righteousness, **if** we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

We can certainly apply this Scripture and encourage ourselves and others to do God's Word. However, we cannot use it as a club to brow-beat ourselves or others with condemnation as if our righteousness depends upon our works and not upon the accomplished works of Jesus Christ. When we are born-again we are righteous regardless of our works. We work the works of God because we are righteous, not in order to be righteous. To apply this Scripture as if it were written to us would only breed defeat and frustration.

Paul specifically addresses this in Romans 10.

Romans 10:1-11:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

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For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.
For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.
But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)
But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;
That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

These verses make it clear that our righteousness is not dependent upon our keeping the law, like Deuteronomy 6:25 said. Therefore, we could not teach Deuteronomy 6:25 to the Church of God today as if their righteousness depended on it.

Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Summary: The interpretation of a section of Scripture belongs to the occasion when it happened and the persons to whom and for whom, the words were originally intended. When that has been settled or established, then it is available for us to make an application of those Scriptures to ourselves or others as long as we can do so without contradicting any other Scriptures specifically addressed to us. All of God's Word has to fit together like a hand in a glove. All of God's Word *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.³⁹

When We Do Not Know How a Verse Interprets Itself, We Must Hold that Verse in Abeyance Until Such a Time as We Can Understand How It Fits with the Rest of the Scripture.

The sixth and final biblical truth to which we must adhere concerns what to do when we do not know how a verse interprets itself. Should we not know how to allow a verse of Scripture to interpret itself without being contradictory to other clear verses due to a problem or problems in our understanding, in translation, in the lack of an original text or any combination of these. Then we must not guess or squeeze a verse to fit into our private interpretation. Rather we should hold that verse in abeyance until such a time

³⁹ II Timothy 3:16,17

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when we learn enough about it so that it explains itself and harmonizes with the rest of the Scripture.

Until it does, we “put it on a shelf” or “set it on a back burner” until further light becomes available. Once we learn more we can “pull it off the shelf” again and rework it until it satisfactorily interprets itself. We may have to wait years before we can see how a verse interprets itself. We may have to admit we do not know how a verse interprets itself for years until it becomes clear to us. However, time is not important—the keys are important. If we remain faithful to the keys and principles of how the Word interprets itself, it will interpret itself without any private interpretation being involved. As workmen of the Word, that is our heart—to rightly divide the Word and stand approved before God.

Living in God's Power, Part II

Hour 6: Unity of Purpose

Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II - Hour 6*

- I. We delight in God's Word. (*Psalms 119:16,24,36,47,70,77,92, 143,174; Job 23:12*)
 - A. The seven steps to biblical accuracy
 - B. Questions to ask to interact with the Word (Genesis 3:4)
 - C. Review of "How the Bible Interprets Itself"

- II. Unity of purpose (*Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17,27; John 8:32; I Corinthians 1:10; John 17:22; I Corinthians 12:24,25; John 5:30; 8:15,16; Philippians 2:13; Romans 15:5,6; I Corinthians 2:16; Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7; II Thessalonians 3:6,14,15; Philippians 3:13; John 13:35; John 3:1ff; Luke 7:19-28; I Chronicles 29:1-25; Colossians 3:2; I Corinthians 8:1; I Thessalonians 2:8*)

We Delight in God's Word.

Like the Psalmist, we delight in God's wonderful matchless Word. Nine times in Psalm 119 it records his delight in the Scriptures.⁴⁰ In verse 92 it says, "Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." We can make it through any assault from our adversary when God's Word is our delight. In Job 23:12 while Job was under such great distress and attack, he boldly declared, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary *food*." Our love for God's communication of Himself will bring delight to our souls, and keep us from perishing in our affliction also.

Our reverence and esteem for the Word of God demonstrates what we really treasure in life. We want a true and vital spiritual relationship with God, and therefore we want to continue to develop our love and appreciation for His communication of Himself in His Word.

The Seven Steps to Biblical Accuracy:

1. The individual word must be understood (in light of its biblical usage).
2. The words must fit in the verse.
3. The verse must fit in the context.
4. The immediate context must flow with the remoter context.
5. The words must be understood in light of to whom they are addressed.
6. The words must be understood in light of oriental customs and manners
7. The words must be understood in light of figures of speech.

Questions to Ask to Interact with the Word:

Another method that gets the reader more actively involved is to ask questions. Ask WHO? and TO WHOM? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? HOW? and WHY? God has a

⁴⁰ Psalm 119:16,24,35,47,70,77,92,143,174

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purpose for everything he says. He has a purpose for who says it, to whom it is said, what is said, where it is said, when it is said, how it is said, and why it is said. By asking questions like these the reader can be more actively involved and direct himself to pay attention to the details recorded in God's Word.

“Who?” and “To Whom?” are important when reading dialogue or teaching. Note both, who is speaking and to whom he is speaking. This may change during the same discourse. For example in John 8 Jesus begins by talking to the people, then he addresses the scribes and Pharisees, then the woman taken in adultery, then the Pharisees and again the people and so on. What he said to each group was specifically for that group, but for the learning of the other groups, also.

Although all the Bible is true and accurate, not everything it records is necessarily true. For example, Genesis 3:4 records that the serpent said to the Eve, “Ye shall not surely die.” It is true and accurate to say that the serpent said it, but what was said, “Ye shall not surely die.” was not true. We must note that the serpent, the devil said it and it was a lie tempting Eve to disobey God's Word. If God or Jesus Christ is recorded as speaking or acting directly or if the narrative of the word describes something, then you can be sure of its truth. But, you can not always assume that the words of anyone else are axiomatically true. What is always true is the biblical witness itself.

“What?” can deal with the specifics of the incident or general topics such as forgiveness or grace.

“Where?” does not only include places in the record like “in the temple” or “on the way to Jerusalem,” but also in the Gospels or in a Church Epistle of reproof or correction.

“When?” not only covers chronological order of events but could also include general periods of time like before Pentecost, or before Ephesians was written, or, if in the Gospels, whether it was during the Kingdom proclaimed period or the Kingdom rejected period.⁴¹

How? could be loudly, like Jesus' Cry of Triumph on the cross. It could be secretively, boldly, with malice or evil intent and so forth.

Why? may be more subjective or directly supplied in the context such as “in response to a question,” “to protect a loved one,” “to confront evil,” or “because God told him to.”

These who, what, when, where, how, and why questions are to get the reader interacting with the Word so he is not just a passive reader who, when he gets to the end of the page, does not even remember what he has read.

⁴¹ For more information see: The Companion Bible, E. W. Bullinger ed., Appendix 119.

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Review of "How the Bible Interprets Itself:"

- ◆ First we established the foundation that the Bible is of no private interpretation.
- ◆ Second, we looked at how the Scripture interprets itself in the verse, in the context, and in its previous usage. We also looked at how the Bible interprets itself in the verse right where it is written, according to biblical usage, in harmony with all Scriptures on the same subject, and Scripture build-up.
- ◆ Thirdly, we looked at biblical truths we must adhere to when allowing the Scripture to interpret itself.
 1. The Word of God should be taken literally wherever and whenever possible.
 2. It is necessary to identify to whom a Scripture is addressed and to be aware of the administration in which or about which they were written.
 3. We must make a distinction where God makes a difference.
 4. Difficult verses must be understood in light of the clear verses.
 5. Interpretation and application must always take into account "to whom" it is addressed.
 6. When we do not know how a verse interprets itself without being contradictory to other verses, we must admit it and hold that verse in abeyance until such a time as we can understand how it fits with the rest of the Scripture.
- ◆ The fourth and final part of the class was designed to show you the importance of these keys in maintaining likemindedness and establishing a strong household from which we can reach out to the world with God's wonderful, matchless Word bringing His love and deliverance to people who are hungering and thirsting for the truth.

