

*HOW TO
STUDY
THE*
BIBLE



and have it
MAKE SENSE

The **BIBLE**

may be compared to a magnificent edifice that took seventeen centuries to build. Its architect and builder is God. Like this beautiful world, the work of the Author, it bears on it everywhere the impress of a Divine hand.

*This majestic temple contains
66 chambers of unequal size –
66 books of the Old and New Testament.
Each of the 31,173 verses is a stone,
a beam, a panel of the building which is
a Temple more glorious by far than that
of Solomon or of Zerubbabel.*

*Would you have fellowship with the
Father? You will be sure to find Him
within the precincts of His holy house.*

– Selected

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Published by:

**Associated Bible Students of Central Ohio
P.O. Box 813
Westerville, Ohio 43086-0813 USA**

1-888-77-BIBLE

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www.biblestudents.com

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

An Age-Old Conflict

The Bible has for centuries been a source of confusion to men everywhere. Many people have concluded that it cannot be a reliable source of information because so many contradictory theories claim to be based upon its contents. The purpose of this booklet is to show that the Bible, carefully studied, can be a consistent, reliable source of information.

Men Need an Authority

It is in the nature of man to want a good authority for his thought and his behavior. In religious thought, especially, it would seem desirable to have sound evidence as a basis for conclusions. Yet, today man faces a challenge in the field of religious thought: Is there a religious authority? Or is every man to believe what he believes with no more evidence than his own personal preference? Actually, there *is* an authority. In practice, few men recognize one.

In this booklet an effort will be made to demonstrate that the Bible can answer reasonably and consistently any question — provided the student learn how to use it. This booklet will endeavor to show that the Bible is, indeed, *the ultimate authority which men have been seeking.*

What is the Bible?

If the idea is accepted that a personal God does exist, then the student must next decide if he has access to knowledge relating to God. The Bible claims within its covers to be the sole source of information about God and about what He is doing.

This booklet, therefore, is based on a very important assumption. It is assumed from the beginning that the Bible is what it claims to be — **the Word of God**. Even if every student does not also make this assumption, it is suggested that he *temporarily* accept it as such while examining the Bible. If its contents do not live up to its claim, he is not obligated to accept it as anything more than another book. If its contents do reveal the answers being sought, he has found what few have found: **THE TRUTH**.

The initial hypothesis that the Bible is the Word of God is made because there is great strength in studying any matter from a positive rather than a negative point of view. Such a position of study allows a person to see intricate beauties which another person might quickly dismiss as contradictions.

It has been for some time the practice of theological seminaries to study the Bible utilizing various kinds of criticism (text, form, etc.). This approach, however, has been negative. It has, in essence, begun the study of Scripture by saying, "What can we find wrong?" The method of study presented in this booklet will be totally different from that which is commonly being practiced, but it should give a *positive* confirmation of the validity of this great Book — **the Bible**.

CHAPTER TWO

Methods of Study

Five Separate Interlocking Approaches

Because man's mind is not capable of retaining and cross-referencing all of the passages in the Scriptures, study which examines one book of the Bible at a time is somewhat fruitless. How can one be certain that conclusions are correct on any question unless he has examined ALL that the whole Bible says relative to that question? After all, if the Bible is the Word of God, its testimony on a given subject should be consistent and revealing from Genesis through Revelation.

In order to know ALL that the Bible says on a given subject, therefore, it becomes necessary to study a single TOPIC at a time. The study of many topics, one at a time, then, can be carefully molded into a larger, comprehensive picture of what the Bible is about.

The first of the five important methods of study, therefore, must be the examination of one topic at a time.

Note: The principles of Bible study outlined here use books as reference material. Many Bible students now use electronic media for study. These approaches are the same regardless of the resources used for reference.

METHOD ONE
Exhaustive Topical Examination

Examination of every Scripture on a single subject was once an impossibility. Now it is relatively easily accomplished. The necessary help is available in either of two large books:

STRONG'S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE and
YOUNG'S ANALYTICAL CONCORDANCE

Each of these books lists every word in the King James translation of the Bible, sometimes called the Authorized Version. Also listed are the Hebrew and Greek words from which they come (with definitions) and other ways in which these same words are translated. Libraries and good bookstores regularly have copies of *Strong's* and *Young's Concordances*.*

As an example of the kinds of benefits reaped from exhaustive topical comparison, note what happens when the traditionally controversial subject of hell is examined. On the page opposite is the listing of "hell" as found in *Strong's Concordance*.

Note immediately that every occurrence of hell in the Old Testament is a translation of a single Hebrew word (sheol) as represented by number 7585 in the right-hand column. Note the definition as reproduced from the lexicon of *Strong's Concordance* shown on page 11.

* Exhaustive Concordances are now available for a number of translations and are also available for computer and other electronic devices. Some newer versions have been abridged and are therefore missing some important information. Be sure to obtain an "unabridged version" to make the most of your studies.

