



*Foundations for Victory 6*  
*Introduction to Reading the Bible*

# Foundations for Victory 6

## Introduction to Reading the Bible

## I Introduction

The Bible is the bestselling, most translated and most printed/copied book of all time! No other book has impacted human history as much as the Bible. It has introduced countless millions of people to the knowledge of our loving, creator God and His salvation through Jesus Christ. That being said, it has also been difficult for many to understand, because they do not know how it was written and how it is presented in its current printed form.

This will not be an exhaustive course on the Bible, but it will give you the basic building blocks to better study your Bible and get the most out of its wonderful truths.

First, we need to understand that the Bible is not one book, but rather a library of 66 books, written by about 40 different people over a period of about 1500 years and covering about 4500 years of human history. The authors themselves, while human, were not writing their own ideas, they were led by the Holy Spirit in what to write.

The Bible is separated into two parts the Old Testament (Old Covenant) containing 39 books\* and the New Testament (New Covenant) containing 27 books\*. These books were originally scrolls/tablets and had no chapters or verse numbers. The chapter and verse numbers were added later to help with study and referencing and they should not be allowed in themselves to shape our understanding or the way we read.

The Bible was originally written in Ancient Hebrew, Aramaic and koine Greek. All other language versions are a translation from these languages or from other languages that were in turn translated from the original ones.

We will look further into the composition of the Bible later.

(\*We will be studying the “protestant” layout of the Bible)

## II God’s plan for the Word

God’s plan for His Word in our lives is that it be alive and active and that it points us to Jesus and salvation. He wants us to learn and be guided from His Word. God wants us to be washed and transformed by His Word and He wants His Word to bear fruit in every area of our lives.

God’s expectation is that His Word, His promises and guidance will bring about tangible changes for good in our lives!

### II (i) The living Word

The Bible is not just a bunch of words in ink on a page, it is a living Word that is able to bring change in those who plant it deeply in their hearts. It is the living Word that we must use to measure ourselves by and find truth, not by human culture or our own feelings.

*Hebrews 4:12*

*12 For the word of God is **living and powerful**, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

**John 6:63**

63 *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

**1 Peter 1:22-23**

22 *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever*

**We are to live by the living Word of God**

**Matthew 4:4**

4 *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*

## II (ii) Jesus the Word became flesh

**The Word of God, Jesus became flesh, entering the body of a man and walked amongst us.**

**John 1:1-5**

1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it*

**John 1:14**

14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**Just as Matthew 4:4 tells us that we must live not only on bread but on the Word of God, Jesus (the Word made flesh) is the "bread" that keeps us satisfied.**

**John 6:35**

35 *And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*

**Our written Bible, points to Jesus, He is the author and finisher of our faith!**

**Hebrews 12:1-2**

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

**To give an example, when you buy a car, it comes with an owner's manual that tells you all about the car. The manual is not the car, it tells you about the car. Reading the manual is very helpful to get the most benefit from the car but you can't just read the manual, you must at some point get into the car and drive it to get a result. In some ways, we could say that the Bible is like the car manual with Jesus**

being like the car. The Bible points us to Jesus, but we need to not only know about Him, we need to know Him, we need to interact with Him.

## II (iii) The Word teaches us all things

The Bible while physically written by men, was given to us by the Holy Spirit (God), who led the human authors in what to write. As it is from God, it should be the final authority for us on how to live our lives.

### *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

### *1 Thessalonians 2:13*

*13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*

### *1 Corinthians 2:13*

*13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

It is the Word of God that we plant deep in our hearts that brings results, the doing of the Word, not just the hearing or mental memorisation of the Word brings power and freedom.

### *James 1:21-25*

*21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

## II (iv) We are washed by the Word

### *Ephesians 5:25-27*

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

### *John 15:3*

*3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

The Word of God washes us as we use its truths to replace the lies of the world. The Bible speaks of renewing our minds, which means changing the way we think from the world's way to thinking God's way. This renewal is a constant process of reading and placing God's Word in our minds and hearts, so that our response to things is based on God's truth and not the earthly culture we live in.

**Romans 12:2**

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

**II (v) God guides us through His Word, not through hardship**

God uses His Word to guide and direct us, not by causing bad things to happen to us!

