CALVARY CHAPEL
MARTIN COUNTY

Living in the Last Days
Deception vs Biblical Illiteracy
How to Become Bereans
Joshua 1:6-9, Acts 17:10-12, Amos 8:11-12
Matthew 24:4, 2 Timothy 2:15-16

ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996, 2019 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. http://netbible.com All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

The Good News Translation Bible (GNB) text used in this product is being used by permission. Copyright © American Bible Society, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version® Release 2.0. (ISV) Copyright © 1996–2011 by the ISV Foundation. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY

Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible (NRSVue), Copyright © 2021, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide

Scripture taken from the New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: The Contemporary English Version (CEV). ©1995 by The American Bible Society, Thomas Nelson, Nashville TN.

Scripture quotations marked (CSB) have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Taken from the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) by David H. Stern. Copyright © 1998. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Messianic Jewish Publishers, 6120 Day Long Lane, Clarksville, MD 21029. www.messianicjewish.net

Here in the last days as we wait on the Lord and His soon return for the church in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, there is an issue that has been several centuries in the making and at least in this nation, has now produced fruit that is hard to deal with.

Over and over again in the Word, we are told to search, to examine, to chew on, even feast on the scripture.

Joshua, who was given an impossible task to do on behalf of the Lord and supernaturally empowered to achieve it, was given a word from the Lord which all of us today should take to heart.

Joshua 1:6–9
"**Be strong and courageous**, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the Law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may achieve success wherever you go. **This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will achieve success**. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not be terrified nor dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."" (NASB 2020)

There is a key item that we read of here, but for the most part, no longer do in our culture of instant communications and tools to assist us in thinking. That is the idea of meditating on God's word that the Lord told Joshua was one of the keys to success as a leader for Him.

That word meditate, as used in the Hebrew here, is not telling us to go and sit in a corner and contemplate our navels, a candle, or center ourselves and empty our minds. Not at all. The Hebrew word used is הָגִיתָ (hagita) which means a barely audible murmur.

Joshua is told to allow the Word of God to so become a part of Him, that it impacts what he says and how he does life.

As he reads the word, the idea is he is reading it to himself with a barely audible word, meditating on God's word.

Psalm 1:1–3
"Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! **But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, And on His Law he meditates day and night.** He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." (NASB 2020)

The verb hāgâ is normally translated as "meditates," but it should be noted that the term does not imply a strictly internalized, cognitive exercise. It properly denotes a verbalized rumination, because the ancients did not read silently but out loud. (Jacobson and Tanner 2014, 61)

What we are learning and seeing here is that in the past, there was an internalizing of God's word, making it part of who you are.

Years ago, I took a new job and felt wholly inadequate for it, but it was where the Lord had placed me. After praying about it. The Lord led me to read through the Proverbs. One proverb per day and I did that for several months.

I began to discover that in business meetings, I was quoting from the proverbs and using them as a basis for decision making. Yes, as we meditate on His word and make it part of us, His word conforms us to Him and impacts us at ways we never would consider.

And here in the last days, with deception everywhere, we need this as part of our tool kit. Jesus warned us.

Matthew 24:4
“And Jesus answered and said to them, “**See to it that no one misleads you**.” (NASB 2020)

This misleading is not just those who want to exercise political power, but this misleading is taking place all across the spectrum here in the last days.

The news media no longer tells the truth; they spin everything to have you see the world through their lens rather than to see truth.

Advertisers spend time trying to convince you their product is better than anyone else’s but facts? Many times, that is lacking.

We are also seeing, unfortunately, deception in the church. The blinders are off and the announcements of another church or organization now being apostate is more than concerning.

I have witnessed more than one pastor who started off well, but somewhere along the line makes the decision that they want one of the three g’s that I was warned about in Bible school. Gold, glory or gals. The most insidious are the gold and the glory.

We now have serious research taking place as a result of this into the issue of the narcissistic pastor, the bully pastor or the false teacher who disguises themselves as orthodox. Meanwhile, most churches no longer teach the word.

Amos 8:11–12
“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will roam about to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it.” (NASB 2020)

We have arrived at that point in our culture. We are now at the point that politicians are taking scriptures out of context and using them to prove up why those lifestyles the Bible says are evil and an abomination, are instead to be embraced. Yes, they are indeed embracing Isaiah 5:20-21. How do we combat this in the last days?

2 Timothy 2:15–16
“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,” (NASB 2020)

Acts 17:11–12
“Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed, along with a significant number of prominent Greek women and men.” (NASB 2020)

What we are going to do over the next few weeks, is work at preparing ourselves for life in the last days by learning how to study the Bible.

Here on Sunday, we do indeed go chapter by chapter and verse by verse. We do the same thing on Thursdays as well. But if you are like me, you want more. The key to developing a Biblical worldview, is to know the Bible and to know the bible, how do you study it?

As we begin this journey together, I want to make sure we all understand where we as a church stand pertaining to God's word.

Our Premise

We believe that all the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, fully inspired by Him and without error in the original manuscripts. We believe the Scriptures as assembled in the Bible to be the basis on which this church is governed and the standard of her faith and practice and that of every believer. We believe the word of God is living and active and able to divide soul and spirit and judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. We believe that the Word of God supersedes any earthly law that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures. We believe Jesus Christ to be the Living Word and the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. (Isaiah 28:13; Nehemiah 8:8; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:3-4 and 1:21; John 1:1; Matthew 5:17).

