



# RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD

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RULES FOR INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

BILL PARKER

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# FOREWORD

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When it comes to books written by men, it must be emphasized that there is absolutely no replacement for (or rival to) the Bible. A book may be truthful and well written, but no book can equal the perfection, authority, wisdom, and eternal value of God’s holy, verbally-inspired, and inerrant Word. THE BIBLE IS GOD’S BOOK OF SALVATION. Why, then, should I (or anyone) write and publish more books? Aren’t there too many books now? Did not Solomon write, **“of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Ecclesiastes 12:12)?** We have only to visit local book stores (especially religious book stores) to find how much time and money is wasted on useless and worthless books written by men. I am convinced that Solomon was referring to man’s natural efforts to communicate and study truth within himself and without the revelation of God’s Word to reveal and guide him in the truth. Solomon certainly was not saying that reading and studying the Bible itself is useless or worthless. The theme of this booklet is stated in the Bible –

***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.***

But the Bible itself is clear that we need to be guided by Godly men whom God has gifted and sent to preach the Gospel and the whole Word of God (**cf. Acts 8:30-35; Romans 10:13-17; 1 Corinthians 1:17-24**). For any of us then to say that this cannot be done in the written word is foolish. To me asking, “Why write more books?” is the same as asking, “Why preach more sermons?” I view written words of Gospel truth as, in essence, preaching the Word of God. It is true that there are way too many books that are pedaling and promoting lies (false gospels and false religions). Any message (whether preached orally or written in a book) that tells the truth as it is revealed in the Bible is worthwhile and can be used of God in the salvation of His chosen people and the edification of believers. All books written by men must be judged by the light of the Bible. I have tried to

emphasize how this booklet (as well as any book the Lord leads me to write) is to be an aid to help those who truly desire to read, study, and learn the truth as revealed in the Bible.

It is my prayer for any who read these words that God (from HIS Word) will reveal Christ to them and show them the salvation that He has freely provided for all His chosen people in Christ. It is also my prayer that the Lord will use this booklet to help believers:

1. Gain an even greater love for the Bible as the written Word of God.
2. See their need to stick to the Bible (read and study it more) and use it as the test of all truth, doctrine, and practice.
3. Become skillful in this Word of righteousness (the Word of God in Christ) so as to discern good and evil.
4. Be inspired by God's grace in Christ for obedience and worship, and become better witnesses for Christ in a lost and dying world.
5. Grow more and more assured of their standing in Christ as washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. May the Lord use this booklet for His glory in Christ and the good of His people.



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# CONTENT

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<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>RULE 1–THE RULE OF JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED &amp; RISEN FROM THE DEAD.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>RULE 2 – THE RULE OF FIRST MENTION.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>RULE 3 – THE RULE OF SIMPLICITY.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>RULE 4 –THE RULE OF REVELATION.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>RULE 5 – THE RULE OF LANGUAGE.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>RULE 6 - THE RULE OF CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>RULE 7 – THE RULE OF COMPARISON.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>RULE 8 – THE RULE OF TYPOLOGY.....</b>	<b>98</b>



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# INTRODUCTION

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## WHY SHOULD WE READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE?

There is a wonderful story recorded both in **2 Kings 22** and **2 Chronicles 34**. This story is not a fairy-tale or fable. It is God's historical record of an event that took place in Jerusalem about six hundred years before Christ when Josiah was king of Judah. At this time Josiah was twenty-six years old and had been on the throne of Judah since the age of eight. His father, Amon, and his grandfather, Manasseh (who reigned before him) were two of the most evil kings Judah had ever known. During their reigns idolatry and immorality flourished in Judah, and the Temple of God was neglected and became almost a total ruin. The true worship of God was virtually extinct. When Josiah began to reign, it is recorded in **2 Kings 22:2** and **2 Chronicles 34:2**, ***"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."*** This does not mean that Josiah was a perfect man or perfect king, but that he sought to follow the ways of God as he understood how his ancestor, King David, had done. He was a man who wanted to do that which is right and good. But there was something missing, and here is the rest of the story.

In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah raised money to repair the temple, and during the repairs the high priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law, the written Word of God (**2 Kings 22:8; 2 Chronicles 34:15**). Some believe that this was the book that contained the books written by God through Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament. Others believe there were more books of the Old Testament contained in this great find. The key for us is this – Whatever books of the Old Testament they found at this time, **THEY FOUND GOD'S HOLY WORD**. When this Book of the Law was

read to Josiah, the king tore his clothes, a sign of mourning and repentance (**2 Kings 22:11; 2 Chronicles 34:19**). King Josiah then issued a royal command –

***2 Kings 22:13 (2 Chronicles 34:21) – Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, CONCERNING THE WORDS OF THIS BOOK that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto THE WORDS OF THIS BOOK, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.***

King Josiah called for the whole nation to repent. The Book of the Law was then read to the people, and a covenant made between the people and the Lord –

***2 Kings 23 – (1) And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. (2) And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and HE READ IN THEIR EARS ALL THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT which was found in the house of the LORD. (3) And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and all their soul, TO PERFORM THE WORDS OF THIS COVENANT THAT WERE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK. And all the people stood to the covenant. (cf. 2 Chronicles 34:29-31)***

Many reforms followed. The temple was cleansed from all objects of pagan worship, and the idolatrous high places in the land were demolished. King Josiah restored the observance of the Passover (**2 Kings 23:21-23; 2 Chronicles 35:1-19**). This is significant because the Passover pictured the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Lamb of God, and the Gospel message of salvation by God’s grace based on His blood alone (His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith).

It is recorded of King Josiah in **2 Kings 23:25**, ***“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart,***

***and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.***” King Josiah’s reign was a time of national prosperity for Judah, but as it is the case with all of us as sinful nations made up of sinful human beings, these times do not last. The important lesson to be learned from this is that there is no hope for any of us unless God’s reveals HIS WORD to us and brings us to understand and love it. The story of King Josiah is the story of a man whom God brought to SEEK THE LORD.

The Bible commands and instructs us throughout its pages to seek the Lord ***“while He may be found,”*** and to call upon HIM ***“while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6).*** The problem is that man by nature (all of us as we are naturally born dead in trespasses and sins – ***Ephesians 2:1; 1 Corinthians 2:14***) has no desire to seek the true and living God and does not know how to seek the Lord. Moses told the people of Israel, ***“But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul (Deuteronomy 4:29).*** Did they listen and obey God’s command through Moses? Later on God told them, again by Moses, ***“Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you” (Deuteronomy 9:24).*** Consider the following verses of Scripture

—

***Psalm 14 – (2) The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. (3) They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

***Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

The natural (unregenerate) man will seek religion, morality, sincerity, and even salvation his own way, but he will not truly seek the Lord. And yet God still commands us to seek Him, to believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ, and to repent of our sins (including any works we presumed recommended us unto God) –

***Acts 17 – (30) And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (31) Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.***

One might question, “How can God command us to seek Him knowing that none of us by nature will do so? How can He hold us accountable?” God’s answer to these questions is found in the Bible in passages such as **Romans 9**, and even when we read God’s answer to these questions, we are unable to reconcile them fully within the limitations of our finite, sinful human minds. BUT HERE ARE THE QUESTIONS THAT EACH OF US NEEDS TO CONSIDER –

- DO I REALLY DESIRE TO KNOW GOD?
- DO I REALLY DESIRE TO SEEK HIM, FIND OUT WHO HE REALLY IS?
- DO I REALLY DESIRE TO KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD, ABOUT MYSELF, ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND SALVATION AS GOD HAS PURPOSED AND GIVEN IT?

If any of us really have a genuine desire to seek and to know God with the desire that always leads to salvation, we must know that this desire is not natural to any of us. It is a gift from God. The next question we need to consider is – WHERE AND HOW DO I SEEK THE LORD THAT I MAY FIND HIM? Consider the following –

***Psalm 19 – (1) The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. (2) Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. (3) There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. (4) Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, (5) Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his***

***chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. (6) His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.***

The psalmist, David, here speaks of God's revelation of Himself in creation. One can seek and find many things about the true and living God in His creation – His greatness, power, wisdom, goodness (***Romans 1:20***). But creation by itself is not enough to reveal the fullness of God that makes us wise unto salvation. Creation by itself cannot reveal how a sinner can find and have a right relationship with God the Creator and the Judge of all the earth. This revelation of God can only be found as God reveals His glory in the salvation of sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ. And this full revelation of God in Christ can only be found IN HIS WORD, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible –

***Psalm 19 – (7) The law [Word, doctrine] of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (8) The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. (9) The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.***

To truly seek the Lord and find Him in His revelation of Himself that brings us to salvation, we must seek Him in His Word. When unbelievers sought to trap the Lord by their foolish questions, He told them, ***“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29)***. The Bible states that ***“the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12)***. The apostle Paul wrote to the young evangelist Timothy, Paul's fellow-laborer in the ministry of the Gospel –

***2 Timothy 3 – (14) But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; (15) 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. (16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.***

In the matter of salvation and true Christianity, it is impossible to over-emphasize the necessity and power of the Word of God as recorded in the Bible. If we are truly Christian, we need to realize that everything we know about God, about ourselves as sinners and our need of salvation by God's grace, and about the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel of salvation in and through Him, comes from the Bible. And so let me show you why I believe the Bible and why we need to read it, study it, and pray that the Lord will empower it unto our salvation and preservation by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S VERBALLY-INSPIRED, INERRANT AND UNIQUE WORD**

I believe this not simply because the Bible itself makes this claim in passages such as quoted above in **2 Timothy 3:14-17**, but because of the uniqueness and power of its main message. The Bible is truly a "one-of-a-kind" book. There is no other book like it. It is the most read book in history. It is the best-selling book and the most translated book in history. With all that being said, we need to know it is also the most criticized, attacked, and the most misunderstood book in history. But it is certainly more than all this – IT IS GOD'S REVEALED WORD.