God is a good God and He is the author of only good things. Bad things come from the devil who is seeking to destroy us. While God can take the bad things caused by the devil for our destruction and turn them for our good, He did not start the bad things, the devil did. We need to have this clear in our minds, because we will never fully trust a god who we think might hurt us.

**John 10:10** (bracketed parts added for clarity)

*10 The thief (devil) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

**James 1:13**

*13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

**James 1:17**

*17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

God guides us through His Word, through the Holy Spirit (remember that the Word was given by the Holy Spirit/God).

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**John 14:26**

*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 things that I said to you.*

**1 Corinthians 2:9-12**

*9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

When we ask God in faith for wisdom, He promises to give it to us.

**James 1:5**

*5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

## II (vi) How the Word produces fruit – Parable of the Sower

Jesus told stories to help people understand how the things of God work. The parable (story) of the sower is very important because it helps us to understand how we apply God's Word in our lives to get a harvest (results). Jesus even went so far as to say to His disciples that if they didn't understand this parable, how would they understand any of the others!

### *Mark 4:1-20*

*1 And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. 2 Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: 3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. 5 Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. 7 And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." 9 And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" 10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 11 And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.' " 13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. 18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."*

This is a story of a farmer who sows seed that falls in four different places.

- The wayside (path at side of field) – seed eaten by birds
- Stony Ground – plants scorched by the sun and withered away
- Thorney Ground – plants choked by thorns and die
- Good Ground – plants grow and bring a harvest (30x/60x/100x)

Jesus tells us the seed represents the Word of God. The seed was the same throughout the story, it was good seed. The variable was the ground which represents the state of men's hearts. The idea is that the Word of God must be planted like a seed in our hearts. The planted seed of the Word will grow and bring a good harvest (results).

Notice in the story that only one type of ground (heart), brought a good result the other three conditions caused the seed to fail. God's Word is always good but if we do not use it correctly, **we** can cause it to not work in our lives.

## a) The Wayside

This is the hard path at the edge of the field. These people's hearts are hard and so they can't understand the love of God and about spiritual things. The devil steals the Word before it can even enter in.

## b) Stony Ground

These people receive the Word of God gladly, but they never get it deep inside them. It is only an idea on the surface of their minds. There are no deep roots of the Word inside them. When the devil sends difficult things against them, to make them doubt God's promises, they forget the truth and fall away.

## c) Thorny Ground

These people receive the Word of God and plant it inside them, but then they start to focus on and value the things of the world. They focus on their troubles or they start to chase money and possessions. These troubles and money choke the truth of God's Word and consume all their focus so that they forget about the things of God.

## d) Good Ground

These are the people who keep their heart soft to God, they are hungry for His Word and to know His truth. They take the Word of God and they plant it deep in their hearts so that it gets strong roots. They stay focused on God and His truths which help to water God's Word (seed) that is growing in their hearts. They do not focus on problems and money but on God our saviour and provider. These people are the ones that see the fruit of God's Word, His promises happen in their lives.

## But be patient...

Jesus talks further on in Mark 4:26-29, where He clarifies that the harvest is a steady progression over time. We must not lose patience but must remain in faith that God's Word is at work and the harvest will come. Too many people lose patience and "dig up" the seed of the Word in their lives by declaring things like, this doesn't work... When you dig up seed prematurely, it's can't grow and produce a harvest.

*Mark 4:26-29*

*26 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28 For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

*Hebrews 6:11-12*

*11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through **faith and patience** inherit the promises.*

Patience can be defined as faith over time. Not losing our belief in God's promises, even in difficult circumstances.

### III How the Bible is composed (put together)

As mentioned in the introduction, the Bible is a library of 66\* books. In this section we will look at how these books were chosen, how the Bible is divided into Old and New Testament, how the books are grouped by themes and not by chronology (time) and when in history the major events in the Bible happened.

(\*This module studies the “Protestant” Bible layout)

#### III (i) The choosing of the Bible books

The 66 Bible books that are contained in our Bibles today were agreed on at the Council of Carthage in 397AD. The Old Testament was taken as the books found in the Jewish Tanakh. When exactly the Tanakh was closed is debated but the Jewish Historian Josephus in 95AD wrote of the Jewish Tanakh as a closed canon (no further additions).

