

The Bible

Introduction to the Bible

Psalm 19:7-11

1. In all of the history of the world, no book has been more loved and studied than the Bible--it remains the best seller of all time and yet often it is left unread.

2. The Bible is unique: 66 Books written by about 40 men over a space of 1500 years. It was written in many different places in the known world of ancient times (not all authors were Jews). It was written in Hebrew (the Old Testament), Greek (the New Testament), and Aramaic (part of Daniel). Yet there is unity and harmony throughout.

3. The Bible is a book that men have hated, because it spoke out against sin--those who are evil hate what is good. Men have predicted that it would no longer be read because it was out of date and out of touch. Many of these men are now in their graves. Their philosophies and beliefs are forgotten, but the Bible is still the most desired book in the world! The Bible is indestructible, because God is indestructible! (Matt 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23-25)

The Bible's Origin

1. 2 Pet. 1:20,21
2. 2 Tim. 3:16
3. 1 Cor. 2:12-13
4. 3800 times the Bible uses the phrases "Thus says the Lord," "God spoke," and "The Lord testified."
5. 2 Sam. 23:1,2 "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue."
6. Jer. 1:9 "I have put my words in your mouth"
7. John 16:12,13 Jesus' promise fulfilled in the New Testament.

The Bible's Purpose

1. To reveal the heart and mind of God to man and reveal His plan to redeem man from sin
2. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 four things for which Scripture is profitable:
 - teaching or doctrine--that we might know the truth
 - reproof or rebuking--to convict or persuade others to change

- correction--standard by which we can always judge ourselves
 - instruction or training--it gives us the equipment to do the work God wants us to do, so that we are complete
3. The gospel is God's message of salvation (Rom 1:16).
 4. The gospel was designed to be believed and obeyed (1 Cor. 15:1,2)

The Bible's Completeness

1. John 16:12,13 Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth! the whole truth, nothing left out! (John 14:26)
2. Jude 3 Jude maintains that "the faith" was once-for-all delivered to the saints

The Bible Warns Us:

1. We are to preach the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:1-4).
2. We are to believe no other gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).
3. Do not add or subtract from the Word (Rev. 22:18,19).
4. Do not substitute human ideas (Mark 7:7-9).
5. His Word will one day judge us (John 12:48; Rev. 20:11-15).

The Bible Answers the Three Great Questions of Life:

1. The Origin of Life: where did I come from? God created you
2. The Purpose of Life: why am I here? Eccl 12:13
3. After Death, What then: where am I going? God gives us a glimpse of heaven and hell.

The Bible Contains:

1. The Mind of God--He loves and wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3,4).
2. The State of Man (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)
3. The Way of Salvation (John 3:16; Acts 2:38)
4. The Happiness of Believers (John 14:1-3)
5. The Doom of Sinners (2 Thess. 1:7-9)

Digging Deeper into My Bible

Psalm 119:33-40

An unknown writer said, "This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity. *But we frequently do not know the Bible, as we should!*

Why Don't People Study Their Bibles More?

1. Too busy with other things.
2. Can't Understand It
3. Many people do not read anything much
4. Have not wanted to
5. Have not planned to

The Scriptures Came From God

1. *2 Tim. 3:16-17*
2. *2 Pet. 1:20,21*
3. *1 Cor. 2:12,13*

What the Bible can do for you

- *Gives understanding Psalm 119:130* The unfolding of Thy words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.
- *Keeps from sin Psalm 119:9-11* How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
- *Sanctifies John 17:17* Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

- *Born by the Word 1 Pet. 1:22-23* Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and abiding word of God.
- *Builds Up and Gives Inheritance Acts 20:32* And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

The Bible is called:

- Word of Life *Phil 2:16*
- Word of Reconciliation *2 Cor. 5:19*
- Word of Salvation *Acts 13:26*
- *Saves souls James 1:21* Therefore putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
- Words are spirit and are life *John 17:3*
- *The Scriptures are compared to:*
 - *a sword Eph. 6:17*
 - *Fire and a hammer Jer. 23:29* "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"
 - *a seed Luke 8:11*
 - *a lamp and a light Psalm 119:105* Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years, which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the Long Parliament. England became a people of the book, and that book was the Bible. It was read at churches and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm. As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue. But far greater was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits, but it was impossible for her to silence or tune the great preachers of justice and mercy and truth who spoke from the Book. The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new conception of life and of man superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread

through every class. (John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People*.)

Therefore, We Should Do These Things:

Know the Bible 2 Tim. 2:15

- At a pulpit rate, it takes 71 hours to read the Bible aloud; if you break that down to 365 days, that is merely 12 minutes a day
- How long has it been since you read the Bible through?

Love the Word *Psalm 119:97* "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Be doers of the Word *James 1:22* But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Keep the word *1 John 2:5* but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

Preach the word 2 Tim. 4:2-5

Because we will be judged by the word *John 12:48* "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

A former park ranger at Yellowstone National Park tells the story of a ranger leading a group of hikers to a fire lookout. The ranger was so intent on telling the hikers about the flowers and animals that he considered the messages on his two-way radio distracting, so he switched it off. Nearing the tower, the ranger was met by a nearly breathless lookout, which asked why he hadn't responded to the messages on his radio. A grizzly bear had been seen stalking the group, and the authorities were trying to warn them of the danger. Any time we turn out the messages God has sent us, we put at peril not only ourselves, but also those around us. How important it is that we never turn off God's saving communication!