Unity of Purpose

Only when the keys to the Word's interpretation are applied and the Word is rightly divided do we have the true Word. This Word of Truth as it is lived and taught brings deliverance. We learn to love God's Word because it brings deliverance. It brings meaning and certainty and purpose to life. It brings peace to a troubled soul. It makes the unlovable lovable. It raises up the down trodden. It brings joy and effervescence where there has been only despair, sorrow, and depression. It heals the lifelong hurts that have been so debilitating and devastating. It allows us to paint the masterpiece picture of our lives, so we can be men and women after God's own heart.

God sent His Word to heal us and deliver us from all our destructions and there is absolutely nothing too hard for Him.⁴² There is no problem so big that He cannot handle it, and no problem so small that He is not concerned about it. Our God is a God of deliverance, and we build commitment to God in our lives and the lives of those to whom

⁴² Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17,27

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we minister as we bring deliverance through the greatness of God's wonderful matchless Word.

We must have the intellectual honesty and integrity to submit to the truth of the Word when we uncover it. Even if it contradicts what we have believed in the past or what we have been taught before. We must never handle the Word of God deceitfully and search out Scriptures to corroborate what we already believe to be true and not allow the Word to interpret itself.

It is not enough to just know the keys and principles by which God's Word interprets itself. We must also know and maintain the proper attitude regarding their use. The heart behind allowing God's Word to interpret itself is not to divide people, but to unite them around the integrity of God's Word.

When we see the Word of God fit like a hand in a glove, and we see the intricate detail of how it is woven together as a royal tapestry exquisite in all its detail, we become convinced of its truth. But, we do not egotistically exhalt ourselves, thinking "I have the answers." We do not know it all, but what we know we are willing to stake our lives on. We simply take God at His Word and trust Him with all our heart. We simply live this Word to the best of our ability, and it brings deliverance to our lives. Jesus said in John 8:32 that the truth shall make you free, and it certainly does.

Because we can see how minutely and precisely God's Word fits together into a self interpreting whole, we can avoid the countless doctrinal debates that have historically plagued Christianity and split it into so many denominations. We have a truly awesome opportunity at this point in history to show the world a unified household of believers who agree on a set of beliefs and principles. God desires that we have unity of purpose and work together as a household in reaching the world with His Word.

I Corinthians 1:10:

Now I **beseech** you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Note the word "**beseech**." It means "to ask earnestly," "to entreat," "to implore," or "to lovingly beg." It suggests a fervor or passion in the asking and connotes great concern over the outcome. It does not however, imply coercion, manipulation, intimidation, or control. It recognizes the freedom of will involved and requests a willing, loving obedience. Paul did not demand it: he requested it. He wants them to want this, because unless they want it, it will never happen.

When a request is made in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is a serious request. There are few things requested this solemnly. It is as if God is saying, "If the sacrifice and lordship of Jesus Christ means anything to you, do this!"

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Hour 6: Unity of Purpose

Look at what Paul, speaking on God's behalf, requested!

- ◆ that ye speak the same thing
- ◆ *that* there be no divisions among you
- ◆ *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

“That ye speak the same thing:” God wants His people to agree with the accuracy of God's Word and speak their agreement. “Speak” is the Greek “*legō*” meaning “to say, with emphasis upon the content or subject matter of that which is spoken.” It suggests a logical, reasoned formulation that is thought-through, with the words being chosen with care. Most people may wonder if this is even possible. When five people get together you may get five different opinions on most any topic. God wants us to speak the same thing, and God would not ask us to do something that is impossible. This unity of purpose can be realized. Remember Jesus' statement from our first hour in John 17:22, “That they may be one even as we are one.” This was Jesus Christ's earnest desire and prayer not just for his disciples but for all of us. God wants us to agree with the accuracy of His Word and speak our agreement.

“That there be no divisions among you:” The Adversary uses circumstances, idiosyncrasies, and personality quirks to detract from our renewed minds and cause division. However, as we act on the Word, God adds to our lives, giving the increase so that his Word can multiply and prevail. God's desire is no divisions. I Corinthians 12:24 and 25 also says that “God hath tempered the body together...that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.” God does not want divisions. He wants us to have the same genuine care one for another. A true and vital relationship with Him, should produce a genuine care and love for each other. Unless we honestly care for and about each other, division is bound to occur. When we put individual pursuits, concerns, and agendas above what is best for the body, it will result in division. God has tempered the body together, and He wants no divisions.

“That ye be perfectly joined together:” The Greek word “*katartizō*” means “to restore,” “to repair,” “to complete,” and “to mend.” We are to put on our completeness in Christ and manifest it. We can also help each other manifest our completeness by restoring one another with the love of God and mend any broken hearts. The Greek construction is very forceful. It indicates completed action with continuing effect. We are to be restored to the proper condition before the schism with the continuing effect in the future that there are no more divisions. Being perfectly joined together should be evidenced in the same mind and the same judgment.

“In the same mind:” The word “mind” here is the Greek word “*nous*” and is translated in the King James Version as either “mind,” the organ of mental perception, or “understanding,” one of the faculties of the mind. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We must all put on the mind of Christ, and think the thoughts he thought. We adhere to the same principles of how the Word interprets itself, holding the same beliefs, and having the same goal of Word over the world. Our understanding of the new birth, the sovereignty of God, the lordship of Jesus Christ, the operation of the

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manifestations of the spirit, and the love of God, among other things, certainly provides a solid foundation on which our unity of purpose can be grounded.

“In the same judgment:” Some translate this word “judgment,” “opinion.” We do not judge each other by our senses preferences. Jesus said in John 5:30 “My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” Jesus also said in John 8:15 and 16 “Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man [after the flesh], And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.” We are not to judge people based on our personal preferences. Our biases or prejudices must not form the basis for our judgments. We look from God’s perspective and judge according His judgment.

Jesus said he was not alone in his judgment, but the Father was with him. We do not want to be alone either. We want the Father with us, working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.⁴³ We just want to do God’s will with all our heart, and when we know what His Word declares we know true judgment. The Word of God is the Will of God and I Corinthians 1:10 says “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” This vital unity of the spirit is available.

Romans 15:5-6:

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When I think of you, I control my thinking to recognize the Christ in you. The only way we will ever be able to be like-minded is for each of us to put on the mind of Christ.⁴⁴ Then we must recognize the Christ in each other without suspicion and without condescending or patronizing. The result will be that we will with one mind (the mind of Christ we have put on) and one mouth glorify God. That is why we should strive for unity of purpose—so God gets the glory! This would certainly be a fulfillment of Matthew 5:16 which says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” When I look at you, I see the Christ in you, and I treat you accordingly.

Ephesians 4:3:

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

That bond of peace is what we want! Within our household of believers there should be a bond of peace. Where we keep the unity of the spirit, we will have a bond of peace. Peace is a guarding fruit. Colossians 3:15 says to “let the **peace** of God **rule** in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” Philippians 4:7 says that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and

⁴³ Philippians 2:13

⁴⁴ I Corinthians 2:16

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minds through Christ Jesus.” We endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit so we can enjoy the bond of peace. It does not say we have to establish the unity of the spirit. God does that. We just have to work hard to maintain it. We endeavor! We expend a diligent effort utilizing our time wisely. We redeem the time and do not strive after words to no profit.