There are many unique things in the Bible that set it apart from all human religions and philosophies, but I will refer only to the main message concerning salvation and a right relationship with God as proof of the Bible's divine origin and inspiration. The Bible's main message of salvation for sinners totally by the grace of God in and through the glorious Person and finished work of redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ is distinctive in and unto itself. There is no human religion that comes close to this powerful message of salvation by grace. The apostle Paul wrote –



***Galatians 1 – (11) But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. (12) For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.***

All human religions teach salvation in some way, to some degree, and at some stage conditioned on the works, the wills, and the decisions of man. These are all false religions. The Bible is the only book that teaches that all the conditions required to attain and maintain salvation have been totally fulfilled by the work, the will, and the decision of Almighty God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness alone. It is therefore the one and only BOOK OF SALVATION FOR SINNERS. It reveals that the only remedy for sin is in and by the Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself the salvation of God's chosen people –

***Matthew 1 – (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.***

***Matthew 1 – (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.***

The Bible is the book of life because it is the book of Jesus Christ who is Himself the life of His people. The Lord Jesus Christ is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE, and, therefore, the only way to God (***John 14:6***). As Paul wrote, it is ***“ABLE TO MAKE THEE WISE UNTO SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS CHRIST JESUS.”*** The simplest message of the Bible is that all of salvation (justification, forgiveness, redemption, spiritual and eternal life) is in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Bible's message from ***Genesis to Revelation***. It is not an oversimplification to say that every book of the Bible, every chapter of every book, every verse of every chapter, is founded upon and ultimately leads to the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. No other book in human history covers so much time and crosses so many cultures and languages and yet still maintains its plain, consistent, and simple message. In defining the purpose of the holy scriptures, the apostle John wrote, ***“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the***

***Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:31). He also wrote that these scriptures are “the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11).***

## **II. THE BIBLE IS HISTORICALLY AN ACCURATE BOOK**

Its truths are not founded upon mythology, legends, and wild tales that have been handed down orally through the ages. Granted, there are some who disagree with this because of the miracles recorded in the Bible, but the miracles of the Bible are never used as sources for its accuracy in truth. They are always used to confirm the word and the power of God working through and in His people and working against His enemies. The word of truth is primary in the Bible. The miracles are secondary. The apostle Peter wrote –

***2 Peter 1 – (16) For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. (17) For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. (19) We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. (21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.***

Peter wrote that he and others were “***eyewitnesses***” of these things. The apostle John wrote of the things which he and others had SEEN and HEARD –

***1 John 1 – (1) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (2) (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) (3) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.***

The Bible is a collection of reliable historical documents written down by eyewitnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. The apostle Paul in writing of the resurrection of the Lord wrote –

***1 Corinthians 15 – (3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; (4) And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (5) And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: (6) After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. (7) After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. (8) And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.***

### **III. THE BIBLE IS A RELIABLE BOOK**

There are some prophecies in the Bible that are yet to be completely fulfilled because they are predictions of the final days of God's judgment upon the earth. But of the thousands of prophecies found in the pages of the Bible, many have come true as predicted, and none can be proven to be inaccurate. For example, there are over 350 prophecies that have been fulfilled by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and His fulfilling all righteousness for His people by His death on the cross as their Surety and Substitute. Consider the odds of over 300 predictions made over several

generations about one particular person all coming true. This is certainly not a coincidence.

The Bible is a plain book that uses plain language. It was not written in some kind of secret code or cryptic language that can only be understood by the intellectual elite or by some mystical society of self-proclaimed spiritualists. Its authority and message can neither be determined by studying the history of the Catholic church (which is full of lies, hypocrisy, and debauchery), nor by looking at a Leonardo da Vinci painting (or the works of other Renaissance artists). It is, however, a book that must be read and studied within the confines of rules of responsible interpretation. Only then will anyone come to know and appreciate how reliable the Bible is to make a person wise unto salvation.

#### **IV. THE BIBLE IS A CONSISTENT BOOK**

Many people believe that the Bible is full of inconsistencies and contradictions. I used to think this myself when I was an unbeliever. But the point of this booklet is to show how the Bible should and can be read and studied by using responsible rules of interpretation. I believe that doing this will prove that there are no inconsistencies or contradictions in the Bible. If the bare facts that apply to the Bible could be applied to any other book (books written by humans), it would be impossible to end up with what we find in the pages of God's Word. It was written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). It covers three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe). The Lord used over forty authors, most of whom never met one another, and who were inspired by God to write these words over a period of about 1600 years. It contains many types of literature – law books, poetry, history, and letters. The consistency of its message is a miracle of God's power and grace.

However, to see and appreciate the consistency of the Bible, one has to read and interpret it prayerfully, humbly, and responsibly, using proper rules of interpretation. Ask yourself, when you read the Bible, how do you interpret the Scriptures? How do you find its meaning and message for you? There are so many different views concerning what the Bible means in certain passages or what it means as a whole. However, people

need to realize that whenever we read the Bible THERE ARE CERTAIN RULES FOR PROPER INTERPRETATION. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy –

***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.***

Granted, there are many, many books and articles on how to interpret the Bible. If you research them you will find various rules stated in different ways. Most lists are generally consistent. The number of rules that I have found in doing research ranges from four to sixteen as listed by different interpreters. For the purposes of this booklet, I have examined my own personal way of studying and interpreting the Bible in light of all the various listings of rules for interpretation and have reduced them to what I see as eight rules of interpretation. I have sought to include every facet of responsible Biblical study and interpretation as stated in the various lists given by different interpreters. Before you read these rules as I have listed them and consider the examples I have given of each, there are several factors to consider:

(1) The first rule listed in this booklet is not generally found in other lists I have read, but in my view it is the most important rule of all. Some may argue that it appears in other lists stated in other ways, but I believe it needs to be at the forefront of every listing of rules for Biblical interpretation. I hope you will see why when you read it.

(2) You will most certainly find the same rules in other lists under different headings, but they are generally the same. A rule found in a different list may be found here under the heading of another rule. For example, a list may include what many call the “rule of historical background.” It will be found in this list as a sub-heading under the “rule of context.” It would be listed as “historical context.”

(3) Also consider that as you read these rules that they will overlap. A rule may stand by itself, but many of the considerations under one

particular rule can be found within the sphere of another rule. They are not mutually exclusive.

(4) Another thing to consider is that even though I view Rule 1 as the most important, the rest of the rules are not listed in any order of importance, and no rule can be ignored if we are to interpret the Bible in light of its intended meaning. All the rules are important, and in order to really understand the intended meaning of the Bible, one cannot pick and choose one rule over another. They must all be used when seriously endeavoring to read and study the Bible.

The eight rules of Biblical interpretation listed in this booklet are:

- **RULE 1 – THE RULE OF JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RISEN FROM THE DEAD**
- **RULE 2 – THE RULE OF FIRST MENTION**
- **RULE 3 – THE RULE OF SIMPLICITY**
- **RULE 4 – THE RULE OF REVELATION**
- **RULE 5 – THE RULE OF LANGUAGE**
- **RULE 6 – THE RULE OF CONTEXT**
- **RULE 7 – THE RULE OF COMPARISON**
- **RULE 8 – THE RULE OF TYPOLOGY**

# RULE 1

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## The Rule of Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen from the Dead

***JOHN 5 – (39) SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES; FOR IN THEM YE THINK YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE: AND THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME.***

**T**he Lord Jesus Christ in the truth and glory of His Person and finished work of redemption is the key to understanding the Bible. If we are to read and understand the Bible properly, we must read and interpret it with a CHRIST-CENTERED VIEW. All of the doctrines and practices that define and distinguish true salvation and true Christianity are founded upon this great truth as expressed by the apostle Paul –

***1 Corinthians 2 – (2) For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.***

In my research, I found this rule to be the one most neglected by others; however, I believe it to be of utmost importance and one clearly set

forth by the Bible. This rule can be stated in different ways. For example, it can be called the rule of the Gospel or the rule of Grace, but I prefer the rule of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead because this is the best way of describing the main subject of the whole Bible, the substance of the Gospel, and the way of God's grace in the salvation of sinners. In **John 5:39** cited above, the Lord Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees who were considered to be master interpreters, teachers, and followers of the Scriptures. They read and studied the Old Testament Scriptures that were available at that time, and the scribes who followed them wrote commentaries on these Scriptures. Their problem was that in all their reading, studying, and memorizing of the Scriptures, they missed the true meaning of God's Word because they missed the truth within concerning Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. They refused to see the reality of righteousness that could only be found in the death of Christ and not in their own works of the law (**Romans 9:31—10:4**). Their view of the messiah was totally different from what God had revealed and recorded in the Scriptures. They desired and expected a messiah who would come into the world to conquer their earthly enemies and set up his kingdom on earth to rule through them from Jerusalem. They expected the messiah to come and praise them for their goodness and obedience. They did not expect a messiah who would be born in a manger and who would be despised and rejected of men (**Isaiah 53**). They did not expect one who would save sinners (even Gentiles) from their sins.

This rule of Scriptural interpretation revolves around two points of truth:

1. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST – WHO JESUS CHRIST REALLY IS, and
2. THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST – WHAT JESUS CHRIST ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISHED IN HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS AS EVIDENCED BY HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST? The apostle John wrote that Jesus Christ is the eternal Word which was "**in the beginning,**" and "**was with God,**" and who "**was God**" (**John 1:1-2**). John also wrote, "**All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made**" (**John 1:3**).



Here we see Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is the Son of God and equal with God in every attribute of His nature. He is ***“Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US” (Matthew 1:23)***. John also wrote that ***“the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14)***. This is His incarnation when the Son of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin and ***“was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3)***. This is His holy, sinless humanity whereby He was enabled to die for His people and save them from their sins ***(Hebrews 2:14-18)***. The point is this –

### **JESUS CHRIST IS GOD-MAN**

All Scripture must be interpreted and understood in this light. This is certainly a marvelous and glorious truth that we as sinful and limited human beings cannot comprehend in its fullness. We cannot explain the constitution of Christ’s glorious Person. But we can know what God’s Word says of Him as both fully God and fully man, and we must bow to the authority of God’s Word. As you read the Bible, you will find many Scriptures that relate more to Christ’s deity than to His humanity. You will also find many Scriptures that relate more to His humanity than to His deity. This rule #1 of scriptural interpretation, however, shows us that ONE NEVER DENIES THE OTHER. Consider, for example, when Christ spoke to the Pharisees in answering their boast of being Abraham’s natural children –

***John 8 – (56) Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad. (57) Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? (58) Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM. (59) Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.***

In His nature as God, Jesus Christ is the eternal I AM, but His human body was not yet fifty years old. These unbelieving Pharisees sought to stone Him because He claimed to be God. Again, HE IS BOTH GOD AND

MAN. Jesus Christ is, and always will be, God “**manifest** [revealed and known] **in the flesh**” (1 Timothy 3:16). In the Bible there are things said of Him and things He did in His earthly pilgrimage that can only be attributed to His deity and things that can only be attributed to His perfect, sinless humanity. For example, man cannot give and sustain life, but this Person (the Lord Jesus Christ who is perfect man) can and does give and sustain life

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***John 17 – (1) These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: (2) As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.***

This giving of life to His people can only be attributed to His deity, but it was and is an act of His entire Person as God-man. Is this mind-boggling to us? It most certainly is, but it is also true! Another example is that God cannot die, but this Person (the Lord Jesus Christ who is God) can and did die for the sins of His people. His death can only be attributed to His humanity, but it was an act of His entire Person as Godman. Again, is this mind-boggling to us? It most certainly is, but it is also true. Are these things we cannot explain given the limitations of our humanness? Yes! But we believe them because God’s Word reveals them to be true. The Lord Jesus Christ is God in every attribute of deity, and He is also man in every attribute of humanity without sin. This is what enabled Him to be the Savior of His people –

***Hebrews 2 – (14) Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; (15) And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (16) For verily He took not on him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. (17) Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make***

***reconciliation for the sins of the people. (18) For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.***

**WHAT DID THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCOMPLISH IN HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS?**

God sent His Son into the world to die on the cross as the Surety and Substitute of His chosen people. The obedience of Jesus Christ unto death was NOT to make salvation a mere possibility for sinners upon condition of their cooperation by faith and repentance. He died to insure and secure the complete salvation of all whom the Father had given Him and to bring them to faith and repentance. He died to establish righteousness for them so that God would be just in saving them by His love, mercy, and grace. The ground of salvation is the righteousness of God which is the merit (value, quality, virtue, excellence) of the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is HIS righteousness imputed (charged, accounted, credited, reckoned) to His people by which God justifies them forever. It is the death of Christ that insures spiritual life for all His people. They will be born again and brought to faith in Him and repentance of dead works and idolatry. It is the blood of Christ (His righteousness imputed) that brings spiritual and eternal life to all His people. This is why the Gospel is the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness as the only way and ground of salvation. This is why the Gospel commands all who hear it to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, plead His blood (His righteousness) as their only hope and ground of salvation. This is why the Gospel commands sinners to repent as they turn to Christ and forsake themselves and all that they by nature highly esteem in (and from) themselves for salvation.