The Need for an Overall View

2 Tim. 2:15

When one studies the Bible, it is necessary to study books, chapters, verses and words. He must study sentences and words to determine their meanings. However, it is necessary also to have a general view of Bible history, so that you will be able to understand how what you read fits into that history. You might know about certain people or things:

- Where does Abraham fit into the history of the Bible?
- When did the Jewish nation begin?
- When and what were the tabernacle and the temple?

When an artist paints a picture, he paints the distant things first and works closer, at last putting on the finishing touches up front. In the same way we need to look at an overall view of Bible History

Getting an Overall View

Dallas Smith produced a book, which gave a simple method of learning the fifteen periods of Bible History. His book gave:

- the names of each period
- the length of each period
- the main events of each period
- the principal character of each period

Just learning the names will go a long way in helping the student. Learning the events that begin and end the period will help put things in the proper order.

Learning the people will also help put things into perspective.

When You Read the Bible

- keep this list of periods handy
- Try to keep the passage you are reading in perspective
- Know who is speaking to whom
- Handle the word accurately

Fifteen Periods of Bible History

Names	Events	Time Span	Character
Antediluvian	from Creation to the Flood	1,656	Adam
Postdiluvian	from the Flood to the call of Abraham	427	Noah
Patriarchal	call of Abraham to Egyptian bondage	215	Abraham
Egyptian bondage	descent to Egypt to Exodus	215	Joseph
Wilderness Wanderings	from Exodus to crossing Jordan	40	Moses
Conquest of Canaan	crossing Jordan to time of Judges	51	Joshua
Judges	from Judges to the Kingdom	305	Samuel
United Kingdom	From crowning Saul to the dividing of Kingdom	120	David
Divided Kingdom	from division of Kingdom to the fall of Israel (Samaria)	253	Elijah
Kingdom of Judah	from fall of Israel to the fall of Judah	135	Josiah
Babylonian Captivity	from fall of Judah to the return to Jerusalem	50	Daniel
Restoration of the Jews	from return to Jerusalem to the end of Old Testament history	92	Ezra
Between the Testaments	from close of Old Testament to opening of New Testament	400	Judas Maccabeus
Life of Christ	from birth of Christ to Ascension	34	Jesus
The Church	from Ascension to close of New Testament history	70	Paul

The Periods Connected to Scripture

Bible Period	Scripture Involved in Each Period
Antediluvian	Genesis 1-5
Postdiluvian	Genesis 6-11
Patriarchal	Genesis 12-45; Job
Egyptian Bondage	Genesis 42 – Exodus 11
Wilderness Wanderings	Exodus 12; Leviticus; Numbers; Deuteronomy
Conquest of Canaan	Joshua 1-24
Judges of Israel	Judges 1 - 1 Samuel 8; Ruth
United Kingdom	1 Sam. 9 - 1 Kings 11; 1 Chron. 10 - 2 Chron. 9; Psalms; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Song of Solomon
Divided Kingdom	1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 20; 2 Chron. 10-32; Joel; Isaiah; Micah; Amos; Hosea; Jonah; Obadiah
Kingdom of Judah	2 Kings 21-25; 2 Chron. 33-36; Jeremiah; Nahum;
Babylonian Captivity	2 Kings 25:8-21; Daniel 1-8; Ezekiel; Lamentations;

Restoration of the Jews	Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Esther, Daniel 9-12; Zephaniah; Malachi
Between the Testaments	No Scripture. History comes from Maccabees, Josephus, other sources.
Life of Christ	Matthew, Mark Luke, and John
The Church	Acts to Revelation

General Outline of the Bible

Old Testament

Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses)

1. Before Moses (Genesis)
 - From Creation to the Flood
 - From the Flood to Abraham
 - Abraham, father of the nation of Israel
 - Isaac
 - Jacob (Israel), the father of the twelve tribes
 - Joseph
2. Israel under Egyptian bondage
 - Call of Moses
 - The Exodus
3. Period of Wilderness Wandering (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
 - At Sinai, the Commandments
 - From Sinai to Moab, Death of Moses

Historical Books

1. Israel under Joshua and the Judges
 - Taking possession of the promised land
 - The oppression of Israel's enemies and God's deliverance through judges.
2. Monarchy (1 Samuel 9-1 Kings 11)
 - Saul
 - David
 - Solomon
3. The Divided Kingdom (1 Kings 12-2 Kings 15)
 - Kingdom of Judah lasts from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, a continuous dynasty. The fall of the kingdom into Babylonian captivity in 607 B.C. The captivity lasted 70 years.
 - Kingdom of Israel lasts from Jeroboam to Hoshea. There were nine dynasties. Israel fell to Assyria and was carried away in 722 B.C.
4. After the Exile (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther)

- Fall of Babylon and restoration of Israel under Cyrus in 537 B.C.
- Temple and Jerusalem rebuilt under the labor of Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah.