This is not “ecumenicalism.” Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit at the expense of the truth is counterfeit. We can not compromise on the truth of God’s Word to maintain a pseudo-unity. Unity of purpose comes from a fervor or passion for communicating the truth. Jesus maintained unity of purpose with his disciples, but not with the Pharisees. They did not agree with him about the truth of God’s Word, and he consistently confronted them with it. However, he did not exclude people from his fellowship because they were Pharisees. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea were both given the opportunity to hear and believe God’s Word, and they responded becoming great believing believers.

Our minds are not shackled by some kind of dull, deadening conformity. We cannot be afraid that we might say something just a little bit different from someone else. We do not want to feel that we are “walking on egg shells.” Neither do we want the burden of constantly “watching our pees and queues.” We are not after a conformity, but rather the vital unity that the Word of God enjoins.

If we disagree on the Word we get together and try to work it out. If we cannot work it out, we refrain from teaching our individual positions until we do agree. We focus on and teach the 99% of the things on which we do agree, instead of focusing and teaching on that which we do not agree. That would only cause confusion and division.

The temptation is to seek and find something new and scintillating. This only panders to itching ears. Augmenting and developing those things which we have already been taught and on which we already agree can certainly be thrilling. “New Light” is not just associated with new teaching. “New Light” can also come in the form of additional insight on old teaching. The depth of God’s Word is inexhaustible. God can continue to unfold layer after layer of truth. It is like peeling an onion. As soon as you remove the outer layer another appears. When the next is also removed yet another appears. The deeper you go, the more layers you see, and it continues to bring tears to your eyes.

If people refuse to renew their minds and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, what do we do?

II Thessalonians 3:6,14,15:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

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God certainly wants unity. There are conditions to this unity, however. Jesus Christ paid the price to establish the unity. It is maintained at the price of believing the Word of God. We must renew our minds to what the Word of God clearly teaches. If one chooses not to renew his mind, he has no access to the true unity of the spirit. Yet, we are not to treat him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother.

I was affiliated with a group of believers for thirty years. I had given my heart and soul and all that I had to move God's Word with them. But after thirty years, I realized that the ministry that I grew up loving—the ministry that taught me God's love and grace—the ministry that taught me the greatness of God's wonderful matchless Word and how it interprets itself had changed. The love of God was replaced with fear motivation. The grace of God succumbed to legalism. The truth that was always exalted and heralded was watered down and replaced with personal opinions. I had no option but to sever my relationship. I tried to confront the problem and work out the differences that had arisen, but my attempts were futile. The system had become abusive, and I could not take it anymore.

Perhaps some of you also experienced a similar ostracism. Perhaps you were “marked and avoided” by some group of believers. The truth of the matter is, that if we no longer agree on the right dividing of God's Word, and it cannot be worked out—the best thing to do is to separate and seek out others believers with which to be like-minded and to fellowship. The best thing that ever happened to some of us, **figuratively**, is that we are no longer part of the abusive systems we were before. Sure we miss the folks with which we used to fellowship. We miss them enormously. Some of us even have family members that no longer will associate with us because we left “the church” or “the household.” I still love those people and would give almost anything to sit and fellowship again. I would love to work the Word with them and have an open dialogue. However, most of them will not speak to me for fear I might challenge them on what they believe. So I have to move ahead and remind myself that Philippians 3:13 encourages us to forget “those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

The hurt, turmoil, and devastation some of us went through was due not only to the separation, but, perhaps even to a greater degree, to what we were taught before we were separated. The problem I had was not with the “mark and avoid” doctrine. When it is done biblically, honestly with the right motivation of heart it can be correct. But it was all the spiritual abuse that went with it, that made it so evil. It was the threats and intimidation and fear that is steeped upon people in an attempt to control them.

Some folks I talked to were told: If you leave you will die. Or if you leave your kids will die or your marriage will break up or you will never get your prayers answered or your life will in some way or another fall apart. The threat of separation from them was equated with separation from God. They drummed into one's head that if you leave “the church” or “the household” you will be outside the will of God, in the wilderness, and you will be open game for the adversary.

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We cannot let those thoughts fester in our heads. We must combat them with God's Word. He loves us. He wants the best for us. He will never leave us or forsake us no matter what people say. There is absolutely no way that God wants those horrible things to happen to us. The prophecies of doom spoken about us will only come to pass if we cave in, if we do not lead every thought captive to the Word of God. God is able to deliver to the uttermost. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. His arms are open wide to receive us and His heart is set on healing any and all hurt that still lingers in our lives. We can be more than conquerors through him that loved us

I guarantee we will never use those despicable tactics in Christian Family Fellowship in an attempt to control people and try to keep people around. The door swings both ways. If you are blessed by what we teach stick around, there is more where that came from. But, if you are not profited and if we can not agree, you are welcomed to leave and find another household of believers with which to fellowship. We will even wish you the best and consider you a brother. We are not into controlling people's lives but we are into helping and ministering as God opens doors for us.

Just because others have failed does not mean we cannot do it right. I trust you are excited with the Word and the fellowship of the believers within the Household of God where you are involved. We are certainly excited about what God is working in Christian Family Fellowship! No group seems to have been able to maintain unity of purpose on the greatness of God's Word for long without becoming fossilized and denomination-alized. However, that should not stop us from the thrill of its pursuit. God is able. The question is, are we willing? Tenderness within the fellowship is required for growth and development. If we can keep the love of God fervent in our fellowship, it is possible. The love of God should be the badge that identifies all God's children. Jesus said in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Remember the keys to the Word's interpretation were not meant to divide, but to provide the means for God's people to unite and move together as a unified household. Dialogue is always important and everyone has the right to ask genuine, honest questions about any doctrine or practice without the threat of reprisal. Remember when Nicodemus went to Jesus under the cover of darkness. Jesus told him "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus then asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"⁴⁵ Jesus did not get upset and tell him, "You better just shut up and believe." No, on the contrary Nicodemus' question initiated some great teaching about how the spirit is operated. Even John the Baptist, when he was in prison asked of Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"⁴⁶ He should have known better. After all he was the one who baptized Jesus. But, Jesus did not upbraid him for his unbelief, he lovingly sent word back to John to reassure him. An outfit that does not allow questions may not be the kind of outfit you want to be associated with anyhow.

⁴⁵ John 3 John 3

⁴⁶ Luke 7:19-28

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Fear and intimidation should not be motivation within the household of God. Freedom of will is a most solemn and sacred trust from God. We should be careful to maintain the same solemnity and reverence for freedom of will that God does.

I Chronicles 29:1-3:

Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, *is yet* young and tender, and the work *is* great: for the palace *is* not for man, but for the LORD God.

Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for *things to be made* of gold, and the silver for *things* of silver, and the brass for *things* of brass, the iron for *things* of iron, and wood for *things* of wood; onyx stones, and *stones* to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.

Moreover, because I have **set my affection to the house of my God**, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, *which* I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house,

David “set his affection” to the house of his God. Where do we set our affection? Where do our passions lie. Colossians 3:2 exhorts us to “set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” We set our hearts and minds on the things of God. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Our reverence for God and His Word will not go unrewarded. Look at David’s heart to build a house for his God. What if we had the same desire to build the Temple of God today. I am not talking about a building. The Temple of God is composed of all the born-again believers today. Our desire to build the body of Christ can be of the same magnitude as David’s. The body of Christ is bigger than any one organization or denomination. No one has an exclusive lock on the truth. Any one which claims that it does, you can be guaranteed that it does not. Of course we think we are right in what we do and teach. If we did not, we would not teach it, and we would not do it. But, we still have to maintain the humility of heart to learn more and the meekness to change when we realize that the Word of God interprets itself differently than what we had previously believed. Remember I Corinthians 8:1 says that “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”

Just in case you missed it, let me say it again. Nobody has a corner on the market when it comes to truth. As workmen of the Word we should be proud of our workmanship. Sure, we do our best to get it right, because it is God’s Word. It is the living Word of a living God. Over the years as we stay faithful to the principles our workmanship should get better and better, but none of us are infallible. Neither are we an exclusive club. There are no strings attached to the Word we teach. We freely avail ourselves. Our Sunday Morning Fellowship tapes go out to anyone to wants to get them. We have no membership role. We just want to enjoy the strength within the household of God that comes from the fellowship of like-minded believers. David was so blessed to be part of the building of the temple back then, we should be as excited today, too. Look at all he personally provided.

