

How I Study the Bible – Part 2

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. This is Part 2 of “How I Study the Bible.” If you have not had the chance to view Part 1, I would encourage you to do so. And if you are helped by what I share with you today, please subscribe and feel free to leave your comments below. Let’s get started.

Now, in Part 1, I gave you a list of the eight things I do when I study the scripture. Here’s our list:

1. 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.

We are now at number 5 in our list which is the spiritual meaning of numbers –

Without a doubt, my favorite “technique” when studying the Word is the spiritual meaning of numbers. If you’re not familiar with this, I highly recommend the book by E.W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture* as well as Ed Vallowe’s book, *Biblical Mathematics—Keys to Scripture Numerics*. Bullinger’s book is free on the internet while Vallowe’s can be purchased through Amazon or Barnes and Noble. There are other sources about number in scripture as well, so be sure to Google it when you get the chance.

In my opinion, the spiritual meaning of numbers in scripture has proven to me more than anything else that this book we call the Holy Bible is truly what it says it is, the Word of God. Though the Word was written by men, Paul wrote that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write it and the spiritual meaning of the numbers proves to me that there was truly a divine source behind the words which these men wrote, especially in light of the fact that each of the books of the Bible were written at different times throughout history. The amazing fact about the spiritual meaning of numbers is that they are the same through every single book, from Genesis to Revelation, and when a concept is brought together numerically, it gives a deeper understanding that no other means could produce. No matter how intelligent man is he could not have put these numbers and their meaning into the Bible without a higher source instigating the entire process.

Think about it; numbers are the “same” in any language. Two of anything in this country is “always” two in another country despite our language differences. So to put it simply, numbers are a “universal” language. Let me share with you a portion from E.W. Bullinger’s *Number in Scripture*.

Quote - In all the works of God we find not only what we call "Law," and a Law-maker, but we observe a Law *enforcer*. We speak of laws, but they are nothing in themselves. They have no being; they possess no power; they cannot make themselves, or carry themselves out. What we mean when we speak of law in nature is simply this: God in action; God not merely giving or making laws, but carrying them out and enforcing them.

As He is perfect, so His works and His words also must be perfect. And when we see number used not by chance, but by design; not haphazard, but with significance; then we see not merely so many works and words, but the Living God working and speaking.

When we see the same design in each; the same laws at work; the same mysterious principles being carried out in each, the conviction is overwhelming that we have the same great Designer, the same Author; and we

see the same Hand, the same seal stamped on all His works, and the same signature or autograph, as it were, upon every page of His Word. And that, not an autograph which may be torn off or obliterated, but indelible, like the water-mark in the paper; so impressed upon and interwoven with it that no power on earth can blot it out – End Quote.

Let me also share a portion from the book by Peter Demetrius called *An Introduction to the Power of Ten: Mystery of Letters and Numbers*.

Quote - The Bible is a book filled with the usage of numbers. Not merely dividing the verses from each other, *but numbers have a connection with the spiritual meaning of the text*. There are TWELVE tribes and TWELVE apostles of the Lamb. There are SEVEN angels and SEVEN churches and SEVEN stars and FOUR living creatures, and TWENTY and FOUR elders. There are TEN camels or SEVENTY souls. There are ONE HUNDRED and FORTY FOUR THOUSAND who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. And it's not only the use of whole numbers, but fractions as well. For example, the **fourth** part of a **third** of the seas and **half** the kingdom. No matter how they are used, numbers play an important part in revealing the plan of God.

Numbers become a language that interprets God's voice by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit seeks to apply the science of mathematics to our walk in Christ. Numbers can help shape the formation of Christ within us, but in a spiritual and mystical sense – End Quote.

This is just a couple of brief quotes about number in scripture but I hope it makes my point. Again, I would encourage you to get the books by E.W. Bullinger and Ed Vallowe. Believe me when I say that there is a divine reason behind the numbers which appear in both the Old and New Testaments.

Number six; the Hebrew and Greek definitions –

As you saw in Part 1, I like to present the Hebrew and Greek definitions which I usually get from the Strong's Concordance. Of course, this is not the only Hebrew or Greek Dictionary available but what you use is not nearly as important as using one.

The reason that definitions play such an important part is because, first of all, the King James Version has a lot of words that are mistranslated. So, when considering a certain word, it can mislead us because of how it was translated. Consider the following passage from Matthew 5:29 in the King James Bible:

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

According to the Strong's Concordance, the word "hell" in this passage is the Greek word "Gehenna," which is "of Hebrew origin." It means, "Valley of the son of Hinnom." Now, in Revelation 1:18 we read:

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

The word "hell" in this passage is not Gehenna, but Hades, which means, "Unseen." It's derived from two other Greek words, "alpha," which is "the first letter of the Greek alphabet" and used as a "negative particle" in this case, and "eido" (a-doe) which means, "To see; by implication to know." Because "alpha" is used as a "negative particle" with "eido," it changes the meaning of "to see" to "unseen." This brings us to the following passage from the Parable of the Sower in Matthew, Chapter 13.

