

# Bible Study Methods

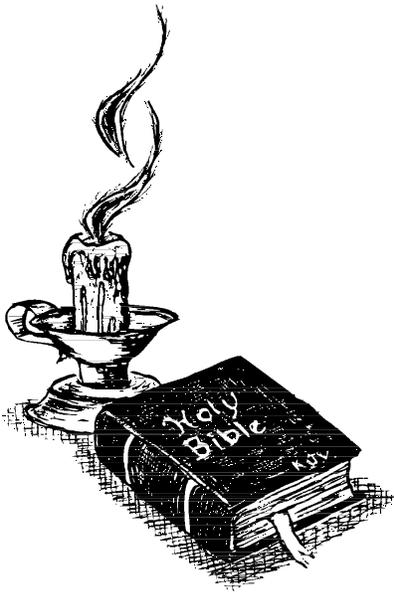
**2 Timothy 2:15**, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” ... 2

Timothy 3:14–17, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; <sup>15</sup> And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in

CHRIST JESUS. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

(for study methods)



**Mark 13:31**, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.”

During the reemergence of Biblical literalism (strict adherence to the basic meaning of Bible words or text) in the early 19th Century,

Christians began to identify the need for true Bible study methods about soteriology—the doctrine of salvation—and eschatology—the study of "last things" (endtimes, judgment, heaven or hell), and so on.

At last, the needs for accurate Bible study methods for eschatology were acknowledged. As a result, a strict Biblical literalism was applied. And this literalism cast the Old Testament in a whole new light—not really new, but an unseen light for many centuries!

Synthetic man-made meanings began to fall away from OT eschatology. Once again, Messianic passages and prophetic Scriptures were brought to light. The result was and still is quite revolutionary! Man-made spiritualizing was shunned among the early 19th Century literalists.

But their excitement was gradually tempered, as Bible study methods developed to govern the interpretation of eschatology along literalist lines. This development extended over 150 years. Indeed, it continues today! These methods evolved into the "inerrancy" or "limited inerrancy" controversy of today. And the hinge for all this controversy is Bible infallibility.

**Acts 17:11**, "These ... searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

We should be like the Berean Christians in Acts 17. One needs to start with the Bible first. Read it. Do not consult Bible commentaries first. After reading the Bible, and before studying prophecy, one should then learn how the Bible teaches you to understand its message.

Many Bible colleges, seminaries, or churches would teach you to study with man-made principles or synthetic hermeneutics. "Hermeneutics" is the science of interpreting texts or "the study of methodological principles of interpretation." I advocate Bible hermeneutics from the Bible itself.

The Holy Bible tells us how to study and understand God's Word. You do not need to invent your own methods or accept the methods from "experts." Remember, many with suspect views on Bible prophecy often neglect the basic Bible study methods taught from the Bible itself.

## Bible Study Methods for Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

1. Know the Holy Bible is God's Word (Psalm 119:1–176). Know the Bible is totally inerrant (Matthew 24:35). It is absolute, authoritative, plenary, supreme, and final in both the New and Old Testaments. Its veracity extends not only to faith and practice, but to history, cosmology and other disciplines.

We only recommend translations of the Holy Bible based on: 1) the Hebrew Old Testament Masoretic text; 2) the New Testament Textus Receptus or Received Text; 3) sound translation rules and principles, like the King James Bible (KJV).

2. Historical-critical methodologies (Colossians 2:1–10) must be avoided—primarily on epistemological grounds (knowing without God). The Evangelical Faith requires rejection of any methodology which incorporates an assumption opposed to the supernatural. GOD—by definition—is supernatural and transcends all finite limits.

Trust the Holy Spirit to teach you (John 14:26). God's Written Word reflects His supernatural and unlimited being and prerogative. Historical-critical methodologies are unworthy of God. They reflect—at the deepest level—a failure of faith. Specifically, we often fail to acknowledge that a supernatural God cannot be studied based upon man's methodology and assumptions.

3. The Bible is given by God to be prayerfully understood and applied by all men (Luke 11:1–10). Therefore, its normal meaning is usually obvious, not hidden (John 8:31–32). Thus, the Bible should be interpreted literally.