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I Chronicles 29:4,5:

Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses *withal*:
The gold for *things* of gold, and the silver for *things* of silver, and for all manner of work *to be made* by the hands of artificers. And **who then is willing** to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?

David set the example and people followed. He wanted to make it available for others to get involved so they could have the same joy and rejoicing that he did. He asked, "Who then is willing?" Folks it should always be by freedom of will and that is why there are blessings that come with it.

I Chronicles 29:6-10:

Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered **willingly**,
And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.
And they with whom *precious* stones were found gave *them* to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.
Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered **willingly**, because with perfect heart they offered **willingly** to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.
Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said,
Blessed *be* thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

David knew that the only reason that this service for the house of God happened was because God had His hand in it. God was the one who worked in people's heart so that they gave **willingly**. They built the house together with unity of purpose by the freedom of their will and God was working in them and with them.

I Chronicles 29:11-14:

Thine, O LORD, *is* the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*; **thine** *is* the kingdom, **O LORD**, and **thou** art exalted as head above all.
Both riches and honour *come* of **thee**, and **thou** reignest over all; and in **thine** hand *is* power and might; and in **thine** hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all.
Now therefore, **our God**, we thank **thee**, and praise **thy** glorious name.
But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things *come* of **thee**, and of **thine own** have we given **thee**.

Look at the humility of mind that David maintained. He knew they were only giving back what God had given them. I know that is my heart and the heart of Christian Family Fellowship. We love God, and we are thankful for the privilege to do what we are doing. We can only give to you what God gives to us, and we humbly recognize that. We have made Jesus Christ our Lord, and we recognize his headship. We work hard because we

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love God and we love His Word and we love His people. Life is too short to be fighting all the time. Let us move out with unity of purpose and move God's Word over the world.

I Chronicles 29:15-18:

For we *are* strangers before **thee**, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is* none abiding.

O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build **thee** an house for **thine** holy name *cometh* of **thine** hand, and *is* all **thine** own.

I know also, **my God**, that **thou** triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy **thy** people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto **thee**.

O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of **thy** people, and prepare their heart unto **thee**:

What a beautiful prayer. What a pure heart of thanksgiving David had.

I Chronicles 29:19:

And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep **thy** commandments, **thy** testimonies, and **thy** statutes, and to do all *these things*, and to build the palace, *for* the which I have made provision.

Solomon did not start it but he was going to have to finish it. His father had prepared him for the task and he was ready to go.

I Chronicles 29:20-22:

And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the **LORD your God**. And all the congregation blessed **the LORD God of their fathers**, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped **the LORD**, and the king.

And they sacrificed sacrifices unto **the LORD**, and offered burnt offerings unto **the LORD**, on the morrow after that day, *even* a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, *and* a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel:

And did eat and drink before **the LORD** on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed *him* unto **the LORD** *to be* the chief governor, and Zadok *to be* priest.

If we cannot do it with thanksgiving it is not worth the effort. God has laid a big challenge before us, **but He** has also equipped us for the task. We can do this thing. We can move out into the world with unity of purpose and reconcile men and women back to God. David's heart here reminds me of Paul's as he expressed it to the Thessalonians.

I Thessalonians 2:8:

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

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You are certainly dear unto us, also. Thank you for allowing me into your home to share with you the greatness of God's Word. I trust that you will continue with these keys and principles and faithfully apply them as a workman of the Word, bringing God's Word of deliverance to yourself and to those to whom you minister. If I can ever help you in anyway please contact me through Christian Family Fellowship.

Christian Family Fellowship
1575 State Route 571 W
Tipp City, OH 45371
(927) 669-0056

Closing prayer.

Enjoy reading your Bible as you allow it to interpret itself! I love you.

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Living in God's Power, Part II

Appendix 1: Uncovering the Word of God

There Are No Original Texts

No translation or version of the Bible may properly be called the Word of God. Not even the manuscripts⁴⁷ from which they are translated may correctly be called the Word of God. The Word of God refers to the original God-breathed Word which was given by revelation to holy men. Their autographs have been lost or destroyed, and there are no original texts in existence today.

What remain are two manuscripts of the New Testament from the 4th century, at least ten from the 5th, twenty-five from the 6th, and in all, a total of more than four thousand copies in part or in whole of the Greek New Testament. In addition to these manuscripts, there are ancient versions of the New Testament in Latin, Aramaic, and Coptic.⁴⁸ However, the quotations and clear references to the New Testament found in the works of the early Church Fathers allude to older manuscripts than are presently extant. The about 4,000 manuscripts fall into two classes: uncial (large hand) and minuscule (small hand), which are also called cursive. The uncials are generally older and comprise about 140 copies extending from the 4th to the 10th centuries. The minuscules include the remaining manuscripts which fall between the 9th century and the invention of printing. None of these manuscripts are originals. The originals are those which holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. At best, the manuscripts in extant today are copies of the originals.

Since we have no originals and the oldest manuscripts that we have date back to the fourth century AD, the workman of the Word must carefully compare one word with another word and one verse with another verse. He must study the context of all the verses. Since the Word of God cannot have a contradiction, the workman works God's Word from the inside out. He does not bring private interpretation and personal opinions to it. Rather, he reads and compares and fits the Word of Truth together into a perfect, organic whole. The workman of the Word must have integrity and honesty and not handle the Word of God deceitfully. The Word will interpret itself as the workman adheres to the premise that this Word of God is indeed perfect and cannot contradict itself.

Additions to the Word of God

There have been additions to the text of the Bible in the form of helps that have made our English versions easier to use. However helpful they may be for reference, they frequently work against rightly dividing the Word. These contributions to modern versions appear as reference aids and language necessities.

⁴⁷ In the broadest sense manuscripts include all handwritten records as distinguished from printed records. In a narrower sense they are handwritten codices, rolls, and folded documents, as distinguished from printed books on the one hand and inscriptions, or engraved documents, on the other. More loosely, but commonly, the term is used as synonym of the codex. [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

⁴⁸ See manuscripts; [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

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Reference Aids

Chapter divisions were first put into the Bible in 1250 AD. Although these are helpful in locating specific scriptures, they were not in the original texts and are of no inspired authority. We read to apprehend the context and do not necessarily stop at the chapter divisions. Following are examples of where chapter divisions do not conform to the local contexts. Genesis 2:1-3 should be included at the end of chapter one. John 2:23-25 should be included in chapter three. II Kings 7:1&2 complete the context of chapter six. Isaiah 52:13-15 should be part of the following chapter and verses 1-12 could be part of the preceding chapter. Matthew 9:35-38 explains chapter ten. The workman must be aware that the chapter divisions are man-made and devoid of authority for rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Verse divisions first appeared in the Geneva Bible of 1560 and after that they appeared in the Authorized version of 1611. Although there were verse divisions in the ancient Hebrew texts noted by a stroke [—] called *Silluk* under the last word of each verse, they were primarily used by the Sopherim (the Counters) to protect the text from alteration. The Massorah give the number of verses in the Hebrew Old Testament as 23,203. Like the chapter divisions, the verse divisions in the modern versions are devoid of authority in rightly dividing the Word. For example, John 7:53 and John 8:1 should not be divided, rather, they should be combined in the same verse and conclude chapter seven.

