

## How I Study the Bible – Part 1

Hi everyone and welcome to Grain of Wheat Publishing and “Studies in Scripture.” My name is Jack Marshall and thank you for joining me today. Today I am going to talk about, “How I Study the Bible.”

Some years ago, my youngest daughter and I were talking about the Bible and she asked me, “Dad, how do you study the Bible?” Now, to be honest, I don’t recall anyone ever asking me that question, so, after that conversation, I sat down and compiled a list of eight things I do when I study, and that’s what I will be sharing with you today. If this helps you, be sure to let me know and to subscribe to my channel for future videos. Let’s get started.

Allright, here’s a list of the eight things I do when studying scripture.

1. Considering the “created things” or the symbol itself.
2. Interpreting scripture with scripture.
3. The context of the passages in which the symbol is presented which is “understanding by context.”
4. Comparison of opposites; which is “understanding and definition by contrast.”
5. The spiritual meaning of numbers.
6. The Hebrew and Greek definitions.
7. Key words and phrases.
8. An open mind.

*Let’s begin with number one, considering the created things or the symbol itself.*

In Romans 1:20, Paul wrote:

**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- *his eternal power and divine nature*-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**

Ever wonder why so many people across the world seek for a higher being? Could it be because of the fact that God’s invisible qualities have been written into creation? Think about it. There are thousands of religions all over the world and just the history of Egypt, Greece, and Rome is enough to know that man has been attempting to comprehend and worship something higher than himself for as long as he has existed. Could this be due to the fact that the created things point us to the Creator, that instinctively, we know there is something higher than ourselves?

So again, what did Paul write?

**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- *his eternal power and divine nature*-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**

So what did Paul mean by “created things”? Would it not be nature, that is the sun, moon, stars, grass, trees, rivers, seas, and, even you and me? This leads me to Matthew 13 and the Parable of the Sower which Jesus taught. Here’s what Jesus said.

**Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**

As we can see, Jesus used the idea of a garden to illustrate spiritual principles Now, here’s the Lord’s explanation of the parable.

**Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**

As we can see by this explanation, Jesus used the things that everyone is familiar with in order to give us spiritual instruction and understanding.

Now, our parable is also found in Luke's gospel, and it is there that Jesus states, "The seed *is* the Word of God." He did not say, "The Word of God is *like* a seed," but rather that "the seed *is* the Word of God." So, when we speak of the "Word of God," we are not speaking of a single statement made by the Lord, but of all the wisdom, knowledge and understanding encompassed therein. In comparison to a natural seed which eventually brings forth a fruit-bearing tree, everything that is necessary to produce the roots, trunk, branches, leaves and fruit is found within. As the parable indicates, our hearts and minds are the "ground" in which the "seed" of His Word is planted. Does the seed grow up overnight? Of course not, and just like a seed, once it has been sown into our heart, it takes time for it to spring up out of our being to finally produce "fruit." Consider the following from Matthew, Chapter 7. Jesus said:

**Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.**

Here's what Paul recorded in Galatians, Chapter 5:

**But the *fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.**

Now, let me mention this. Once Jesus finished, His disciples asked Him, "**Why do You speak to them in parables?**"

First of all, the Greek definition of our word "parables" means, "A similitude" or "likeness," a "symbol" or "fictitious narrative of common life conveying a moral." Whether we realize it or not, we often use parables in our everyday life, saying things like, "He eats like a pig" or "she's crazy as a loon," but as all of us know, just because someone eats like a pig doesn't mean they are one.

So why did Jesus use parables? I think Romans 1:20 answers that question. No doubt the Lord understood that our Father's "invisible qualities," that "his eternal power and divine nature," can truly be understood from "what has been made." As I mentioned before, the Bible bears this out, using the created things such as the sun, moon, and stars, along with the trees, water, and even animals to convey spiritual understanding.

When studying the symbol itself, think about its different characteristics in order to get a fuller understanding and appreciation of God's Word.

*Now, let's look at number two, interpreting Scripture with Scripture.*

I Corinthians, Chapter 2, verse 13, Paul wrote:

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

In the previous example of the Parable of the Sower, you'll notice that I brought in passages from Matthew, Chapter 7 and Galatians, Chapter 5, both which are related to this parable and the principle of sowing and reaping which Jesus taught. This is what is meant by interpreting scripture with scripture. When the Lord speaks about bearing "fruit," Galatians 5:22 tells us what the "fruit" is and the other passages help to clarify our understanding.