A figurative or symbolic interpretation—if not clearly justified by the immediate context or related passages in Scripture—constitutes a basic denial of Scriptural inerrancy. It may be nothing more than a ploy to overcome the occasional difficulties of maintaining inerrancy.

4. The New Testament governs the Old Testament—clearly compelling the interpretation of the Old in light of the New (Hebrews 8:13; 9:15; 10:20). The New Testament is not interpreted in the light of the Old (Romans 8). It is enriched by the Old Testament, and its meaning is often rendered more complete, but its doctrinal interpretation is not governed by the Old.

5. The methods of literalism apply to the Bible as a whole—OT and NT (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22–23; 4:4). For that reason, OT moral commands are normative—though not in salvation—unless otherwise dictated by the New Testament. The Old Testament use to form doctrine remains and should only be suspended if specifically authorized by the New Testament (Colossians 2:16–23).

6. The canon or standard accepted collection of Scripture is closed and cannot be modified by additional “revelation” (Revelation 22:16–21). Any personal revelation must always be tested by the accepted Holy Scripture from JESUS and the primitive Church (Matthew 22:29).

The “Logos” or the Written and Living Word—JESUS—always governs the personal word or your “rhema” from God (John 1:1; Romans 10:17). Doctrine must be established exclusively upon the existing canon of Holy Scripture and never on the basis of personal revelation.

7. The harmony of Scripture is a matter of both fact and faith—for instance, in the Gospels. Therefore, consistency—though always to be sought—should never be forced. Apparent inconsistencies must be understood in the light of our human limitations (Mark 12:29–31).

8. The Bible consists of “revealed knowledge” (Ephesians 1:15–23; Colossians 1:9–20). It's not composed of man's logical set of “first principles” from which theology can always be deduced. Deduction can only be profitably employed when our conclusions do not violate the meaning of Scripture as a whole. Doctrinal conclusions based upon “logical deduction” from one specific Bible premise must be abandoned, if it subverts other Bible premises.

9. The interpretation of specific passages of Scripture must always be governed by the immediate context of those passages and by Scripture as a whole (2 Timothy 3:10–17). The Bible is an integrated book of consistent themes, not a series of disjointed segments. Obscure interpretations should be avoided, and never used as a basis to form doctrine.

10. A substantiated figurative interpretation never prevents a literal interpretation as well. Both interpretations may be equally valid, unless otherwise stated or required by the context (Matthew 25:14–46).

11. The limits of allegory (parables, symbols, figures of speech) must always be carefully observed. No allegory should be pressed to the extent that deductions based on it subvert the clear meaning of Scripture or other Bible doctrines. Moreover, many Bible subjects are described in terms of several allegories, not just one (Matthew 25). Furthermore, allegories used to treat a single subject—if pressed too far—will often conflict with each other.

12. No allegory should be used as the sole basis for establishing doctrine! Only clear statements should be used to establish Bible doctrine (Ephesians 2; Acts 4:12; John 14:6). Allegory can add a deeper meaning, but it should never be relied upon exclusively for doctrinal formulation.

13. The Holy Bible is “anthropomorphic” and may ascribe to God human characteristics (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 9:35–38). The normal application of biblical literalism should be made in that light.

14. The Bible treats two dimensions of reality—the heavenly and the earthly (Luke 11:1–5). Scripture may develop a theme or subject within the earthly dimension, and then later develop that same theme or subject within the heavenly dimension. Frequently, these different treatments occur within the same passage of Scripture. All truth is parallel (Daniel 12:4).

More frequently, the earthly treatment occurs within the Old Testament, and the heavenly treatment occurs within the New Testament. Yet, it should never be assumed—unless it is stated or required by the context—that the treatment of a theme or subject within the heavenly dimension terminates its validity within the earthly dimension.

15. Unless clearly stated otherwise, the actual historical behavior of Bible personages does not govern or modify doctrine. Sinful or non-sinful behavior of a Bible personage should always be understood in light of God’s mercy for human weakness, and should never be used to establish new doctrine or to modify existing doctrine (Numbers 24:10; Mark 3:5).

We MUST know the basic methods for accurate Bible interpretation. These methods are quite simple and not new at all—ONLY the recent application to eschatological passages is new.

**John 5:37–40**, “And the Father himself, which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. <sup>38</sup> And ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. <sup>39</sup> Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. <sup>40</sup> And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.”

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