Hebrew Poetry

1. Job. Deals with the problem of suffering.
2. Psalms. Song and prayer book of the Bible.
3. Proverbs. Wisdom from Solomon.
4. Ecclesiastes. Deals with the purpose of life.
5. Song of Solomon. Deals with the beauty of married love.

Prophecy

Major

- Isaiah, prophet of redemption.
- Jeremiah, the weeping prophet who saw the destruction of Jerusalem.
- Ezekiel.
- Daniel, prophet of the exile.

Minor Prophets

- Prophets of Judah: Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk.
- Prophets of Israel: Amos, Jonah, Hosea, Micah.
- Nahum prophesies of Nineveh.
- Obadiah prophesies of Edom.
- After the Exile: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

The New Testament

The Gospels, biographical of Jesus

1. Matthew, the gospel for the Jew.

2. Mark, the gospel for the Roman.
3. Luke, the gospel for the Greek.
4. John, the gospel for all.

Acts of the Apostles, history

1. Jerusalem the center and Peter is the focus (Chapters 1-12). Beginning of the church.
2. Antioch the center and Paul the focus (Chapters 13-28) Missionary journeys.

Paul's Epistles

1. First epistles (51-52 A.D.): 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
2. Doctrinal epistles (56-57 A.D.): Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians.
3. Prison epistles (62-63 A.D.) from Rome: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
4. Pastoral epistles (66-67 A.D.): 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

Epistle to the Hebrews (anonymous, but likely Paul)

General Epistles

1. James (perhaps 45 A.D.)
2. 1 and 2 Peter
3. 1, 2 and 3 John
4. Jude

Prophetical Book: Revelation.

Comments about the Bible

The bible is a collection of 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. About 40 different men wrote these 66 sections. The writers lived in Europe, Asia and Africa and came from quite different backgrounds, doing their writing over a period of 1600 years.

The Old Testament writings came from about 1445 to 400 B.C. by about 32 men. It is made up of 5 books of law, 12 books of history, 5 books of poetry, 5 books of major prophecy and 12 books of Minor Prophets. It is mostly written in Hebrew, but a small amount in Daniel is written in Aramaic.

The New Testament writings were done from about 45 to 98 A.D. by 8 or 9 writers. It is made up of four books on the life of Jesus Christ, one

book on the story of the first century church, 21 letters to churches and individuals, and one book of prophecy. It was written in common Greek language.

The Old Testament was written on stone, clay, wood, and leather. The New Testament was written on papyrus, parchments and paper. None of the original manuscripts are in existence today. There are 5,480 total manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. About 4,200 manuscripts date from the 9th to the 15th centuries, written in cursive style and called miniscules. There are about 360 older manuscripts in the uncial style (all capitals with no spaces or punctuation).

Three of the oldest and almost complete manuscripts in the uncial style date from 350 to 400 and are on vellum (fine grained skins). They are the Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus.

The Vaticanus manuscript (abbreviated as codex B) is very rare in that it is practically complete and is all written in Greek. It is in the Vatican library at Rome and has been there since 1401. It has 759 leaves of the finest vellum. Some of the missing leaves are: Genesis 1-46; Psalms 106—136; Hebrews 9-13; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus and Revelation. It is considered to be the most exact of the New Testaments known today. It is the oldest of the uncials, which are written in all capital Greek characters. Our New Testament Greek texts of today rely heavily on this Vaticanus codex B.

The Sinaiticus manuscript (abbreviated as codex Aleph). It gets its name from Mt. Sinai, where Constantine Tischendorf found it in 1844 at St. Catherine's monastery. The codex Aleph was given to the Russian czar in the decade of 1660. In 1933 the Soviet authorities sold it to the British for 100,000 pounds, and it has remained in the British Museum for the last 67 years. The New Testament is complete, but parts of the Old Testament had dropped off prior to the time that Tischendorf found it. The writing is in four columns per page, done in clear Greek handwriting and is written with all capital letters..

The Alexandrinus manuscript (abbreviated codex A) takes its name from Alexandria, Egypt, from where it originated in the fifth century. A high Greek Church official made a gift of it to James I of England, and later Charles I received it. It has remained in the British Museum since

1627. It is written in all uncials and contains most of the Old and New Testaments. About 40 of the leaves have dropped off. It is not considered to be as high quality as the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts.

One of earliest known fragments of New Testament writing is on papyri found in Egypt. Scholars date p52 as early as 125 A.D. It contains a portion of John 18:31-33 on one side and John 18:37, 38 on the other. This proves that the apostle John's gospel was in circulation in Egypt in the few years following his death in 98 A.D. This papyrus was found in 1920 and is in the Rylands Library in Manchester, England.

In all there are now 115 papyri dated prior to the fourth century A.D. They have been quite valuable in helping scholars to identify the Greek text of the New Testament.

Selected portions of the four gospels, Acts, and of certain epistles were copied from manuscripts for readings in public worship services. These copies were considered to be extremely accurate because they were designed for use in the worship of God and because of their early date. These selected written Scriptures are called

lectionaries. There are over 1800 of such sections done in both uncials and cursives (miniscules).

