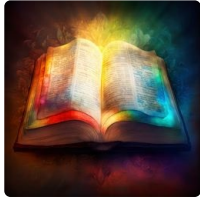


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Three Stage Inductive Bible Study



Authority of Scriptures - Steve Gregg

In this comprehensive study guide, Steve Gregg outlines the Three Stage Inductive Bible Study method for interpreting scripture. Gregg emphasizes the importance of observing the text without preconceived ideas, interpreting its meaning in its original context, and applying its lessons to our lives. He also challenges traditional doctrines regarding Satan as a fallen angel and highlights the importance of recognizing various genres and figures of speech found in the Bible. Gregg encourages readers to seek guidance from God through prayer as they study biblical passages.

Transcript

The handout we'll be looking at today, the notes, have as the title, the Three Stage Procedure for Inductive Bible Study. The notes you have probably misspelled procedure. I have a more updated copy where it's spelled correctly.

Three Stage Procedure for Inductive Bible Study. I don't know if you've ever heard of Inductive Bible Study. There are some who say that's the only kind of Bible study that makes sense or that's reasonable.

Depending on how you define it, I think that's probably true. Well, I don't know. In some cases there may be other forms of Bible study that are as good.

I don't know. I'm not sure exactly how broad that definition of Inductive Bible Study can be taken. If you go to the nine-month Bible school that YWAM has called the School of Biblical Studies, they follow a method of what they call Inductive Bible Study.

Indeed, what they do is inductive. Some of the people who have been in their program have given me the impression in talking to me that they think that the specific methodology they use is the sum of what inductive study involves. They have to read the material five times and they have to make charts going this direction, that direction, horizontal and vertical and all kinds of things.

They've got all kinds of charting and written material they have to do. A lot of the people that I've talked to in that school have the impression that making these charts and these

outlines is what inductive study is. Actually making those charts and outlines certainly goes along well enough with inductive study, but that's not what inductive study means.

You may well be an inductive student of the Bible without making any charts at all. When we speak of inductive Bible study, we're talking about a form of study that endeavors to discover what the text is saying. You might think, well, that's obvious.

What else would you do in study but try to discover what it said? But a lot of people go to the Bible trying to prove something. It's not so much their interest in finding out what the text is trying to say to them, it's going to the Scripture to find out whether there's something they can quote to prove a point that they want to establish. That point might be a theological point that they're locked in some kind of a controversy over and they want to prove their point.

It may be an ethical or moral point that perhaps they have an extra grind on it because they're trying to justify something they're doing, something not very easy to justify. I've known certain people go and try to find biblical support for polygamy and concubines and things like that. And by the way, if you use the Old Testament alone, you could easily find at least what would appear to be permission for that.

But taking the whole counsel of God and looking at the Scripture, we don't go there with some kind of an agenda saying, okay, this is what I hope to find in the Scripture and I will look until I find that. I will comb through it until I find every verse that seems like it may give some degree of support to what I want to say. That's the opposite of inductive Bible study.

That is trying to read into the Bible something, going with an agenda to cause the Bible to support a particular theory or preferred conclusion. Inductive study means you go there with an open mind, willing to accept whatever conclusions arise from the text itself. It's going into the Bible to discover what it is that the Bible writers were seeking to communicate.

And of course, since we believe the Bible is God's word, it's not only what Paul or Peter or Isaiah was trying to communicate, but what God was trying to communicate through them. Many times, of course, we can rightfully speak of what Paul was trying to say and what Paul was trying to communicate, even though we acknowledge that behind what he had to say is God's message and God's word, because Paul was not an unconscious agent in writing his epistles. He actually had intentions.

He had a reason in his heart for writing and something he had in mind to communicate. And so we want to find that out, I hope. It's all too common for people to avoid inductive study altogether and only go to the Bible when they have something they're hoping to prove.

This is, I think, very obviously the case, for example, among those that regard themselves as evangelical feminists. There's a movement, the people call themselves evangelical feminists. Evangelical means they believe the Bible's the word of God, and feminist means they're feminists.

And these people are going to the Bible, trying to find every shred of evidence they can to prove that the traditional understanding of what the Bible teaches about women simply isn't biblical. They've got a hard task ahead of them, because in 1900 years of biblical scholarship, it has always seemed essentially that the Bible teaches something fairly clearly on the subject. It just happens that since the rise of pagan feminism, and by pagan I don't just mean secular, I mean the feminist movement has arisen out of the worship of the goddess.

It's a new age, and witchcraft highly weighted. The leaders in the original feminist movement at the beginning of this early part of this century were much an overlapping group with a strong lesbian goddess-worshipping contingent in society. And the definitely pagan feminist movement arose before the evangelical feminist movement did.

Now, I'm always a bit suspicious when people who say they're trying to find out what the Bible says wait until a pagan idea has been introduced, and it becomes the prevailing norm in society, and it begins to be embarrassing to swim against the grain of the prevailing culture. And so one begins to say, well, maybe we can find some support in the Bible for this idea. And this is something you'll find in many books, and it certainly is not an example of inductive Bible study.

The people who do it and write the books, some of them are Bible scholars, mostly women. There are some men Bible scholars who call themselves evangelical feminists, but they are going back to the text that has never been hard to understand before, the meaning of which has been quite obvious to Bible readers for centuries, and they're trying to find nuances and hints and little twists of the thing that would make the text say the opposite of what it's always been taught to teach. This is an excellent example of having an agenda when you go to the Bible, and deciding that the Bible must teach what you want it to teach, and finding ways of making it do so.

Well, that's not what I approve of. It's not so much that I have an agenda about women's issues. I would have no problem being a feminist if that's what the Bible teaches.

I just have problems because the Bible doesn't teach it. But I would hope that our approach to Scripture would be that if God's word is what we have before us, then it's what God wants us to know that is the thing we want to know. That we're not just trying to recruit God as an endorser of our agenda, but we want to submit to God.

That's the idea. God is the Lord. We don't call the plays.

He calls the plays, and we run the plays. And so, inductive Bible study is the process of seeking to discover what is there, rather than to try to make it say something that we would prefer for it to say. Now, there are three stages to inductive Bible study, and this is well-known.

This is not something I came up with. Although, I'm not sure, but as I recall, I recognized these three points and taught them before I ever heard anyone else say them. But, I mean, since that time, I've found many books on inductive Bible study that all make the same observations, and that is to conduct actual inductive Bible study, there's three stages in your dealing with the material in the Bible that you need to follow.

First is observation. The second is interpretation, and the third is application. An observation means you simply look at what's there, and you take note of what is written, what the words mean, what is stated, what is not stated.

At this stage, you're not trying to discern meanings, particularly. That's where interpretation comes in. What is the meaning of this? It's just a matter of saying, okay, what is there? What has been stated here? What has been left out? What words are here, the key words that the writer is using? The first step of observation of the text means that you try to put away the grid as much as possible that you've always worn.

Everyone wears glasses when they read the Bible or anything else. They look at the world through glasses, which basically reflect the grid or the filter that has been fitted for us by earlier experiences and training. Many of us have certain attitudes and beliefs that we've never really examined.

We've never really critiqued our own beliefs because everybody we knew held to them, whether that's everyone in our church, everyone in our religion, everyone in our denomination, or in our family, or in our neighborhood, in our school, or whatever. There are things that we've just picked up by osmosis from our upbringing, from the culture around us, and these things form a grid that represents what we take for granted to be true. In every consideration, there are certain things that we already accept before we start considering anything new.

This is what we take for granted as fundamental things. In order to really get out of the Bible what we should get out of the Bible, we need to recognize that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are not our ways. Paul said in Romans 12, verse 2, that we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Our minds are our thought processes, our values, our opinions, and so forth. Our beliefs. Now, if Paul said that we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and God said his thoughts are not our thoughts, it follows that when we come to the Scripture, it would be very wise for us to come and say, everything that I've thought before, certainly everything I learned before I was a Christian, and maybe a great deal of what I've

learned even as a Christian, if it has not, since the time I accepted it, if I have not cross-examined it from Scripture, there's a very good chance that it's wrong.

Now, you don't have to assume that everything you believe is wrong, that would be a little overly negative and pessimistic, but you need to come to the Scripture saying it's possible that everything I've been taught is wrong, especially whatever opinions I formed before I was a Christian, or even as a Christian living among people who weren't really very deeply students of the Word, because we find that Christians have as many wrong ideas as non-Christians on some areas, because until you submit to the Word of God, something that too few Christians do consistently, you are as subject to error as a non-believer is subject to error. And it's why Jesus said that when you come to Him, you have to come like a little child, humble like a little child. Well, children, I've observed some little children, they're not all, they don't all seem humble, it's not the word I would use for them in some cases, but there is one thing that is true of little children, and that is that they have everything to learn.