Chapter and page headings are obvious additions to the text of the Bible. Although, designed for reference and ease in locating records, they have interpretive tendencies. For example, Isaiah 1:1 says, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." The page heading in the Cambridge Bible above Isaiah 29 says, "*The heavy judgment of God upon Jerusalem.*" This would be consistent with the text in Isaiah 1:1. However, the page heading over chapter 30 says, "*God's mercy toward His Church.*" This is not consistent with the text of Isaiah 1:1. Either the man who put "toward His church" at the top of chapter 30 is wrong or the Word in Isaiah 1:1 is wrong.

Paragraphs are also interpretations of the translators since they were not part of the original texts. They indicate when one topic is complete and when a new idea should begin. Sometimes translators fail to recognize proper division between ideas or topics and the workman of the Word must be vigilant to identify subject matter without relying on the paragraph markings. Paragraph markings [¶] in most of the King James Versions stop at Acts 20:36 and do not appear after that. If they were God-inspired, they would have continued all the way through the Bible. They would not have stopped in the middle of a book.

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Reference systems⁴⁹ add information that the editors think is pertinent. The workman of the Word must evaluate all information given in these reference systems to see whether it fits with the rightly divided Word of God or works at cross purposes to its right dividing. The information may be right, or it may be wrong, but in either case, it is not authoritative when it comes to interpretation. These additions though designed to help may cause more conflicts than they help to alleviate.

Italics are used in the King James Version to note additions to the text. When words were added in the King James Version which were not in the Stephen's Greek text, often times they were noted by being placed in *italicized* type. However, this addition was not completely followed through. There are places where the King James Version added words and did not put them in italics. Again the workman of the Word must not rely not *italic* type in the King James Version to alert him of additions to the texts.

Language Necessities

Capitalization: Uncial manuscripts were all capital letters, and minuscule manuscripts were all small case letters. There was no independent or distinct capitalization in the original texts. However, the English language requires capitalization of certain words and has rules for capitalization. The first word of a sentence and proper nouns require capitalization.

For the most part, capitalization does not change the meaning of a word. However, capitalization does make a difference with certain words. The word "spirit" is an example. It is capitalized in the middle of a sentence when it is a proper noun, a name for God. When the translators thought it meant God, they capitalized it. When they thought it did not mean God they left it in lower case letters. Some places the translation is correct. Such a place is John 4:24 where it says, "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth." This verse shows the difference between the Giver and His gift. The first occurrence of "Spirit" refers to God the giver. The second occurrence of "spirit" refers to the gift. However the workman of the Word can not rely on the English versions to properly handle the different usages of "spirit." In Acts 2:4 it is done improperly. It says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The first occurrence of "spirit" here translated "Ghost" is capitalized as is the second. This implies that both occurrences refer to God, the Giver. The right dividing of the Word demands that the first should not be capitalized as it refers to the gift, while the second is correctly capitalized as it refers to God, the Giver.

Another use of Capitalization in the Authorized Version is found in the use of capitalization for emphasis. Examples of this may be found in Exodus 3:14 "I AM

⁴⁹ Bibles have different systems of reference. There are center references, marginal references, and references at the bottom of the page. Study Bibles, such as the Companion Bible and the Scofield Bible, may have rather elaborate reference systems.

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THAT I AM” and “I AM,” Zechariah 3:8 “BRANCH,” and Luke 1:31 “JESUS.”⁵⁰ It is important that the workman of the Word recognize that capitalization in the English versions for the purpose of emphasis is also added by man and was not in the original texts.

The English word “lord” also appears with different forms of capitalization in the Old Testament of the King James Version when it is used as a proper noun referring to God. “Lord” is usually a translation of the Hebrew words “*adon*” or “*adonai*.” “LORD” is usually a translation of the Hebrew word “*jehovah*.” However, this is not universally done (especially when the names of God are used in combinations) and the workman should still check a concordance or Hebrew text to be sure.

Punctuation: Punctuation was not in the original texts and has also been added by man. Although there are language rules that govern the proper use of punctuation, many times it was used by the translators to promote their theology. Manipulating punctuation is one way the Word of God can be made to say something that it does not really say. Many times the placement of a comma makes the difference between truth and error in the Bible.

Luke 23: 43 says, “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” This verse was punctuated in this way to promote the theology that when one dies he goes directly to heaven or hell. However, the Word talks about death as a state of sleep which endures until the gathering together or the resurrections. The comma should properly be placed after the word “today.” This makes the Word cohere and fit without contradiction, and it is the proper rendering, the right dividing of this verse.

In the original Word of God there were no periods, no commas, no semi-colons, no colons, no question marks, no quotation marks, no dashes, and no parentheses. These have all been added to the text by the best judgment of the translators. Although their purpose was to assist the reader to properly understand the scriptures, they may be misleading. The workman of the Word is responsible to evaluate their use in scripture

Meanings of words: The meaning of words change over time. Certain words and expressions which were properly and accurately used in the 1611 translation have since gone out of use or have changed in meaning altogether. All language goes through periods of change. There are words in the King James Version which have completely gone out of current use. One such example is “trow.” It occurs in Luke 17:9 and means “imagine” or “think.” There are other words whose meaning has expanded since the translation of the King James Version. Biblically “create” is an action reserved for God. Although current usage may attribute it to man, the workman must recognize that it is biblically restricted to God. Following is a list of some of the archaic usage of words found in the King James Version.

⁵⁰ For a complete list see the Companion Bible Appendix 48.

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Archaic Usage of Words:

King James Version:	Modern English:	Reference:
adventure.....	venture, go	Acts 19:31
all to brake	completely break.....	Judges 9:53
artillery.....	any instrument (especially weapons)	I Samuel 20:40
	constructed by art or skill	
anon	immediately	Matthew 13:20
assay.....	attempt, try.....	Job 4:2
astonied.....	bewildered, dazed, astounded	Daniel 3:24
away with.....	tolerate	Isaiah 1:13
beeves	cattle	Numbers 31:33
bonnets.....	men's head-gear.....	Exodus 28:40
by and by.....	immediately	Luke 21:9
carriages.....	that which is carried.....	Acts 21:15
charity	love.....	I Corinthians 13:1
clouded.....	patched.....	Joshua 9:5
come at.....	come near.....	Numbers 6:6
company with.....	accompany, go with as a companion	I Corinthians 5:9
conversation.....	manner of life, behavior.....	Hebrews 13:5
cunning	skillful, clever	Genesis 25:27
do to wit.....	make known, certify	II Corinthians 8:1
draught	British spelling of draft; a drawing or pulling.....	Luke 5:4
(to) ear.....	to plow.....	I Samuel 8:12
fain	gladly, with eagerness.....	Luke 15:16
fast	near	Ruth 2:8
fetched a compass	made a circuit, take a round-about course.....	II Kings 3:9
froward.....	adverse, unfavorable, perverse.....	Deuteronomy 32:20
full well.....	with full knowledge	Mark 7:9
go to now	come now.....	James 4:13
goodman	householder, master of the household.....	Mark 14:14
let, letteth	hinder, hold back, restrain.....	II Thessalonians 2:7
lusty	vigorous	Judges 3:29
mote	speck of dust or other tiny particle.....	Matthew 7:3-5
naughty	worthless.....	Proverbs 6:12
nephew.....	progeny, grandson.....	Judges 12:14
occupy.....	carry on a business.....	Luke 19:13
outgoings.....	utmost limits	Joshua 17:9,18
presently.....	at once, instantly, immediately	I Samuel 2:16
prevent	precede.....	I Thessalonians 4:15
quick	alive, living	Acts 10:42
quicken.....	make alive.....	Romans 8:11
quit.....	conduct	I Corinthians 16:13
several, severally.....	own, his own.....	Matthew 25:15
shew	show.....	Genesis 12:1
silly	harmless.....	II Timothy 3:6
simple.....	innocent, naive.....	Proverbs 1:4,22,32
sottish.....	dull, heavy, stupid.....	Jeremiah 4:22
spake	speak.....	Genesis 8:15
strike hands	conclude a bargain by shaking hands.....	Job 17:3
took in	be hospitable.....	Matthew 25:35,38,43
trou	imagine, think, suppose	Luke 17:9
twain	two	II Kings 4:33
very	true, real	John 7:26
whit.....	the least bit.....	Deuteronomy 13:16
wist, wit, wot.....	knew, know, know.....	Exodus 16:15; 2:4; 32:1
wont	accustomed, habit, usual practice.....	Daniel 3:19