HELL

and shall burn unto the lowest <i>h</i>	Deut 32:22	7585
The sorrows of <i>h</i> compassed me	2Sa 22:6	7585
deeper than <i>h</i>	Job 11:8	7585
<i>H</i> is naked before him, and	Job 26:6	7585
The wicked shall be turned into <i>h</i>	Ps 9:17	7585
thou wilt not leave my soul in <i>h</i>	Ps 16:10	7585
The sorrows of <i>h</i> compassed me	Ps 18:5	7585
and let them go down quick into <i>h</i>	Ps 55:15	7585
my soul from the lowest <i>h</i>	Ps 86:13	7585
the pains of <i>h</i> gat hold upon me	Ps 116:3	7585
if I make my bed in <i>h</i> , behold,	Ps 139:8	7585
her steps take hold on <i>h</i>	Prov 5:5	7585
Her house is the way to <i>h</i>	Prov 7:27	7585
her guests are in the depths of <i>h</i>	Prov 9:18	7585
<i>H</i> and destruction are before the	Prov 15:11	7585
that he may depart from <i>h</i> beneath	Prov 15:24	7585
and shalt deliver his soul from <i>h</i>	Prov 23:14	7585
<i>H</i> and destruction are never full	Prov 27:20	7585
Therefore <i>h</i> hath enlarged herself	Is 5:14	7585
<i>H</i> from beneath is moved for thee	Is 14:9	7585
thou shalt be brought down to <i>h</i>	Is 14:15	7585
with <i>h</i> are we at agreement	Is 28:15	7585
agreement with <i>h</i> shall not stand	Is 28:18	7585
didst debase thyself even unto <i>h</i>	Is 57:9	7585
when I cast him down to <i>h</i> with	Eze 31:16	7585
They also went down into <i>h</i> with	Eze 31:17	7585
of <i>h</i> with them that help him	Eze 32:21	7585
which are gone down to <i>h</i> with	Eze 32:27	7585
Though they dig into <i>h</i> , thence	Amos 9:2	7585
out of the belly of <i>h</i> cried I	Jonah 2:2	7585
who enlargeth his desire as <i>h</i>	Hab 2:5	7585
shall be in danger of <i>h</i> fire	Mt 5:22	1067
whole body should be cast into <i>h</i>	Mt 5:29	1067
whole body should be cast into <i>h</i>	Mt 5:30	1067
to destroy both soul and body in <i>h</i>	Mt 10:28	1067
shalt be brought down to <i>h</i>	Mt 11:23	86
the gates of <i>h</i> shall not prevail	Mt 16:18	86
two eyes to be cast into <i>h</i> fire	Mt 18:9	1067
the child of <i>h</i> than yourselves	Mt 23:15	1067
can ye escape the damnation of <i>h</i>	Mt 23:33	1067
having two hands to go into <i>h</i>	Mk 9:43	1067
having two feet to be cast into <i>h</i>	Mk 9:45	1067
two eyes to be cast into <i>h</i> fire	Mk 9:47	1067
heaven, shalt be thrust down to <i>h</i>	Lk 10:15	86
killed hath power to cast into <i>h</i>	Lk 12:5	1067
in <i>h</i> he lift up his eyes, being	Lk 16:23	86
thou wilt not leave my soul in <i>h</i>	Acts 2:27	86
that his soul was not left in <i>h</i>	Acts 2:31	86
and it is set on fire of <i>h</i>	Jas 3:6	1067
sinned, but cast them down to <i>h</i>	2Pet 2:4	5020
and have the keys of <i>h</i> and of death	Rev 1:18	86
was Death, and <i>H</i> followed with him	Rev 6:8	86
<i>h</i> delivered up the dead which	Rev 20:13	86
<i>h</i> were cast into the lake of fire	Rev 20:14	86

7579. שָׁבַב *shâ'ab, sah-w-ab'*; a prim. root; to *bale* up water:— (woman to) draw (-er, water).

7580. שָׁגַג *shâ'ag, shaw-ag'*; a prim. root; to *rumble* or *moan*:— x mightily, roar.

7581. שָׁגַג *sh'âgâh, sheh-aw-gaw'*; from 7580; a *rumbling* or *moan*:— roaring.

7582. שָׁחַח *shâ'âh, shaw-aw'*; a prim. root; to *rush*; by impl. to *desolate*:— be desolate, (make a) *rush* (-ing), (lay) waste.

7583. שָׁחַח *shâ'âh, shaw-aw'*; a prim. root (rather ident. with 7582 through the idea of *whirling* to *giddiness*); to *stun*, i.e. (intr.) *be astonished*:— wonder.

7584. שָׁחַח *sha'âvâh, shah-av-aw'*; from 7582; a *tempest* (as *rushing*):— desolation.

7585. שְׁאוֹל *sh'ôwl, sheh-ole'*; or שְׁאוֹל *sh'ôl, sheh-ole'*; from 7592: *hades* or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean *retreat*), incl. its accessories and inmates:— grave, hell, pit.

7586. שָׁאֵל *Shâ'ûwl, shaw-ool'*; pass. part. of 7592; *asked*; *Shaul*, the name of an Edomite and two Isr.:— Saul, Shaul.

7587. שְׁאוּלִי *Shâ'ûwliy, shaw-oo-lee'*; patron. from 7856; a *Shaulite* or desc. of Shaul:— Shaulites.

7588. שָׁחַח *shâ'ôwn, shaw-one'*; from 7582; *uproar* (as of *rushing*); by impl. *destruction*:— x horrible, noise, pomp, rushing, tumult (xuous).

7589. שָׁחַח *sh'ât, sheh-awt'*; from an unused root mean. to *push* aside; *contempt*:— despite (-ful).

Following the colon and dash (: -), *Strong's Concordance* lists the other ways that this same Hebrew word (*sheol*) is translated in the King James version. It is interesting to learn that the translators occasionally rendered this word “grave” and “pit.” Finding this information, it is now important to look up *grave* and *pit* to see the Scriptural usage of these words since they are still a definite part of our topical study on hell.