And they usually know it, they freely ask questions without wondering, is this a dumb question, am I going to look really stupid by asking this question? They know that they don't know things and that they need to learn. When you get older, your ego, you know, you get a little more inhibited about asking questions that you're afraid everyone's going to think, boy, they're that stupid, boy, you're not as smart as I thought you were asking a question like that. And this is one area where children are truly humble.

They have everything to learn, and they know they have everything to learn, and they're willing to ask and be instructed. And to come to Christ, we need to come as little children, saying, I have everything to learn. It may be that I've got a PhD in some secular field, but if I was not instructed by those who were men of the word of God, there's a very good chance that everything I learned is probably wrong, or at least there's element of error that may weave throughout the whole system of my beliefs that I have to re-examine.

So observation requires that I overcome these initial prejudices to the best of my ability. And I add that last phrase, to the best of my ability, because I don't know that we are, any of us, capable of being so totally objective that we are no longer influenced by any of our biases. I mean, it's a wonderful goal.

It's a wonderful thing to aim at, but I'm not sure that any of us reach it. At least, I just don't know. I can't claim that I have divested myself of all prejudices.

I hope I have, but I don't know. But I know it is my goal. And there's a big difference if a person's reading the Bible with a commitment to throw off prejudice and just see what's there, on the one hand, or if someone's reading the Bible without that commitment.

If persons don't have the commitment to put away their biases and their bigotry and just

let the Bible speak for itself, they're not likely to learn a great deal, except what they want to learn. And what they want to learn may not really be the truth at all. So the observation process means that we do our best to recognize what's really there and say, I've always been taught that this verse said X, but now they look at it again, it doesn't say X, right? Let me give you a classic example of this.

There's been some curiosity expressed by some of the students about my views about the devil. Somewhere someone left a cat out of a bag, but my views about the devil are a little different than some people's. This Bible's in several installments, I can see.

I think I can find the portion that has what I'm looking for. It doesn't take long for news to get around that I have questioned the traditional idea that Satan is a fallen angel. When I raise the issue, I usually don't do so with any kind of concern about people agreeing with me.

It's usually something to just illustrate how much we can be influenced by tradition and not know we're influenced by tradition. Because the belief that Satan's a fallen angel is 100% tradition, and it is not taught in scripture. And yet every Christian I have ever met, including myself for the majority of the years of my youth and early adult life, I was quite convinced it was taught in scripture.

In fact, I was told, and I felt like there must be biblical grounds for it since I was told, that the devil was one of three archangels. Each archangel had a third of the angels under him before any angels fell. Now, by the way, the Bible does say that angels are fallen.

It just doesn't say that the devil's one of them. But before any angels fell, there were a third of the angels under Michael, a third under Gabriel, and a third under Lucifer, which was taken to be another name for Satan. And this Lucifer was perhaps the most beautiful and wise of them all, and apparently musically talented, because a passage in Ezekiel in the King James Version seemed to indicate that he had musical instruments almost as part of his anatomy.

And this has led many people to believe that if he was musically oriented, perhaps he was the choir director in heaven, before the fall, of course, of Lucifer. And then, of course, as the story goes, Lucifer began to be a bit vain about his own beauty and his own wisdom, and he staged an uprising against God, thinking that he could overthrow God and be like God. Any angel that would think that would not be, in my opinion, wise.

It's always puzzled me how such a being could be said to be so wise and yet think he could overcome God, when compared to even the greatest angel, God is infinitely greater and more powerful, and certainly the angels must be aware of that more than we are. I would think any angel that would seek the stage of rebellion against God, I would think, would be anything but wise, fairly stupid, as a matter of fact. But this is how it goes.

He was incredibly wise, incredibly beautiful, incredibly musical, and he staged an uprising against God, and as a result, a third of the angels that followed him were thrown out of heaven. He became the devil, and the angels that followed him became the demons. This is very standard teaching.

The idea that a third of the angels ever had anything to do with Lucifer, or that a third of the angels fell, even, is based on a single verse in Revelation, which is very obscure, Revelation 12, 4, which says that the dragon with his tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the ground. Well, we read of the dragon, therefore, with his tail, that's the devil, certainly the dragon's the devil. He drew a third of the stars and threw them to the ground.

Well, what's that got to say about angels? Well, maybe nothing, maybe something. I guess it depends on whether the stars represent angels, but that's a big if. There are reasons to believe that they do not.

I don't have time to go into Revelation right now, but suffice it to say they might or they might not. To my mind, there's a much better reason to believe they don't by comparing it with the same imagery in Daniel chapter 8, which we won't look at right now. But they might or they might not be angels.

If they are angels, then there might be something said here about a third of the angels being cast down. But this isn't necessarily in a setting in Revelation 12. It's not it's not in a setting about some primordial rebellion in heaven against God.

The setting is much later in history than that. It's after the birth of the Messiah and he's catching up into heaven. And then it describes the dragon being cast out of heaven.

And notice he wasn't an angel cast out. He's a dragon cast out of heaven. In Revelation 12, which some people think is supports the idea that Satan is a fallen angel from beginning to end in the whole story.

First time he appears, he's a dragon. He's not ever an angel. Jesus also said, I think it's in Luke 10, 18, Jesus said, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

This is sometimes thought to be proof that the Bible teaches that Satan is a fallen angel. But frankly, I, you know, let's let's observe the passage. What does it say? I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Does this give us any time indicators? Well, not really. There's no time indicators. So we don't know what the time frame is.

Does this say that the one who fell from heaven was an angel? No, no mention of an angel. They're just a Satan. Satan means adversary.

The Hebrew word Satan means adversary. So I saw the adversary fall. So from the before he fell in Africa, he was an adversary.

He was an adversary who fell. And so we don't we don't find anything there that indicates that Jesus is talking about an angel that fell. And it certainly doesn't necessarily tell us that it's talking about something ancient, long before Jesus time.

As a matter of fact, in the context, Jesus disciples have just come back and they've said, Lord, even the demons are subject to you and to us in your name. And it's on that occasion, he says, well, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Without stating the time frame, there's a possibility that his statement refers to the time frame of the disciples casting demons out of people.

That's the context. They had just come back and said, Lord, you should have seen what we saw. We saw demons come out of people in your name.

He said, I saw something even better than that. Now, he could be referring to something thousands of years earlier, but there are many scholars who believe that what he's referring to is that the disciples just saw individual instances of demons coming out of individuals. Jesus saw in the spirit the downfall of the whole satanic kingdom with its ruler, Satan himself, come crashing down, but not in the sense of speaking of an angel falling back before the days of Adam and Eve.

Now, you could import that to the passage, and people often do, right? I mean, when they think of that passage, they say, well, here's a proof that Satan is an angel that fell. Well, what do you have there? You have reference to Satan. It's true.

And you have reference to a fall. I saw him fall. But the ideas of an angel, the ideas of this being back in ancient times, and this being the origin of Satan, all that is imported by the person.

It's not stated. If one would just observe the text, they could say what is there and what is not there. And then they determine whether they've got a case for what it is they're trying to prove.

I became aware of this deficiency of biblical support for this traditional doctrine about 17 years ago, 18 years ago, when I was preparing for the first time a series for youth with a mission in Honolulu. They'd asked me if I'd come teach a series on spiritual warfare. I had taught a few times before that on spiritual warfare, but usually a single lecture, a single Bible study on spiritual warfare, not a series.

I said, well, why would I teach for a week, 15 hours? So I thought I'd better put together some more material. I thought, well, one way I can use up some time, and logically so, is to talk about the origin of Satan. So I decided, I was fully convinced Satan was a fallen angel.

I'd never heard anything else ever been suggested. But I'm the kind of person that I need to find scriptural support if I'm going to teach it. And I had taught it before, but in a short study, I'd never had to look at all the verses and stuff.

I thought, I'm going to give a really totally biblical view, a presentation of the origin of Satan. So I went to all the passages that I thought taught that Satan was a fallen angel. And what I did was observe them.

I didn't even have to interpret them. I just had to observe them. And I began to scratch my head to know, what ever made me think that this passage said that Satan was a fallen angel? Now, I just mentioned a couple of New Testament passages.