People who did not know the Hebrew of the Old Testament or the Greek of the New Testament needed a translation into their tongue. The Christians used the Septuagint, which is a translation in Greek of the entire Hebrew Scriptures. It was known to be in existence as early as 200 B.C. The Greek New Testament was translated into:

- Syriac versions (old Syriac and Peshitta, early 2nd century)
- Latin versions (old Latin and Jerome's Latin Vulgate in the 380s)
- Coptic version (2nd century Egyptian vernacular)
- Ethiopic and gothic versions (4th century translations)
- Armenian version (5th century translation)
- Arabic and Slavic versions (9th century translations)

The demand for early versions testifies to the wide spread respect the early Christians had for the Scriptures.

Understanding the Old and New Testaments

The word we use for testament (διαθηκη) is better-translated "covenant" than "testament." The word describes a legal, binding relationship between two parties. A covenant between two nations may be considered a treaty; a covenant between two businesses would be a contract; and a covenant between a husband and wife would be a marriage contract or covenant. When a ruler and his subjects were the parties to a covenant, such a covenant served as a national constitution and spelled out the responsibilities of the ruler and the ruled. It should not be surprising that God used this word "covenant" to clarify the legal relationship he established with his people.

The Mosaic Law was given in the form of a covenant that a Ruler would establish with His people. This Law spoke to those who were in the covenant and under the law of the covenant (Rom. 3:19). The Ten Commandments, written on tablets at Sinai, gave the words of the old covenant (Ex. 34:27,28; Deut. 4:13; 9:11). The Law detailed the promises and obligations of

both parties. The individual laws are details of the covenant, rules that govern the relationship. The covenant made at Horeb (Sinai) was never made with the fathers of the Israelites who were at Sinai (Deut. 5:1-5). Nor did this covenant apply to the Gentile nations who never entered into a covenant relationship with Jehovah. Specifically, the Old Testament was addressed only to the nation of Israel or the Jews (Ex. 20:1,2).

By her sin and unfaithfulness to the Lord, Israel did not continue in that covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13). God determined to make a new covenant with His people, a covenant established by the blood of Jesus Christ. This covenant was for all people, Jew and Gentile alike, and invited all who wished to come under the covenant by faith obedience to the gospel. The establishment by the blood of Christ of the second covenant made the first obsolete (Heb. 8:13; 10:8-10).

Two Extremes:

Those who say that the Old Testament is equally binding with the New.

Those who say we have no practical need for the OT.

The Truth:

The covenant law of the OT has been made obsolete, but there are many things in the Old Testament that are for our learning, so that we will know how to live for the Lord.

The Purpose and Value of the Law or Old Testament:

- Rom. 15:4 "written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."
- 1 Cor. 10:11 "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come." (Cf. 10:6; Jude 5).
- Gal. 3:19 "What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."
- Gal. 3:24 "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."
- 2 Tim. 3:16,17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- Acts 3:18 "this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer." (See Luke 24:27,44; Acts 10:43; 1 Cor. 15:3,4).
- Heb. 10:1 "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are to come..." The priesthood, tabernacle, and the offerings find their antitypes in the NT (Hebrews 9,10).
- Heb. 12:1 "such a great cloud of witnesses" who testify to us that our faith is not in vain and that we can be victorious through faith and obedience.

Many important truths revealed in the New Testament are based upon events of the past and recorded in the Old Testament. "In the Old the New is enfolded, while in the New the Old is unfolded." How could we understand these things without knowledge of the OT:

- the glory of Solomon (Matt. 6:29)
- the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6)
- Lot's wife (Luke 17:32)
- the lifted up serpent (John 3:14)
- Esau's birthright (Heb. 12:16)
- Noah's ark (1 Pet. 3:20,21)
- praying of Elijah (James 5:17,18)
- burning bush (Acts 7:30)
- details of creation (Genesis 1,2)
- the fall (Genesis 3)

While the laws, details, of the OT have been made obsolete, that does not mean that the truths of the OT are any less true. There are many principles taught in the OT which must surely be believed such as the infinite nature of God, the creation of the universe, the accountability of man to God, the mercy of God, etc. Many of the moral laws of the Old Testament are assumed in the New. We understand many concepts such as sexual immorality based on definitions from the OT.

The Old Testament Law of God Has Been Done Away

1. The Old Testament (the Law of Moses) was addressed only to the Jews (Deut. 5:1-3; Ex. 20:1,2; cf. 14:21-31). Paul said that the Gentiles do not have the Law (Rom. 2:14) and that the Law speaks only to those that are under the Law (Rom. 3:19). Paul did not consider himself under the Law (of Moses) but under the Law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

2. The Old Testament Law did not offer absolute salvation from sins. Only by the shedding of blood can sin be forgiven (Heb. 9:22). But the blood offered under the OT could not take away sin (Heb. 9:11,12; 10:3,4). Only the blood of Christ can forgive sin (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 7:18-25; 9:15). "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39).