Strong's Concordance lists the usages of *grave* and *pit* as follows: [look for number 7585]

GRAVE		
	And Jacob set a pillar upon her <i>g</i>	Gen 35:20 6900
	of Rachel's <i>g</i> unto this day	Gen 35:20 6900
---->	into the <i>g</i> unto my son mourning	Gen 37:35 7585
	gray hairs with sorrow to the <i>g</i>	Gen 42:38 7585
	gray hairs with sorrow to the <i>g</i>	Gen 44:29 7585
	our father with sorrow to the <i>g</i>	Gen 44:31 7585
	in my <i>g</i> which I have digged for	Gen 50:5 6913
	<i>g</i> on them the names of the	Ex 28:9 6605
	<i>g</i> upon it, like the engravings of	Ex 28:36 6605
	body, or a bone of a man, or a <i>g</i>	Num 19:16 6913
	or one slain, or one dead, or a <i>g</i>	Num 19:18 6913
	he bringeth down to the <i>g</i>	1Sa 2:6 7585
	voice, and wept at the <i>g</i> of Abner	2Sa 3:32 6913
	be buried by the <i>g</i> of my father	2Sa 19:37 6913
	head go down to the <i>g</i> in peace	1Kin 2:6 7585
	thou down to the <i>g</i> with blood	1Kin 2:9 7585
	he laid his carcase in his own <i>g</i>	1Kin 13:30 6913
	of Jeroboam shall come to the <i>g</i>	1Kin 14:13 6913
	be gathered into thy <i>g</i> in peace	2Kin 22:20 6913
	that can skill to <i>g</i> with the	2Chr 2:7 6603
	also to <i>g</i> any manner of graving,	2Chr 2:14 6605
	be gathered to thy <i>g</i> in peace	2Chr 34:28 6913
	glad, when they can find the <i>g</i>	Job 3:22 6913
	shalt come to thy <i>g</i> in a full age	Job 5:26 6913
	to the <i>g</i> shall come up no more	Job 7:9 7585
---->	carried from the womb to the <i>g</i>	Job 10:19 6913
---->	thou wouldest hide me in the <i>g</i>	Job 14:13 7585
	If I wait, the <i>g</i> is mine house	Job 17:13 7585
	and in a moment go down to the <i>g</i>	Job 21:13 7585
	Yet shall he be brought to the <i>g</i>	Job 21:32 6913
	so doth the <i>g</i> those which have	Job 24:19 7585
	not stretch out his hand to the <i>g</i>	Job 30:24 1184
	his soul draweth near unto the <i>g</i>	Job 33:22 7845
	in the <i>g</i> who shall give thee	Ps 6:5 7585
	brought up my soul from the <i>g</i>	Ps 30:3 7585
	and let them be silent in the <i>g</i>	Ps 31:17 7585
	Like sheep they are laid in the <i>g</i>	Ps 49:14 7585
	in the <i>g</i> from their dwelling	Ps 49:14 7585
	my soul from the power of the <i>g</i>	Ps 49:15 7585
	my life draweth nigh unto the <i>g</i>	Ps 88:3 7585
	like the slain that lie in the <i>g</i>	Ps 88:5 6913
	be declared in the <i>g</i>	Ps 88:11 6913
	his soul from the hand of the <i>g</i>	Ps 89:48 7585
	us swallow them up alive as the <i>g</i>	Prov 1:12 7585
	The <i>g</i> ; and the barren	Prov 30:16 7585
	knowledge, nor wisdom, in the <i>g</i>	Eccl 9:10 7585
	jealousy is cruel as the <i>g</i>	Song 8:6 7585
	Thy pomp is brought down to the <i>g</i>	Is 14:11 7585

Strong's Concordance list continues

PIT

slay him, and cast him into some <i>p</i>	Gen 37:20	953
but cast him into this <i>p</i> that is	Gen 37:22	953
took him, and cast him into a <i>p</i>	Gen 37:24	953
the <i>p</i> was empty, there was no	Gen 37:24	953
and lifted up Joseph out of the <i>p</i>	Gen 37:28	953
And Reuben returned unto the <i>p</i>	Gen 37:29	953
behold, Joseph was not in the <i>p</i>	Gen 37:29	953
And if a man shall open a <i>p</i>	Ex 21:33	953
or if a man shall dig a <i>p</i>	Ex 21:33	953
The owner of the <i>p</i> shall make it	Ex 21:34	953
Nevertheless a fountain or <i>p</i>	Lev 11:36	953
----> and they go down quick into the <i>p</i>	Num 16:30	7585
them, went down alive into the <i>p</i>	Num 16:33	7585
Behold, he is hid now in some <i>p</i>	2Sa 17:9	6354
him into a great <i>p</i> in the wood	2Sa 18:17	6354
the midst of a <i>p</i> in time of snow	2Sa 23:20	953
slew them at the <i>p</i> of the	2Kin 10:14	953
slew a lion in a <i>p</i> in a snowy day	1Chr 11:22	953
ye dig a <i>p</i> for your friend	Job 6:27	
----> go down to the bars of the <i>p</i>	Job 17:16	7585
keepeth back his soul from the <i>p</i>	Job 33:18	7845
him from going down to the <i>p</i>	Job 33:24	7845
his soul from going into the <i>p</i>	Job 33:28	7845
To bring back his soul from the <i>p</i>	Job 33:30	7845
He made a <i>p</i> , and digged it, and is	Ps 7:15	953
sunk down in the <i>p</i> that they made	Ps 9:15	7845
like them that go down into the <i>p</i>	Ps 28:1	953
I should not go down to the <i>p</i>	Ps 30:3	953
my blood, when I go down to the <i>p</i>	Ps 30:9	7845
they hid for me their net in a <i>p</i>	Ps 35:7	7845
me up also out of an horrible <i>p</i>	Ps 40:2	953
down into the <i>p</i> of destruction	Ps 55:23	875
they have digged a <i>p</i> before me	Ps 57:6	7882
let not the <i>p</i> shut her mouth upon	Ps 69:15	875
with them that go down into the <i>p</i>	Ps 88:4	953
Thou hast laid me in the lowest <i>p</i>	Ps 88:6	953
until the <i>p</i> be digged for the	Ps 94:13	7845
unto them that go down into the <i>p</i>	Ps 143:7	953
as those that go down into the <i>p</i>	Prov 1:12	953
of strange women is a deep <i>p</i>	Prov 22:14	7745
and a strange woman is a narrow <i>p</i>	Prov 23:27	875
Whoso diggeth a <i>p</i> shall fall	Prov 26:27	7845
shall fall himself into his own <i>p</i>	Prov 28:10	7816
of any person shall flee to the <i>p</i>	Prov 28:17	953
He that diggeth a <i>p</i> shall fall	Eccl 10:8	1475
to hell, to the sides of the <i>p</i>	Is 14:15	953
go down to the stones of the <i>p</i>	Is 14:19	953
Fear, and the <i>p</i> , and the snare, are	Is 24:17	6354
of the fear shall fall into the <i>p</i>	Is 24:18	6354
up out of the midst of the <i>p</i>	Is 24:18	6354
prisoners are gathered in the <i>p</i>	Is 24:22	953
to take water withal out of the <i>p</i>	Is 30:14	1360