When studying the Word, it's helpful to search for and consider other passages that relate to the subject. When studying the Parable of the Sower, there are many other passages in the Bible about seed, trees and fruit that will relate to what we are considering. Here's another passage we could think about. It's John 15:5. Jesus said:

**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**

As we see, one of the key concepts in this passage is again "bearing fruit," which coincides with our Parable of the Sower.

So, what is meant by "fruit"? The "fruit" denotes the "manifestation" or "maturity" of the life of the seed which was sown in the ground. And again, Galatians 5:22 tells us quite clearly what that "fruit" should be, beginning with "love."

In our quest to understand the Bible, it's important to interpret scripture *with* scripture. That being said, I would highly recommend getting some form of Bible software that allows you to use several versions of the Bible, as well as giving you search functions for just about anything word or phrase you might think of. Some of these programs are free and available on the internet for instant download.

*The next thing to consider is number three, the context of the passages in which the symbol is presented or what I like to call "understanding by context."*

Webster's College Dictionary defines "context" as, "The parts of a written or spoken statement that precede or follow a specified word or passage and can influence its meaning or effect."

Consider the following example from Revelation 13:11.

**Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.**

Here in John's vision, he sees a beast coming up out of the earth with "two horns like a lamb" but who "spoke like a dragon." Our "two horns like a lamb" obviously suggest that this is a religious entity, since Christ is the "Lamb of God." Yet we're told that this entity speaks like a "dragon," which the Strong's Concordance defines as, "A fabulous kind of *serpent*." The idea of a "serpent" clearly suggests *deception*, and in confirmation, we read just a few verses later, "And he *deceives* those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast." As we see, our context helps define what we're considering.

Now, when we look at the prophecies to the seven churches in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, we will find that Jesus rebuked five of the seven churches due to the problems which rose up in them, but there were two which He didn't rebuke; Smyrna and Philadelphia. This suggests to me that the "two horns like a lamb" are symbolic of these two churches while the phrase, "Spoke like a dragon" refers to the other five. That being said, we just defined our beast which comes up out of the earth as the seven churches in Revelation, which would be the whole of the body of Christ. I'm sure that will leave you wondering, but we'll leave that for another video. For further

confirmation of what I just stated, check out the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25, verses 31 through 46. When studying, be sure to pay attention to the “context” of the passages that contain the symbol or symbols.

*Number four; comparison of opposites or what I call “understanding and definition by contrast.”*

Another popular idea which we’ve all heard about is that of the “antichrist.” Many today still believe it will be an individual and even try to guess his identity, but, let’s consider the understanding of *the* antichrist with its *opposite*, Christ. In I John, Chapter 2, John wrote:

**Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**

Now, consider what Paul wrote in I Corinthians, Chapter 12:

**For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?**

Now, how many times do you see the word *they* in the passages in 1 John? So, when considering *the* antichrist, how does this concept compare to the understanding of *the* Christ given to us in 1 Corinthians, Chapters 10 and 12? Don’t the passages concerning Christ give the understanding that He, *individually speaking*, is *one body* and has *many members*, each of those members being you and me joined by the one Spirit which He is? The passages in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, confirm this understanding, comparing the body of Christ to the human body. Its *one* body made up of *many* members.

So my question to you is why the same understanding wouldn’t apply to *the* antichrist? My personal belief is that *the* antichrist is “many antichrists” as John wrote, and that *all of them*, collectively speaking, make up *one body* with *many members*, and they are all joined by the *one spirit of error and deception* (1 John 4:1-6). This is what is meant by “comparison of opposites.” When we compare one against the other, we gain the understanding of what is meant.

Finally, the word “antichrist” itself confirms what we’re considering. It’s a compound word, “anti” meaning, “Opposite” or “instead of” and “Christ,” which means “anointed.” So this word is not addressing an individual but the “anointing” itself of “anyone,” personal or collective, that operates from a spirit that is “opposite” or in place of what Jesus called the “Spirit of truth.”

This ends Part 1 of, “How I Study the Bible,” and of course, be sure to view Part 2 where I will finish the other items on our list. Thank you for joining me today on “Studies in Scripture.” Please feel free to leave your comments below and subscribe to “Grain of Wheat Publishing.” May God bless you today in your walk with Christ.