3. The Old Testament Law was taken out of the way to make way for faith in Christ. (Gal. 3:15-29) The Law served as a tutor to lead us to Christ; but now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Those who want to be

under the Law are under slavery rather than free (Gal. 4:21-31). Those who bind the Law on Christians sever themselves from Christ and have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:1-4); this is the perversion of the gospel Paul speaks about in Gal. 1:6-9.

4. The Old Testament Law was abolished so that Gentiles may draw near to God (Eph. 2:11-18). The OT law is described as a barrier, a dividing wall of hostility that had to be destroyed so that Christ could make "one new man out of

the two, thus making peace." Through Christ both circumcised and uncircumcised have access to God. (See also Col. 2:14-16).

5. Christians die to the Law so that they may be joined to Christ (Rom. 7:1-7). Christians serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

6. Christians are servants of a new covenant (2 Corinthians 3). Paul contrasts the old covenant made at Sinai with the new covenant made with all men through the blood of Christ.

old covenant (14)	new covenant (6)
tablets of stone (7)	tablets of human hearts (3)
servants of the letter (6)	servants of Spirit (6)
letter kills	Spirit gives life (6)
ministry of death engraved in stone	ministry of the Spirit (7,8)
fading glory	more glory, abounding (8,9)
ministry of condemnation	ministry of righteousness (9)
no glory	remains in glory (9,10)
Moses veiled (13,14)	Christ removes veil (16)
readers of Moses hardened (14)	liberty in Christ (17)
veils Christianity	unveiled

Must We Have Bible Authority?

1. We are living in times in which the Bible is being challenged as the one, genuine source of religious truth.

- the challenge of belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible
- the questioning of authority--all authority, including that of the Scriptures
- the challenge to the all-sufficiency of the Bible
- the challenge of living in a pluralistic society
- the challenge of a "new hermeneutic," a new way of interpreting the Scriptures to allow broad freedoms
- the renewed interest in grace and the belief that grace makes what you believe irrelevant
- the renewed interest in unity; belief that the churches of Christ are one denomination among many--the question of "who is a Christian?" has become important

- the challenge of man's methods to God's ways--the arising of church growth dominance

2. These challenges are coming not from the religious world outside churches of Christ but are now coming from our own pulpits.

- some are speaking out about what "they think" or "they believe" or what "they feel"
- these are bright, intelligent, articulate, educated men who are making these challenges
- they have forgotten that the only, genuine source of truth we have is in the Word of God

3. Our purpose is to examine what is being said and ask "Is this what the Bible teaches?"

- Acts 17:11 Bereans considered noble for studying the Bible, checking out Paul and Silas
- 1 Thess. 5:21,22 "examine everything carefully"

- 1 John 4:1 we have responsibility to test the spirits
- Rev. 2:2 Ephesians commended for testing those who claimed to be apostles and were not
- Titus 1:9 qualification of an elder is that he hold fast to the faithful word so that he can refute those who contradict the teaching (see v. 10)

What is Bible Authority?

1. Jesus has all authority Matt. 28:18
2. Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles to teach them all things and guide them into all truth John 14:26; 16:12,13
3. The Scriptures are the writings of the apostles and prophets, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit
 - 1 Cor. 14:37 commandment of the Lord
 - 1 Thess. 2:13 preached the word of God's message
 - 2 Pet. 1:20,21 speaking of his own prophecy, Peter says that He was moved by the Holy Spirit
4. The authority of the Bible is in the fact that it comes from God through the Holy Spirit--the Scriptures are not the work of men but of God!

Why the Bible must be our Authority!

1. Matt. 7:21-27 because obedience to the teaching of Jesus is what distinguishes the wise man that survives and the foolish man who fails.
 - Some who think they are right with God are not right!
 - it does matter what we believe and how we live
2. John 12:47,48 Jesus' teaching is the standard by which we will be judged on the last day--Rev. 20:11-12
3. John 8:31,32 we must abide in the teaching of Christ to be true disciples and to be set free
4. 2 Tim. 2:15 we must handle the word of truth accurately
5. 1 Tim. 4:16 to insure our salvation and the salvation of those that hear us
6. Tit. 1:9,10 elders have a responsibility to guard the flock, hold fast the word of truth, and to refute those who contradict its message

7. Gal. 1:6-9 to preach a different gospel from that which is taught is to be condemned--anathema

8. 2 John 9-11 the Christian is to abide in the teaching of Christ; to do otherwise is to lose our relationship with God; we must not support false teachers

- to "go too far" or "go beyond" is to add new teachings
- no one has the right to add new doctrines to the word of God (whether on the deity of Christ or anything else)

Our task is to hear and do God's will, not our own will; we can be sure of the New Testament; we cannot be sure of any other source of authority. When men suggest ideas, we must examine them and ask if their teaching is Scriptural--this is noble (Acts 17:11).

Can We All Understand the Bible Alike?

There are a number of popular beliefs being taught about the Bible that we need to explore--perhaps you have heard people say some of them:

- The Bible is not meant to be understood.
- The Bible says different things to different people
- What is important is not so much what the Bible says but what the Bible says to me.
- The New Testament addressed the culture of the first century and really doesn't speak to us.
- It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere.
- You can make the Bible say anything you want it to.