Strong's Concordance list continues

Look in the right-hand column for number 7585. (This, remember, means that the Hebrew word *sheol* is the word being used.) This reveals the interesting fact that good men expected to go to hell! Genesis 37:35 shows that Jacob expected to go there and that he thought his favorite son was there! Job 14:13 shows that Job actually prayed to go to hell to escape God's wrath!

Is the value of this kind of study becoming clear? Without pursuing the matter further, it should be becoming clear that the teaching of hell as a place of eternal torment is contrary to the Scriptures — *when they are studied exhaustively and impartially!*

If this matter is studied to its logical conclusion, it will be found that the word "*oblivion*" is the best synonym for the Hebrew word *sheol* and its Greek (New Testament) counterpart, *hades*. Hell is not eternal torment; it is oblivion. It is not only for the wicked; it is also for the good. It is not permanent; it is a *temporary* oblivion, or non-existence, or death-state. (For a detailed examination of every Scripture on Hell, see our publication *Where are the Dead?* offered on page 36) It is interesting to note that such an old and large denomination as the Church of England has recently accepted the validity of this definition of hell.

Another Example

Arranged below are three columns of Scriptures which contain the word "earth." These samplings are purposely listed in three columns to point out the *seeming contradictions*. One column contains Scriptures which state that the earth *will be* destroyed. The second column contains texts which show that

the earth *will not be* destroyed. The last column entries imply that there will be a new earth. Read these texts before proceeding:

EARTH DESTROYED	EARTH REMAINS	NEW EARTH
Matthew 24:35	Matthew 6:10	2 Peter 3:13
Hebrews 1:10, 11	Ecclesiastes 1:4	Revelation 21:1
Zephaniah 3:8	Matthew 5:5	
	Isaiah 45:18	
	Psalms 104:5	

This listing is still based on the idea that an examination by TOPIC is of foremost importance. From this chart, however, it is clear that topical study by itself is not always adequate to eliminate contradiction. Note the importance of *two more methods* of Scripture study: study of Symbolic Language and study by Time Frame.

METHOD TWO

Study of Symbolic Language

It is clear that a literal interpretation of the foregoing texts about the earth results only in confusion and contradiction. When topical study by itself does not clear up interpretation, it becomes necessary to discover the presence of symbolic meaning in the words being used. How is this done?

Perhaps the first test is to apply the obvious possibilities to all of the texts involved. In this case (with the word *earth*), suppose:

- ◆ All words “earth” suggesting *good things* must be symbolic of heaven.
- ◆ All words “earth” suggesting *bad things* must be literal and really mean the earth.

If this doesn't work (and it doesn't), try the opposite:

- ◆ All words “earth” suggesting *good things* must be literal and really mean the earth.
- ◆ All words “earth” suggesting *bad things* must be symbolic and must mean something else.

This does work. Then, a diligent comparison of prophetic texts containing the word “earth” used symbolically reveals that its symbolic meaning is “the political-social order.” Once the correct symbolism is found, it always works. This is, indeed, a comforting reassurance of the accuracy of interpretation.

To show the richness of the information found by utilization of proper symbolisms, it will be beneficial to examine 2 Peter 3 which makes multiple use of this word “earth.”

In this chapter, Peter makes reference to:

- ◆ the “world that then was” (vs. 6)
- ◆ “the heavens and the earth which are now” (vs. 7)
- ◆ and “a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (vs. 13)

Peter here introduces words which we have not yet considered, and the careful student will submit these words — world, heaven, fire — also to exhaustive topical investigation.

Our conclusions, based on the topical and symbolic study methods, clarify this chapter easily:

The “world (*political-social order*) that then was (*before the flood*) perished.” (*But the literal earth itself remains.*) Peter, as he continues, wishes to differentiate between rulers and the ruled and, hence, divides the symbolic “world” into “heaven” (*the ruling*

powers) and “earth” (*the social order*). Thus “the heavens and the earth (*entire political-social arrangement*) which are now (*ever since the flood*) are reserved unto fire (*destruction — of the order, not the people: the earth still remains*). Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens (*new government ruled by Christ*) and a new earth (*social arrangement*) wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:6, 7, 13

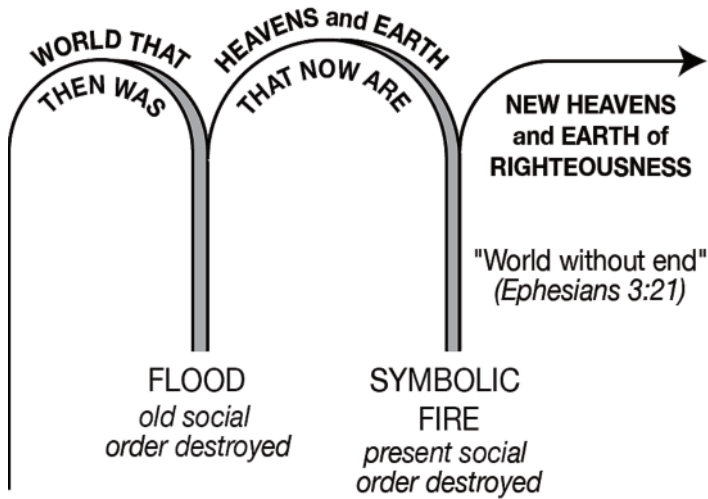
Now (with the proper symbols to eradicate contradictions) the promises of the Bible relative to the earth take on new meaning:

