

## Personal Bible Study – 1

**Intro:** Learning the content of the Scriptures is important. But more important is learning **how** to study for ourselves.

### 1. Attitude Toward the Scriptures

A. Attitude, rather than intellect, is the key to understanding.

1. Reverence based on the fact that Scriptures are *God's word*: 1 Th 2:13. The words of the Scriptures originated in heaven, in the mind of God, Himself (1 Cor 2:10-13).
2. God has so framed His message that it is accessible to the spiritually interested and obscure to the merely curious or casual observer. When Jesus spoke in parables, He said "*Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear*" (Mt 13:16), but He condemned the masses for being dull of heart (13:14-15).
3. Jesus rebuked His disciples as "*foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken*" (Lk 24:27). The "*natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God*" (1 Cor 2:14).

B. This leads to an appetite for learning, a *hunger and thirst* for knowledge:

1. The apostles, too, found the parables difficult. But rather than depart from Jesus, they sought explanations and further illumination because He had "*the words of eternal life*" (Jn 6:68).
2. The Scriptures reveal God's nature/character/laws/promises; they tell of the psychological/emotional/rational and spiritual make-up of man; they tell of the broken relationship with God by sin and what can be done to remedy it.
3. Spiritual men will "*search the Scriptures daily*" (Ac 17:11) for they know that they provide nutrition for the soul, insight into the mind of God and instruction for how to live properly. By the Scriptures we are thus transformed from within.

C. Many fail to understand God's revelation because:

1. They are satisfied with only following traditions or customs.
2. They think the Scriptures are a product of man and thus filled with error or not relevant to today's society.
3. They are not willing to invest the work that is needed. *There is no shortcut!*

## 2. Seeing the Big Picture: Preparation for Redemption

A. From fables to folklore to fiction, we remember stories better than facts. Stories engage our imagination as we identify with characters, relate to human elements and experience common emotional reactions. *We must learn the flow of the Bible story.*

B. The framework of the Old Testament story:

1. God determines to save men from their sins by providing a sacrifice.
2. This sacrifice will come in human form, but spiritually He will be God's Son.
3. God will create a special nation of men from which His Son will come. A man of great faith, Abraham, is selected by God as the founder of this nation.
4. Most of the Old Testament is the history of this nation, Israel, up to 400s BC.
5. Abraham's descendants (Hebrews/Jews/Israelites) were given a special law to preserve their uniqueness among other nations (Law of Moses).
6. Israel was also given a special land to dwell in so that they might be protected, nurtured and prospered by God unto readiness to produce the Savior. (This basically covers Genesis-Joshua and the Job from "wisdom" literature).
7. Israel, unfortunately, goes through various cycles of rebellion and restoration. God establishes a civil kingdom in Israel, thus entering a period of three kings called the United Kingdom (This covers Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel; 1 Chron. and "poetic" books such as Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon).
8. Eventually this kingdom divides and Israel is split in two. Each nation (Israel/Judah) gradually declines and, as God warned, is conquered and removed from the land (1 & 2 Kings, 2 Chron., and prophetic books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah).
9. Is this the end of God's promise? No, for the people repent and are restored to the land (Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and prophetic works of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi).
10. A long period follows (about 400 years) wherein God has little direct interaction with Israel and no inspired works are preserved. Israel is further afflicted with political and religious turmoil until the coming of a great prophet who introduces the long-awaited Savior.

### C. Tying it all together:

1. Once the overall story line is understood, further details such as people, places, dates are placed in proper relation to each other and are thus more easily remembered. (Melanie has brought a teaching system where children are taught this framework in great detail.)
2. Principles:
  - a. God narrows purposes by promises/prophecy (seed of woman, family of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, family of David, priest/prophet/king, son of Mary/Joseph). This demonstrates His divine purposes in what unfolds and defeats the notion of chance or natural development.
  - b. Satan tries to destroy Israel through idolatry, war, intermarriage, disobedience to covenant, etc. This explains much of the conflict in OT history.
  - c. Prophecies point to something ultimate, complete yet to come.
3. The Law of Moses was a covenant made specially between Israel and God. It never applied to all mankind and today is no longer in force. We must take care how we refer to this covenant and use it in applications to present situations.

### **3. The “Fullness of the Times”**

#### A. The framework of the NT story:

1. When the time was right in God’s purposes (Gal 4:4), the Savior entered the world as God had planned. His earthly life and teaching is found in the “biographies” of Matthew-John.
2. The Savior, Jesus Christ, spent a relatively short time teaching, working benevolent miracles and doing good for mankind. However, He was misunderstood by the very nation that produced Him and should have been the first to welcome His blessings. Instead, they conspired in His execution.
3. All the events that were predicted in the OT concerning Jesus came to pass, and He arose from the dead and ascended into heaven.
4. A special group of men had accompanied Jesus and been trained by Him during His ministry. Upon His ascension they systematically undertook the task of spreading His teaching throughout cities of the Roman Empire. The book which covers this history is Acts.
5. One of Jesus’ greatest enemies is converted and becomes the greatest proponent of Christianity in the first century. He, Paul, also authors most NT books.

6. During the 30-40 years of growth and the establishment of local communities of believers, inspired men wrote personal correspondence addressing many problems of the day. These letters make up the bulk of NT writings. They explain things such as worship, organizational structure, doctrinal positions on various subjects relative to redemption, the character of faith and principles of interpersonal relations.
  7. The last book of the NT, and the one that has gained such attention in our day, is the most difficult book to understand accurately. It is written in a literary style (apocalyptic) that requires much study to master. But it is a book that tells of great trials and persecution that will come upon the people of God as Satan mounts an all-out assault upon the spiritual kingdom that has now been created. The book assures God's people of all time that God's purposes will never be frustrated and His people will be triumphant and victorious.
- B. We must recognize that, like the OT, the NT books are not arranged chronologically. The gospels are not chronological histories as much as narratives that set forth His divine nature. They offer proofs of His unimpeachable works and character. Many of the epistles can be fitted into specific time-frames while others can only be approximately placed.
- C. The NT brings completeness to the OT prophecies and fulfills them in ways that could neither be understood or engineered by man alone. There is ample evidence in the NT that the entire scheme that God has unfolded throughout the annals of human history could not have been created and sustained by humans.

### **Conclusion:**

1. Thus we have one story, woven through the events of human history, unfolded gradually, and told by different authors often living in different eras.
2. Human creativity, collaboration and ingenuity cannot account for this one, seamless, intricate story. It is without contradiction, a quality that is ever-present in the projects of man. It is a story of meaning, purpose and hope for all, regardless of culture and its sophistication or lack thereof.
3. When we understand the "big picture," we will find the motivation to study, to learn, to conform and to treasure this collection of writings from God known as the "Scriptures."