The Lord Himself told the Pharisees and taught His disciples that the Scriptures can only be rightly interpreted and believed in light of the truth of His Person and His finished work –

***John 5 – (45) Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. (46) For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: FOR HE WROTE OF ME. (47) But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?***

***Luke 24 – (27) And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.***

***Luke 24 – (44) And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. (45) Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) And ye are witnesses of these things.***

In **Luke 24** the Lord was teaching His disciples how to preach the Old Testament Scriptures. The truth of Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead because of the righteousness that He by Himself accomplished for His people is the key to Scripture and opens up the mysteries of the Scriptures. All Scripture is to be read and interpreted in this great light of the Gospel. No Scripture denies, challenges, or confuses the truth of Christ crucified, raised from the dead, and the righteousness He worked out to insure and secure the complete salvation of all for whom He lived, died, and arose. This is true of all Scripture from **Genesis** to **Revelation**. I could write volumes just listing examples throughout the Bible that prove how its true meaning can only be found in the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead. Given the limitations of time and space for the purposes of this booklet, consider one of the best examples of this major rule of Scriptural interpretation found in **Acts 8** where Philip the evangelist was commanded by the Holy Spirit to seek out a man in the desert. The man was sitting in his chariot and reading from **Isaiah 53** –

***Acts 8 – (30) And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST? (31) And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he***

***desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. (32) The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before His shearer, so opened He not His mouth: (33) In His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth. (34) And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? (35) THEN PHILIP OPENED HIS MOUTH, AND BEGAN AT THE SAME SCRIPTURE, AND PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS.***

Philip showed this Ethiopian seeker how the suffering servant of ***Isaiah 53*** was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety and Substitute of God's chosen people. There are many Jews who claim to believe the Old Testament and who interpret ***Isaiah 53*** to be speaking of the nation Israel as the suffering servant rather than the Lord Jesus Christ. To miss Christ in this passage, as well as in many, many other passages, is to miss the meaning of the whole Bible, Old and New Testament. Christ is the Surety and Substitute of God's elect chosen unto salvation from among every nation. As the prophet Jeremiah also stated, Jesus Christ is the righteousness of His people –

***Jeremiah 23 – (5) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. (6) In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.***

Without reading and interpreting the Bible with a Christ-centered perspective, it is a closed book as far as a real and right understanding is concerned. The apostle Paul wrote of this concerning the Jews' reading of the Old Testament –

***2 Corinthians 3 – (12) Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: (13) And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of***

***that which is abolished: (14) But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. (15) But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. (16) Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.***

The ***“veil”*** that is ***“upon their heart”*** is the darkness and deception of ignorance, self-righteousness, and human pride which keeps all of us in our natural darkness when it comes to understanding the Bible and the things of God. God the Holy Spirit shows us clearly how that ***“veil”*** is ***“taken away”*** – WHEN SINNERS ARE BROUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE POWER OF GOD’S GRACE TO ***“TURN TO THE LORD.”*** We must read the Bible prayerfully and humbly asking God to show us more and more of the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Person and in the power of His finished work of redemption for His people.

# RULE 2

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## The Rule of First Mention

The rule of first mention can also be called the rule of precedent. A precedent is a model, a pattern, or a standard by which everything thereafter is to be measured and judged. The rule of first mention states that the first revelation and declaration of a Biblical truth or concept holds true throughout the whole Bible, from **Genesis** to **Revelation**. This rule only applies to the concepts of truth as they are revealed and declared by God in His Holy Word. These revelations and declarations are never changed or contradicted by any other passage or verse in the Bible. This rule does not always apply to the interpretation of particular words and phrases in the Bible. Particular words and phrases, especially as they are translated into other languages such as English, must be interpreted by finding their meaning within their respective contexts. They cannot be rightly understood under the rule of first mention. For example, the first time the word “**mercy**” is found in the Authorized King James Version is in **Genesis 19:19** where the Lord showed Lot “**mercy**” in saving his life. The word for “**mercy**” in this passage is the Hebrew word **חֶסֶד** (*checed*) which means God’s goodness and kindness towards Lot. The word translated “**mercy**” in **Exodus 25:17** is a different Hebrew word. It is **כַּפֹּרֶת** (*kapporeth*) which means

a lid or covering referring to the “*mercy seat*” over the Ark of the Covenant where the high priest of Israel sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. We see then that particular word meanings can only be determined by other rules of interpretation such as the rules of language and context, both of which I will treat in later chapters of this booklet.

As stated, the rule of first mention applies only to the concepts of truth as they are revealed and declared by God in His Holy Word. The importance of the rule can be seen, for example, in God’s revelation of the most important theme of the whole Bible – God’s way of saving sinners by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel message. The Gospel of salvation by the sovereign grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ (God manifested in the flesh and by whose righteousness sinners are saved) is the same in the book of *Revelation* as it was when first mentioned in the book of *Genesis*. It never changes throughout the Bible. When is the Gospel first mentioned in the Bible? We must go back to *Genesis 3:15* where we see the first mention of the promised Messiah (the one chosen by God and anointed to be the Savior of His chosen people) as the SEED OF WOMAN –

***Genesis 3 – (15) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.***

As I will explain, this is a prophecy of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Person as both God and man and how He would come into the world to save His people from sin and death. This is God’s purpose and plan from the beginning. In fact the apostle Paul was inspired to write of it in *2 Timothy* –

***2 Timothy 2 – (8) Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God; (9) Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.***



This shows us that the purpose and plan of salvation by the grace of God (in and by the Lord Jesus Christ) is older than creation itself. As I will show, this truth is the substance of God's first revelation of salvation in the Bible. The revelation and prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ in **Genesis 3:15** were given in the context of the broken law. Adam was the first man, and God appointed him to be the representative of the whole human race. God gave Adam the law which was symbolized in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil –

***Genesis 2 – (16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.***

This tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes God's sovereign right as Creator to determine the standard of good and evil. Adam broke this law and brought the whole human family into a state of sin and death –

***Romans 5 – (12) Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:***

This is why all human beings are born in sin, spiritually dead and, outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, deserving condemnation and eternal death. And this is why immediately after the fall of man in Adam God revealed and prophesied of the only way of salvation through the merits of His appointed Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ, revealed as the Seed of woman. God revealed to Adam and Eve that salvation from sin and death could not be by the works of fallen men as symbolized in the fig-leaf aprons Adam and Eve made in their attempt to cover their shame –

***Genesis 2 – (6) And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (7) And the eyes of them both***

***were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.***

In the Bible nakedness is a symbol of shame due to the absence of righteousness. This is why Adam and Eve ***“hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8)***. God then began to pronounce three curses. The first curse was upon the serpent –

***Genesis 3 – (14) And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: (15) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.***

The serpent is cursed above all animals, not because of the fact that many people have a fear of snakes. It is cursed above all animals because Satan’s appearance to Adam and Eve in the form of a serpent serves as a continual reminder of the fall of man into sin and death. It is a reminder of the fall of the human family in Adam and that we are sinners who are cursed on this earth. It shows us that we cannot rise above sin and death by our works and efforts to keep the law. After this God gave the promise of the Seed of woman who would crush the serpent’s head (the final death blow). The Lord Jesus Christ would come in time and destroy Satan and save His people (God’s elect) from sin and death. He would accomplish this great work by dying as their Surety in their place. His death, however, would not be the end as it would be with Satan. Christ would be bruised in His heel, and He would be raised from the dead because of the righteousness He established for His people. After stating the curse upon woman in ***Genesis 3:16*** and upon man in ***Genesis 3:17-19***, it is stated –

***Genesis 3 – (20) And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. (21) Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.***

Up until this time Eve's name was simply **"woman" (Genesis 2:23)** ( *השא – ish-shä'*). The name **"Eve"** means **"mother of all living"** (*הַדָּ - khav-vä'*). Apart from the promise of Christ in **Genesis 3:15**, she could not have been named **"Eve"** as the mother of all living because apart from Christ she would be the mother of all dead because of sin – **"the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a)**. Life comes only in Christ – **"the GIFT of God is eternal life BY JESUS CHRIST" (Romans 6:23b)**. In **Genesis 3:21** we are given a beautiful and clear picture of how God justifies the ungodly, how God saves sinners by His grace. Here is the first blood sacrifice which typifies and pictures the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only Surety and Substitute of God's chosen people. Here is where God established the sacrificial system of approach to Him and worship of Him throughout the Old Testament. Here is a great picture of the Gospel of God's grace through Christ and the Gospel principles of substitution, imputation, and satisfaction. The blood of animals could never atone for sin or make reconciliation between God and sinners (**Hebrews 10:4**), but the glorious Person and powerful work typified here by the blood of an animal (probably a lamb) can and does atone for sin and make reconciliation between God and sinners – **"For by one offering HE hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)**.