One idea that seems to keep floating around is, "Take a passage of Scripture and read it to a group of people. There will be as many interpretations of that passage as there are people in that room." Is this really true?

- Was the Bible meant to be understood?
- Was the Bible intended to be understood alike?

Men Can See the Bible Alike

The Bible Was Written To Be Understood

Deut. 30:11-14 the word is not out of reach.

- 31:9-13 to be read to men, women, children every seven years, an enduring process
- It was to all Israel: smart, dumb, conservatives, liberals
- those who didn't know it were expected to learn it

Luke 1:1-4 Luke carefully investigated the life of Jesus that you might know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

2 Cor. 1:13 Paul wrote no other thing but what you can understand.

Eph. 3:3-4 Paul wrote so that "you can understand when you read."

1 John 2:21 John said Christians can know the truth and can distinguish a lie.

God Intended For Men to Understand the Bible Alike

Gal. 1:6-9 There is one gospel and no other. Eph. 4:4-5 There is one faith--system of belief. 1 Cor. 1:10 We are to be of the same mind and judgment.

The commands of obedience to Jesus Christ are universal. (Acts 17:30; 1 Tim 2:3,4). God desires all to come to a knowledge of the truth. God expects all men to come to the same understanding of Jesus Christ and to be obedient to the gospel.

- John 8:24 Jesus is the Messiah, and our salvation is dependent upon our believing the right thing about him.
- Gal. 5:1-4 Some fell from grace and were severed from Christ because they bound the Law in addition to gospel.

What kind of God says, "be of the same mind" and composes a Bible that says different things to different people? If we say that God cannot communicate clearly, what are we saying about God? A simple math lesson teaches the principles of addition; all that are in the class are expected to arrive at the same, correct answer. We assume that normally intelligent people would arrive at the same answer if they understood the principles. If someone came up with a wrong answer, we do not assume the book

is wrong, but that the person needed further teaching. So it is with the Bible.

If People Understand the Bible Differently, The Problem is With the People Not With the Bible

God wrote to us what he wanted us to know. Whatever He wrote was for our best interests. It is the truth that makes us free, but we have an obligation to abide in God's word.

Why Men Differ in Understanding the Bible

(J. D. Thomas, *Heaven's Window*, pp. 66-71.)

Laziness: Some do not study; they assume what they think the Bible should say based on poor knowledge. (2 Pet. 3:16-18; Ezek. 34:1-10; Hosea 4:6)

Wishful thinking: Some want it to say something so badly they assume it does say it and reject other views--this is especially true of doctrines surrounding salvation. (1 Cor. 6:12-20; 1 Tim. 1:3,4; Matt. 7:21-23)

Personal Prejudice: Some hold a doctrine because they have been taught it; the Pharisees held to the tradition of their fathers and put it before the Law or Jesus. (John 7:47-49; 9:28-34; Mark 7:1-13)

Unteachable because of pride: Some are unwilling to admit they are wrong and are unapproachable. (2 Pet. 2:10-20; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Matt. 6:3)

Emotional Bias: Some hold such a love for a teacher that they not consider that their mentor could possibly be wrong. Some have "Preacheritis!" There was only one Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Mark 3:1-6; 3:22-24)

Vested Interest: Some teach what they are paid to teach, whether it is right or not. Titus 1:10-11; 1 Tim. 6:3,4; 2 Tim. 4:3,4

Dishonest: Some have no integrity or regard for truth, so they handle the Bible dishonestly. (1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Thess. 2:8-12; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:13-15)

Faulty Logic: Some people do not reason correctly; they may miss the point; they may reach conclusions before they get all the facts; or they may not see the need for sound reasoning. (2

Pet. 3:16; Mark 6:14-16; Luke 6:6-11; 1 Tim. 6:20-21)

Lack of Thoroughness: Many people do not fully explore a subject before they form a doctrine in their mind. There is a difference between a truth and the whole truth. (John 7:40-44; Matt. 22:23-33)

Regard for Human Authority: Some favor a teacher, a commentary, a church council, or a creed book over plain Bible truths. (Matt. 15:1-14; Gal. 1:6-9; John 12:48)

Self-deception: People when they select their beliefs have filters to keep out things they do not wish to believe. If one tells himself a lie long and loudly enough, one will believe it. (2 Thess. 2:8-12; 2 Tim. 4:3,4)

Basic Rules of Bible Study

Correctly understanding the Scriptures means that there are certain, basic rules that must be followed. The Bible must speak for itself and should never be made to say things that were never intended by the writers. Solomon urges us to "Buy the truth and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Prov. 23:23). The Lord expects us to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Listed below are some basic instructions in how to understand the Bible correctly.

1. *Familiarize yourself with the sixty-six books of the Bible.* The Bible is actually a library of books. Note that there is an Old Testament and a New Testament, which are written to different audiences. The OT addressed the nation of Israel or the Jews, while the NT is addressed to Christians, both Jews and Gentiles. The books of the Bible are written in different styles of literature: history, narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophetic, exhortation, and apocalyptic. The Bible was written over a period of 1600 years by forty different authors who lived in a variety of places. Each book has its own historical and cultural setting.