"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

So let me ask you some questions. Is it possible that the word “hell” used in Revelation 1:18 defines what the Lord meant when He stated, “Because *seeing they do not see?*” Could it be that this word for “hell” denotes a present “state of being,” rather than a place that someone might go to after they die? Is it possible that the traditional view of hell being a place of eternal torment could be wrong, despite the fact that so many embrace it? For further consideration, I would encourage you to download my free studies, “Hell, No! An Alternative View of Hell” and “Dead Men’s Bones – A Case Against Eternal Torment.” They’re available at Smashwords.com as well as Barnes and Noble.

The point is we have two meanings of the same word in the King James Version of scripture. So, it is very important that we consider the Hebrew or Greek definitions before we draw conclusions about their meaning and use in scripture.

Now, number seven on our list is key words and phrases –

Another important method I use when studying is to pay very close attention to *key words* or *phrases*. There have been many times when I misunderstood something simply because I didn’t pay close enough attention to what is written. Let’s look at Revelation, Chapter 13 again and the “beast coming up out of the earth.”

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

Now, in regard to this beast, Revelation 13:16 reads:

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

From these passages, let me point out a few *key words* and *phrases*.

1. He *causes all...to receive* a mark; both of these are key phrases.
2. Our word “Beast;” which is a key word.
3. Our word “Earth;” which is another key word.

Now think about number one. “He *causes* all...*to receive* a mark.” This isn’t saying that He gives it. Rather, he *causes us* to *receive* it. In other words, it suggests *influence* as well as *manipulation* which leads to a *voluntary act on our part* to receive it. No doubt, this changes our perspective when considering this entity. Now, look at our key word “beast” in light of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, verses 18 through 21.

I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?

In the Strong’s Concordance, our word “beast” is *behemah* and means, “A dumb beast; especially any large quadruped or animal,” often used collectively. This word appears for the first time in Genesis 1:24 as “cattle.” Verse 18 clearly states that man *is* a “beast” and verse 19 of Ecclesiastes compares the “children of man” *with* “beasts,” letting us know that the writer is referring to literal animals.

How are we like them? “As one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity All go to one place. All are from dust, and to dust all return.”

The reference here is clear. When it comes to our *human form*, we are like the animals in many ways. So, when we consider this thought with the “beast” of Revelation, Chapter 13, we can see that it is referring to humanity as a collective whole as well as the nature of those things which are associated with our humanity. Interestingly enough, the word “beast” in Revelation, Chapter 13 is *therion* (thay-ree-on) and means, “A dangerous animal.” So it appears that this definition focuses more on the violent and untamed nature of mankind as a whole. Of course, there is much more we could consider, but let’s move on.

Our final key word is the word “earth.” Consider these passages from I Corinthians, Chapter 15.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the *earth*, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the *earthy*, such are they also that are *earthy*: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the *earthy*, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Here we are told that “the first man,” Adam, “is of the earth, earthy,” the word “earth” meaning “soil” or “ground.” This does, of course, tie to the passage in Genesis 2:7 where we read, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

It then speaks of “they also that are earthy” and bearing “the image of the earthy.” Look at what Paul immediately states after this. “Now this I say, brethren, that “flesh and blood” cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does “corruption” inherit incorruption.” So again, the reference here is to our human form, to our humanity and its nature, derived from the dust of the ground, therefore corruptible because it relates to “flesh and blood.” Consider all of this with these passages from Romans, Chapter 8.

For those who live *according to the flesh* set their minds on *the things of the flesh*, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For *to be carnally minded is death*, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because *the carnal mind is enmity against God*; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Here we find clarity about what is meant by “earth” and “earthy.” When our minds are completely absorbed in “creature comforts,” and our priorities are primarily “the things of the flesh,” then the Bible declares that we are “carnal-minded” and stand in “enmity against God.” We are “not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” and “cannot please God.”

So, the fact that our “beast” comes up “out of the earth” reveals to us that this entity incorporates the idea of living “according to the flesh.” Furthermore, this “beast” is dangerous and untamed, and this due to the propensity for violence in our human nature. Again, there is more to be considered, but I will leave that for a later study. When studying, take time to consider key words and phrases.

Number eight and our final point in this study is having an open mind -

It has been said that we are “spiritual beings going through a human experience.” I tend to believe this. I’m also inclined to believe that the mind is “an invisible element formed out of the spirit.” Mark 12:30 reads:

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment.

The Strong’s Concordance defines “mind” as, “Deep thought, properly, the faculty,” the “mind or its disposition, by implication, its exercise.” It’s also translated in the King James Bible as “imagination” and “understanding.”