The use of the definite article: The Hebrew and Greek languages have only one article, the definite article “the.” English has an indefinite article, “a” or “an,” as well as the

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definite article. Unfortunately, the uses of the articles do not coincide between English and the Greek and Hebrew languages. Sometimes, when there is no article in the texts, “the” will need to be added in English for a smoother or better translation. At other times, when the article does appear in the texts, the article will need to be omitted in the English for the translation to be the best. The decision to include or omit the article in English must be determined only by a study of the entire context.

Furthermore, Estrangelo Aramaic has no article at all. Some scholars believe that Estrangelo Aramaic (the language spoken by Jesus) was the original language of the New Testament, and Greek was a translation. The article was therefore not part of the original God-breathed Word, but it was added as proper translation required. Therefore, it is very unwise to draw conclusions based upon the presence or non-presence of the article. This becomes extremely important in the study of “spirit” in the New Testament.

Conclusion

Remember it is the original God-breathed Word that is perfect. Only to the extent that the Word of truth is rightly divided do we have the original God-breathed Word. As workman, we must go beyond the Authorized King James Version, or any other version for that matter, to arrive at that original God-breathed Word. Each believer can gain a greater understanding of the scriptures by comparing our English versions with the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts from which they were translated even though he has no reading knowledge of these languages. Concordances, lexicons, and other biblical tools allows any believer to investigate and check the accuracy of God's Word.

As workmen in any other endeavor, the workman of the Word must hone his skills through consistent and faithful application. His desire is to know the Author and stand approved before Him by rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Uncovering the trappings which man has added to the Word of God will be helpful to the workman as he does his utmost to understand God's wonderful, matchless Word. The responsibility of the workman of God's Word is to let this wonderful, matchless Word of God interpret itself. We can get back to the original God-breathed Word if we handle God's Word according to the principles which He establishes in it.

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God Is Always Good.

God's Word is clear as to the nature of the true God—He is *always* good. In direct contrast to God's loving nature is the Devil, our adversary, the thief, who wants to do nothing but steal, and kill, and destroy (John 10:10). The Devil is *always* bad. In order to live in God's power, we must maintain a clear mental picture of the goodness of our loving heavenly Father and the badness of the Devil. God never imparts evil to mankind. People who think that God makes them sick, injures them, or kills them are attributing darkness or evil to God, and that is wrong because God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (I John 1:5).

Of course there are many apparent contradictions in the Bible that stem from the erroneous idea of God's hurting or killing someone. Most can be reconciled with the proper understanding of the figure of speech, idiom. An idiom is a colloquialism, a peculiar manner of speaking, or an expression with a meaning that cannot be understood from the words alone. An idiom can also be described as a usage of words in a culture that has a meaning different from a strict dictionary definition. In *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E. W. Bullinger explained that the Hebrew language has an idiom of permission, which is a unique usage of words where active verbs are sometimes used "to express, not the doing of the thing, but the *permission* of the thing which the agent is said to do."

For example, when Exodus 10:20 says that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" it means "the Lord permitted Pharaoh's heart to be hardened." When II Samuel 6:7 says that "God smote him [Uzzah]," it more accurately means "God permitted him to be smitten." When Genesis 19:24 records that "the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire," it must be understood as "the Lord permitted brimstone and fire to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah."

Having this fundamental understanding that God is *always* good, let us take a closer look at the Word of God to get a fuller understanding of why and how this idiom of permission is used so that we never attribute folly, or evil, to God.

There are two major factors that contribute to the frequency of this idiom in God's Word. First, the adversary and his activities were not fully exposed until Jesus Christ made a show of them openly. Second, man's freedom of will to accept or reject the law of God allows him to either accept God's Word and appropriate the blessings or to reject God's Word and receive the consequences. Seeing these two factors in the context of the Word further broadens our understanding of the use of this Hebrew idiom.

The Adversary Was Not Fully Exposed Until Jesus Christ Did It.

People in the Old Testament knew a little about the Devil, devil spirits, and spiritual influences. The prophets also spoke about the adversary (Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:13-19), although it was often cloaked in figurative language (Ezekiel 28:12). People

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were aware that devil spirits did affect mankind negatively. However, it was the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that really exposed the network and functioning of the devil-spirit realm. He clarified what the Devil's will is, describing him as a thief and detailing his objectives.

John 10:10:

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

Look at the emphatic way it is stated: "The thief cometh **not, but for to....**" This encompasses the sole reason for his actions. Jesus, in contrast, came declaring the one true God so that we could be victorious over the devil-spirit realm and could live more abundantly. He taught his disciples how to be victorious over their personal adversary, giving them power over the spirit realm.

Luke 10:17-24:

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*.

And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

The Old Testament prophets would have loved to know what Jesus Christ was able to teach his disciples. However, the full exposure of the snare did not happen until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ and the sending of the power of the holy spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Colossians 2:15:

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

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Although the believers in the Old Testament were not fully cognizant of the spiritual forces at work, they could still express what was going on by using this idiom of permission. Furthermore, and important to note, God specifically instructed His people on occasion to not even mention the name of false gods.

Exodus 23:13:

And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

Joshua 23:7:

That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear *by them*, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them.

Therefore, instead of saying that the Devil or Belial did something, the people would say that the Lord permitted it to be done. This figure allowed people to explain what was going on and still portray God as sovereign and in control of the situation.

The Books of Samuel are written from man's point of view, revealing man's limited awareness of the devil-spirit realm. In II Samuel we find the idiom of permission used in speaking of the numbering of Israel.

II Samuel 24:1:

And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he [the Lord] moved David [permitted David to be moved] against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

However, Chronicles, written from God's point of view and with the proper understanding of the spiritual forces at work in the world, states the literal truth.

I Chronicles 21:1:

And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

There is no contradiction here. Understanding the idiom of permission dissolves the apparent contradiction.

Another example of the use of this idiom in light of man's limited understanding is seen in the Book of Job. God had the account of Job recorded for one major purpose: to show us the goodness of God and the wickedness of the Devil.

Job 1:21:

And [Job] said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

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This verse appears to be in direct contrast to what the Book of James tells us about God's nature.

James 1:16,17:

Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

There is no variableness with God. He is not fickle. His will does not fluctuate. He does not contradict Himself. He does not give and then decide to take away. Again the proper understanding of the idiom is necessary: "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath permitted it to be taken away." Job knew that it was his own fear that brought the devastation upon him.