- ◆ The meek shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)
- ◆ Thy will be done in earth. (Matthew 6:10)
- ◆ On earth peace, good will toward men.
(Luke 2:14)
- ◆ The earth abideth forever. (Ecclesiastes 1:4)

The Bible tells a comprehensive picture without contradiction. Though it seemed to say both that the earth would be destroyed and that the earth would not be destroyed, a careful study shows that it was cleverly telling a consistent story. It was using the kind of symbolism President Woodrow Wilson used in World War I when he stated, “The world is on fire!” What he meant was easily understood. The Bible symbolism is just as obvious if it is not approached with preconceptions.

METHOD THREE *Study of Time Frame*

This third chapter of Peter’s second epistle gives an interesting clue about efficient Bible study. We can diagram Peter’s reference to the three worlds thus:



This basic division of man's history into three parts helps in resolving difficulties in texts not clarified by topical or symbolic investigation (the first two study methods).

As an example, note the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. He was caught up into the "third heaven" — an arrangement which he characterizes as "paradise." Paul was not seeing heaven in three layers, but was manifestly seeing, as Peter saw, a third period in man's history under the perfect government (heaven) of Christ (Isaiah 9:6). How beautifully the Bible is its own interpreter!

Further Time Divisions

As the three "worlds" clarify some texts, a more detailed division of time helps the understanding of other Scriptures. For instance, divide the "heavens and earth that are now" (the second world) into three ages based on Scriptural history. One period, from the flood to the death of Jacob, sees God dealing with the

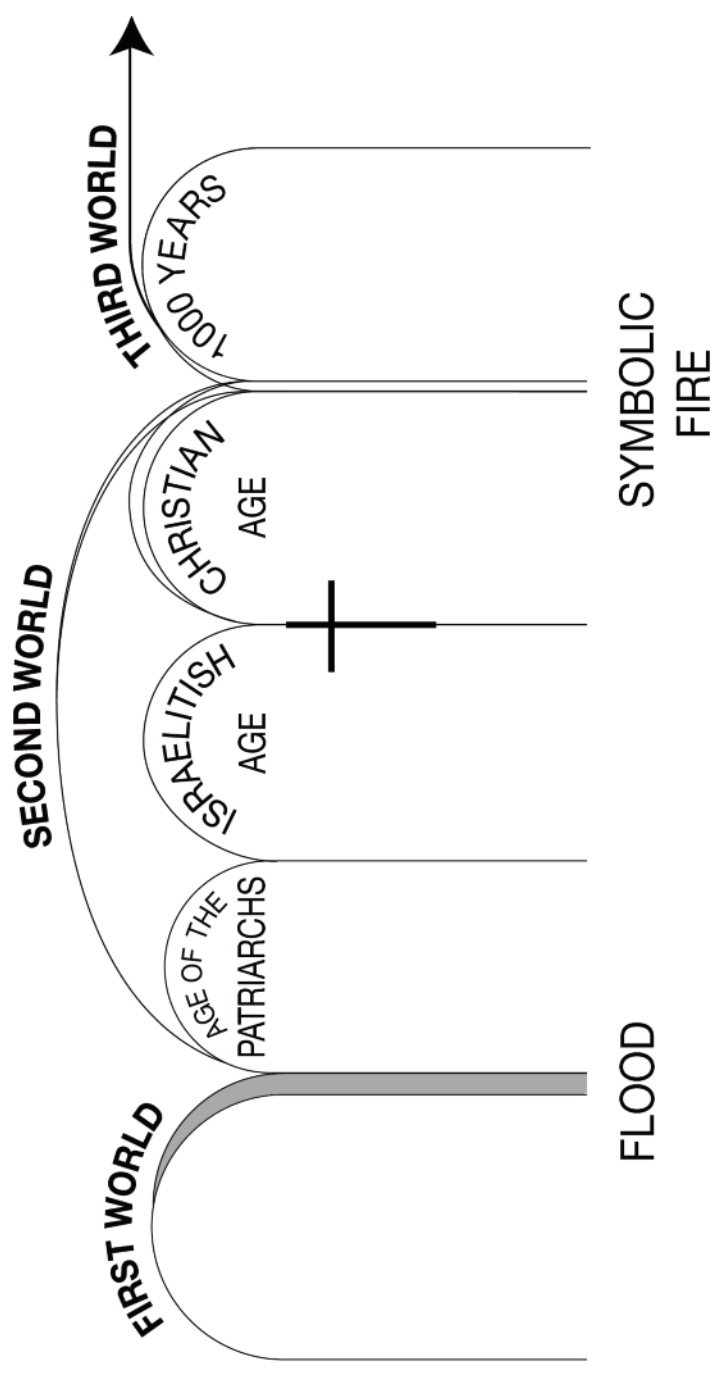
Patriarchs — men like Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — whose descendants became the Jewish nation. The next Scriptural division of time is the period during which God deals exclusively with Israel (Amos 3:2). Following the rejection of Israel (Matthew 23:38) is the age of Christianity. To diagram these three time divisions, see the chart opposite (page 21).

Added to the time-frame chart is the 1,000-year period which apparently begins the “new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” This 1,000-year age is based on Revelation 20 and 2 Peter 3.

This time-frame chart can become a cherished possession. It will clarify many Scriptures and seeming contradictions. Study reveals that *some Scriptures apply only during certain periods of time*. Attempting to apply them at the wrong time results in the age-old confusion and contradiction which cannot be a part of a Bible which is truly God’s Word.