So, to consider the mind is to consider our thought processes, our thinking, which encompasses our knowledge, understanding, and imagination.

Now, we are not talking about the human brain (although the mind may be linked to it in some fashion). But to emphasize, the mind is that part of us which is capable of absorbing knowledge and understanding, of implementing reasoning and imagination. It is an *invisible* element. Again, I believe it is formed out of the spirit, *which is also an invisible element*. So our ability to think is an attribute of spirit. It is present when we are born, but *unformed* until we begin to process the knowledge of things around us. So it is that in a very short time, we learn to walk, talk, and understand a great number of things. For this reason Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:23, “Be renewed in the ‘spirit’ of your ‘mind.’”

Now, the most important faculty of the mind is its ability to form beliefs. Why do I say this? Because every single one of us live according to what we believe. As an example, I know that fire can be advantageous or destructive. When used properly, you can warm yourself or cook your food. However, when used improperly, it can burn or destroy. Both of these understandings are facts based upon *knowledge* as well as *experience*. They are something I have *known* and *believed* for a long time.

One of the Greek definitions of the word “faith” in the New Testament reads, “Persuasion, i.e. credence.” “Credence” means, “*Belief* as to the truth of something.” In the King James Bible, it is also translated as “assurance, belief, believe” and “fidelity.” So faith *is* belief based upon knowledge and is formed when we have been fully persuaded on a matter. Once persuaded, our faith dictates our actions.

Truth should be the center point of belief, after all, why would we want to believe or act upon anything that isn’t true? There are many “truths” that we take for granted but follow on a daily basis in this natural world. I *believe* I’ll be paid to work my job, so, I get up each morning, get ready for work, go to work, and perform the tasks I’ve been given so I will receive my pay. I am also experienced in the knowledge of how a car functions, so I am able to use it for my benefit. The point is *we act upon our beliefs every moment*. So, if truth should be the center point of belief, then wouldn’t *knowledge* be the key? Consider what we read in I Samuel 2:3:

Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

And from I Corinthians, Chapter 15:

Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

Now, let me humbly state that the “knowledge of God” is not knowledge *about* God, but *knowing what God knows!* Don’t all of us acquire knowledge from some other source, from someone who already possesses the understanding of what we wish to understand? This is what the previous passages speak of. To possess the knowledge of God is *to know what He knows*, to see things as He sees them, to understand things as He understands them. For this reason, *it is the most precious knowledge we can hope to gain*. That being said, is it just coincidence that the story of Adam and Eve begins with a “tree of knowledge”? Genesis, Chapter 2.

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

In its simplest form, there are *three* types of knowledge typified by our parable in Genesis. There’s the knowledge of *evil*, the knowledge of *good*, and the knowledge of *life*. As we see in Genesis 2:9, this is given in symbolic form as “the tree of life,” and “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

Remember, the tree is a perfect symbol for knowledge, illustrating that it begins as a “seed” taking “root” within our hearts and minds until it eventually “grows up” out of our being to form the “branches, leaves,” and “fruit” of what we are about.

So what is the difference between the “knowledge of good and evil” and the “knowledge of life”? Doesn’t life as we know it incorporate the understanding of “good and evil”? Yes it does, but the difference lies *in the spirit behind it*. When our spirit or heart is wrong, our *knowledge* of good and evil is corrupted by our *love for self* which manifests as actions which bring harm to our neighbor. But when our spirit is right, our knowledge of good and evil translates as actions which leads us and others to life. This is why Paul wrote in Romans 7:14 that “the law is spiritual.” When we understand this, we will find that the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life are the same tree. The difference between them is simply what spirit we are of.

Let me emphasize that the right spirit is a spirit of humility, and when this is true, we will have an open mind.

Having an open mind means that we are willing to examine *anything* we currently believe. We should never be afraid to question any belief since truth can withstand the most intense scrutiny. If a belief crumbles in the light of further understanding, so be it, there’s no shame in realizing we’ve been wrong.

Having an open mind suggests that we listen to what others have to say, *even outside the realm of “Christian” structure*. We cannot reject something simply because it comes from a different religion. It’s arrogant to think that any of us have a monopoly on truth. The divisions that exist between religions are there because of the strength of tradition and the pride of man. And it’s our pride which leads to our *narrow-mindedness*.

As I’ve heard it said, “Be open to everything and attached to none.” So it is that we should stay open-minded. Eternity has much to teach us.

This ends Part 2 of “How I Study the Bible.” In conclusion, I hope these eight things which I’ve shared with you will help you in your studies in scripture and your walk in Christ.

Thank you for joining me today and I hope you will subscribe to my channel, Grain of Wheat. Be sure to also visit my website at “grainofwheatpublishing.org.” There you’ll find links to all of my longer studies and the downloads are free.

Let me know what you think by leaving your comments and questions below.

God bless you my friends and I’ll see you next time on “Studies in Scripture.”