They're the primary ones in the New Testament. There's also two Old Testament passages that are the primary ones. Let me take you over there and just see what you can observe.

This will be an exercise in observation. Not interpretation. Interpretation comes later.

First, we need to see what is said in the passage. After that, we can decide what it means. That's interpretation.

Too many times we assume that it says certain things, and they're not really there. And we could save ourselves a lot of grief and deception if we just learned to be more observant. You know how Sherlock Holmes always said to Watson, you see, but you don't observe.

You know, there's a difference between Sherlock Holmes and everybody else. You know, he'd walk by someone and no one else noticed, but he knew how many buttons were on the shirt of the constable who just walked by. He'd observe everything.

He knew how many steps there were in the two flights of stairs they got on, because he paid attention. Of course, he was a fictional character. But the point is, it's entirely possible to be surrounded by things and never observe them.

For example, how many of you, without looking, could tell me the color of the fence that's behind you there? Not the street side, but the side that I'm facing. Someone could. How many of you would vote for brown? How many would vote for some other color, if I suggested it? Well, brown is correct, as a matter of fact, and I don't hold it against those of you who weren't sure, because if I wasn't looking at the moment, I'm not sure I would have been sure.

I mean, that one's green over there, because of the moss. But the fact is, we see things every day, in many cases without taking note of them, without observing them. And it's true when we read the Scriptures also.

We can see a passage again and again and again, and we see there, or we think we see there, whatever we already thought was there, if it's a familiar passage. And we need to be able to put on the eyes to say, well, what is there, before I import a whole bunch of human assumptions about it. Look at Isaiah 14.

There's two Old Testament passages usually considered to be relevant to the origin of Satan. There's two in the New Testament, two in the Old Testament. We already talked about the two in the New Testament.

Isaiah 14 is one of them, and Ezekiel 28 is the other. In Isaiah 14, verse 12, Isaiah 14, 12 says, How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation of the farther sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High.

Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you and consider you, saying, Is this the man who made the earth tremble and shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners? Now, did anyone see an angel in this passage? Which verse mentions the angel? Is there anything in there that suggests maybe it's not talking to an angel? In the verses we read, is there anything there that might suggest it's not addressing an angel? Did anyone see a verse there? Yeah. It says in verse 16, Those who see you, this person who's being spoken to, will gaze at you and consider, saying, Is this the man? Now, there is a possibility, of course, that an angel could be referred to as a man in the New Testament, when angels appeared like at the tomb of Jesus.

Some of the Gospels say two men in white apparel. Men. So, I mean, a man could be a way of speaking about an angel, since angels, apparently, when they appear, look like men.

But angels really aren't men. Men are one class of beings and angels are another. This is not talking about an angel appearing to someone in the form of a man.

It's talking about, well, I mean, it doesn't appear to be. All I can say is, as I observe the text through somewhat more critical eyes than I used to, I see nothing here that informs me that we're talking about an angel. Now, some people say, Well, look at the boast he makes.

I will be like the Most High God. I will ascend, you know, put my throne above the stars of God. How could any man have such ambitions? Therefore, it must, of necessity, be a reference to some superhuman.

However, this is not a correct suggestion at all. Many kings have had just such ambitions to be above God and so forth. As a matter of fact, if you look back earlier in the same chapter and verse four, the prophet is told that he will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon and say, How has the oppressor ceased in the golden city? Cease the Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers who struck the he who struck the people in wrath, meaning the king of Babylon.

And at a certain point, it goes on like this. And at a certain point, it just says in verse 12, How are you fallen from heaven? Oh, Lucifer. Now, isn't Lucifer a name for Satan? Well, how would we ever know? It's a good question.

It's a fair question. Is Lucifer a name for Satan? Well, you wouldn't know it just from looking at this passage, whether it is or not. But everyone I know when they read this passage, they import the notion that Lucifer, oh, that's another name for Satan.

But if someone say, Well, how do we know this? Of course, the only way we could know it is either from this passage itself, from internal evidence in the passage, that'd be one possibility. The other way would be if we had other references elsewhere to Lucifer telling us that he was saying we either have to have it in this passage or some other. Now, a big problem here is that the name Lucifer doesn't appear anywhere else in the Bible or anywhere else at all.

Lucifer is just a name or a word that means morning star. And Jesus is even called the morning star somewhere else, but I'm not suggesting this is Jesus. I'm just saying that the that morning star, which Lucifer means is not necessarily a name.

It may be more of a title or a description. But since the name Lucifer is found only in this passage in all of scripture, we obviously don't have the ability to look at some other cross references and see where Lucifer is said to be Satan because Lucifer isn't mentioned anywhere else, only here. And so we would have to find out who Lucifer is from an observation of the internal data of the passage itself.

Well, if we are guided by that alone, we would have to say, well, a few verses earlier, it said it was addressed to the King of Babylon. And in verse 16, a few verses after the Lucifer statement, it says the kings and others will look at you and say, are you the man who made the earth tremble? They could say that to the King of Babylon. He was the, he conquered all the nations around, made them all tremble.

Now, in other words, without importing a notion of some angel in this passage, there is nothing in the passage to compel it. Now, some might say, well, wait, okay. Kings can boast if they will, but could, could a King really seriously expect to set his throne above the stars of God? Well, what do you think the Tower of Babel was? Do you know what that was? That was the beginning of Babylon.

Were you aware of that? In fact, I mean, all scholars know this. Babel was built according to Genesis 11 on the plains of Shinar. That's where the city of Babylon lay the set.

Babel was simply the first building of the civilization that came to be known as Babylon under a man named Nimrod, the first King of it. So would it not be possible to say to Babylon or to the King who represents the nation, you said you will ascend into the heavens. You said you'd set your throne above the stars.

Would that be a fair description of what the ambition was of those who established the Tower of Babel or sought to do so? Sounds very fitting to me. Now, let me show you something else real quickly before we go to Ezekiel. Look over at, what do we want to look at? I don't know what portion of the Bible.

Let's see, this one goes directly from Ezekiel to John. I think we got something missing here. Maybe I'll look at yours just for a moment here.

That might be helpful. If you could look over at Obadiah. Oh, you know, I've got this.

Here's that section. You have to subscribe to this Bible. A different section comes every month.

Let's see. Now, if you look over at the book of Obadiah, you know, Matthew, Mark, Obadiah, easy to find. There is no question in anybody's mind who's studied the book of Obadiah what it is about.

It is about the kingdom of Edom, an ancient kingdom now long extinct, hasn't been around since the time of Christ, really. I mean, that was about the time the Edomites disappeared. And it is a prophecy, a single chapter, the shortest book in the Old Testament.

A single chapter declined the doom of this pagan country, Edom. Now, the Edomites had a fortress called Petra, which was carved out of the side of a sheer rock face. And it was protected by the fact that the structures and mountains around it allowed only one way of entering or coming toward it, and that was through a narrow ravine, which was easily defended from invaders.

And so the people of Petra, the Edomites, they believed that they were invincible, that no one could ever conquer them. Well, they found out otherwise because they're now extinct. But this prophecy was addressing them about the fact that God would destroy them.

Now look what it says from the beginning, Obadiah 1, the vision of Obadiah, thus says the Lord God concerning Edom. A little further down, verse 2, behold, I will make you small among the nations. You shall be greatly despised.

The pride of your heart has deceived you. You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, you who say in your heart, who will bring me down to the ground? Though you exalt yourself as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord. Now, I've never heard anyone suggest that this prophecy is addressed to an angel.

And yet here's somebody whose ambitions are described as if they felt they could set their nest or their dwelling place among the stars themselves. This is what we call hyperbole. It's an exaggeration, but it's not an inappropriate representation of their ambition and their pride.

But what I would say is if this could be said about Edom, why couldn't such a thing be said about the pride of Babylon? Very, very appropriate, it seems to me. If you know, a curse or a woe upon the city of Capernaum, which happens to be the city that he was headquartered in for most of his Galilean ministry. So they had the advantage of seeing him and hearing him more often than most.

And he said to them in Matthew 11, 23, and you Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. Now, Hades is the Greek equivalent of Sheol in the Old Testament Hebrew. The king of Babylon or Lucifer or whoever that was, was told in Isaiah 14, you thought you'd exalt yourself to heaven, but you'll be brought down to Sheol.

Jesus says precisely the same thing to Capernaum. No one has ever argued that Capernaum is an angel. It's a city, an earthly city.