It’s important to note that no council, Carthage or otherwise dictated which books were to be included, they simply identified which books were in use already and then used a set of criteria to list the ones they considered trustworthy to be acknowledged and called inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The books were acknowledged according to the following criteria:

a) Written by a recognized prophet or apostle

Was the author known and was he a recognised prophet or apostle?

b) Written by those associated with recognized prophet or apostle

Were they written by a known associate of a prophet or apostle? All the 27 books of the New Testament were written by first century apostles, except for Mark and Luke but Mark was a companion of Peter and Luke was a companion of Paul.

c) Truthfulness

If anything written in a book could be shown to be untrue, then the book was discounted. The Holy Spirit would not inspire someone to write something untrue.

d) Faithfulness to previously accepted canonical writings

A book must agree with previously accepted books. God is not the author of confusion.

e) Confirmed by Christ, prophet, apostle

Did Jesus or an apostle quote from an old testament book as the Word of God? Doing so adds weight, that the book quoted from is scripture.

**Luke 24:24-27**

24 And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." 25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

**Luke 24:44**

44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

Jesus quoted from all the 24 books of the Jewish Bible (Old Testament). (Note the Jewish layout is 24 books verses 39 in our Bible. Some books that are separated out in our Bible are combined into one book in the Jewish Bible.)

**2 Peter 3:15-16**

15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

Peter indicates that he considers Paul's writings to be scripture.

**1 Thessalonians 2:13**

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Paul makes it clear that they were teaching the Word of God (scripture), not men's ideas.

**f) Church Usage and Recognition**

Ultimately, what happened was that as these books of scripture circulated, and more and more groups of Christian people were built up and changed for good by these writings, they came to witness together that these writings were from God. The Church used these writings and was deeply edified by them; they were believed over time that they were from God.

[The Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305AD) decreed that all Christians must sacrifice to the Roman gods or be put to death. Christians were also ordered to burn all their books. The early church had to decide which books they were willing to risk their lives for to protect and hide. Those that were kept, were the ones that brought the results promised in them.]

**III (ii) Apocrypha**

Some Christian Bibles have extra books which some refer to as the Apocrypha (another term is Deuterocanonical). I do not consider these as scripture, i.e. inspired by the Holy Spirit. They can contain errors and although they can be used for historical background, they should never be used to define doctrine.

### III (iii) Old Testament vs New Testament

The Bible is divided into two main sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. We could also call these two divisions, the old covenant and the new covenant. We will study covenants in more detail later, but a covenant is a very strong agreement between two parties, often to provide aid in case of attack or trouble. Covenants are much stronger than contracts and covenants were not to be broken.

Within the details of a covenant is the list of requirements from each party. The fact that our Bibles contain an Old Covenant and a New Covenant, tells us that the agreements are not the same. There is a difference between them that we need to understand.

The Old Testament contains more than one covenant but most of it is about the Covenant of Moses. The Covenant of Moses is the covenant between God and the Nation of Israel. This covenant was facilitated from man's side by Moses. The New Covenant was instituted by Jesus, by His death, burial and resurrection. We as Christians are therefore under the New Covenant.

### III (iv) How the Bible books are ordered

The books of the Bible are not ordered chronologically (by time), they are instead grouped by theme and within the theme by length (number of words).

#### a) Old Testament

Here is a list of the old testament books grouped by themes with their approximate date of writing. (Remember that BC dates count backwards to Jesus' birth)

##### **The Pentateuch**

- Genesis (1445 BC)
- Exodus (1445 BC)
- Leviticus (1445 BC)
- Numbers (1405 BC)
- Deuteronomy (1405 BC)

##### **The History Books**

- Joshua (1405 – 1385 BC)
- Judges (1043 BC)
- Ruth (1000 BC)
- 1 Samuel (1000 – 900 BC)
- 2 Samuel (1000 – 900 BC)
- 1 Kings (561 – 538 BC)
- 2 Kings (561 – 538 BC)
- 1 Chronicles (450 – 430 BC)
- 2 Chronicles (450 – 430 BC)
- Ezra (457 – 444 BC)
- Nehemiah (425 BC)