When God killed an animal (shedding its blood), He showed the necessity of satisfying His justice for sin. When He made coats of skin to put upon Adam and Eve, He showed the righteousness that comes from satisfied justice. This all pictured the righteousness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel –

**Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.**

God saves sinners by His grace through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. God justifies the ungodly based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed (charged, accounted, reckoned) to them. God gives spiritual life to dead sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord their

righteousness – ***“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10).***

Sometimes the Bible speaks of the righteousness of God in Christ as wearing a robe (*ex. – Isaiah 61:10; Matthew 22:11-14*). This is not teaching that Christ’s righteousness imputed to His people is literally placed, as some ridiculously assert, on the outside of their persons or that it is “pasted on” them. It symbolically teaches how that just as the demerit and debt of the sins of God’s elect were charged to Christ so that He was ***“made sin”*** and died under the wrath of God for them, the merit and value of His justice satisfying righteousness is charged to God’s elect. They are ***“made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21)***. This was all symbolized and pictured first in ***Genesis 3:15-21***. The LAW OF FIRST MENTION states that whenever the Bible speaks of the salvation and/or justification of a sinner before God, this truth as first mentioned in ***Genesis*** is the way it will be throughout the Bible. Throughout the whole Bible salvation for sinners is always by God’s free and sovereign grace through the blood (the righteousness) of the Lord Jesus Christ. This never changes in the salvation of any sinner.

A very important consideration of the law of first mention in interpreting the Bible correctly is found when we consider the giving of the law of Moses from Mount Sinai to the nation Israel. Why did the Lord God give that law with all of its conditional promises to the nation Israel? Was this to teach that for a period of time God would save sinners by their obedience and works under the law? Did this mean, as some assert, that under the law God saved sinners in a different way other than by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is found in the Bible –

***Romans 5 – (20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.***

***Romans 9 – (30) What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. (31) But Israel, which followed after the***

***law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. (32) Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; (33) As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.***

***Romans 10 – (1) Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.***

***Galatians 3 – (19) Wherefore then serveth the law? IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.***

***Galatians 3 – (23) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.***

All of the above verses show that the law of Moses was given to Israel to expose their sinfulness and the impossibility of being saved and justified before God by their works of the law –

***Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

The law was given to Israel to show them their need of God's grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ as He was prophesied and pictured

throughout the time of the law from Sinai to the cross. The law was given to show them their need of righteousness by God's grace through Christ. Again, this was first mentioned in **Genesis 3**, and the giving of the law to Israel did not change this great and glorious Gospel truth. We can see this truth repeated, emphasized, and illustrated throughout the Bible. Abel, for example, was accepted of God because of the blood sacrifice which typified the promised Messiah who would save Abel from his sins and work righteousness for him (**Genesis 4:4**). **"Noah found GRACE in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8)**. Abraham and King David were prime examples of how God justifies the ungodly based on the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 4:1-13**). Just as the Lord Jesus Christ in Himself is **"the first and the last" (Revelation 1:11,17; 2:8; 22:13)**, the law of first mention shows that in the matter of salvation (as well as other truths God has revealed), God's Word is the first word and the last word. It never changes

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***Malachi 3 – (6) For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob [sinners saved by grace, God's chosen people] are not consumed.***

# RULE 3

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## The Rule of Simplicity

When we consider that the Bible is God's revelation of Himself to men, it should not amaze us that there are things within its pages that we cannot fully understand within the limitations of our finite (and even sinful) human minds. God is holy, infinite, immutable, and righteous in all His ways. He is so high above us that many times when reading the Bible we are faced with absolute truths that are so high above us that we cannot simplify them and subject them to the limitations of our human reasoning and understanding. In these cases we must humbly take our place before God and realize we are very limited and very sinful human beings. This kind of humility is not natural to us, but God makes His people humble by His power and grace. The Lord stated this –

***Matthew 11 – (25) At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these***

***things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. (26) Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.***

The psalmist David and the apostle Paul expressed this God-given humility –

***Psalm 139 – (6) Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.***

***Romans 11 – (33) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? (36) For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.***

This is where the RULE OF SIMPLICITY helps greatly in scriptural interpretation. It is common for many interpreters to state this rule as follows – “The simplest understanding of a text is usually the right understanding.” This can sometimes be the case, but it is not really a good way to apply the rule of simplicity. The vital doctrines of the Bible and the Gospel message itself are without question stated plainly and simply. The Bible is not written in some kind of veiled language or hidden code. There are, however, problems within all of us as fallen, sinful people that hinders our understanding of even the simplest truths of the Bible. Consider:

(1) THE STATE OF UNREGENERATE MAN -- The Bible itself teaches us about the “*natural man*” in **1 Corinthians 2:14** and many other related Scriptures –

***1 Corinthians 2 – (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***



The **“natural man”** describes all of us as fallen human beings and as we are born naturally into this world as spiritually **“dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1)**. It describes an unregenerate person. As unregenerate people we do have minds and the limited power of human reason, but our natural fallen and sinful wills are totally opposed to the truths that glorify God whereby we turn to Christ for all salvation. Man by nature WILL not submit to and believe the simplest truths of the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation based on His righteousness alone. This is stated in the following verses –

***John 6 – (44) No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.***

***Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

The natural man is spiritually dead, and before he will understand, believe, and submit to God’s way of salvation, he must be born again. In our natural state we do not and cannot know the way of salvation, so further consider that –

(2) THE GOSPEL MUST BE REVEALED TO US BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. I will deal more with this in the next rule which is the Rule of Revelation. But we need to understand that when we read the Bible and seek to know its true meaning, we are totally dependent upon God the Holy Spirit to uncover truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Even though God is pleased to use means, such as weak and sinful human instruments in preaching the Gospel and teaching the Scriptures, it is God the Holy Spirit alone who can bring us to an understanding of truth unto salvation –

***John 3 – (3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (4) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old?***

***can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? (5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.***

***1 Corinthians 2 – (9) But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. (10) But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.***

(3) Lastly consider that while the Gospel is a simple message, AS A WHOLE THE BIBLE IS NOT A SIMPLE BOOK. It takes some time and effort to read, study, and understand its contents. Although a true and saving understanding of the Bible can only come by the Holy Spirit through divine revelation, He does not give us liberty to suspend all reasoning and rational thought when it comes to reading and interpreting this great book of life. Granted that all sinful human reasoning and rational thought (in and of itself) ultimately fails us in a search for truth in the Bible, but all who do read the Bible and find its truth are guided by God's reasoning and God's thoughts. Consider this as shown in the command of the Gospel itself – ***“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18)***. This is GOD'S way of reasoning by revelation and instruction, and a major part of this revelation and instruction is by means of using proper rules of interpretation.

Consider, for example, that many passages of the Bible cannot be understood with simply a surface reading of the text. In **Acts 8** it is recorded how an Ethiopian seeker was reading the prophecy of **Isaiah 53**. The Lord sent His evangelist Philip to the man. Philip asked him, ***“Understandest thou what thou readest?” (Acts 8:30)***. The man responded, ***“How can I,***

***except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31).*** It is written that ***"Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).*** Now I am sure that Philip had probably never seen or read a list of rules of Biblical interpretation, yet we see here an application of Rule #1 – the rule of Jesus Christ, crucified, and risen from the dead. Philip was led of God to read the Old Testament through Christ-centered eyes. This was a revelation from God to the Ethiopian seeker given through a proper reading and method of interpreting the Bible.

This also shows us the necessity of Paul's exhortation to Timothy to ***"study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).*** The ***"word of truth"*** is the Word of God as revealed in the written Scriptures (the Bible). This ***"word of truth"*** must be handled in a correct way else it will be twisted to the destruction of those who seek to understand it. Keeping these things in mind, there are two tenets to be consider when using the RULE OF SIMPLICITY in reading and studying the Bible. The first tenet is –

#### **I. IF GOD SAID IT, IT IS TRUE.**

***Psalm 19 – (7) The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (8) THE STATUTES OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.***

The truth of God's Word is not determined by our own personal understanding, approval, or even our belief of it. It is not, as some say, "God said it; I believe it; that settles it." It is, "God said it; that settles it, whether I believe it or not." This is the simple truth. People try to corrupt this simplicity whenever they encounter Bible revelations that are either difficult to understand or that go against the thinking of the natural (unregenerate) man. Consider that there are paradoxes in the Bible. A paradox is a statement that seems self-contradictory because it often contains two statements that are both true, but in general, cannot be true at the same time. It is a statement that seems to defy our own logic and

brings us to the point of not understanding how both could be true. Whenever reading such statements in the Bible many people seek understanding by their own natural thinking and sinful reasoning. Oftentimes they come up with some of the most complicated and false interpretations imaginable, and some even deny the truths revealed. The rule of simplicity teaches us how we should view such paradoxes. Consider the paradox of the following two Biblical truths:

**(1) GOD IS ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN AND IN CONTROL OF ALL THINGS –**

***Isaiah 46 – (9) Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure: (11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.***

***Daniel 4 – (35) And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?***

***Romans 9 – (17) For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. (19) Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? (20) Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? (21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (22) What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath***

***fitted to destruction: (23) And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory,***

God the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to describe the Lord God as the one who works ***“all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11)***. Even though God is not the author of evil and sin (as this would be opposed to His holy nature), we know that ***“all things”*** includes all things good and evil. God is the supreme Governor of all things, and He is in control of this whole universe. This does not deny that fact that –

**(2) GOD HOLDS ALL MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR UNBELIEF AND EVIL ACTIONS –**

We see this stated by the patriarch Joseph in ***Genesis 50:20***, and this shows us how we should deal with the paradox of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. Recall the story of how Joseph’s brothers wickedly sought to get rid of him and sold him into slavery. It was by the providence of God that Joseph was brought to Egypt and arose in power to become second only to Pharaoh. Years later due to a famine in the land, Joseph’s brothers were brought face to face with him. They stood before Joseph fearing he would take vengeance upon them, but Joseph said –

***Genesis 50 – (18) And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. (19) And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? (20) But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.***

Joseph did not excuse them for what they did – ***“ye thought evil against me”*** – but he knew that God is sovereign and had a purpose in all this for the preservation of Israel – ***“but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”*** The greatest example of this same way of thinking Biblically is found in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ –

***Acts 2 – (22) Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: (23) Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:***

***Acts 4 – (26) The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. (27) For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, (28) For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.***

So the question then arises – “If God is in total control, and He has determined such things in dealing with our sinfulness and evil, then how can He hold us responsible for these things?” There are basically three ways in which people have historically dealt with this question:

(1) Some deny the sovereignty of God and promote what they call the “free will” of man. This is wrong. It denies the truth of God as revealed in the Bible. It limits God’s will and exalts the will of sinners over and above the will of God. People will come up with all kinds of unbiblical answers to this problem, such as “God limits Himself because He does not want to destroy the dignity of man and man’s freedom of choice.” The problem with this solution is that it is not Biblical! Man’s ability to make choices in every-day life does not prove that he has a will free of sin. By nature our wills are in bondage to sin. We can choose different things (even religion and morality), but we cannot choose that which would truly glorify and honor God in the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason we cannot choose ultimate good as God measures good is that we do not want that which glorifies and honors Him alone. Man by nature always desires to have some glory for Himself.

