

Lesson 3: The Nature of the Bible

Over ____ different human authors wrote in a variety of ways, using diverse *Languages* in different *Societies* and in *Different Geographical Locations* over a period of more than *One Thousand* years.

Bible: The English word Bible is derived from the Greek word *biblion* or *biblia*, which means *Scroll(s)* **or** *Book(s)*.

Scripture: comes from the Greek word *Graphe*. The plural form identifies the *Whole Collection* of sacred writings (Matt. 21:42; 1 Cor. 15:3-4). The singular word can mean either a *Specific Passage* or the *Constituent Body of Writings* (Gal. 3:22). Paul characteristically used *Gramma* (*writing or Scripture*) to refer to the *Torah* **or** *The Law*. In 2 Timothy 3:15 he referred to the “*Holy Scriptures*”

Two major parts: The Bible is referred to in two major segments. *The Old and New Testaments*. Among the church fathers the Latin term *Testamentum* was used to translate *Covenant*, and from there the term passed into English.

The Old Testament was primarily written in *Hebrew* though a few chapters were written in a similar language, *Aramaic*. It is customary in Hebrew to divide the Old Testament into three large segments called, the *Law*, the *Prophets*, and the _____ (Luke 24:44)

The New Testament was primarily written in *Greek* although it is obvious that Jesus and His disciples spoke *Aramaic*. It begins with the four Gospels, Acts stands as an account of the start and ministry of the church, then you have the Pauline letters followed by a group of “*Catholic*” or “*General*” letters. The last work is *Apocalyptic* in nature and was written by John.

The OT is _____ *Books* written over a period of *One Thousand* years. The NT testament is _____ *Books* that were written over a period of about *Fifty* years.

In Hermeneutics (*comes from the Greek word, “hermeneuo” meaning “to explain, interpret.” It is the science of Biblical interpretation.*) **We want to do two things:**

1. *Analyze the text to determine what it means.*
2. *Account for our own situation. (Watch ourselves, be careful in our own presuppositions.)*

Particular challenges in Biblical Hermeneutics

1. *A Distance of Time* – from these particular text to modern time.
 - a. Most scholars believe that the [Johanne literature] was the last NT literature to be written which was about 95 A.D.
 - b. The Oldest portion of the Bible would be the [song of Moses] which might have been 1400 B.C. A record found in Ex. 15.
 - c. Also there is a distance of time and when they were written down.
2. **There is a Cultural Distance** – the times in which Biblical events occurred are different from our own.
 - a. The culture of the Bible was Agrarian
 - b. It exhibited a very strict social strata, kings, slaves, empires
 - c. In the culture of the Bible there was a concern for the community. Today there is concern only for the individual
 - d. It was Non technological
 - e. Not un-superstitious
3. **There is a Geographical Distance**
 - a. The events of the Bible both OT and NT take place in a land that have different names. Israel, Palestine, or Canaan. Regions called Samaria, Judea.
 - b. The events took place in climate that was different than ours. Example: “foot washing”
4. **The Distance of Language**
 - a. Original languages of Bible were Hebrew, Latin and Aramaic.

Prevailing Belief's About the Bible

- Unquestionable *Belief* in the fact that the Bible is God's Word –

Divine and Human

*Scripture cannot be understood correctly unless we take into consideration that it has a **Dual-sided Authorship**. It is not enough to affirm that the Bible is a human witness to divine revelation, because the Bible is also God's witness to Himself.*

Human authorship

- The biblical writers employed the *Linguistic Resources* available to them as they wrote to specific people with particular needs at particular times.
- They were not *Lifted* from their culture or *Removed* from their contexts.
- They share similarities that transcend *Times* and *Places* – (Augustine points out – human beings created in the image of God can have memories of the past, considerations of the present and expectations of the future.
- They were time-related, but not *Time Bound*.
- They were not entirely *Culturally* or *Behaviorally* conditioned.
- They were *Unified* in their message
- They employed various types of *Literature*

Note: Variety does not imply contradiction.