- Esther (475 BC)

### The Poetry Books

- Job (Unknown/old – lived in Patriarchal times – after Genesis 6 in timeline, maybe oldest book)
- Psalms (1450 – 500 BC)
- Proverbs (950 BC)
- Ecclesiastics (931 BC)
- Song of Solomon (960 BC)

### Major Prophets

- Isaiah (740 BC)
- Jerimiah (561 BC)
- Lamentations (586 BC)
- Ezekiel (570 BC)
- Daniel (536 BC)

### Minor Prophets

- Hosea (750 BC)
- Joel (830 BC)
- Amos (760 BC)
- Obadiah (845 BC)
- Jonah (780 BC)
- Micah (735 BC)
- Nahum (661 – 612 BC)
- Habakkuk (609 BC)
- Zephaniah (635 BC)
- Haggai (520 BC)
- Zachariah (520 – 518 BC)
- Malachi (430 BC)

Note: With the prophets the major or minor category refers to the volume/length of their writings, not the importance of the prophet or his writings. The prophets who wrote a lot are classified as major and those that wrote less as minor.

## b) New Testament

### Gospels

- Matthew (50 AD)
- Mark (50 AD)
- Luke (60-61 AD)
- John (80 – 90 AD)

### History

- Acts (63 AD)

**Pauline Epistles**

- Romans (56 AD)
- 1 Corinthians (54 – 55 AD)
- 2 Corinthians (55 – 56 AD)
- Galatians (48 AD)
- Ephesians (61 AD)
- Philippians (62 AD)
- Colossians (61 AD)
- 1 Thessalonians (51 AD)
- 2 Thessalonians (51 AD)
- 1 Timothy (62 AD)
- 2 Timothy (64 AD)
- Titus (63 AD)
- Philemon (61 AD)

**General Epistles**

- Hebrews (65 AD)
- James (45 AD)
- 1 Peter (65 AD)
- 2 Peter (67 AD)
- 1 John (85 AD)
- 2 John (90 AD)
- 3 John (90 AD)
- Jude (70 AD)

**Prophecy**

- Revelation (95 AD)

Do an internet search for a Biblical Timeline Chart. You may have to look at a few to get a good idea. Don't get caught up in the extra theories about future events that some charts present, just look at the dates to get a feel of when different past events happened. This will help you get oriented in time and get a feel of the flow of the Bible.

### III (v) Bible is authoritative, inspired and inerrant

These three terms are mentioned a lot. Here is a brief description of what they mean.

#### a) Authoritative

As the Word of God, the Bible is the final authority on how we live our lives.

#### b) Inspired

The Bible while physically written by men, is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The ideas it contains are not the ideas of men but of God.

### c) Inerrant

This means without error. We must clarify this point as it is obvious that we have different translations of the Bible and different Hebrew and Greek source texts. The source texts of the Bible we have now, even the oldest ones are copies of copies. The original documents have disintegrated with age and no longer exist. Without a doubt, we believe that the original Bible texts that were first written were inspired by God and without error. We also believe that God made sure, while working through faithful scribes, that we have a trustworthy copy today of the original texts.

Through historical document analysis of Biblical texts, we know that the Bible we have today is a highly accurate copy of the first texts. While there are some slight differences between some texts, these differences are mostly in grammar, spelling or word order. There are no differences that affect doctrine or that claim any new spiritual revelation over other texts.

(The differences between translations of the New Testament are due to there being two principle Greek source texts from they are drawn: The Majority Text and the Critical Text. The King James Version New Testament and its descendants are based on the Received Text, which is similar to the Majority Text. A full discussion on this is outside the scope of this module.)

## III (vi) English Bible Translations by type

Translating is both a science and an art. If you speak more than one language, you will be familiar with the difficulties of translating between languages, as there are often multiple words and multiple ways that things can be translated from one language to another. We are fortunate with English, that because of the number of speakers worldwide, a lot of work has been done with English Bible translations. Some people push one translation over another, but I tend to look at them as complementing each another.