(2) Some people approach this paradox by denying the responsibility of man. This is also wrong. They say, “If God is absolutely

sovereign, then it does not matter what we do or what we choose.” The Bible clearly states that all people will **“stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10-12). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).** One of the most common arguments against any belief in God’s sovereignty and denial of man’s “free will” is that it “makes man a robot.” This is the same objection the apostle Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to anticipate in **Romans 9:19-23** as cited above. This leads us to the only correct answer as given in the Bible itself.

(3) The only right response to this paradox is to bow to God’s sovereignty in all things, and to act and operate in the realm of the light and knowledge we have as sinful, limited human beings. This is essentially what Joseph was saying to his brothers. It is written in **Deuteronomy 29:29 – “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”** The fact that God is sovereign and works all things after the counsel of His own will is revealed in the Bible. God’s sovereign will in ALL things, especially in providence, is not always revealed to us. For example, the Bible states that **“before the foundation of the world”** God chose a people to save by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 1:4**). They are called God’s elect. We do not know who they are until God sovereignly and powerfully brings them under the Gospel message and gives them spiritual life to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. If discovering the Biblical truth that God chose His people (God’s elect) from before the world began causes one to conclude that it then not matter what we do or believe is to deny the revealed truths of the Bible. Also for one to try to claim to be one of God’s elect without hearing and believing the Gospel is the equivalent of trying to claim a knowledge of the **“secret things”** that belong only to God. It is, in essence, man claiming to be as wise as God.

We need to realize that it is impossible for us to fully understand the dynamics and workings of a holy and sovereign God as He molds and shapes the will of man and the events of this creation. Scripture is clear that God determines the past, present, and future (**Matthew 6:8; Psalm 139:1-4**) and has total sovereign control over all things (**Colossians 1:16-17; Daniel 4:35**). The Bible also says that we must seek and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or be eternally separated from Him (which is eternal death). We are held responsible for our beliefs and our actions (**Romans 3:19; 6:23; 9:19-21**). How these facts work together is impossible for our finite minds to comprehend fully (**Romans 11:33-36**). The truth is that God does not violate the wills of His people by choosing, redeeming, and regenerating them. God changes the hearts and wills of His chosen people so that they willingly choose Him –

***Ezekiel 36 – (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them.***

***John 6 – (44) No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me. (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10-12)***

In light of these things, what are we to do? First, we are to seek and trust in the Lord, knowing that He is in control (**Proverbs 3:5-6**). God's sovereignty is a comfort to God's true children, not an issue to be concerned about, debated over, and certainly not denied. Secondly, we are to live our lives making wise decisions in accordance with God's REVEALED Word (**Deuteronomy 29:29; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5**). There will be no excuses before God for why men disobey Him and refuse to believe the Gospel (**Romans 1:18-20**). Men will have no one to blame but themselves for sin and unbelief. Lastly, we are to believe in and worship the Lord,



praising Him that He is so wonderful, infinite, powerful, full of grace and mercy—and sovereign.

The other tenet of the rule of simplicity is –

## **II. EVERYTHING GOD HAS FOR HIS PEOPLE IN SALVATION IS IN THE GLORIOUS PERSON AND FINISHED WORK OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

This is stated in the Bible when the apostle Paul warned the believers in the church at Corinth against being deceptively led away from *“the simplicity that is in Christ”* –

***2 Corinthians 11 – (3) But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.***

This is the simple truth of the Bible – All things in salvation, all blessings (including forgiveness of sins, righteousness before God, comfort, peace, assurance of salvation, preservation, and final glorification), are freely given to God’s chosen people by virtue of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ in His obedience unto death as their Surety and Substitute. The word *“simple”* here has the connotation of SINGLENES. All of salvation is in and by this one single Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. All of salvation is singly by God’s grace in Christ and not by the works or the wills of men. It is all based on the merits of one single righteousness – the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ –

***2 Corinthians 1 – (20) For all the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM Amen, unto the glory of God by us.***

***Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places IN CHRIST:***

***Colossians 2 – (9) For IN HIM dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And ye are complete IN HIM, which is the head of all principality and power:***

This applies also to God's love for His people. There is no love from God for sinners outside of Christ. Outside of Christ there is only God's hatred for and wrath against sinners. As stated in ***Hebrews 12:29, "our God is a consuming fire"*** to all who stand before Him without having been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and clothed in His righteousness imputed. Here is the answer to the great dilemma concerning the question of how sinners can be made right with God. Consider this in light of God's hatred of ***"all workers of iniquity"*** as referenced above with the fact that ***"God is love" (1 John 4:8)***, and that God loves His chosen people ***"while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8)***. If God truly does hate all workers of iniquity, and we by nature are sinners (workers of iniquity), how then could God love any of us? If God is just and must punish sin, how could He remain just and forgive sinners, even justify them? How is it possible that God could be able to justify the ungodly (***Romans 4:5***) and retain His honor and glory? How is it possible that I (a sinner) could stand before a holy and just God and NOT be declared a worker of iniquity whom God hates? The rule of simplicity shows us that the only possible way is by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety and Substitute of His chosen people (the people whom He loves in Christ) –

***Romans 5 – (8) But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.***

***1 John 3 – (4) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (5) And ye know that HE [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins; and IN HIM [as we stand in Him having our sins washed away by His blood and having His righteousness***

imputed to us] *is no sin. (6) Whosoever abideth IN HIM sinneth not* [has no sin charged to His account and will not forsake Christ but abide in Him by faith]: *whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.*

It is so tragic and confusing when unregenerate people look for salvation and any of its blessings in anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ. It complicates and corrupts the simplicity (the singleness mentioned above) that true believers see and have in (and by) the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation based on His righteousness imputed alone. If we believe the Bible, we cannot attribute salvation or any part of it to ourselves. When we speak of the new birth (regeneration and conversion, new life within, the new heart), the simple truth is that it is all the fruit of the merits of Jesus Christ and His righteousness imputed to His people. When unregenerate people entertain the notion that the new birth (even salvation itself) is attributed to their own “free will,” right decisions, or innate goodness, they deny the simplicity that true believers have in Christ and Him alone. Remember the words of the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul as cited above – *“for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2)*. This is the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus.

# *RULE* 4

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## The Rule of Revelation

The fourth rule for interpreting the Bible is THE RULE OF REVELATION. This rule states that we are totally dependent upon God the Holy Spirit to reveal the true meaning of the Scriptures. Therefore, whenever we read and study the Bible, we must do so prayerfully and humbly in meekness. We must try not to interject our own prejudices and preconceived notions into the Scriptures. We must sincerely seek to be taught of the Lord. The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life and knowledge from the Lord Jesus Christ to God's chosen people. He does this initially in the new birth by the preaching of the Gospel as He empowers the Gospel to bring them to salvation. He brings sinners by God-given faith to Christ for all salvation and to repentance of dead works and idolatry. He indwells them forever teaching them from the Word of God. It is by His power and direction that God's people grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ. We cannot interpret and understand the real meaning of God's holy Word on our own. We must be brought by God not only to understand its meaning but also to embrace and bow to its truth as the rule of our lives.

As I have stated before, the reason we are totally dependent upon God the Holy Spirit to reveal the truths of the Bible to us is because we are by nature spiritually dead. Having fallen in Adam into sin and death, we have no spiritual life or understanding. The Bible describes our natural state metaphorically as having no spiritual eyes or ears (spiritual faculties of heart and mind). Such spiritual faculties can be given to God's people only by the Holy Spirit in the new birth (**Matthew 13:15-16; John 3:3-5**). Except for those who die in infancy and those who are born mentally and/or physically disabled, we are all born with the capability to read the words on the pages of the Bible. We may understand something of its moral and historical teachings, but by nature we lack the spiritual capacity to understand adequately the issues of the glory of God in salvation by Jesus Christ so as to bring us to faith, repentance, and perseverance in the faith, and to cause us to love the truth in Christ. This is what the Lord meant when He told Nicodemus –

**John 3 – (3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD. (4) Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? (5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.**

To “**SEE the kingdom of God**” means to perceive, understand, and grasp the reality of the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ through the eyes of God-given faith and repentance whereby regenerated sinners “**enter into the kingdom of God**” by faith. This is the new birth, and it comes, not by the power or will of men, but the power and will of God –

**John 1 – (11) He [Christ] came unto His own, and His own received Him not. (12) But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [right, privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His**

***name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***

This establishes the proper attitude and demeanor with which we are to approach any reading and study of God's holy Word. We are all totally dependent upon God the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to us and write it upon our hearts –

***Psalm 86 – (11) Teach me Thy way, O LORD; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name.***

***Jeremiah 31 – (33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.***

***Matthew 11 – (27) All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.***

***2 Corinthians 3 – (2) Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: (3) Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.***

The apostle Paul addressed this issue in his first epistle to the church at Corinth –

***1 Corinthians 2 – (9) But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God***

***hath prepared for them that love Him. (10) But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US OF GOD. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

Our natural spiritual deadness is evidenced by our refusal to receive the freeness of salvation all by God's grace and based on the merits of Christ's righteousness alone. This unbelief is the result of fallen, unregenerate man's natural ignorance, pride, and self-righteousness. False preachers tell people that the new birth is the result of their "free will" rather than the result of God's power and will in Christ. Unregenerate people seek to understand the Bible in a self-centered way, subjecting the Word of God to their own personal interpretations. Even though it is true that in our unregenerate state, we cannot understand and receive the true message of the Bible unless the Holy Spirit gives us life and light in new birth, we should still read the Bible and seek its meaning with a diligent effort to remove from our minds all preconceived notions and personal prejudices. We should seek to be open to the truths of the revelation of God's Word in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many will argue that if it is true that we are totally spiritually dead and have no understanding or desire for truth from God's Word until the Holy Spirit gives us life and light in the new birth (and it is), then why should we even bother to read and study the Bible? There are several Biblical reasons given to encourage us to engage in serious Bible reading and study:

First, the Bible tells us, ***"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law"*** (Deuteronomy

**29:29).** God commands sinners to seek the Lord, and we are to seek Him in His revealed Word (*cf. Psalm 19:7-14; Romans 10:13-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31*). It is not our responsibility simply to sit back and ask, “Am I one of God’s elect; did Christ die for me; has the Holy Spirit regenerated me – am I born again?” Election, redemption, and regeneration are all known by a God-given faith in and love for Christ as He is revealed, identified, and distinguished in the Word of God.

Secondly, God the Holy Spirit does not work in the new birth or in a believer’s growth in grace apart from the Word of God –

***1 Peter 1 – (22) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: (23) Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.***

***James 1 – (18) Of His own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: (20) For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.***

Thirdly, the Bible is the only book of salvation for sinners (***John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:14-17***). Any book written by man, including this book, that points sinners to the one way of salvation, is based upon the authority of God’s Holy Word, the Bible. The Koran, the Bhagavad Gita (Hindu scriptures), all writings of Buddhists, the Book of Mormon, and others do not reveal the right way of salvation and acceptance with God which is the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness alone. This can only be found in the Bible.