Studying the Bible Inductively

Kay Arthur uses a good illustration of what it means to study the Word of God Inductively. The principles of studying the Word of God inductively go like this...

“If you have ever taken a biology course, you have studied frogs, and you have probably done so through observation.

To thoroughly study the frog, you first go to a river or creek bank where frogs live. You watch their egg hatch and the tadpoles emerge. You see their back and front legs develop and grow, until they look like frogs and leave the water. After observing how the frogs respond to their new life on land, you catch one and observe it more closely. Eventually you take it to the biology lab where you dissect it to see how it looks on the inside. Afterward, you read what other biologists have learned about frogs to see if your conclusions match.

Inductive study of the Bible involves the same process: you begin with the Bible, observe it in its environment, and then take it apart so that you understand it firsthand. Then, when you’ve seen or discovered all you can on your own, you compare your observations with those of godly men and women who have written about the Word down through the ages.

Now it would be much easier to just sit down and read a book about frogs in the first place and forget about traipsing through the marsh, ... But you would end up with only secondhand knowledge. You would know what others have said about frogs, which might be interesting and – you hope – true. But you never would have had a personal encounter with a frog.

Inductive Bible study draws you into personal interaction with the Scripture and thus with the God of the Scriptures so that your beliefs are based on a prayerful understanding and legitimate interpretation of Scripture – truth transforms you when you live by it. (How to Study Your Bible – pg. 8-9)

Begin with the Basics

1. **Observation** – answers the question: *What does the passage say?* If you want to accurately interpret what a passage means, this step must be taken first. Too many times we read a passage of scripture and five minutes later we can't remember what we read. The reason for this is often we rely on someone else to interpret it for us or we just think that we have done our duty for God and that is that. But it takes time and practice to develop this foundational skill.
2. **Interpretation** – answers the question: *What does the passage mean?* And the basis for accurate interpretation is always careful observation. As you carefully observe what the passage is saying, the meaning of the passage becomes apparent. “However, if you rush into interpretation without laying the vital foundation of accurate observation, your understanding will be

colored by your presuppositions – what you think, what you feel, or what other people have said, rather than what God’s Word says.

3. **Application** – Answers the question: *How does the meaning of this passage apply to me?* Usually this is the first thing we want to know when we read a passage but the proper application actually begins with belief which then results in being and doing.

Accurate **interpretation** and correct **application** rest on the accuracy of your **observations**. So it is vital that we develop our observational skills first, so the others will follow accurately.

Observation:

1. Begin with Prayer

Prayer is often the missing element in Bible study, and we can’t overemphasize its importance. No matter how good your method or your tools, life-change and true understanding only come from God.

2. Identify the Context

One of the most important phrases that I live by when studying scripture is the phrase, “Context is King.” The word “context” means “that which goes with the text.” In general, context is the environment in which something dwells, the setting in which something exists or occurs. In other words, context is the words, phrases, and sentences surrounding a particular word, phrase, or sentence. The context gives meaning to the particular word, phrase, or sentence and helps you understand what the author is saying. Context can also be expanded to paragraphs, chapters, books, and eventually the whole Bible. Because context rules in, or determines, the interpretation of the passage, it is important for you to know the context of any passage that you are studying.

For example: What does the word “Trunk” mean? How many usages of this word do we have in our English language?

Trunk of a car

Trunk of a tree

Trunk of an elephant

Trunk that holds clothes or items (luggage)

Trunk (shorts worn for swimming).

*“I remember seeing this huge trunk appear
before the window of our car.*

We had been informed to always line up our

*car in the same direction in which the
elephant was going, in case he charged at our vehicle.
As we saw this trunk swinging back and forth
and the elephant's face coming closer,
we knew it was time to leave."*

Since context is "that which surrounds or goes with the text," the information in this passage gives us a proper understanding of the word "trunk" as it is used here. Notice some key words... Elephant, (used twice) huge trunk, swinging back and forth. From these words we can determine that the word "trunk" is speaking of the flexible snout of an elephant. In Inductive study, context is determined or identified in the same way – by carefully observing what is repeated in the text and seeing how it all relates. If you observe what is said and pay attention to the repeated words, phrases, or ideas, you'll clearly see the context in any book, chapter, or passage that you're studying.