2. *Select good Bible study helps.* It will help you greatly to acquire a Bible dictionary, a Bible atlas, and a concordance. These tools will help you define people, places and things that may be

unfamiliar to you. The concordance will give you the passages, which have the key terms you are studying.

3. *Read each individual passage in its context.* Each passage of each book has a context in which it is to be read and understood. Many passages are misunderstood because the reader has never taken time to investigate the context of the Scripture he is reading. Some questions he must ask of the passage:

- Who is writing the passage?
- To whom is the author writing? Not everything in the Bible is written to every person. The OT was written to Jews, and the NT was written to Christians.
- When was the passage written?
- What was the author's intent and purpose in writing? The direct or literal sense of a sentence is the meaning of the author, when no other is indicated; not any figurative, allegorical, or mystical meaning.
- What circumstance may have prompted the writer to give rise to this lesson?
- What kind of literature is he using to make his message known?
- What are the historical and cultural circumstances that bear on this passage?
- What would this message mean to its original recipients?

To interpret a passage and not regard its context is to misinterpret it; to interpret it contrary to its context is to teach falsehood for truth. The meaning of a word or phrase in a later book of Scripture is not to be transferred to an earlier book, unless required by the context. There are four circles of context:

The Historical-Cultural Circle of Context. Many concepts are not properly understood when one does not think about the customs of the people and the historical circumstances of the time. Further, since the OT was written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic and the NT was written in Greek, the sense of a sentence, and the relation of one sentence to another, must be determined according to the grammar of the language in which it is written.

The Biblical Circle of Context. Because the whole Bible is the product of inspiration, no two passages of Scripture conflict or contradict one

another. No two passages should be thought to teach contrary doctrines. Often the problem is that the reader has not studied enough to see how the passages harmonize with each other. The meaning of NT words and phrases are often influenced by the OT and should be determined in harmony with OT usage; not by Greek against Hebrew usage.

The Specific Author and Specific Book Circle of Context. Words and phrases sometimes take on a particular meaning whenever they are used often in the same book or by the same author. This particular meaning may not be normally understood if found used in another book or by another author.

The Immediate Context. The most important context for understanding any verse of Scripture is the verses before and after it. The final determinate of the meaning of any word is the way that it is used in its immediate context.

4. *Learn to draw out the meaning of a passage; do not read into the passage anything that was not originally there.* There is a difference between exegesis and eisegesis. Exegesis is the drawing out of the meaning of the passage. Eisegesis is the reading into the passage things that were never there. Those who study the Bible must be careful not to read into it their own personal prejudices or concepts that they think ought to be in the Bible. One must read God's Word with an open mind to learn what He has said and to understand the Bible for what it says for itself. The Bible is always its own best interpreter.

Let the Bible explain itself. A difficult prophecy in Joel 2 finds its fulfillment in Acts 2. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). In Eph. 4:4 Paul says that there is "one body"; this body is defined as the church (Eph. 1:22,23). In Rev. 1:20 John explains that the seven stars are angels or messengers and the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches. There is no further need of wondering. The Bible is indeed its own best interpreter. A plain, clear passage should always be used to make the dark and abstruse passages clear. A difficult passage never denies or contradicts the plain teaching of the Scripture.

The Scriptures admonish us not to add or take away from what is revealed (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; John 8:31,32; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18,19). We must learn to stay within the teaching and observe the teaching carefully, completely, lovingly and accurately.

The Scriptures do contain a law of inclusion and exclusion. We must do all that God commands us to do (Matt. 28:19,20), yet we must also realize that specific commands exclude substitutes and additions. When God told Noah to build an ark of "gopher wood," this excluded all other kinds of wood. When God gives us an instruction in general terms, He allows us to use our common sense to fulfill that command in a variety of ways. For instance when God tells us to "go into all the world," He allows us to walk, run, swim, take a car, take a boat, take a plane, ride horseback, use a motorcycle, use a bicycle, or any other way that we choose. The good Bible student knows how to distinguish between general instructions and specific instructions. He accurately observes the specific.

5. *Take all that the Scriptures teach on any subject.* All the truth on any one subject is not usually in one passage. There is a difference between a true statement and the whole truth of a matter. John 5:24 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." It is true that we are saved by faith, but that is not the whole truth. Faith apart from repentance or baptism will not save (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38).

6. *Recognize figures of speech.* There are many figures of speech in the Bible. Many problems occur because uninformed students interpret a passage literally when they should interpret it figuratively. "It may truly be said that most of the gigantic errors have their root and source, either in figuratively explaining away passages which should be taken literally, or in taking literally what has been thrown into a peculiar form or Figure of language: thus, not only falling into error, but losing the express teaching, and missing the special emphasis which the particular Figure was designed to impart to

them." (E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, p. xvi.).

Important Figures of Speech:

Simile: a comparison of two things in one or more aspects, usually employing the words "like" or "as." Example: "Is not my word like a fire?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?" (Jer. 23:29; cf. Isa. 53:6; Matt. 10:16; 17:2; 23:27).