Edom, Capernaum, Babylon, same thing said to all of them. Now, that being so, why should there be anything in Isaiah 14 that necessitates the importation of an idea that Lucifer or the person addressed there is an angel? There's nothing in the Bible to suggest it. It's a very strong tradition.

And I'll bet you've read that passage before and it's just click. You're right. Oh, this is that passage again about Satan, unless you've never read Isaiah.

But if you, if you're a Bible reader and you've read Isaiah, I would dare say that, that whenever you've read this passage before, it's just, you know, it's just, there's something, oh, this is that passage that tells about Satan falling, Lucifer. I'm saying, if you, you see, but you do not observe. And it doesn't say that now a little more difficult to deal with objectively is Ezekiel chapter 28.

Let me real quickly take you there. And then we'll be done with this point and go into some entirely different thing. In Ezekiel chapter 28, beginning with verse 12, it says, son of man, that's Ezekiel himself, God speaking to him saying, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre.

This is just like Isaiah was told to take up a lamentation for the king of Babylon. And that's where it was in Isaiah 14. Now Ezekiel is taking up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, another earthly city.

Say to him, thus says the Lord God, you were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. That might start to sound familiar to some of you. You were in Eden, the garden of God, every precious stone was your covering.

Then it gives a list of quite a few of them. And at the end of that same verse, it says, the workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you in the day you were created. Now that's the King James.

Could someone tell me what the new King James says in that last line of verse 13, that last sentence, timbrels and pipes. Does anyone have a translation other than the King James of the new King James? You've got an NIV. I would imagine it's, I'm not sure I would imagine it says something like sockets and fittings, sockets and engravings.

Okay. Settings and mountings. Okay.

We'll read on. Keep that in mind. Verse 14, you were the anointed cherub who covers.

Now that sounds indicative of something. I established you. You were on the holy mountain of God.

You walked back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created until iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading, you became filled with violence within and you sin.

Therefore, I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God. And I destroyed you all covering cherub from the midst of the fiery stones. Now I can say this a little more complex.

There are several things here that would give the impression by observation that this may be talking about some superhuman agent. First of all, people aren't cherubs. We know of cherubs from other places in the Bible.

Cherubs are some kind of angelic being, it would appear. Also, there weren't very many people of whom it could be said they were in Eden. If we're talking about the garden of Eden, how many people altogether were in Eden or persons? Well, Adam and Eve.

There's a couple of them. Who? Satan was there and any others? God. Right? Let's say we've got God, Satan, Adam and Eve.

After that, no one because Adam and Eve were expelled and we don't have any reason to believe that God or Satan went there again either. So there are four persons historically of whom it could be said they were literally in Eden, the garden of God.

Obviously, this is not speaking to God so that we can eliminate that as a possibility.

It's not speaking to Adam and Eve because they're dead by this time. And therefore, the suggestion is this must be the devil, the serpent. He was in Eden.

So you've got the serpent. You've got, it said you were a cherub. What else do we have? He's perfect in beauty, perfect in wisdom.

And that certainly couldn't be said literally of any human being being perfect. Well, maybe perfect in beauty. I don't know.

Some people I suppose have no blemishes, but no one's perfect in wisdom. And it even says you were perfect in all your ways until iniquity was found in you. So this is starting to look like it may be talking about someone other than the mere king of Tyre to whom it says it is addressed.

And the theory is that this is speaking to none other than the same being that was mentioned Isaiah 14 and called their Lucifer. Although notice the word Lucifer doesn't occur in this passage, nor does the word devil, but the person spoken to is called the king of Tyre. Now, when it gets to interpretation, and this is where we, you know, this takes us another step beyond observation.

We need to interpret. Is this literal language or is it figurative language in any sense? Now, people who don't like literal translations might just, or literal interpretation might just say, well, it's figurative without any grounds. But if one was to take the context of the book of Ezekiel, would it be possible to come to any conclusions about this? Well, maybe you'd want to look real quickly at chapter 27 of Ezekiel, the opening verses, the word of the Lord came again to me saying, now son of man, take up the lamentation for Tyre and say to Tyre, now this is not the prince of Tyre, this is the city of Tyre.

Many times the city and its king were identified with one another in prophecy. Say to the city of Tyre, you who are situated at the entrance of the sea, that's true, Tyre was a port city, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, thus saith the Lord God, O Tyre, you have said, I am perfect in beauty. Does that sound familiar? Perfect in beauty.

That was what Tyre said of itself. Now, this is not talking about the devil, this is talking about a city that's situated on the seacoast, we're talking about the literal city of Tyre. It's self-opinion, it's arrogance.

They boasted of themselves that they were perfect in beauty. You could read on down further and find some interesting other things too about it, in chapter 28, verse 3, still speaking to Tyre, I'll actually read earlier, verse 2, son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, thus saith the Lord God, because your heart is lifted up and you say, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas, yet you are a fallen angel, right? No, it says, yet you are a man. Who's this talking to? Anyway, the prince of Tyre.

Well, prince and king are interchangeable terms in prophecy, believe it or not. Prince just means ruler in Hebrew. So, we've got the ruler of Tyre, he says, I'm a God.

The God says, no, you're a man, you're not a God, even though you have set your heart as the heart of God. Verse 3, behold, you are wiser than Daniel, therefore no secret can be hid from you. With your wisdom and your understanding, you have gained riches for yourself and gathered gold and silver for your treasuries.

This business, you are wiser than Daniel, certainly must be uttered in sarcasm. Again, reflecting the arrogance of the city. Oh yeah, you're really wise.

You're wiser even than Daniel, no doubt. All this wealth, you got that all by your own wisdom, didn't you? You might remember on another occasion in Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar made a similar boast. He said, this is Babylon, which I built by my great prowess, my great wisdom.

And he was struck insane for seven years and ate grass like an ox for seven years for saying something like that. Kings like to take credit for their accomplishments and not include God in them. This is talking to a king, a man who thinks he's like God.

He thinks he's wiser than Daniel and God sarcastically says, oh yeah, you really are wiser than Daniel by your wisdom. You've gotten all this, right? This city says, I am perfect in beauty, according to chapter 27. Now, when we're talking to this king of Tyre in chapter 28, verse 12, what does it say? You are the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty.

The very same things that were said of the city of Tyre and of the prince of Tyre earlier in the chapters. So there's reason to believe we're talking to the same individual here. And it is the ruler of the city of Tyre, not a spiritual being.

Now it says you were in Eden, the garden of God. And of course it says further down, you were the anointed cherub that covers and it repeats that the old cherub. Now, I guess we might ask is this literal or is this figurative? Is this person who is addressed? Was it, were they literally in the garden of Eden and are they literally a cherub? Well, perhaps we would not know if we had this chapter alone to go on.

But if you'll turn three chapters further in Ezekiel 31, you'll find that there's a prophecy here that has to do with Assyria. Now it's a different nation than Tyre, but it says in verse three, Ezekiel 31, three, indeed Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon. Is that literal? No, Assyria is not a tree.

But go on. With branches that shaded the forest and high stature, and its top was among the thick boughs, waters made it grow, underground waters gave it height, etc., etc., etc., etc. The thing goes on in the same vein quite a bit.

And then it finally says in verse eight, the cedars in the garden of God could not hide it. Apparently this tree, this Syria, this Lebanon. Now here it said it was a cedar in Lebanon.

Now it's changed. It's not in Lebanon. It's in the garden of God now.

The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it. The fir trees were not like its boughs and the chestnut trees were not like its branches, etc., etc. And it says in verse nine, I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches so that all the trees of Eden, so we know that the garden of God is Eden here, envied it.

We're in the garden of God. Now do trees feel envy? Literally? No. Was Assyria literally a tree? No.

Was it literally in Lebanon? No, but the cedars of Lebanon were renowned. So it was a cedar in Lebanon means it was a renowned tree. But actually the imagery shifts and now it's no longer in Lebanon.

It's in Eden, the garden of God, and all the other trees are envying it. Is this literal language or figurative language? It's figurative and it's not talking about an angel. It's talking about a nation, Assyria.

Now, I guess it seems fair for me to ask the question of myself at least. If Assyria can be called a tree in the garden of Eden, could not Tyre be called a cherub in the garden of Eden without being any more literal? One case than the other? We know that Assyria wasn't literally in the garden of Eden, so why must we insist that the king of Tyre was literally in the garden of Eden? Both are said to have been there, but one is said to be a tree and one is said to be a cherub. Both were found, by the way, in the literal garden of Eden.