Job 3:25:

For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

As we read the account of Job, God adds details necessary to our understanding. However, Job was not fully aware of the spiritual forces involved. He did not have the luxury of reading Job 1:6-12 like we do. Job knew he had an adversary, but he did not initially know much about him. He lamented, later on in the account, that he did not know more about his adversary.

Job 31:35:

Oh that one would hear me behold, my desire *is*, *that* the Almighty would answer me, and *that* mine adversary had written a book.

It was the Devil who stole Job's health and killed Job's children. It was the Devil who destroyed Job's reputation and wanted to ultimately destroy Job by getting him to curse God, to blame God for all the evil he suffered. However, Job never cursed God. In the midst of the devastation of the adversary's attack on Job, he never succumbed as the Devil wanted him to. He never attributed folly, or evil, to God (Job 1:22; 2:10). Job knew that none of the evil and hurt that had befallen him came from God. Since Job is the first book of the Bible that God had written, we could consider this the oldest and most foundational lesson of all.

God's Law and Man's Freedom of Will

In addition to the Old Testament believers' limited knowledge of the adversary contributing to the frequent use of this idiom, the second major factor was the relationship between God's law and man's freedom of will. Man's freedom of will is a sacred trust from God that He never oversteps. God has allowed men to determine their own lives by controlling their thinking to either believe His Word and accept His will or to not believe and reject it.

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Deuteronomy 11:26-28:

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day:

And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

God gave us His Word to protect us from our adversary. When we respect Him and do His commandments, He can take care of us.

Deuteronomy 6:24:

And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear [reverence] the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as *it is* at this day.

When God established free will, there had to be a choice. There had to have been an option other than the perfect beauty and order that God created and initiated. God's creation was perfect until the day when iniquity was found in Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:12-15). God did not make Lucifer evil. Rather, God allowed him the freedom of will to love and serve Him. With this freedom came the alternative of evil, which was first manifested in Lucifer. God gave this same freedom of will to mankind.

God set up the universe on the basis of perfect justice. After the fall of man, when Adam transferred his dominion to the adversary, God had to permit the adversary to work. When people refuse to do God's Word and decide to turn away from Him, God can no longer help and protect them because they, by their freewill choice, step outside of the protection of God. People bring evil upon themselves when they turn from God's Word.

Jeremiah 2:19:

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear [respect] is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts

Isaiah 3:8-11:

For Jerusalem is mined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide *it* not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*. for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.

Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be ill with him*. for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

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Throughout the Word, God makes His will very clear: He does not even want the wicked to die. He wants the wicked to change their evil ways and believe His Word.

Ezekiel 33:11:

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

If the wicked turned from their evil ways, God could protect them and preserve their lives.

God's will is never the variable in life's situations. The variable is man's response to God's Word. Will he believe and appropriate the blessings or reject the Word and receive the consequences?

Isaiah 59:1,2:

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

God has given mankind the right to choose, and He will not violate that right.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20:

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, *and that* ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

The Scripture cannot be broken. Therefore when people break God's laws, they, in essence, break themselves on the law of God. God gave man His Word. When men believe and act on it, they are blessed and protected. When men rebel and refuse to listen

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to God's Word, God can no longer protect them. God recognizes the sanctity of freewill choice. He will never violate man's free will to choose. When man chooses to break the law of God, he receives the consequences of his disobedience.

If a man jumped off a cliff and killed himself, we would understand that the man was responsible for the consequence of his own death. Even though God is the One Who established the law of gravity, we would not say God killed the man, because the man broke God's physical law of gravity. Likewise, God is not responsible for the consequences when man breaks the spiritual laws of God. The fact that God declares what the consequences of unbelief are does not mean that He actively imparts them to mankind. Why would a loving God ever want to harm or to kill people? He does not! The Bible teaches in Hebrews 2:14 that the Devil holds the power of death. He is the one who brings and causes the calamity, not God.

This account of Saul gives us a good example of how this idiom of permission is used in the context of man's breaking the law of God.

I Chronicles 10:3-5:

And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.

Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died.

It is obvious from the record here and in I Samuel 31:3-5 that Saul took his own life. He killed himself. However, in Chronicles this record continues and shows the underlying reason for Saul's death: he broke the law of God.

I Chronicles 10:13,14:

So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, *even* against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking *counsel* of *one that had* a familiar spirit, to inquire *of it*; And inquired not of the Lord: therefore he [the Lord] slew him [permitted Saul to be slain], and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

Here we see clearly this idiom of permission. I Chronicles 10:4 says Saul killed himself, and I Chronicles 10:14 says that God permitted Saul to be killed. Saul brought the consequence of death upon himself because he forsook the true God and turned to the devil-spirit realm. The Devil is the one with the power of death, and it was he that authored and instigated the death of Saul.

Let us look at some other examples of this idiom of permission.

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Exodus 12:29:

And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.

Again, this verse contradicts all the clear verses on the subject. The proper understanding of this verse is that "...the Lord permitted all the firstborn in the land of Egypt to be smitten..." By taking a closer look at the context we will see that there is one verse of scripture which handles the smiting of the firstborn both idiomatically and literally. The first part of the verse handles it idiomatically.

Exodus 12:23:

For the Lord will pass through to smite [permit the smiting of] the Egyptians....

The second part of the verse explains what literally happened.

Exodus 12:23:

...and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer [permit] the destroyer [the Devil] to come in unto your houses to smite *you*.

The destroyer, the Devil, literally and actively killed the firstborn. God simply had to allow it to happen because the Egyptians did not obey His Word. God knew that the Devil would act in this manner, so He provided protection for His people in the Passover. God gave the people His Word. If they observed the Passover as He prescribed, putting the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintel, He would protect them and not allow the Devil, the destroyer, to kill their firstborn. If people did not obey, God could not protect them, and the destroyer was permitted to kill the firstborn.

The question often arises as to why the adversary would kill his own people. Again, the adversary's nature is to steal, kill, and destroy, and he succumbs to it even when it means the death of his own people at times. Furthermore, if there is an opportunity for him to kill, maim, or harm and cause God to receive the blame for it, he will. The adversary likes nothing better than to have people attribute evil to God. Now when you read of God actively causing harm, injury, or death, you can identify this as the Hebrew idiom of permission.

Summary

Recognizing and understanding the Hebrew idiom of permission allows us to rightly divide God's Word and not to attribute evil, or folly, to God. The frequency of this idiom in the Old Testament was due in part to the lack of awareness of the spiritual forces at work. It was also due to specific instruction God gave Israel at times to not even mention the names of other gods. Man's free will to accept or reject the law of God also contributed to its frequent occurrences.

Living in God's Power, Part II
Appendix 2: The Hebrew Idiom of Permission

The proper understanding of the relationship of God's law and man's free will demonstrates that man brings evil upon himself when he breaks the laws of God and walks outside of God's protection. The very form of the idiom kept God always in control of situations and His sovereignty unquestioned. When man is outside the stronghold of God's protection, he is prey to the Devil, who as a roaring lion walks about, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

For us to live in God's power we must have a clear mental picture of the goodness of God and the badness of the Devil. Let us drive into our minds the truth that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. By keeping a clear picture of the goodness of God before us, we can live in God's power. Our freewill choice to believe and do the Word appropriates God's blessings and keeps us in the center of His will, protected by the everlasting arms of our loving heavenly Father.