It is best to educate yourself on the method of each translation, so that you can be aware of how to use it in your studies. Remember that at times the theology of the translators would have influenced their translation choices.

Broadly speaking, translations (not paraphrase versions) fall into 2 categories.

- Formal Equivalence: Word for word, giving priority to what the original language says and how it says it. (This is not to be confused with literal translations)
- Dynamic Equivalence: thought for thought, giving priority to what the text means. It aims to make the text as readable for a modern audience as possible.

Below is a list of some English Bible translations by category with some additional comments. (This is only a brief summary.)

### a) Formal Equivalence – “Word for word”

- King James Version – (KJV- Based on Bishops & Geneva Bible, Old language can be difficult)
- New King James Version – (NKJV - updated language from KJV)
- English Standard Version (ESV – Revision of RSV)
- New American Standard (NASB - special attention given to verb forms)
- American Standard Version (ASV) (Amplified Bible is based on ASV with revisions)

## b) Dynamic Equivalence – “Thought for thought”

- Contemporary English Version (CEV)
- Good News Bible (GNB)
- New Living Translation (NLT)
- New International Readers Version (NIRV – Based on NIV but uses simple English)

## c) Mixture of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence

- New International Version (NIV)
- Common English Bible (CEB)

## d) Literal Translation (Translates words keeping sentence structure of original language) \*

- Young's Literal Translation
- Weymouth Literal Translation

\*These use formal equivalence but their strict adherence to the original sentence structure makes them difficult to read and they're best used for detailed study.

## e) Paraphrase (Interpreted by author so as to no longer be a translation)

- The Living Bible (Based on American Standard Version)
- Message Bible (Some say paraphrase, some say technically a translation)
- The Passion Translation (An interpretation, with the author writing the meaning behind the words as he sees it)

If you are starting out reading the Bible and want to know which English version to start with, I recommend you try one of the following.

- Person with good English skills: NKJV, NASB or NIV
- Person with some or limited English skills: NIRV, NLT or NIV

## IV Understanding Bible Covenants

As we said earlier, a covenant is a strong agreement between two parties. In our modern world we are familiar with contracts which people regularly break but we don't really understand covenants. Even the marriage covenant where people promise to stay married till one of them dies has been watered down by easy divorce. In Bible times covenants were binding, they could not be broken without dire consequences.

- Covenant of Abraham
- Covenant of Moses
- Covenant of Jesus

It is important for us to understand these covenants because they have different ways to approach God. If we do not see that different times in history had people under a different set of requirements from God, we will be confused by the different things that happened in the Bible. We need to understand which of them apply to us as Christians today and how so

## IV (i) The covenant of Abraham

The covenant of Abraham is a covenant of Blessing. It's important to note that the only requirement from Abraham was that he believed in God and come out of the place he was in. There were no other requirements to obey a set of laws or follow any rituals. Abraham and his descendants were under this covenant up until they made another covenant through Moses.

### *Genesis 12:1-3*

*1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

### *Genesis 15:1-21*

*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." 2 But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" 4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 **And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.** 7 Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." 8 And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." 17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— 19 the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."*

### *Genesis 17:1-22*

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after*

*you. 8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in[f] which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” 9 And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. 13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” 15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but [g]Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.” 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” 18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” 19 Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” 22 Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. 23 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; 27 and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.*

## IV (ii) Covenant of Moses

The covenant with Moses was a covenant of performance. It was between God and the nation of Israel. If Israel obeyed the covenant they were blessed. If they disobeyed, they were cursed.

Read Exodus chapters 19 to 24.

### *Exodus 24:1-8*

*1 Now He said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. 2 And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.” 3 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” 4 And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. 6 And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant*

*and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient." 8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."*

The covenant of Moses was given on Mount Sinai/Horeb by God. It was after He led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

#### *Exodus 2:23-25*

*23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. 24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.*

God responded to Israel because of the covenant He made with Abraham. So why did He then make another covenant through Moses?

#### *Galatians 3:19-25*

*19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. 21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

#### *Romans 7:7*

*7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."*

Before the Law (Covenant of Moses) was given, people were living under the Covenant of Abraham. This covenant was a covenant of blessings with no requirements upon the people except that they believe in God. It was a covenant of faith without any requirements of performance.