- We believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, unlimited inerrancy of the Bible.
- Verbal inspiration means the very words are inspired by God as the Holy Spirit inspired the various authors to write.
- Plenary means we believe the whole Bible is completely infallible and that the words used in the original text are the exact words God wanted. This includes the exact letters and spaces between the letters in the original languages.

One more thing, you and I are followers of Jesus Christ are already equipped to understand what is in the text of the word.

John 14:26
"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, **he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you**." (ESV)

James 1:5
"**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him**." (ESV)

Our Lord wants us to learn His word and to understand His word and to make sure that happens, He has provided us the tools we must have to understand it.

As you move forward on this decision to get to know His word, I learned there are a couple of things that help.

Either a notebook, if you are into analog, or a digital note keeper. There are several voice to text programs out there that can be used if you prefer to dictate what it is the Spirit is showing you.
I use a computer. The key is to create a record of what you are reading and seeing in the text and what the Lord is telling you about the text.

Who was the author writing to? What is the context of the text? What type of literature is it? Is it history, poetry, a letter, and so on.

Something else to remember, when we study the Bible, we are reading a detailed and intricate love letter written by God revealing Himself to you and me. It is personal.

It is a supernatural book with a supernatural origin and there is no way you can separate that out of it.

And about the context, remember this, it is predominately a Jewish book and there are times when you read something it that will not make sense unless you dig a bit into the time period it was written in. Sorry, but yes, history does come into it.

And yes, there are also weird things you will come across as well. More on that to come.

When I became a follower of Jesus, I wanted to know more about the Bible. I asked my pastor so many questions he began to throw books at me instead of answering the questions. This is one of the reasons why I like doing a Q&A after the service, I had questions, lots of them, and most of the time I was not allowed to ask them until I got to Bible school.

There I was with people who had been Christians since they were kids and they knew the word, I didn't. But I wanted to know it and began digging.

Once you have a method of keeping notes, then settle on a Bible to use. I prefer one to hold and mark up. It is yours so mark it up so you know where things are and how to get back to something later.
One more thing, as you prepare, each day when you sit down to read, ask the Lord to reveal His word to you. He is the author after all and He has promised to teach us all things, that includes the verses you are reading today. And if you are still uneasy about the meaning after you read, pray again and ask Him to show you the meaning.

Again, this is why I like a notebook. When you ask Him to show you, write down the date, time and section of scripture you have asked Him to show you the answer to. When He does, and it may be later today or tomorrow and it may surprise you how He does it, write down the answer and the date and time. The reason is simple, when you are going through a trial and God feels a million miles away, you have a written document showing how God has shown up for you in opening up His word to you.
And as you read His word, remove any man made filters that you approach the word with.

I agree with Michael Heiser on this one. "The proper context for interpreting the Bible is the context of the biblical writers—the context that produced the Bible. Every other context is alien to the biblical writers and, therefore, to the Bible. Yet there is a pervasive tendency in the believing Church to filter the Bible through creeds, confessions, and denominational preferences.

I'm not arguing that we should ignore our Christian forefathers. I'm simply saying that we should give their words and their thought the proper perspective and priority. Creeds serve a useful purpose. They distill important, albeit carefully selected, theological ideas. But they are not inspired. They are no substitute for the biblical text." (Heiser 2025, 11-12)

This is where folks want to put you and me into a box of some sort. And if you start buying commentaries to use in your study, you will indeed come across this. Pastor Chuck Smith discussed this in his book on Calvary Chapel Distinctives. We work hard to stay out of a box.

"A classic example is the problem in our understanding of the Scriptures that refer to the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. The Bible actually teaches both, but in our human understanding they're mutually exclusive. People who become divisive on this issue claim that we can't believe both, because if you carry the sovereignty of God to an extreme, it eliminates the responsibility of man. Likewise, if you carry the responsibility of man to the extreme, it eliminates the sovereignty of God. This mistake is made when a person takes doctrine and carries it out to its logical conclusion.

Using human logic and carrying divine sovereignty out to its logical conclusion leaves man with no choices. So, how are we to deal with rightly dividing the Word on the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man? **We need to believe both of them through faith, because I can't keep them in**

balance by my understanding. I don't understand how they come together. But I do believe them both. I believe God is sovereign, and I also believe I'm responsible and God holds me responsible for the choices that I make. I simply trust God that both assertions of Scripture are true." (Smith 2000, Kindle Location 569)

We will go more into this next time. Let me leave you with a tool tip. Something to use to help you as you begin to study the word. David made reference to it and then it was picked up in Hebrews 10 as well.

Psalm 40:7–8
"Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."" (ESV)

Here is the tip, if you are stumped, try making the verse about Jesus. The verses may not be specifically about Him, but it is part of the overall theme of the Bible, the progression and outcome of God's plan of humanity which is in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Yes, I could indeed go into multiple examples of why we need to be studying the scriptures here in the last days. But I think it is more important to learn how to dig in and do so. I have learned over the years that a knowledge of the truth is the best antidote to deception.

Let's pray.

Works Cited

Heiser, Michael S. 2025. *The Unseen Realm: Discovering the Supernatural World of the Bible*. Expanded Edition. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Jacobson, Rolf A., and Beth Tanner. 2014. "Book One of the Psalter: Psalms 1-41." In *The Book of Psalms, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, edited by E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Smith, Chuck. 2000. *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*. Kindle Edition. Costa Mesa, CA: The Word for Today.