The Bible speaks of both a GENERAL revelation from God (which all people by nature reject or pervert in some way or another) and a SPECIFIC



(effectual) revelation from God given only to His chosen people and which they receive by the power and will of God. The GENERAL revelation is that which God reveals of Himself to all people in the light of nature, the light of conscience, and even in the written and spoken Word of God to people. Consider the following examples:

#### **THE GENERAL REVELATION OF GOD IN HIS CREATION (NATURE)**

***Psalm 19 – (1) The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. (2) Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. (3) There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. (4) Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, (5) Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. (6) His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.***

***Romans 1 – (18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. (20) For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:***

#### **THE GENERAL REVELATION OF GOD IN THE NATURAL CONSCIENCE**

***Ecclesiastes 3 – (10) I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. (11) He hath made every thing beautiful in His time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.***

***Romans 2 – (14) For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: (15) Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)***

## THE GENERAL REVELATION OF GOD IN THE WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORD

***John 5 – (39) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.***

***1 Corinthians 1 – (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;***

The Bible is clear that because of the spiritual deadness of all people by nature these general revelations of God in creation, in conscience, and even in the written and spoken Word are not enough by themselves to bring sinners to a saving knowledge of God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have argued that if people would simply “walk in the light that they already have,” they would be saved. This is true, but the Bible teaches that none of us by nature will walk in the light that we already have. For a sinner to walk truly in the light of God revealed in nature, in conscience, and even in the written and spoken Word, it would mean that he or she would truly seek the Lord as He reveals Himself in these revelations. The depravity of man is evidenced by the fact that the natural man WILL NOT seek the Lord as He truly reveals Himself in any of these revelations. The natural man either shoves what knowledge is found in these revelations out of his mind (atheism, agnosticism), or he perverts this knowledge with his own ignorance, self-love, self-righteousness, and pride (false religion). This is true even when he reads the Bible on his own in the absence of God’s sovereign power through the new birth. The Lord Himself stated this to the unbelieving Jews who read and studied the Old Testament – ***“Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures” (Matthew 22:29; cf. John 5:39)***. Apart from the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, darkness will prevail in the hearts and minds of the unregenerate person – ***“For the preaching of the cross is to***

***them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).***

While these general revelations are insufficient by themselves to bring sinners to a saving knowledge of God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are sufficient reasons for God to hold people responsible for their refusal to seek Him above all things – ***“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts” (Psalm 10:4).*** This, as well as the following passages, speaks of all of us by nature

***Psalm 14 – (2) The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. (3) They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

***Romans 3 – (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

It is also clear that if left to ourselves (our own wills and ways) we will not use these general revelations to seek the Lord as He identifies and distinguishes Himself in the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. In his natural pride, unregenerate man will always imagine God is like himself (***cf. Psalm 50:21***) –

***Romans 1 – (20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (24) Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own***

***bodies between themselves: (25) Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.***

The command of God to people is still as follows –

***Isaiah 55 – (6) Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: (7) Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.***

***Acts 17 – (24) God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; (25) Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; (26) And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; (27) That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:***

***Acts 17 – (29) Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. (30) And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (31) Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.***

In whatever revelation a person is under, the commandment of God to that person is the same – SEEK THE LORD ABOVE ALL THINGS. In the revelation of the Bible and the preaching of the Gospel, the commandment of God to sinners is BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (as He is identified and distinguished in God's revelation) AND REPENT OF YOUR DEAD WORKS AND IDOLATRY. HE WHO WILL NOT BELIEVE SHALL BE DAMNED (***Mark 16:16; John 3:36***)! The fact that people in their natural state of spiritual

deadness will not seek the Lord and will not believe and repent is not an issue for us to settle. We are to do what God commands. The fact that God in His wisdom has determined not to intervene to save some people is His business, and it is foolish for us not to seek the Lord. It is foolish for us to engage in debates over God's fairness and justice in these matters. God answers these issues for us in **Romans 9:15-31**, and this is HIS last word on the matter. God is so high above us that we can only bow to His Word and say with the apostle as recorded in **Romans 11** –

***Romans 11 – (33) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? (36) For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.***

False Christians have argued against and perverted these issues of God's sovereignty in contrast to man's responsibility for thousands of years. But go back to the first aspect of the rule of simplicity – If God said it, it is true. One can argue against it or pervert it, but that does not change it. This is only resolved in our finite minds as we bow to the reality of **Deuteronomy 29:29** – ***“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*** Those who deny either God's sovereignty or man's responsibility think they are wiser than God, and, frankly, they are in essence trying to “play God.” My friend, understand that we as sinful, finite human beings are simply not equipped to figure out these issues that can only be found in the nature, glory, majesty, and wisdom of the almighty and infinite God. This brings us to the glorious truth that God does have a people of His own sovereign choice, chosen in the Lord Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world. Christ has redeemed them from their sins, and He sends the Holy Spirit to bring them under the preaching of the Gospel with the authority of His written Word (the Bible). God the Holy Spirit powerfully, effectually, even invincibly

calls them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to repentance of dead works and idolatry. This is the –

**SPECIFIC (EFFECTUAL) REVELATION OF GOD TO HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE IN CHRIST –**

***2 Thessalonians 2 – (13) But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

All who have been effectually called of God by the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit have been given spiritual eyes to see (understand) the kingdom of God and spiritual ears to hear, love, and believe the Word of God in Christ. This is the sovereign work of Christ for His people for whom He died, was buried, and arose the third day – ***“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.***

For a sinner to be brought to a saving knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be saved by God’s grace, there must be this SPECIFIC, powerful, and invincible revelation in the Word of God through the preaching of the Gospel wherein Christ is revealed as the very righteousness of God –

***Psalm 19 – (7) The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (8) The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. (9) The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (10) More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (11) Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.***

***Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.***

***2 Corinthians 4 – (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

***2 Timothy 3 – (14) But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; (15) 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.***

The Bible will be a book of salvation and make you wise unto salvation only as God does the following –

***Ezekiel 36 – (24) For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. (25) Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. (28) And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.***

You may ask, “How will I know if God has done this for me?” The answer is this – ***“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15).*** This spiritual hearing is evidenced by a God-given understanding, love for, and belief of God’s Word in the revelation of Himself (His glory) in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is when the Gospel

is made ***“the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”*** This believing is through the God-given revelation of ***“the righteousness of God,”*** which is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (the merit, value, quality, excellence, virtue of His obedience unto death) as the Surety and Substitute of His people. This has been the Gospel revelation from the beginning. If we claim that God has revealed this truth to us, our claim must be supported by the authority of His Word (what He has already revealed to His people from the beginning). It is a sad fact that not everyone who hears the Gospel with the physical ear believes it. They have not been given spiritual ears. For example, the evangelist Stephen preached the Gospel in Jerusalem, and those who heard his voice refused to believe it. What did Stephen say about them? –

***Acts 7 – (51) Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.***

***“Stiffnecked”*** means proud and not submissive to God’s way of salvation in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. ***“Uncircumcised”*** means not born again (unregenerate). Prior to Stephen’s preaching, the apostle Peter preached the Gospel in Jerusalem. How did many respond to Peter’s message? –

***Acts 2 – (37) Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.***

***“Pricked in their heart”*** refers to the sovereign, powerful, invincible work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, convicting them of their sin and leading them to Christ for salvation. Both Stephen’s and Peter’s messages were essentially the same – the Gospel of God’s grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. What was the difference between those who rejected Stephen’s message and those who received and believed Peter’s message? Were Peter’s hearers a better, less rebellious, less stubborn class of people than



Stephen's hearers? NO. The difference was in God's electing, redeeming, and regenerating grace to those to whom Peter preached. And the promise of salvation is to all of God's elect and evidenced by their calling upon Him for salvation –

***Acts 2 – (39) For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.***

The apostle Paul quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah in recognizing that not all who hear the Gospel believe it –

***Romans 10 – (16) But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***

It is God alone who gives this hearing to His people so that whosoever calls upon His name shall be saved. Consider the following as a summation of God's plan in the salvation of His people:

**(1) THE LORD GOD HAS DECREED FROM ETERNITY TO SAVE A GREAT MULTITUDE OF SINNERS FOR THE GLORY OF HIS OWN GREAT NAME, AND THEY ALL MUST BE SAVED –** They are the elected, adopted, and predestinated heirs of God in Jesus Christ. Election and predestination are Bible terms in which we rejoice. God's elect must be saved. The Lord Jesus Christ said –

***John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. (39) And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which he hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.***

**(2) THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS REDEEMED ALL OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, AND HE MUST HAVE THEM WITH HIM IN ETERNAL**

**GLORY FOR THE SATISFACTION OF HIS SOUL'S TRAVAIL.** Christ did not shed His blood in vain. Every sinner for whom Christ died, was buried, and arose again shall be with Christ in glory.

*Isaiah 53 – (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. (11) He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. (12) Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

**(3) GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT SOVEREIGNLY, IRRESISTIBLY REGENERATES, CALLS, AND PRESERVES EVERY SINNER CHOSEN BY GOD AND REDEEMED BY CHRIST.** God's grace never fails. The Holy Spirit has been sent into this world to savingly apply the benefits of Christ's finished work to those for whom He lived and died.

*John 6 – (44) No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.*

*John 10 – (11) I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep ... (14) I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine ... 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.*

*John 10 – (25) Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.*

*(26) But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: (28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. (29) My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.*

**(4) EVERY SINNER WHO COMES TO GOD BY FAITH IN CHRIST SHALL BE SAVED.** God has never and will never turn away any sinner who comes to Him seeking salvation HIS way by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

*John 3 – (16) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

*John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.*

*Romans 10 – (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

**(5) NO SINNER CAN OR WILL BE SAVED APART FROM THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** God has determined for His own glory in Christ to provide and empower all the means necessary to bring His chosen people to salvation.

*Romans 10 – (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias*

***saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***

***1 Corinthians 1 – (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.***

In consideration of this interpretive rule of revelation, one may ask that since we are all totally dependent upon God the Holy Spirit to reveal truth or keep truth hidden, how can WE apply this rule in our own personal reading and studying of the Bible? There are three things that I have already stated in this chapter but want to emphasize in closing that we must keep in mind:

FIRST, understand that the application of revelation is totally the work of God and not in any way the product of our works or our wills.

SECONDLY, understand that if we have a genuine and sincere desire to seek the Lord in His Word, this is a gift from God upon which we WILL act. Someone once said, "Where there is a seeking sinner, there has already been a seeking Savior."