Example of Age-Restricted Verses

One example of a text which is applicable only during a specific period of time is John 12:47. In it the Lord states that anyone not believing him would not be subject to judgment — that his judgment would be for a later age. This verse applies only to the Christian Age. A comparison with Acts 3:20-23 readily shows that conditions of judgment will change when the 1,000-year age of Christ’s second advent is in operation. At that time the rule is “every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.” These two texts would be at odds with each other without a time-frame reference for each. Thus, this chart dispels all contradiction and adds greatly to the understanding of the progress of God’s plan for man.



METHOD FOUR

The Importance of Context

The fourth rule for successful Bible study is the necessity for considering context — large context and small context. 1 Timothy 4:10 is an example for developing this rule of study.

In this text Paul tells us that God “is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.” It is manifest from this Scripture that there is more than one salvation. Therefore, all texts mentioning salvation cannot be lumped together, but must, *by context*, be divided into groupings dependent upon which salvation is meant.

A topical study of resurrection yields some additional help in this matter.

Note:

- ◆ Revelation 20:6 speaks of a “first resurrection.”
- ◆ Hebrews 11:35 speaks of a “better resurrection.”
- ◆ Acts 24:15 speaks of a resurrection even of the unjust.

These are in obvious agreement with 1 Timothy 4:10 when it states that there is more than one salvation.

To simplify the matter greatly, summarize salvation into two major divisions based on 1 Timothy 4:10:

- ◆ the world of mankind — “savior of all men”
- ◆ the church — “specially of those that believe.”

The contexts of Scripture can be studied more carefully when the *two salvations* are recognized. For instance, most of the epistles of the New Testament are clearly addressed “to the saints . . .” (the church). Therefore, to apply the laws,

promises, admonitions, warnings, etc., contained in these epistles to everyone in the world is folly. The world are those who “believe not” and are, therefore, not now under judgment as learned from John 12:47. This eliminates many problems. This is an example of large context.

Small context is a simpler matter. Even though the epistles are written to the church, they contain references to those not in the church. A few verses before and after any text under consideration should clearly indicate if an interpretation makes contextual sense.

Finer Distinctions in Context

In some cases a seemingly definitive Scripture is not really as complete as it might seem. Note Matthew 7:13, 14 as an example. This text on the surface implies that there are only two paths open to men: a broad road to destruction (affecting the majority), and a difficult road to life (affecting merely a few).

This is in disharmony with other texts already examined. God is not the Savior of a few and loser of all others! Why, then, does this text not mention the fact that there will ultimately be an easy road — a highway — when all men (even fools) will be able to make it, as Isaiah describes in 35:8-10?

This problem is not uncommon. The Scriptures often make mention of only a *part* of God’s plan because a specific point is being made.

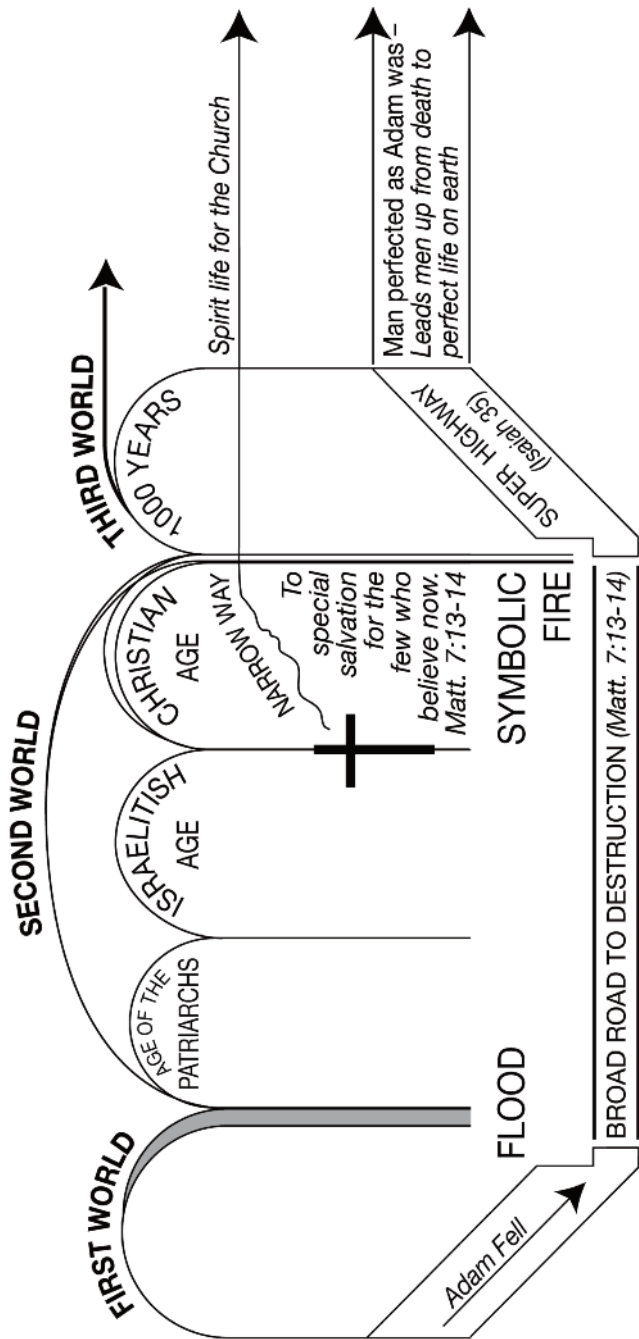
In Matthew 7:13, 14 the context shows that the Lord is speaking to those following him. He is pointing out to them that their choice then (at the beginning of the Christian age), was either to follow him as believers (and thus be heirs of the

special salvation), or to follow the path of the rest of the world as they had been doing. That choice would merely result in their destruction, as it would have had they never heard of Jesus. They were already doomed to destruction as are all men since Adam. But Jesus was in no way saying that this was their last opportunity for choice! No, not at all. As shown in John 12:47, 48, if any man did not believe (during the Christian Age), he was not under judgment; his judgment was reserved for a later date — for the 1,000 years of Christ's Kingdom — for the highway that will lead to holiness at that time.