The problem was that the people were still in their hearts sinful and without an absolute standard from God, they were using their lack of punishment and their comparing themselves with one another as a measure for how good they were. Slowly this way of thinking was pushing them deeper and deeper into rebellion against God and they were in danger of destroying themselves. God intervened by giving them the Law through Moses. Now they had God's perfect standard and as they tried and failed to keep it, they realised their need for help, that they needed a saviour. To stop them being totally destroyed on the spot by their sin, God gave them the animal sacrificial system that functioned as a temporary cover for their sin, until Jesus could take it away forever on the cross. The dying of animals for their sins, also helped the people to learn that sin brings death and it must be paid for with blood.

The Israelites were not saved by the Law, they were preserved until Jesus could complete His redemption on the cross.

## IV (iii) Covenant of Jesus

The covenant of Jesus was a new covenant that was not like the old one. It was the culmination of God's dealings with man to bring about salvation. From the garden of Eden and the fall, God had been dealing with man to bring him to a place where he could be set free from the results of Adam and Eve's mistake.

### *Hebrews 8:6-13*

*6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

The Old Covenant is now obsolete as a way to approach God. We need to do so under the New Covenant, through Jesus.

### *John 14:6*

*6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

We can't mix the Old Covenant and New Covenant. Some try to blend the two, as we see below, this does not work!

### *Matthew 9:16-17*

*16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."*

If we try to approach God under the law, we are cursed by the weight of keeping the whole law. Only Jesus achieved the keeping of the whole law! Every other man failed in some area.

### *Galatians 3:10-14*

*10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

Jesus brought us back to the blessings of Abraham, were the only requirement from us is to believe.

## V Understanding progressive revelation

### V (i) Why did God have to reveal himself to man?

In the beginning, in the garden of Eden, we see that man was created in God's image and he spent time with God. There was no barrier between man and God, they were in perfect relationship.

#### *Genesis 1:26-28*

*26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

Man was created with:

- Identity
- Authority
- Blessing/ability
- Purpose

Man had communion with God, he knew God.

#### *Genesis 3:8-9*

*8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

### a) We see sin enter the world and things change

Man moves from faith to fear.

#### *Genesis 3:1-10*

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*

Man's condition changed.

**Ephesians 4:17-18**

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

**Man turned against God.**

**Romans 8:7**

7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

**Idolatry came onto the scene.**

**Galatians 4:8**

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

**God did not change, man did.**

**James 1:17**

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

**1 Corinthians 2:14**

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

**Malachi 3:6**

"For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

**Man lost the knowledge of God, so God had to re-reveal Himself to man.**

## V (ii) God has revealed Himself progressively through the Word

**Grace and truth are revealed through Jesus.**

**John 1:17-18**

17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

**In last days revealed through Jesus**

**Hebrews 1:1-4**

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

**Old testament prophets and righteous men have not seen...**

**Matthew 13:16-17**

16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

...things kept secret

**Matthew 13:34-35**

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, 35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

**Jesus exalted over the Law and the Prophets****Matthew 17:1-8**

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

**V (iii) New Testament Revelation**

Times of ignorance before...

**Acts 17:29-30**

Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

...But now...

**Romans 3:20-22**

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

**Romans 16:25-27**

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

**Colossians 1:24-27**

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

**V (iv) The revelations of the New Testament:****We can know God as father****John 14:7-10**

7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

**We can see the Father****John 12:45**

And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.

**Jesus is the image of God****Colossians 1:15-16**

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

**Hebrews 1:3**

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

**V (v) Jesus is the maximum revelation of God to man****All prior revelation (Old Testament) must be filtered through Jesus.****2 Corinthians 3:12-14**

12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.

## V (vi) Examples between Old and New Testament

a) (OT) The Lord gives and takes away VS (NT) The Lord gives and the devil takes.