THIRDLY, the question we all need to consider is – DO WE REALLY DESIRE TO KNOW GOD AS HE IS REVEALED IN HIS WORD? For all who have this desire and are seriously interested in reading and studying the Bible to find its truth, let me offer the following suggestions:

(1) Pray that God will give you spiritual life from Christ (eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to love and submit to His Word no matter what it says) – ***“Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live, and keep Thy word. Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psalm 119:17-18).***

(2) Pray that God will reveal Himself to you, reveal yourself to you, and reveal Christ to you – ***“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).***

(3) Pray that God will clear your mind of all preconceived notions and personal prejudices. Try to approach the Bible with a “clean slate.” Some will say this is impossible, and in considering the natural state of our minds and our wills (under the bondage and deception of sin – self-righteousness, pride, ignorance), it is impossible apart from God’s saving grace. But God graciously gives His people an understanding. So in light of this fact, we should try to approach any serious reading and study of the Bible this way. Realize also that it takes the sovereign power and work of the Holy Spirit to cleanse our minds and hearts, and He does this by a powerful application of the blood of Christ to the regenerate heart. It may be that the Lord God has given you spiritual eyes and ears, a new heart, and, thus, will give you an understanding of His truth as it is in Christ – ***“Teach me Thy way, O LORD; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name” (Psalm 86:11).***

(4) Pray that God will make you willing to lay everything you already believe and think you know to be true (and all that you present as proving your salvation) on the line and be open to being challenged and corrected or confirmed by the Word of God – ***“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (1 Corinthians 13:5).***

# RULE 5

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## The Rule of Language

As I have previously written, this booklet is intended to be an aid in reading and studying the Bible, the written Word of God. Obviously a major part of this is finding the meaning of the WORDS contained in the Bible. The apostle Peter wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that his desire for his readers was to encourage them ***“by way of remembrance: that ye may be MINDFUL OF THE WORDS which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” (2 Peter 3:1-2)***. The apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write to Timothy, ***“Hold fast the form of SOUND WORDS, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13)***.

This brings us to one of the most comprehensive rules of Biblical interpretation – the Rule of Language. The Rule of Language is so wide-ranging because it involves so many different types of expressions. It applies not only to the definitions of individual words, but also to the meaning of phrases, sentences, expressions, and whole passages in the

Bible. As we read and study the Bible, it is obvious that words inspired by God the Holy Spirit and written by human instruments have specific meanings to communicate truth to the reader. The meaning of all the expressions and combinations of words in Scripture, therefore, cannot be determined on a subjective level as if they had different meanings for each individual who reads the Bible. People have so many different views of the Bible's message because so many try to justify an erroneous understanding by claiming things such as, "This is what it means to me personally," or "This is how it speaks to me personally." As this booklet asserts, there are rules of interpretation by which we can determine the intended meaning of the words of the Bible.

There can be no argument that the meanings of the words contained in the written Scriptures are vital in understanding the message of salvation and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are to understand these words, we need to use reliable tools of language. This would include using tried and true Bible dictionaries and word studies (such as Nave's Topical Bible, or Easton's Bible Dictionary), concordances (such as Strong's Concordance), and commentaries (such as John Gill's Commentary on the whole Bible). Try to find materials written and/or compiled by men who truly believed the Gospel and seek to stay with the Scriptures. Avoid those who write in the "free-will," man-centered, works-oriented thought of modern-day religion. In any event WE MUST AVOID SETTING THE WORDS AND COMMENTARIES OF MEN ON THE SAME FOOTING OR ABOVE THE INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD. Even as you read this booklet and the examples of Scriptural interpretation I present, do not automatically assume that I am telling you the truth as it is in the Bible. Be a "noble Berean" –

***Acts 17 – (10) And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. (11) These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.***

This takes some time and effort on our part. Men may be telling us the truth as it is revealed in the Bible, but many so-called Bible scholars and teachers will inject their own personal beliefs into word meanings in an effort to ignorantly support false doctrine(s). This is why we are commanded to ***“believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1)***. We are to test ALL preachers, teachers, and writers BY THE WORD OF GOD using the reliable rules of Biblical interpretation.

This process may require much discussion and even debates over the meaning of Scripture. We must also be aware that God’s Word commands true believers NOT to be engaged in useless debates and arguments over ***“words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers” (2 Timothy 2:14)***. As stated, there are many who read the Bible not to find the meaning as it is revealed in the Scriptures but to support their own preconceived notions, doctrines, and/or personal prejudices and preferences. This certainly has no value in helping us to understand and communicate the message of the Bible and leading us in the right way of God’s truth. Many professing Christians (and so-called Christian denominations) are false as evidenced by their doctrine which is clearly against what the Bible teaches concerning Christ and the issues of salvation and eternal life. However, TRUE Christians are united under the Word of God as revealed in the Bible.

The language of the Bible can sometimes be a complex thing, but do not let this dissuade you from reading and studying the Bible. Do not think that you have to be an expert in ancient or modern languages to read and understand the Bible, but there are some things you need to consider while reading and studying the Bible –

## **THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE**

As most Bible scholars agree, the Old Testament was originally written in ancient Hebrew, and the New Testament was originally written in ancient Greek. There are some passages of Scripture which appeared originally in Aramaic, the language of Judea during the time of Christ’s earthly pilgrimage. Some assert that all the original manuscripts of the Bible



were written in Aramaic, but that has been proven false. We do not have to be Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic scholars to understand the Bible, but it is helpful to be aware that these were the original languages and take this into consideration when we read the various translations of the Bible. Some translations do not stay true to these original languages as some of the translators have changed the original words to fit what they believe and have omitted words they do not believe. This is why we need good Bible concordances, dictionaries, and word studies.

### ISSUES OF PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD

God's Word states that **"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21)**. Notice, it does not say "the preaching of foolishness." It says, ***"the foolishness of preaching."*** It is stated this way because true preaching of Christ and the Gospel of God's grace is foolish to the unbeliever – ***"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18)***. True preaching is the declaration of the Word of God whereby the true Gospel preacher proclaims and communicates words that are established in the revealed truths of the Bible.

Whenever we read the Bible (like the Ethiopian seeker in **Acts 8** when asked, *"Do you understand what you are reading,"* and he responded, *"How can I lest some man show me?"*), it is very, very important that we find and unite with a true Bible-based, Gospel-preaching church. We need to be under pastors and teachers who are diligent to preach the true Word of God from the Bible. There are so many preachers who use the Bible merely as a launch-pad for their moral pep talks, psychological and positive-thinking babble, and health-and-wealth preaching. **THE BIBLE IS THE BOOK THAT PROCLAIMS GOD'S GRACE IN THE SALVATION OF SINNERS BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WHO IS THE VERY RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD FOR HIS PEOPLE.** It instructs the people of God in the way of righteousness by faith in Christ –

***1 Corinthians 2 – (1) And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. (4) And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: (5) That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.***

## **MATTERS OF CONTEXT**

When seeking to understand the language of the Bible (its words, phrases, passages), there is the simple definition of words and terms and the context of these words that help determine their meaning. Context has to do with the framework in which any word or phrase appears within a sentence, paragraph, passage, and book. Context is so important that it is in itself one of the rules of interpreting the Bible and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. There are also historical and cultural matters that need to be considered. For example, we know that the meanings of words change with time. Expressions common in the ancient world do not necessarily mean the same when they are used today.

## **MATTERS OF TRANSLATION**

We also have to consider this in light of the various translations of the Bible. The most popular translation of the Bible is the Authorized King James Version of 1611, which is the one I recommend because it has stood the test of time. The language of this translation is sometimes called “Elizabethan English,” meaning from the time of Queen Elizabeth who reigned in England until 1603. It was the same English used by the famous playwright, William Shakespeare. Other than the obvious differences (such as we say “you” instead of “thee” and “thou”), there are other expressions we need to notice. For example, in ***Luke 15:20*** when the father saw his prodigal son returning home, it is written that the father ran to him ***“and fell on his neck.”*** Was the father angry and trying to break the boy’s neck?

Was this a wrestling match? Obviously not. This was a way of describing a simple embrace (hug) as the father expressed his love to his son and joy over his son’s return. The study of the origin of words and the way their meanings have changed throughout history is called etymology. You do not have to be an etymologist to understand the Bible, but it is helpful in reading and studying the Bible to keep in mind words can be translated correctly or wrongly and that words do sometimes change meaning with time and within various cultures.

### AN EXAMPLE OF THE RULE OF LANGUAGE

Let’s consider an example of the Rule of Language in one of the most important phrases in the Bible – **“THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.”** This phrase is found, for example in **Romans 1:17** and presented as an essential truth of the Gospel revelation –

***Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.***

If we are to know and believe the Gospel of salvation by the grace of God, it is essential that we know what this phrase, **“the righteousness of God,”** truly means. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote that to be ignorant of this **“righteousness”** is to be lost in the darkness of unbelief –

***Romans 10 – (1) Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.***

Paul had already explained how the **“Gospel of God”** reveals the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the successful accomplishment

of His redemptive work (His death, burial, and resurrection) for His people

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***Romans 1 – (1) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, (2) (Which He had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) (3) Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (4) And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:***

The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ is God ***“manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16; cf. Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-4,14)***, and that He is both the Surety and Substitute of God’s chosen people, the elect of God chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (***Ephesians 1***). It also includes how that Christ as Godman had the sins of God’s elect imputed (charged, accounted, reckoned) to Him, and how He took their place under the law to suffer the just wrath of God due to the guilt of their sins. The Gospel reveals how in doing this work, Christ satisfied God’s justice for His people by His death – ***“And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Colossians 1:20)***. The merit of His justice-satisfying death on the cross is the very ***“righteousness of God”*** which is imputed (charged, accounted, reckoned) to all His people by God for their complete justification –

***Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (21) But now THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in***

***Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.***

The meaning of this phrase, ***“the righteousness of God,”*** reveals the necessity of God’s JUSTICE against sinners and His JUSTICE in the salvation of sinners. The words *“right,” “righteous,”* and *“righteousness,”* both in the Old and New Testaments, can also be translated as *“just”* and *“justice.”* Many people think of righteousness as merely a moral quality of character, but righteousness is the high standard by which God measures all goodness, morality, and obedience. The question then comes, *“How righteous (how good) must I be to be saved and go to heaven?”* The answer is found in God’s Word –

***Acts 17 – (31) Because He [God] hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.***

The truth of this verse proves that the Lord Jesus Christ, the One whom God has appointed, is not only the Judge of all, but HE IS ALSO THE STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BY WHICH ALL WILL BE JUDGED. How righteous, then, must we be to be saved and go to heaven? WE MUST BE AS RIGHTEOUS AS CHRIST! This is impossible if we seek to find righteousness by our works or within ourselves –

***Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

***Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be***

***stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

***Romans 3 – (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;***

In light of this, the Bible presents the great question of questions –

***Job 9 – (2) I know it is so of a truth: but HOW SHOULD MAN BE JUST WITH GOD?***

***Job 15 – (14) What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?***

(1) GOD IS HOLY AND JUST, AND HE MUST REMAIN HOLY AND JUST WHEN SAVES, REDEEMS, FORGIVES, JUSTIFIES, RECEIVES AND BLESSES SINNERS.