There were trees and there was a cherub there. But apparently imagery from the garden of Eden is being applied figuratively of these kings, basically a way of saying you were important, you were in paradise as it were, you had it made, just as if you were in the garden of Eden itself, but you blew it. Now you're kicked out.

The tree got cut down later on in Ezekiel 31, and Assyria is destroyed. But you see, many people who read Ezekiel 28, they read it in order to prove the point that Satan is a fallen angel, and so they find, oh, cherub, that's not a person. By the way, a cherub isn't an archangel either.

A cherub has four wings and four faces, one of an ox, one of a lion, one of a man, one of an eagle, according to earlier in Ezekiel chapter 1, the cherub is so described. We're not talking about a normal angel kind of thing here either. It's a weird kind of creature, similar to the four living creatures in Revelation.

So if this was the devil, we could not say he was an archangel. He was a cherub, an

entirely different order of beings, if that's literal. But when you read the whole book of Ezekiel, something very few Christians bother to do, and I must confess I didn't bother to do until I had to teach through it and then I had to read it.

Hard book to read, because it's so full of this kind of imagery, so full of non-literal symbolic images like this, and it's hard, and most Christians don't bother to read it, and therefore they never acquaint themselves with the way that Ezekiel commonly expresses himself in these images. So when they take an individual passage, never having read the book of Ezekiel itself, they look at one passage, oh, it says cherub, it says Eden, okay, we're getting some pictures, a picture's taking shape here, we've got someone who is back there with Adam and Eve, must be the devil. However, notice this, it says in verse 18, you defiled, no, earlier than that, earlier than that, verse 16, by the abundance of your trading, you became filled with violence within and you sinned.

So the sin of this being was trading, and apparently got defiled by too much prosperity. That would certainly be true of the city of Tyre, the richest city on that end of the Mediterranean, because it was the chief seaport of a wealthy city. But I don't know, I'm not sure, what, Lucifer up in heaven, an angel? Before he fell, his sin was that he got defiled by trading? What did he have, some kind of a Walmart he opened up there, and something got a little too wealthy, a little too greedy? I don't know.

It doesn't make much sense to me, it certainly doesn't talk about staging any rebellion in heaven, or taking a third of the angels with him. The person addressed here got corrupted by wealth, and by trading, and by prosperity, and so forth. And many people have been, many kings have been.

The king of Tyre did. But is that really what we're prepared to say about some archangel in heaven, that he got corrupted by trading? I don't think so. By the way, all that business about you had these stones for covering? Let me look at verse 13 just for a minute, we'll pass from this subject and go to something else.

In verse 13, it says, you were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering. The sardius, the topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the sapphire, the turquoise, the emerald, and the gold.

And I've actually heard it said, that this is actually describing the garden of Eden, at least when Satan lived there as a serpent, that he actually lived in an underground, like serpents typically do, in some kind of a burrow or a hole, and he was covered, you know, the ground was covered with all these precious stones, these gems. And that's, they think, a description of how the, you know, the ground was littered with gems in the garden of Eden. And he had them for his covering.

But is it not more likely that it is talking to a king who was bedecked with jewels, covered with them, we might say? You were so wealthy, you were covered with diamonds, you're

covered with rubies, you're covered with gold and silver. Is that not a more reasonable explanation than to say the garden of Eden was littered all over the ground with gems, and the snake lived under them, and he had them for his covering? And especially when you get to the latter part of that same verse, when the modern translations all say, your sockets and your settings, it's talking about jewelry here. We're talking about the jewels were set in golden sockets and settings and so forth.

It's not talking about a snake living under a ground cover of gems, it's talking about a person wearing gems, jewelry. So, it's so funny to me now as I think of it, now that I look at it, and think, I used to just accept uncritically this whole idea that this is talking about the devil. There's not a line in here that suggests it, unless you want to be more literal than Ezekiel typically is about this Eden and Cherubim and so forth.

But Ezekiel, you know, he's, if you're going to be literal there, you've got to be literal consistently through there, and you're going to get into some embarrassing situations, trying to make Assyria a tree in the Garden of Eden, I guess when Satan was there as a Cherub in the Garden of Eden, same time. That would make Assyria the most ancient nation in the world. But, you know, this latter part of verse 13, as it reads in the King James, the New King James, it actually says, and this is apparently a poor translation because all the modern translations have improved on it, it says, the workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day that you were created, sometimes to stay in you.

And some have suggested that, and this is really, to my mind, ridiculous, but I've heard actually sober Bible teachers suggest this, before Satan fell, before Lucifer fell, he had pipes and timbrels, these are musical instruments, built into his body, hanging off of him like limbs of his, like his arms and his legs were like pipes and timbrels, and this is where they get the whole notion, well, he must have been musical, you know, why else would God put a bunch of clarinets and flutes and oboes hanging off his body, you know? It must have made him to be a musician, probably a song leader in heaven. All of this, you know, to me, as I think of it now, how bizarre to interpret this in this way. And all it took for me to begin to have my doubts about it was to observe a little bit more and say, does it really ever say anywhere there's an angel in this picture? In Isaiah 14, in Ezekiel 28, is there anything there that necessitates that it be about a description of anyone other than who it says it's about, the king of Babylon, the king of Tyre? There's nothing there to compel this, and nothing in the New Testament either.

And so, of course, I get the reputation of being the guy who doesn't believe the devil's a fallen angel. Let me just clarify my position. If someone wants to know from me if the devil's a fallen angel, I'm just going to have to say, how would I know? If God doesn't say, where am I going to get the information? I wasn't there when he originated, so I can't tell you where he was before, but all I can say is I'm in the realm of ignorance on this.

I don't know. Unless God says something about it, I have no way of knowing about it. And the passages that most people think address it don't.

And therefore, I don't know. Maybe he was an angel that fell. If so, the Bible is silent on it, because the passages that are thought to teach it, if you observe them, don't teach it.

There's also the possibility he wasn't an angel. Jesus said in John 8, 44, the devil was a murderer from the beginning. Doesn't sound very angelic, John 8, 44.

And in 1 John 3, 8, John said in 1 John 3, 8, the devil sinned from the beginning. And it also says over in Proverbs 16, verse 4, Proverbs 16, 4 says, the Lord has made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of doom. God made even the wicked for himself, for his own purposes.

We'll pass on from this now, because it gets too far afield of what I'm trying to get at about observation in the scripture, but it's a very good example of the need to observe without the grid that we've always brought to it. But I would just say this in passing from this business of Satan, and maybe he was always bad. I can't just say nothing more, because everyone then thinks, uh-oh, does that make God the author of evil? I mean, did God make Satan like that? I mean, certainly Satan is a created being.

If he's uncreated, then he's like God and equal to God. The reason that God is supreme over all is because he's the only self-existing one, and everything else originated from him. So if we would suggest that the devil has never been any better than he is now, then he must have been created that way.

And that bothers a lot of people, because of what they think the implications are for the character of God. But let me just say this before passing it all together. Could we not deduce, regardless, regardless of our opinions of the origin of Satan, could we not deduce that God has use for a devil? Think of it this way.

If, let us say, Satan is an angel who fell. Just for the sake of argument, let's assume this for the sake of argument. Satan is an angel who fell.

Why has God kept him around? If I were God, I would have squashed him like a bug for rebelling like that. Why did God keep him around all the time? Is God powerless to do anything? Or is God capable, if he wished, to just, you know, squish him under his thumb or throw him in the lake of fire like he's going to do something? Why doesn't he do it now? Why didn't he do it immediately afterward? Why did he allow him into the Garden of Eden to cause all this trouble? Why has he allowed him to persist even to this day when Jesus conquered him? Why is the devil around? We have to answer that God has use for him in his program. There must be something the devil is doing that God prefers to have done.

Now that may that may bother you, but how else could you explain it? Either God is

powerless to get rid of him or else he has the power to get rid of him, but he hasn't chosen to do so. There might be something that he is useful for. I almost said good for, but I don't think there's anything good about the devil, but he might be useful to God.

As what? Maybe a tester? A tester of the loyalty of God's people? Remember that passage we talked about before in Deuteronomy 13? It wasn't about the devil, it was about prophets. It says, if a prophet or dreamer of dreams comes, he shows a sign of wonder, a thing happens, but he says, let's go after other gods. Remember, it says, don't listen to that prophet or dreamer of dreams because the Lord your God is testing you to see if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.

God, it doesn't say, don't listen to that prophet or dreamer of dreams because he's a counterfeit, he's a spiritual counterfeit, the devil has inspired him, he did a sign of wonder, but he's trying to lead you after other gods. That's a satanic cult, don't follow that because that's demonic. It could be that all that is true, but it doesn't say that.