Metaphor: the comparison of two things without the use of "like" or "as." Example: "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13; cf. Gen. 49:27; Matt. 5:14; 7:15; Jude 12,13).

Parable: a comparison, an extended simile; a short, supposed story from real life that points to a moral or spiritual truth. Examples: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37); The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32); The Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13).

Allegory: an extended metaphor. An allegory differs from a parable, in that a parable typically keeps the story distinct from its interpretation, while an allegory intertwines the story and its meaning. Examples of allegories: the Christian armor (Eph. 6:10-20); the true vine (John 15:1-17); and Paul's allegory of Ishmael and Isaac (Galatians 4).

Fable: an illustration story made by attributing human qualities to animals, plants, and inanimate things. Unlike the parable, which uses characters that are true to life, the fable uses actors that are unreal. There are only two fables in the Bible: Jotham's fable (Judges 9:6-21) and Jehoshaphat's fable (2 Kings 14:9). (The NT uses "fable" as a translation of the word "myth" (μῦθος), which may be defined as a religious story that has no connection with reality and contrasted with an eyewitness (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:6).

Personification: representing an inanimate object or abstract idea as endowed with the personal attributes of a human being. Example: "tomorrow will be anxious for itself" (Matt. 6:34; cf. Num. 16:32; Prov. 8:1; Psalm 19:1; Isa. 55:12).

Anthropomorphism: the representation or conception of God as having human attributes. Example: the Lord God "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8; cf. Gen. 11:5; Psalm 8:3; Prov. 15:3; Isa. 59:1). God, of course,

is spirit (John 4:24) and should not be considered as made of matter (Acts 17:22-30).

Irony: a method of criticizing or judging by seeming to praise or congratulate. Example: Elijah's mockery of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:27; cf. 1 Cor. 4:8-13).

Euphemism: a soft or moderate expression for a more direct and perhaps shocking one. For example, those who are dead are called "asleep" (1 Thess. 4:13 cf. Gen. 15:15; 42:38; Judg. 3:24; 2 Sam. 18:32; John 11:11). Other phrases: "spreading the skirt" for marriage (Ruth 3:9); "them that are afar off" are Gentiles (Acts 2:39). To "uncover nakedness" is to have sex with (Lev. 18:6).

Hyperbole: the intentional use of exaggeration for effect. Example: "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:24; cf. John 21:25; Psalm 6:6,7; Judg. 7:12).

Paradox: the assertion of two propositions as true which seem to be contradictory, but in fact are not contradictory. For example: "but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away that which he hath" (Matt. 13:12; cf. Matt. 5:5).

Metonymy: the use of one noun for another that it suggests. For example, 1 Cor. 11:27 speaks of drinking "the cup," a reference to the contents not the container. Or "they have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them," the writings of Moses and the prophets not the men (Luke 16:29). John turned to see a voice speaking, a reference to the speaker (Rev. 1:12). God so loved the world, not the earth but the people who live in it (John 3:16).

Synecdoche: a form of expression where a part represents the whole or a whole represents a part. For example, "preach the gospel to every creature" would not include dogs and cows (Mark. 16:15). In Matt. 12:40 Jesus is to spend "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," yet he remains buried only about 37 hours, not 72. The apparent discrepancy is solved when one recognizes that in Jewish thought, any part of a day is counted as if it were a whole day.

Riddle: a riddle is a concise saying which is intentionally formulated to tax the ingenuity of the hearer or reader when he tries to explain it.

Samson's riddle is found in Judg. 14:12-20. The number 666 in Rev. 13:18 also contains a riddle.

"Figurative language is a pervasive feature of human discourse. It lends vivacity to expression and adds depth of meaning. In order to understand any figure, one must of course first recognize the literal meaning and then, by reflecting on the relevant points of similarity, interpret the significance of the figure."

How can we know the language is figurative?

- The sense of the context will indicate it.
- When the literal meaning of a word or sentence involves impossibility.
- If the literal makes a contradiction.
- When the Scriptures are made to demand that which is wrong.
- When it is said to be figurative.
- By the use of common sense.

7. *One must come to the Word of God with the right attitude.* Open-mindedness and humility are essential to good Bible study. The point of view that a miraculous event can't possibly have happened will lead one to endless speculation. One must have a good and honest heart if one is to bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). Christians are to "buy the truth and

not sell it" (Prov. 23:23) and so hold a high view of the truth. Christians must also come with a willingness to apply what they learn to themselves.

8. *Apply the message of the Bible to your life.* We ought to bring the message of the Bible home by responding to the passage with our hearts and lives. Here are some questions we can ask the Scriptures that will help us apply them to our lives:

- Does this command something I'm not doing?
- Does this suggest a change in my behavior?
- Does this reflect a spirit or an attitude I'm not manifesting?
- Does this confirm a belief I already hold?
- Does this suggest further study or a change in my beliefs?
- Have I accepted this promise and trusted God to fulfill it?
- Have I seen this promise fulfilled in my life?
- How would it change matters if everyone obeyed this command?
- What would Jesus do in my place?

One has failed to bring home a passage if one has applied the truths of the Scripture to everyone else and neglected to apply them to oneself (Matt. 7:1-5).