**Job 1:21 VS John 10:10**

*Job 1:21*

*And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."*

*John 10:10*

*10 The thief (devil) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

The greater revelation is found in the New Testament. Job thought God was both giving to and taking from him. Jesus makes it clear that it is the devil who steals, kills and destroys and the He (Jesus/God) is the giver of abundant (more than enough of everything) life.

b) Interesting comparisons

**1 Chronicles 21:1 VS 2 Samuel 24:1**

*1 Chronicles 21:1*

*Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.*

*2 Samuel 24:1*

*Again the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."*

The above two verses are speaking of the same event. Was it God or the devil that motivated David to number Israel? We see below that God does not tempt, so it was the devil that tempted David to sin.

*James 1:12-15*

*12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

In old testament times people had limited revelation of spiritual things, especially about the devil. Often, they recorded all spiritual activity as originating from God because of their limited understanding. In Chronicles the author (possibly Ezra), had a revelation from the Holy Spirit that it was the devil that did this. Samuel did not get this revelation.

We see from James that the revelation in Chronicles is correct.

(In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit came on people for a limited time and specific purposes and left again. In New Testament times the Holy Spirit lives within believers permanently.)

## V (vii) God reveals Himself through

### a) General Revelation – Creation

God reveals Himself to all men through His creation, the wonders on the world around us.

#### *Romans 1:18-21*

*18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

#### *Acts 17:24-30*

*24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' 29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,*

### b) Specific Revelation

#### i) Written Word of God – The Bible

God uses His Word to reveal Himself to us.

#### *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

#### ii) The Word made flesh

Jesus the Word made flesh, dwelt amongst us and revealed God the father to us.

See John 1:1-18.

#### *John 1:1*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

#### *John 1:14*

*14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*Hebrews 1:3*

*3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

## iii) The Spirit

The Holy Spirit reveals the things of God to us.

*John 14:26*

*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 things that I said to you.*

*John 16:13-15*

*13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.*

The Bible is the revelation of God to man in a progressive form.

## V (viii) Bible Hermeneutics – How we interpret what the Bible is saying.

*2 Timothy 2:15*

*15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Everyone who reads the Bible is interpreting what they read whether they realise it or not. The goal of this section is not to list and discuss every method of interpretation out there but to make us aware that we are all reading through the filter of our life experiences and the theology we have accepted up to this point.

Anyone who's being around the Bible for any length of time will know that there are many different views on what the Bible teaches. This is why it is so important for the honest seeker of the truth of God's Word to sincerely and without reservation submit themselves to the Holy Spirit who is the author and interpreter of God's Word.

As this is a foundation module, I will list some thoughts to get you started. We have already touched on many topics in this module that shape our framework of interpretation.

## a) Our conclusions must line up with God's nature

God is love and He is always good. We see God's nature listed in Galatians 5:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. If we have an interpretation that calls God's nature into question, we need to rethink our understanding.

## b) Covenants

We have already looked at three of the covenants in scripture. We see each is a different agreement, governed by a different set of rules. The Bible books all fall under one or another Bible covenant and

should be read with that understanding. God does not deal with us in the New Covenant the same as He dealt with people under the Old Covenant.

c) *Historical context*

The Bible, while a text for all time, was also written to a specific audience at a specific time. We should as much as possible seek to understand what the original audience would understand, before we take the text further and apply it to ourselves.

That being said, the Holy Spirit knew that we would be reading it at a future date, so it is possible for there also to be meaning for us that may not have been understood by the original audience.

d) *More than one verse*

It is a good idea to have more than one verse to support a doctrine. If it is doctrine that God wants us to have, then we can expect the idea to appear more than once.

e) *Read the whole story - context*

The Bible books were written as one continuous text. We should read the whole story to see what is being said. Reading one verse out of context can lead to wrong understanding.

f) *The first mention is useful*

The first mention in the Bible of an idea or thing, can be useful in understanding God's thoughts or purpose for it. This is a guideline rather than an ironclad rule, and we should not abandon other checks to blindly follow the first mention principle. Some strange doctrines have come out of applying the idea of first mention without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, context, etc.

One difficulty is knowing which mention is the first one timewise. (Bible books are not in chronological order).

g) *Jesus is the Word become flesh*

Jesus is God's Word become flesh and He is the perfect image of the Father. Through Jesus we can know the Father and we should use the revelation of Jesus in the New Testament to understand the Old Testament. If our understanding of something is against how Jesus acted, we are mistaken.