It says, don't follow him because the Lord your God is testing you. In other words, here's a demonically inspired false prophet, and God doesn't say that's demonic, he says this person is here because God wants you to be tested. He wants you to obey him, he doesn't want you to disobey, but he doesn't want your obedience to be untested.

And if that is true in the character of God, could he not have made an agent to test Adam and Eve and to test us all? And when he's done with that agent, he'll dispose of him, but for the time being it's suits God's purposes for him to be around. If that is true, if that is possible even, then we could as easily say that God might have made him in that condition since he needed something like that. Otherwise, if he made him an angel, he'd have to wait around for him to fall so he could use the devil, you know, got to wait for a devil to come along.

Hopefully one of these angels will fall. You know, I mean, God obviously has use for a devil. There's no way of getting around that or God wouldn't have a devil in the universe.

God is sovereign. So a lot of people don't want God to have made the devil as the devil because they think that has bad implications about God and his purity and so forth. But think about it this way.

Suppose he made an angel that he knew would become a devil. Is that much better? I've never really, even when I thought that the devil was a fallen angel, and I heard Christians say, well, when a non-Christian say, well, how come there's evil in the world if God's a good God? Christians always say, well, God didn't make evil. God made, only did things, but one of those good things became bad.

And that's why there's evil. It still doesn't answer your question. Unless God was kind of taken by surprise by this whole deal, we'd have to argue that God created, let us say, a

good angel knowing he would become evil.

Why bother with him? Why not just not create him in the first place? He's going to be so much trouble. Obviously, if God created an angel knowing he'd become a devil, or if he just skipped the middle, man, and just made a devil right from the start, it's because he had some reason to allow there to be a devil for testing man, apparently. And that's why I can say God made all things for himself, even the wicked, for the day of doom.

Well, it's another theory. We need to move along from it, take it much too long on it. I'm hoping that this length of time I've spent on this will illustrate to you the need not to assume that you know what a passage says, but to look and observe what the passage says and what it does not say.

When you read the material carefully, you need to identify words and information that answers the big W questions. Who, what, when, where, why, how. The information is there.

Who wrote this? Who is it written to? What is being said? Is there any indication of why it is being said? Where did this take place, depending on the kind of material? This is just getting the basic information out of the words without interpreting at all, just seeing what is there. It's good to identify, if you can, what the obvious thought of the passage is. You can divide the chapter or a whole book you're studying, you can divide it into paragraphs where you can see how the thoughts divide up into segments for later analysis, for later interpretation.

I would suggest you might even want to write down an ignorance list when you're reading a passage, and questions come to my mind I don't know the answers to. I'll write that question down. Maybe if I remember the question later, I can ask somebody, or maybe it'll come back to me, and I can fill in that gap.

It's not a bad idea to keep not only a list of things you know, but a list of things you don't know. And I'd really encourage you, you know, a lot of times I'll say, does anyone have any questions? And everyone knows they do, but they can't think of what they are. You know, I remember yesterday I was reading about some question, and I forget what that was.

So when you get a chance to have an answer, or you find it, you know, you get your hands on a commentary, you forget what it was you wanted to know. Just notice what's there. Take stock of what you can know from what's there, and what you can't know, what you don't know.

Write questions down. Then you move on to interpretation. There are rules of interpretation, some of which we've already talked about, the hermeneutic principles.

We talked about those in an earlier lecture. Let me just say there's a few things to be

sure of in this matter. If you can identify the genre of the passage, it helps a great deal, because poetry is not the same thing as historical narrative.

It doesn't use the same figures of speech and manner of expression. Apocalyptic style literature is a genre of its own. And the book of Revelation, for example, is written in apocalyptic style, so is much of Daniel and Ezekiel and Zechariah.

If you know what genre you're reading, is this an epistle, or is this a parable? Is this a historical narrative, or is this a poem of praise? Or is this wisdom literature? What am I looking at here? Once you know what genre it is, it'll help you to know what approach to take to interpretation, because if it's a historical narrative, you'll have reason to believe that it's essentially a literal presentation of the facts, because that's what historical narratives generally are. But if you're reading poetry, you'll have reason to believe that maybe some of these things are figures of speech used for the sake of the poet's intention to make an impression. That's what poets do, you know.

And it will affect your choices in interpretation of the passage, whether to be literal or not so literal. Identify the figures of speech, if there are any. A hyperbole is an exaggeration made for the purpose of emphasis.

An anthropomorphism is when something that is not human is spoken of as if it is a human. The trees clapping their hands being a notable example. They're not human, but they're talked about as if they were human.

Sometimes God is spoken of anthropomorphically. Talk about God's ear and God's hand and God's eye, which are probably not literal, but more anthropomorphisms. Apocalyptic imagery.

Again, I've mentioned before Jesus being depicted as a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns, a highly symbolic image. It's typical apocalyptic imagery. If you can identify, oh, this probably is not literal.

This looks like an apocalyptic image. If you can be sure, it'll help you to know what to do with the passage a little better. Poetic parallelism.

This is something I don't know if I've mentioned to you prior to this, but in the poetry portions of the Old Testament especially, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and much of the material in the Prophets, which is poetic, there is parallelism. The failure to recognize parallelism will hurt you in your ability to interpret what's being said. Let me give you an example.

Turn over to Psalm 8. This is a typical example of parallelism. The whole book of Psalms and Proverbs is entirely written in poetry. You'll find parallelism all the time.

Parallelism means that there's two clauses or two lines in a stanza that say the same

thing a different way. Instead of rhyming, as English poetry does, Hebrew poetry is distinguished by repetition of the same thought in various forms, sometimes two or three or four times the same thought in different words. Here's just a typical and fairly well-known example.

This is Psalm 8. It says in verse 3, When I consider your heavens the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him? Now, notice this. Verse 3 has two essential clauses. When I consider your heavens the work of your fingers is the first one.

The second one is the moon and the stars which you have made. Do you see there's parallelism there? The heavens parallels the moon and the stars. The work of your fingers parallels the things you've made.

Same ideas, twice. That's typical of Hebrew poetry. Look at verse 4. What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him? Man and the son of man are parallel ideas.

Being mindful of him and visiting him are parallel ideas. Same thing twice. By the way, if you didn't know this, if you didn't know about Hebrew parallelism in poetry, you might think, son of man, oh, that's the name for Jesus.

This is a prophecy about Jesus here. You might think so, because in the New Testament Jesus calls himself the son of man. But if you recognize parallelism in poetry, you'll avoid making that mistake.

Son of man is just a Hebrew expression that means a human being. A son of Adam, as it were. The son of the dust.

And it's frequently used throughout the Psalms, Proverbs, and Prophets. Son of man means a man, a mere man. And so it says, what is man that you're mindful of him, or the son of man, or a mere man that you would visit him? You've got the same idea twice.

Let me turn you to a similar phenomenon in the Prophets, which I think has led to many misunderstandings theologically, misinterpretations of what's being said, the failure to recognize this kind of parallelism. In Isaiah 53, now, some of you, since you don't know what I think about these things yet, might get the wrong impression if I don't tell you, first off, I believe in healing. I've been miraculously healed in my life.

I've prayed for sick people and seen them miraculously healed. I believe in the gifts of healing. I believe in every form of divine healing that ever existed in the Bible.

I believe it's still valid today. Okay? Now I'm going to take on one of the popular notions about healing. In Isaiah 53 and verse 5, it says, but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. That last line, everybody who's charismatic knows, is the line that is used to prove that Jesus purchased our healing when he was at the whipping post and got stripes laid on his back, and that he has therefore acquired for us healing in the atonement along with the forgiveness of sins. I've heard this for 30 years.

Anyone not heard this? Everyone's familiar with it, right? Well, is that what it's saying? When it says, by his stripes we are healed, is it talking about I as an individual and my personal organic sicknesses am healed, or that my healing was acquired by his being whipped? That's what I've always been told that it means, and certainly it sounds something like that. With his stripes I'm healed. Doesn't that sound like my sicknesses are healed? Now, this is a place where taking context would help a great deal, because throughout the book of Isaiah, the nation of Israel is described as a sick man.

In Isaiah chapter 1, it says, whole nation is sick from the crown of the head to the sole of foot, full of putrefying sores, no one has bounded up, no one has healed it. Talking about the nation, it's not talking about an individual with a sickness, it's talking about the nation of Israel anthropomorphized as a man, and a sick one at that, needing healing. And you'll find that motif throughout all of Isaiah, the nation's sick, the nation's sick, there's no healer, there's no cure, and then comes along this passage, here comes the Messiah, and with his stripes we are healed.