These fine distinctions in context demonstrate the importance of applying *all* of the methods of study available — not relying upon one or two. Each serves as a cross-check for the other.

A more complete visual aid is obtained if we add to the chart the “three roads” from the Scriptures just examined. (See chart opposite, page 25) This shows that large context “*secret*” of the Bible: There is more than one salvation. Not all men travel the same road! All roads do not lead to the same place. All roads are not open at the same time.

The broad road of Matthew 7 has existed since Adam plummeted to it when he disobeyed. The narrow and difficult road for the true Christian, leading ultimately to life as spiritual beings, has existed only since the cross. Thus the Christian receives his lifting up out of the broad way before the rest of men. But in the 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ, the highway (Isaiah 35) will be opened and will bring up from destruction the rest of mankind so that they, too, can learn righteousness. God “is the Savior of all men (on earth) — *specially* (in heaven) of those that believe.” Thus, in the end, His will shall “be done in earth as it is in heaven.”



METHOD FIVE

Study by Type and Antitype

One final method of Biblical investigation must be mentioned at least briefly. In the Old Testament are many events which actually happened but which have significance above and beyond their original import. For example:

Exodus describes the institution of the Passover which involved the slaying of a lamb, the deliverance of the firstborn at night, and the deliverance of the rest of the people in the morning. The miracle would have been great in itself. But in 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul states, "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us," indicating that God meant to make an informative picture of the Passover event. This conclusion is further corroborated by the Scriptural references to Jesus as "the Lamb of God."

A careful consideration of this Passover type and its symbols indicates a remarkable correspondency with what has been demonstrated in the application of the other four methods of study. Jesus (the lamb) dies. His death saves the firstborn (the church) during the night (the Christian Age). The rest of the world are saved in the morning (the 1,000 years) from the enslavement under sin (represented by Pharoah's enslavement of Israel).

This subject of typical/antitypical relationships opens whole new concepts in Bible study!

A REVIEW

Five methods of Bible study have been briefly examined:

1. *Study by complete topical investigation.*
2. *Study of symbolic versus literal statement.*
3. *Study of time-frame placement of Scripture.*
4. *Study considering large and small context.*
5. *Study of typical-antitypical relationships.*

Any one of these methods is helpful. No one of these methods is complete. All taken together will result in Biblical interpretation entirely free from self-imposed prejudice, preference, etc. The Bible will become reasonable, consistent, adequate, and inspiring: **The Word of God.**

If the student will approach the Bible honestly, it will change his mind — and his heart. It is well worth such an honest approach.

In the next chapter is a brief outline of God's plan as revealed by the foregoing methods of study. It is recommended as the most sublime philosophy ever spoken among men. It is boldly suggested as uncontestable — provable point by point by the Scriptures and in contradiction to no text in the Bible.

In short, it is too good not to be true.

Messengers to the Church

One of the greatest aids to Bible study is the help received from teachers which God has used from time to time. (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) Among these are such men as Arius, Waldo, Wycliffe, Luther, and Russell. Each brought to light at least one Scripturally-documented major truth.—Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12

Excellent teachers are an asset, and the student who profits from the teachers' experiences can avoid much stumbling through the Bible. This does not, of course, relieve each individual of the responsibility of proving all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21) with careful and complete study techniques such as are outlined in this chapter of the booklet.

Because good teachers are an asset, the next chapter purposes to present an in-a-nutshell summary of the best thoughts of these teachers. This summary is in the form of an explanation of what God started out to do, what He is now doing, and what will be the ultimate result of His plan for man. This epitome of the contents of the Bible is in harmony with the results of careful study as previously outlined. Detailed explanations of this plan and its parts are available in the book *The Divine Plan of the Ages* offered on page 36.

CHAPTER THREE

The Purposes and Reasonings Behind Creation

Unresolved Questions

In the second chapter of this booklet, samples of study subjects have been used to illustrate study techniques. These samples may have caused questions to arise in the mind of the reader. Some of the conclusions have been:

- ◆ there is no eternal torment
- ◆ the earth will not burn to a cinder, but be forever inhabited
- ◆ the judgment day lasts 1,000 years
- ◆ the unbelievers will have a “second chance”
— actually their first *real* chance

These conclusions are as startling as they are wonderful. They reflect a God who has a character well worth worshipping. Since these conclusions have been somewhat disconnected and abstract in the second chapter of this booklet, it is the purpose of this third chapter to create a unified word-picture of the implications of these various conclusions.

God's Plan

The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning God created." Many have asked WHY God created? — WHY he ever bothered? The answer to this question is fundamental to an understanding of the Scriptures.

"God is love." (1 John 4:16) This thought is the key to God's purpose in creation. If love is characterized by any one attribute, that attribute is the desire and necessity of giving. God is love; God must give. But God was *alone* in the universe! There was no one to whom He could give anything! Thus was born both the concept and the need for creation. God would create so that He could give.

God's creation, according to Scripture, involves more than the earthly realm. Nevertheless, man is an important part of that creation and has a special place and purpose in God's design. This chapter will concentrate primarily on God's dealings with men, as the Scriptures concentrate primarily in this area.

Decisions in Making Man

The decisions in creation were based much on God's attribute of love. When the creation of man was due, God's initial decision involved a problem something like this:

"Will I make man like a machine — programmed so that he cannot make a mistake? Or will I make man with freedom of will and choice?"