3. Ask the "5 W's and an H"

As you study any passage of Scripture, train yourself to constantly ask:

Who? – Who wrote it? Who said it? Who are the major characters? Who are the people mentioned? To whom is the author speaking? About whom is he speaking?

What? – are the main events? What are the major ideas? What are the major teachings? What are these people like? What does he talk about the most? What is his purpose in saying that?

When? – When was it written? When did this event take place? When will it happen? When did he say it? When did he do it?

Where? – Where was this done? Where was this said? Where will it happen?

Why? – Why was there a need for this to be written? Why was this mentioned? Why was so much or so little space devoted to this particular event or teaching? Why was this reference mentioned? Why should they do such and such?

How? – How is it done? How did it happen? How is this truth illustrated?

These questions are the building blocks of precise observation, which is essential for accurate interpretation. However, If you rush into interpretation without laying the vital foundation of observation, your understanding become colored by your own presuppositions – what you think, what you feel, or what other people have said. And if you do this, you distort the Scriptures to your own destruction.

Practice: to answer the questions, use only what is written in scripture, do not make up your own answers.

*"And after these things Jesus was walking in
Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in
Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him."
(John 7:1)*

Who is this about? – _____
What was He doing? – _____
Where was He walking? – _____
Why was He not in Judea? – _____
When was this action taking place? – _____
What things? – _____

Note: You don't always have to find all the W's and an H every time you question a passage, because they are not always going to be there. For example, the verse we just used did not answer the H question.

4. Mark key words and phrases

(see figure below)

A key word is one that is essential to the text. Key words and phrases are repeated in order to convey the author's point or purpose for writing. For example, notice that some form of the word suffering is used three times in 1 Peter 5. Key words can be marked using symbols, colors, or a combination of the two.

Precept Marking Method

MARK KEY
WORDS &
SYNONYMS,
SUCH AS GOD,
CHRIST, DEVIL, &
SUFFERING

IDENTIFY LISTS

MARK
CONTRASTS

MARK TERMS OF
CONCLUSION

MARK
COMPARISONS

MARK
EXPRESSIONS
OF TIME

DOUBLE
UNDERLINE
GEOGRAPHICAL
LOCATIONS

1 Peter 5 — NASB

- 1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,
- 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;
- 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.
- 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,
- 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
- 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.
- 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.
- 11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- 12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!
- 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.
- 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

WITH EPISTLES,
MARK AUTHOR &
RECIPIENTS
SEPARATELY

MAKE LISTS
FROM KEY
WORDS

Peter

1. exhort the elders v.1
2. a fellow elder v.1
3. witness of Christ's sufferings v.1
4. partaker of the glory to be revealed v.1
5. regards Silvanus a faithful brother v.12
6. has written to them briefly v.12
7. calls Mark his son v.13

Studying the Bible Inductively - #2

5. Make lists

Making lists can be one of the most enlightening things you do as you study. Lists reveal truths and highlight important concepts. 1 Peter 5:2,3, for example, contains a simple list regarding the role of the elder, shown by numbering the items in the text. It is also helpful to make a list of what you learn about each key word or person you mark.

05

Watch for contrasts and comparisons

Contrasts and comparisons use highly descriptive language to make it easier to remember what you've learned. For example, Peter compares the devil to a roaring lion in verse 8. Peter also contrasts God's attitude toward the proud and the humble.

06

Note expressions of time

The relationship of events in time often sheds light on the true meaning of the text. Marking them will help you see the sequence or timing of events and lead to accurate interpretation of Scripture.

07

Geographic Locations

Often it's helpful to mark geographical locations, which tell you where an event takes place.

08

Mark terms of conclusion

Words such as "therefore," "thus," and "for this reason" indicate that a conclusion or summary is being made.

09

Identify chapter themes

The theme of a chapter will center on the main person, event, teaching, or subject of that section of Scripture. Themes are often revealed by reviewing the key words and lists you developed. Try to express the theme as briefly as possible, using words found in the text.