Now, what kind of heal? Well, if you know something about parallelism, this is poetic. Your Bible should have it said in poetry form, in verse form. And look at the four lines in this verse, verse 5. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

Those sound like similar concepts? Wounded and bruised are parallel. Transgressions and iniquities are parallel. Wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities.

That's just saying the same thing twice. And that's poetic, that's how Hebrew poetry is structured. What about the next two lines? The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

Now, where are the parallels there? What does stripes, what does stripes parallel to there? Chastisement. Chastisement means whipping, generally, or spanking, or something like that. A disobedient child or a disobedient slave might be whipped by his master or by his father, or with a rod or something.

And that would be a chastisement, he'd receive stripes. So the stripes are parallel to the chastisement, isn't that correct? Then what is healed parallel to? Peace. My peace with whom? With God.

The chastisement, do me to acquire my peace with God, that chastisement was laid on

him, and with his stripes I am healed. Healed parallels my peace with God. It's not related to my physical sickness, it's the nation needing healing, they're healed by the Messiah's suffering.

Their relationship with God is fixed. You know, over in Jeremiah, repeatedly, Jeremiah says, God says to Jeremiah, I will heal their backsliding. I will heal their backsliding.

Hosea uses that term too. What is that? It's not healing a physical sickness, it's healing a relationship with God. By the way, this is a little extra for no extra money, no extra cost to you.

This verse that we're looking at is quoted in the New Testament. And the way it's quoted, it confirms this particular understanding of it. If you look at 1 Peter chapter 2, and we don't want to take too long with this, we need to move along, we have very little time.

1 Peter chapter 2, speaking about what Jesus has done for us, it says of him, and how he reacted especially, but it says in verse 24, who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died the sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed. That's a line from Isaiah 53, 5. But what's it saying? For, now he's amplifying what he means. What do you mean by his stripes you were healed? Well, for you were like sheep going astray.

But now you've returned. What's been healed then? My backsliding's been healed. My strain, my alienation from God has been healed.

He says by his stripes you were healed because you were like sheep going astray, but now you've returned, haven't you? He has healed your relationship. You were alienated by your wandering, by your backsliding, and he's healed your backsliding. Now again, I believe in divine healing.

I just don't believe that Isaiah 53, verse 5 is talking about that. And one way I know that is from the way it's quoted in the New Testament. Another way I know it is the way that healing motif is used throughout the book of Isaiah and the prophets generally.

And another way I know it is by the Hebrew parallelism in the poetry there. I can see that healing there is parallel to my peace with God. And so, recognizing this genre, oh, this is poetry.

Here we have this, here's a figure of speech of poetic parallelism. A figure of expression. That will help me understand some things I might otherwise not understand.

When it comes to interpretation, you're going to want to probably look up unfamiliar words that are in the passage that aren't in your vocabulary. Especially you might want to look them up in the Hebrew or the Greek. It helps a lot sometimes to make up your mind about the meaning of a thing when you know what the Greek or Hebrew means,

not just the English.

And you can use cross-referencing tools. We dealt with that by his structure healed by cross-referencing also. In addition to the parallelism, we could cross-reference other passages in Isaiah that talk about healing and sickness.

You can also cross-reference over to Peter. And when you see what the whole Bible says on the subject, you begin to get a little more understanding, maybe a lot more, of what the particular passage is talking about. Then you need to ask yourself, how does the thought of the passage fit in and interact with the context of the immediate discussion of the book in which it is found, in this case Isaiah, and of that of the whole Bible? Well, if you can answer that question, you're talking about context here.

You're talking about immediate context, context of the book, and context of the whole Bible. You will use the whole context to harmonize or to at least gain hints at understanding the individual passage that you're dealing with. Now, very quickly, I want to run through some issues related to application.

Interpretation is the process of finding out what it means. Application is deciding what it means to me and what I'm going to do about it, applying it to my life. You can sit around having observed perfectly everything that's there and interpreted it flawlessly, and you fully understand what it means, and make no application to yourself, in which case you've failed.

The Bible is not there for us to fill our minds with information about. It's there to change us, to transform our behavior and our thinking. And therefore, this is the crucial part.

But the other two are crucial, too. You can't really do this correctly unless you've done the other steps. You have to have observed correctly what's there, interpreted legitimately what it's trying to say, what its meaning is.

That's interpretation. Then you need to take the final step and apply it to your own circumstance, your own life. How does this affect me? What am I supposed to do about this? How should I change? Now, I've given you here several different categories of passages, because there are different kinds of things in the Bible, and there's different ways to apply them.

I've given you a list of things to—these are really questions to ask yourself and find the answers to, and this will be how you apply it. If you're reading a promise, there are promises in Scripture. Or if you're reading a command, that's different than a promise.

How do you apply that? Or about passages that just tell you something about God, about His character and nature, how do you apply that? Or there are passages that describe events and people, men and women in Scripture, things they did and so forth. How do you apply that to your life? Is there any way? And then there's prophetic predictions in

the Bible. What do you do to apply that? Let me very quickly run through the kinds of questions that I feel you should be prepared to ask in order to make the application of these different kinds of passages.

Now, these are questions that I've always kind of asked intuitively. Once I sat down and said, well, what kind of questions do I intuitively ask? And I started writing these down, I realized that there's a lot of questions that, you know, they're already there forming my framework as I read these different kinds of passages. And I'm not telling you to memorize these rules or memorize these questions and ask them consciously to yourself, although you might have to if it's not habitual.

But hopefully these are just the common sense kinds of things that you will become in the habit of asking yourself in order to apply certain things. When you're reading promises, ask yourself, to whom was this promise originally made? It might make a difference. Maybe it's not to me.

Maybe it was made to Abraham or David. And maybe what was said doesn't apply to me. You need to find that out first of all.

What did the promise mean to the, in the original context? If there's a promise, my God shall supply all you need according to his riches and glory. What was the original context of that? What did it mean? Who was it made to? Well, it was made to the Philippians. The Philippians 4. 19, I think it is, or 18.

And what did it mean? Well, Paul had just received a gift from them. And he's saying, listen, you've been very generous in your giving. And my God will supply all your needs.

You've been supplying my needs and my God will supply you. He said, I can't repay you. My God will repay you.

He's not just making some kind of unconditional promise. He's making a statement about people who've been generous to him, to the ministry. And he said, and God will pay you back for this.

What did it mean in the original context? We can just excise it from its context and make it mean whatever we want it to, but we might be wrong. Are there stated or implied conditions attached to the promise? Sometimes a promise is made that is conditional, but the conditions aren't always stated. Sometimes they're implied.

And this is true of threats too, both promises and threats. Remember Jonah said, 40 days Nineveh will perish. He didn't say any conditions, but the people repented and it didn't perish.

Why? Because it was implied, unless you repent, you know. And so also God says that when he promises a nation some blessing, if they turn from their good and do evil, he'll

repent of what he said he'd do. It's conditional.

He said that in Jeremiah 18 verses seven through 10. Does it apply to parties like myself beyond the original recipients? Good question. Sometimes you can figure that out and work it out.

Am I in the same class? Was this made to all believers? Well, I'm a believer. Was this made to all Jews? Well, I'm not a Jew, so it doesn't apply to me. I mean, who is this made to? Does it apply to people besides the original people? Does it apply to me? Am I part of a group that this addresses? If so, am I realizing this promise in my experience? You know, and the Bible might promise something and your experience doesn't reflect that.

What's wrong? Why doesn't this promise come true to me? Is it God that's unfaithful or is it, am I not meeting certain conditions or what? Can I think of examples from scripture or in the lives of myself or others, which are examples of God fulfilling this promise to others or to me? That's a very important thing to know. When you're going to believe the promise of God, it helps to think of cases where he fulfilled that promise to other people or even to you in the past so that you know next time you need to believe. It's real easy to believe because you remember, remember David was willing, it was courageous to go to fight Goliath because he remembered times when God had protected him from the lion and the bear.

Before he said, well, God delivered me from the lion and the bear, he delivered me from the Philistine. It helps, helps to have some remembrance of times when God showed himself faithful before so that next time you need to believe it, it's easier. Under what foreseeable circumstances or test in my life will I particularly need to remember this promise and count upon it? That's an important thing to ask yourself.