The answer to this initial question was readily dictated by God's love. If man were a robot, a machine, he could not receive God's love. Machines don't experience love. For man to be the appreciative recipient of God's love, he must be free, not programmed.

God knew the dangers of creating beings with the freedom of exercising their own wills, but there was no legitimate alternative. God would, indeed, create man with the freedom of choice.

The Nature of Freedom

Freedom is a strange word. Freedom cannot exist without limits. If one man's freedom infringes upon the freedom of another man, freedom no longer exists. Freedom by its own inherent definition must contain limits. But who shall define the limits of freedom? It seems manifest that God, who created man in the first place, is best equipped to tell man his limits.

Thus it was. God created man in His own image — free to reason and choose. And God informed man that he was free with only one certain limitation.

Why Die for Eating an Apple?

Of all possible restrictions to freedom, why did God tell Adam that he could not eat the fruit of a certain tree? (There is no evidence that it was an apple.) It seems God could have chosen a better limitation to freedom than that! Not so! This choice was excellent for one compelling reason: *God wanted man to learn the lesson of obedience.*

Obedience: The Key to a Peaceful Universe

Had God told Adam that he could not kill Eve, the inherent moral power of that command would have been obvious. Adam would not have known, however, that obedience *even when he doesn't understand* is what God wants. Therefore God gave man a simple test of obedience — one in which, on the surface, man could not clearly perceive evil.

God knows that disobedience anywhere in His creation will cause chaos in the universe. God reserves the right, therefore, to extinguish the life of any creature who disobeys. This was the point which He wanted to make: Disobedience results ultimately in death; only this will preserve order in the universe.

How We Learn

God knew that His creatures (since they were not programmed machines) could learn in only three ways: *by information, by observation, or by experience*. Thus the lesson which all of God's creatures had to learn (obedience) must be learned by one or all of these three methods. God is a good instructor; He uses all three.

God gave Adam instruction by information; He warned Adam of the consequences of disobedience. God, of course, was sufficiently far-sighted to know that a free, inexperienced being would not learn from information alone. Adam sinned; and subsequently he died. God's justice is as strict and unchanging as His love is broad. He had to make His point: disobedience will cause death (no exceptions)!

So man is now learning by experience. The angels and other orders of creation are learning by observation. All creation is learning. The lesson is being forcibly impressed upon us all: disobedience will cause death — even disobedience in the simplest, seemingly innocent matter of eating a piece of fruit.

Has Creation Failed?

It was shown that God, out of love, desired to create free beings upon whom He could shower blessings. It was also shown that the nature of freedom requires the practice of obedience to God's

directions, and that God permitted evil (disobedience) to enter His universe as being the only method by which free beings can learn.

But man is dead! God purposed to have a perfect earth populated with perfect men — men who would love Him because they respect Him. God's word never returns unto Him void. His original purpose will, indeed, be accomplished. Once the earth's population has reached the size God determines to be correct, the learning experience with evil will be terminated. Man will cease to die. Man will be resurrected — his original sin paid for (not excused) by the sacrifice of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Meanwhile, A New Creation

Through the Scriptures God tells us that His creative effort would include the creation of a *special* group of beings — an intimate family of His own. This family would be like Him in that they would be *indestructible*.

The Scriptures clearly differentiate between mortal beings and immortal beings. At one time, only God was immortal. Immortality is that condition where *death is an absolute impossibility*. (John 5:26) It is this quality which God wants to give to His special creation, His intimate family. All other beings will be mortal — not dying, but subject to extinction by God, should they ever disobey.

As God contemplated this immortal, intimate family of His own, He fully realized that to create immortal free beings without some safeguard would be to invite the possibility of eternal disobedience in the universe — a possibility which God could not accept.

But God saw a great opportunity in the affairs of the earth. He determined that He could deal with

some people while they were exposed to the terrible influences of evil and thus test their characters and obedience fully. If He could find people who would be fully obedient under evil circumstances, He could trust them under all circumstances. God decided He would make His New Creation, His intimate family, from the human race.

Thus in the Scriptures is an offer to men to follow Christ and to seek immortality. God is *calling out* of the earth the few people who will be His New Creation. He calls them His church. (This is from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means “a calling out.”)

In this process God saw another advantage. Since His church, once glorified as spirit beings, will have been human, they will be very sympathetic toward the experiences of mankind. The church will be well suited for the purpose of helping mankind — raising them from the dead, instructing them up the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8-10), and dealing with every problem as the effects of evil are washed away.

It is for this purpose that God determined that His church would rule with Christ during the thousand years of the Kingdom (Revelation 20:6).

How much greater now is the significance of 1 Timothy 4:10? “God is the Savior of all men, specially (with immortality) of those that believe.” How much greater now is the significance of Matthew 6:10? “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”

The Scriptural Summary

Yes, God intended, and will have as the result of creation, a perfect earth populated with perfect, ever-living men who will worship Him because they love and understand Him. He will also have an intimate,

personal, immortal family of spirit beings like Himself, taken from among men where they will have been fully tested for their immortal inheritance. **What a Plan! What a God!**

The Apostle Paul summarizes this entire matter in just two verses of Scripture (Ephesians 1:9, 10). We quote from Dr. Weymouth's *Modern Speech translation*:

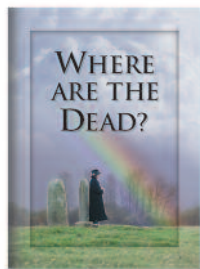
*“ . . . He made known to us
the secret of His will . . .
God's merciful purpose
for the government of the world
when the times are ripe for it
— the purpose which He has
cherished in His own mind
of restoring the whole creation
to find its one Head in Christ;
yes, things in heaven
and things on earth,
to find their one Head in Him.”*

AMEN!

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