Living in God's Power, Part II
Appendix 2: The Hebrew Idiom of Permission

Living in God's Power, Part II
**Appendix 3: Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II*
“How the Bible Interprets Itself”**

- I. Introduction (John 8)
- II. The Bible is of no private interpretation. (II Peter 1:20; *I Samuel 13:19; Acts 13:22; Psalms 119:161,117; Proverbs 13:13; II Timothy 2:15*)
- III. The Bible interprets itself in the verse.
 - A. Right where it is written, as we read it (Genesis 1:1; John 3:16; Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 13:5; III John 2)
 - B. According to biblical usage (Joshua 9:5; I Thessalonians 4:15; Hebrews 13:5; Luke 17:9; Jeremiah 4:22)
 - C. A word must be in harmony with the other words in the verse as well as all other Scriptures on the same subject.
 - 1. “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30; 17:11,20-23; I Corinthians 3:6-8)
 - 2. “The Cry of Triumph” (Matthew 27:46; John 16:32; 8:29; 6:38; II Corinthians 5:19; John 10:30; Matthew 26:53; *Exodus 14:19; 23:20-23; Matthew 26:54; John 18:11; Matthew 26:39; Matthew 27:46; Hebrews 13:5; II Timothy 4:10,16; Acts 2:27; Romans 9:29; Acts 24:27; Romans 11:4; Psalms 22:1; 27:10; 37:25,28; Leviticus 19:10; Ruth 2:15,16; Ezekiel 24:21; John 4:34; Luke 2:49; Psalms 22:1,2; John 11:41,42; Psalms 22:19,21; Acts 28:1-4; Psalms 22:22,25,30; 118:17,18; 22:8,15,16,18; Matthew 27:35; Psalms 22:31,31; John 12:27; 11:41,42; Matthew 26:54; John 18:11; Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 26:50; John 13:26,27; Psalms 40:8; Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 2:14,15; John 19:30; II Corinthians 5:21)*

HOUR 2 -----

- 3. “Make disciples of all nations in my name.” (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5)
- D. The Bible interprets itself in the verse with Scripture build-up or narrative development.
 - 1. The others crucified with Jesus (Matthew 27:35-38,44; Mark 15:24-27,32b; Luke 23:32-34,38-43; John 19:18; Revelation 22:2; John 19:32; *Psalms 34:20; Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12*)
 - 2. Peter's denials (Mark 14:72,30; Matthew 26:34; Luke 22:34; John 13:38; Matthew 26:57,58,69-75; Mark 14:53,54,66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:13-18,24-27; Mark 14:72; Matthew 26:74; John 18:27; Luke 22:60; John 13:36-38; Luke 22:31-34; *Genesis 41:32; Matthew 26:31-34; Mark 14:30,31; Luke 22:60-62; Mark 14:30,72*)

HOUR 3 -----

Living in God's Power, Part II
**Appendix 3: Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II*
“How the Bible Interprets Itself”**

- IV. The Bible interprets itself in the context. (Psalms 14:1; Daniel 3:25; *Matthew 1:18*; Daniel 3:28)
 - A. The Parable of the Tares (*Matthew 13:24-31,36-43*)
 - B. “In the resurrection” (*Matthew 22:23-32*; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 5:28,29; Ephesians 1:20,21; Romans 6:9; Colossians 1:18)
 - C. The vision of Elijah and Moses (*Matthew 17:1-9*)
 - D. Considering the remoter context (*Judges 3:16,31; 5:8; 14:5,6; 15:14-16; I Samuel 13:19-22*)
 - E. Words defined in their context (*Exodus 12:21; Leviticus 23:4,5; Luke 22:8-13; 22:1; John 8:32*)

- V. The Bible interprets itself as it has been used before.
 - A. Paul’s thorn in the flesh (*II Corinthians 12:7-10; Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:13; Judges 2:3; II Corinthians 12:7; Acts 14:19; II Corinthians 11:24-28*)
 - B. Pure from the blood of all men (*Acts 20:17-38; Ezekiel 33:1-9*)

- VI. Doing word studies (*Deuteronomy 29:29; Romans 11:33; Ephesians 3:8; John 5:39; Proverbs 25:2*)

HOUR 4 -----

- VII. Biblical truths to which we must adhere
 - A. The Word of God should be taken literally wherever and whenever possible. (*Galatians 4:15; I Timothy 5:23; II Peter 2:20*)
 - 1. Figures of speech (*II Corinthians 12:7; Numbers 33:55; Exodus 23:13; Joshua 23:7; II Samuel 24:1; I Chronicles 21:1; Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 6:24; Ezekiel 28:12-15; John 10:35; Hebrews 2:14; Exodus 12:29,23; I Peter 5:8*)
 - 2. Oriental customs and manners (*Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 10:42*)
 - B. It is necessary to identify to whom a Scripture is addressed and to be aware of the administration in which or about which they were written.
 - 1. Identify to whom a Scripture is addressed. (*I Corinthians 10:32; 1:22-24; Romans 9:24; 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:8; I Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; James 1:1; Acts 21:20; Galatians 5:1; Acts 15:10; Romans 10:9,10; I John 1:9; Romans 8:37-39; 11:21,22,13*)
 - 2. Identify the administration in which or about which they were written. (*I Corinthians 9:17; Genesis 1:3; 3:24; Romans 2:12; Acts 17:30; Luke 16:16; Romans 10:4; Ephesians 3:2-10; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; II Thessalonians 2:1ff; Genesis 3:24; 15:6; Deuteronomy 6:25; Romans 3:20; 8:31-37; Psalms 44:22; I Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29*)

Living in God's Power, Part II
**Appendix 3: Outline of *Living in God's Power, Part II*
“How the Bible Interprets Itself”**

HOUR 5 -----

- C. We must make a distinction where God makes a difference.
 - 1. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5)
 - 2. The same individual, place, or reality may be called by different names. (*Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-12*)
 - 3. Different individuals and places may have the same name.
 - 4. There is frequently great benefit derived from simple and general classifications.
- D. Difficult verses must be understood in light of the clear verses.— *the death of Judas* (Matthew 27:3-5; 28:16; Luke 24:33; John 20:24; I Corinthians 15:3-5; John 20:24-26; Acts 1:1-3; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:4-11; Revelation 3:20; Acts 1:15-20; *Psalms 109:8; Matthew 27:3-5; Mark 4:7,19; Matthew 18:28; Acts 1:18; Matthew 27:5-8; John 12:6; Acts 1:19; I Samuel 31:4; Romans 8:1-8*)
- E. Interpretation and application must always take into account “to whom” it is addressed. (Romans 12:3; Colossians 3:1,2; Romans 6:16; 16:26; II Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 2:13; 3:13; I John 1:9; Romans 8:1; Deuteronomy 6:25; Romans 10:1-11; Ephesians 2:8-10; II Timothy 3:16,17)
- F. When we do not know how a verse interprets itself without being contradictory to other verses, we must admit it and hold that verse in abeyance until such a time as we can understand how it fits with the rest of the Scripture.

HOUR 6 -----

- VIII. We delight in God's Word. (*Psalms 119:16,24,36,47,70,77,92,143,174; Job 23:12*)
 - A. The seven steps to biblical accuracy.
 - B. Questions to ask to interact with the Word (Genesis 3:4)
 - C. Review of “How the Bible Interprets Itself”
- IX. Unity of purpose (*Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17,27; John 8:32; I Corinthians 1:10; John 17:22; I Corinthians 12:24,25; John 5:30; 8:15,16; Philippians 2:13; Romans 15:5,6; I Corinthians 2:16; Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7; II Thessalonians 3:6,14,15; Philippians 3:13; John 13:35; John 13:35; John 3:1ff; Luke 7:19-28; I Chronicles 29:1-25; Colossians 3:2; I Corinthians 8:1; I Thessalonians 2:8*)