If it's a promise that has some substance to you and applies to you, you might say, well, when will I need to make sure I remember this promise? I mean, I might not need it real badly right now, but I can imagine needing this real badly sometime. You might want to anticipate that. Those are ways to apply the promises to your own life.

How about passages that describe a duty or a command or instruction? Well, here's the kind of questions you would ask yourself about those. Is this passage really presenting a duty or is it merely descriptive? Is it prescriptive or descriptive of what someone did without necessarily endorsing it? We read that the apostles and the early church, the people sold their goods and brought them to the apostles' feet and they distributed equally to all the people who had need. They had sort of a common purse kind of arrangement of some sort.

Now, the Bible tells us they did this. Does that translate into a command that we should do that or is it just descriptive? You need to make a difference between what is just a description of what happened on the one hand and what is a prescription of what's

supposed to happen on the other. I mean, it tells us they did it, but is that a command? I know people who would make it a command.

They say, it's mandatory. The early church said we're supposed to do it. I say, wait a minute, maybe so, but let's look.

Does that say we're supposed to do it or does it just tell us that they did it? They did some things we're not supposed to do. So you need to make sure it's really a command before you go further. To whom does this duty apply? Is it for me? Biblically, how can I know? We talked about the command to circumcise.

That's in the Bible. But does it apply to me? No. I'm not a Jew.

It's made to the Jews under the old covenant. What was God's underlying concern in stating this command or how is it to be obeyed in the spirit of it as well as the letter? Sometimes people just legalistically do the letter of the law and do what is commanded, but they neglect what the spirit was like. That's like, you shall not murder.

Okay, I never murdered, but were you angry? You shall not commit adultery. Well, I've never done that. But were you ever blasphemed? That's God's underlying concern.

The command tells me something. But if I reflect on it, it may tell me more about what God's really after. And in addition to keeping the letter, I want to keep the spirit of it.

What character trait would be exhibited in the consistent performance of this duty? Do I need to work on this area? How can I develop this in my character? How did Jesus fulfill this duty in his life? I want to copy him. Am I violating this duty in any way? If so, what specifically has prevented obedience? Have I been ignorant, blind? Is it a blind spot? Have I been just negligent or stubborn? Why am I not keeping this command? Ask yourself. Then, of course, finally, what specific resolution should I make to bring my life into conformity with it? If I'm not doing it, when am I going to start? What should I start doing different to make sure that I conform to what God commanded? Let's go on now and talk about passages that are just reflective of God's character, where we see God's mercy, where we see God's justice in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There's both. In the flood, there's both. God's anger and his wrath, that's part of his character.

But there's also his mercy. He spared Noah. In fact, he even spared the world for what, 120 years after he decided to do it.

He gave him 120 years to repent. That's his mercy. You can see throughout the Bible, and especially in the life of Jesus, many things that tell you about the character of God.

When you're reading a passage like that, ask yourself, what is God revealing about his

mind and his heart in this passage? What's he like? I'm supposed to like him, you know? There's a typo there. In what way does this differ from my previous perceptions or opinions about God? This is a very important thing, because everyone has some opinion about God, usually wrong in some respects. And when I see some manifestation in Scripture of his character, I say, is this God as I perceived him before? If not, I better start changing my views and conform to what he said about himself here.

What examples in Scripture or in Christian biography or my own experience demonstrate this characteristic in God's nature? I can think of all kinds of things in my experience that prove that God is faithful. I can also think of things in my experience that show that God is merciful. I mean, God's dealings with me and with many in Christian biographies and in Scripture, stories, you can see it all the time.

It's good to think about those things, because if you're ever going to communicate this about God, it's good to have concrete illustrations. How does my own character need to be changed to resemble God's in this respect? Don't just stand back and admire God from the distance and say, hey, how can I be more like him? It says in Ephesians 5.1, be followers of God or imitators of God as dear children. How does my own character need to be changed to resemble God's in this respect? Let's go on and talk a little bit about when you're reading the Scripture, you read about things that Peter did or that Paul did or that Noah did or Enoch did or Abraham did or whatever, you're reading about people, people's lives.

These passages are not specifically commands, but is there any way that I can apply it to my own life? Well, when you're reading about certain people, just reading their story, you could ask these questions. Is this person commended in Scripture? Rahab is commended in Scripture. So we can read the story of Rahab and say there's something about this woman that's commendable.

Next question, for what is that person commended? Was she commended for being a prostitute? No. Was she commended for lying? No. What was she commended for? If she's commended for something, I'd like to be like her in that respect.

So I'd better make sure I know what she's commended for and what she's not commended for. Is he or she commended specifically for the behavior exhibited in this passage? Again, Rahab's lying is a good example. Is she commended for that? No, not necessarily.

Did this character make some blunder from which I can learn? I don't know that Rahab did. Maybe she did by lying, but that's not brought out. Abraham's a good example.

David, Moses, all these guys made blunders we can learn from. You know, a wise man learns from someone else's experience and their mistakes. A fool has to learn from his own.

If so, what lessons can I learn? What can I learn about life and God from God's overall dealings in the life of this person? The story of Abraham or David is a wonderful way of learning about how God deals with people over a long period of time because we've got a long period of their life recorded. Frankly, when I read about God's dealings with David or with Abraham or some of these guys, I can relate. I can learn a lot and know what kind of a God I'm dealing with and what he might do in my life.

What particular virtue does this person exemplify that might inspire me to emulate or to copy? You always need role models. If there aren't too many visible around, you can always look at some of the biblical role models and say, well, what is it in this person that's worth role modeling after? The final category is what about prophetic predictions? When you read a prophetic prediction, don't just assume that it hasn't happened yet. First of all, I ask, what is predicted here? That's the observation part, really.

What is really said here? What is really predicted? Does it really say that the world's going to have a cashless society? Everyone says so, but where does it say that? Well, they get that from Revelation 13 where it says that no one can buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast. But does that say there's going to be a cashless society or is that just assumed? What is really predicted here? Could the same thing just refer to people boycotting believers because they won't go along with the system? That would be true also. They can't buy or sell unless they go along with the beast.

What does it really say? What is predicted? Don't assume you know. Look at the actual wording and say, is there any other way that could be understood than the way I have typically understood it? Has this been fulfilled in history? There's another question to ask subsequent to the prediction being given. Sometimes it has and we haven't paid attention to it and we think it's still future.

Does the New Testament indicate that the fulfillment is spiritual? Sometimes it is. It's not always literal. It's sometimes spiritual.

The New Testament sometimes will say so. If so, does the spiritual fulfillment exhaust the sense in which fulfillment is to be expected? That is, there may be a spiritual fulfillment and also a literal fulfillment expected, but you'd have to find out by, you'd have to ask those questions before you know what to do with the thing. Finally, is this an instance of prophecy that was conditional and which will not be fulfilled because of a failure to meet conditions? Certain promises to Israel will never be fulfilled, not because the promises weren't true, but because Israel wasn't true.

They were conditional. God told them that if they were faithful, they'd never be driven out of their land, but they weren't faithful and they were driven out of their land. Promises are sometimes conditional and sometimes they won't be fulfilled because the conditions were not met.

Just in closing, let me say that there is an important role in Bible study for prayer. This should be elevated to a high position of visibility when talking about Bible study, because God inspired the Word. Only He can really open your understanding to understand the Scripture, and there are some scriptures you should be mindful of.

It says in 1 John 2, 27, the anointing you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone should teach you. But as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, you shall abide in Him. So as the Spirit teaches you, you'll abide in Him.

James 1, 5 says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith. When you want to understand better, ask God, but ask believing that He'll help.

2 Timothy 2, 7, Paul says to Timothy, consider what I say, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things. The passage in Timothy is hard to understand. He says, listen, consider this for a while.

Think about this. Roll it over your mind. Meditate on it.

The Lord will give you understanding of it. There are certain prayers that the Bible actually records that we might want to pray with reference to our study. Psalm 119, verse 12, blessed are you, O Lord, teach me your statutes.

Psalm 119, 18, open my eyes that I may see wondrous things out of your law. Psalm 119, verse 27, make me understand the way of your precepts. So shall I meditate in your wondrous works.

Psalm 119, verse 33, teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. And finally, Psalm 119, verse 34, give me understanding, and I shall keep your law. Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

These are prayers that God would love to honor when we come to the study of Scripture, to pray prayers like that, and to ask God to guide and to teach and then apply responsible rules of inductive study with observation, interpretation, and application. This is the best way, I think, to get the most out of the Bible.