(2) MAN IS SINFUL, FALLEN IN ADAM, BORN SPIRITUALLY DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS, AND HAS NO RIGHTEOUSNESS BY WHICH TO RECOMMEND HIMSELF TO GOD. Even at his best man always fall short of the requirement of God's law and justice.

(3) FALLEN, SINFUL MAN, THEREFORE, CAN NEVER BE SAVED, JUSTIFIED, OR ACCEPTED WITH GOD BY HIS WORKS AND ATTEMPTS AT OBEDIENCE.

(4) SALVATION FOR SINNERS MUST COME IN A WAY THAT SATISFIES AND HONORS GOD'S JUSTICE AGAINST THE SINS OF HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE. God cannot save and justify sinners at the expense of His holy law and inflexible justice.

(5) SALVATION IS BY GOD'S FREE, SOVEREIGN GRACE THROUGH THE MERITS (VIRTUES, EXCELLENCIES) OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WHO

ALONE WORKED OUT A PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS (**“THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD”**) WHEREBY GOD IS JUST TO JUSTIFY HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE –

***Romans 5 – (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might GRACE REIGN THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.***

This is the theme of the whole Bible and the heart of the Gospel of God. Many people today claim to be “saved by grace,” and they will sing Newton’s famous hymn, “Amazing Grace,” but their idea of grace is actually a cleverly disguised system of conditional works salvation. They believe God’s grace is merely God making salvation possible IF they do (or decide) something for God. But the Bible teaches us that man by nature has no righteousness, and can do nothing that would measure up to **“the righteousness of God”** found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. It also teaches that man in his natural, fallen state does not want righteousness God’s way by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 3:10-20**). The Bible teaches that if any of us desire salvation God’s way and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, it is because the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us with His blood and the Holy Spirit has sovereignly and powerfully given us spiritual life in the new birth –

***John 1 – (11) He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. (12) But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [the right, privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***

How does **“the righteousness of God”** come to a sinner? First, it comes BY JESUS CHRIST AS SURETY AND SUBSTITUTE OF HIS PEOPLE (**Romans 5:21**). Secondly, it comes BY IMPUTATION, which means God’s charges it to the account of His chosen people (**Romans 4:1-8**). Thirdly, it comes to the believer’s conscience BY GOD-GIVEN FAITH (**Romans 10:4**). It is called **“the righteousness which is of faith”** (**Romans 9:30**), NOT because faith (believing) itself is counted in place of righteousness, as if to say that God lowers His standard to be able to accept sinners, and NOT because faith

(believing) appropriates or empowers righteousness. It is because the righteousness which Christ alone accomplished by His death, and which God has freely imputed to His chosen people, is received in the new hearts of His people by God-given faith. The preaching of the Gospel and God-given faith is the way by which God makes His people aware of and submissive to what HE ALONE has done for them and freely gives them.

***“The righteousness of God”*** revealed in the Gospel is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which is imputed to His people and received by them in God-given faith. The imputed righteousness of Christ is the GROUND of their salvation; faith and repentance are the fruits of salvation. The work of Christ on the cross in establishing righteousness FOR His people is the GROUND of salvation; the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth within His people to bring them to faith in Christ is the FRUIT of what Christ accomplished for them –

***John 12 – (32) And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. (33) This He said, signifying what death He should die.***

***Romans 8 – (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***

In showing the meaning of this important phrase, ***“the righteousness of God,”*** we have seen an example of how to use the Rule of Language (along with other rules of interpretation) beginning with finding the definition of the word ***“righteousness.”*** That was followed by studying its use (as well as the use of the whole phrase, ***“the righteousness of God”***) within the context of other verses of Scripture. Within the Rule of Language this is also included in the way we find the meanings of all the literary images, symbols, figures of speech, axioms, laws, and doctrines found within the pages of the Bible. A proper understanding often includes this Rule of Language (along with other rules) for us to have a right understanding of these words and phrases. Consider –

## **ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE RULE OF LANGUAGE**



***John 10 – (9) I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.***

Obviously, the Lord did not mean that He was a physical door with hinges and a knob. This is a metaphor which is a comparison between two or more things using descriptive or figurative language. The meaning of “door” in **John 10:9** is that Christ Himself is the only way to God and salvation. This brings us to a very important matter of what it means to interpret the Bible LITERALLY. Many people misuse what they refer to as “literal interpretation” as a convenience to use the Bible to support their own personal beliefs. To interpret the Bible literally means to find its true meaning (literal meaning, if you will) in light of all the clearly stated words, phrases, and passages, as well as finding the meaning behind all the images, symbols, figures of speech, and types therein. As stated, the LITERAL meaning of “door” in **John 10:9** communicates that Christ is the only way into the gracious presence of Almighty God and the only way of salvation provided by Him in Christ –

***John 14 – (6) – Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.***

***Hebrews 10 – (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;***

How do we determine the LITERAL meaning of any word, phrase, passage, symbol, metaphor, figure of speech, or type in the Bible? We find the LITERAL meaning of these words by using all the tried and true rules of Biblical interpretation. There are so many examples of this as they pertain to Christ in His Person and His redemptive work. The following are just a few of many:

Christ is the Lamb of God (**John 1:29**) literally meaning that He is the sacrifice and sin-offering for the sins of His people.

Christ the Shepherd of the sheep (**Psalm 23; John 10**) literally meaning that He is the Head of the church who cares, provides for, and protects them.

Christ is the Water and the Bread of life (**John 4:10-14; 6:33-51**) literally meaning that He is life and nourishment of His people.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the parables of the Bible are prime examples of metaphors and symbols used to express and illustrate spiritual truth. In **Matthew 13**, for example, the Lord taught the parables of the kingdom beginning with the parable of the sower and the seed. He also explained what the symbols within this parable represented –

***Matthew 13 – (18) Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. (19) When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (20) But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; (21) Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. (22) He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. (23) But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.***

The sower is Christ and His ministers of truth preaching the seed of the Word of God, the Gospel of salvation by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness alone. The different grounds upon which the seed falls represent the kinds of hearts of sinners and the state of their hearts. The first three represent the different reactions of the unregenerate, natural man to the preaching of the Gospel (**1 Corinthians 1:18-22; 2:14**). The last one ("**good ground**") represents the regenerate sinner who has been given a new heart that is broken and contrite and made ready to receive (believe) the Gospel of Christ. This shows that we have no right or liberty to subject the parables to our own thinking,

understanding, and opinion. This method of interpretation applies to all the parables of the Bible. Also remember, as stated in a previous chapter, we cannot derive Scriptural doctrine from the parables. Bible doctrine is clearly stated in the doctrinal (teaching) passages of the Bible. Parables illustrate the teachings that have already been established.

There are so many other symbolic words in the Bible that we cannot list all of them in this short booklet. But know that when we do interpret these symbols, we are not ignoring or leaving the LITERAL meaning of the Bible. More of this matter of language will be dealt with in the last rule of interpretation, the Rule of Typology. Technically, the Rule of Typology could be incorporated with this Rule of Language, but it is so prevalent and important in the Bible that it deserves to be set apart and dealt with as a rule all its own.

# *RULE*6

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## The Rule of Context

Biblical context refers to the literary setting in which particular words and phrases appear that determine their true intended meaning. Whenever we read a word, phrase, or term in the Bible, we must consider the other words, phrases, terms, along with paragraphs, chapters, and books in which they appear in order to find their meaning. We have already considered several issues of context in considering some of the prior rules of interpretation, but matters of context are so important that we need to study it as a rule by itself. Let's first consider the various areas of context from the broader to the narrower –

(1) HISTORICAL CONTEXT – As stated before, words can have different meaning in different times of history.

(2) CULTURAL CONTEXT – Words can have different meanings in various cultures.

(3) LINGUISTIC CONTEXT – Words can have different meanings as they are spoken and derived from various languages. Remember the Old

Testament was originally written in ancient Hebrew, and the New Testament was originally written in ancient Greek. Consider also that the Bible has been translated into English (as well as many, many other languages), and the most popular English translation has been the Authorized King James Version which was completed in A.D. 1611. This means it was written in what some describe as Elizabethan English. For example, the word “*anon*” in the KJV as recorded in **Matthew 13:20** and **Mark 1:30** means “immediately” or “now” in modern English.

(4) BIBLICAL CONTEXT – There are various contextual considerations within the context of:

(a) The whole Bible – When determining the meaning of any word or phrase in the Bible we must consider its meaning within the context of the whole Bible. For example, the Bible’s main message of salvation by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ will never be contradicted by the true intended meaning of any word or phrase within its context. If we view any word or phrase as contradictory to the Gospel message of the Bible, it is because we have interpreted it wrongly.

(b) The Testaments – A word may have a different meaning as used within the context of the Old Covenant than it does within the context of the New Covenant. Consider, for example, what many readers of the Bible may judge to be a very small and insignificant word – the word “*IF*.” This little word is actually a very, very important word as it appears in the Bible. Our understanding of it within its various contexts reveals our understanding of the difference between salvation by the works of men and salvation by the grace of God. Consider the following passages of Scripture, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New Testament –

**2 Chronicles 7 – (14) *IF My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.***

***Colossians 1 – (23) IF ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;***

**2 Chronicles 7:14** was an Old Covenant CONDITIONAL promise from God to the nation Israel. God promised that nation physical and temporal success and prosperity based on their humility and obedience. We know the **“IF”** in the promise is CONDITIONAL because of the nature of the Old Covenant – PROMISES FROM GOD CONDITIONED ON NATIONAL OBEDIENCE. We must remember that Israel failed miserably to fulfill the conditions, and this was a testimony from God of the sinfulness and depravity of all people without exception. The Old Covenant law was given to expose the sinfulness, not only the nation Israel, but of all people. It showed the impossibility of any sinful human being able to attain and/or maintain salvation from sin and blessings from God based on man’s works. It was given to show fallen man’s need of salvation by God’s grace according to the terms of another (a better) covenant –

***Romans 5 – (20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:***

***Galatians 3 – (19) Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.***

***Hebrews 7 – (22) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.***

**Colossians 1:23** is a New Covenant EVIDENTIAL promise showing how continuing in the faith (looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation) gives evidence of salvation and eternal life. All the promises of the New Covenant were conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ who is **“the seed”** in **Galatians 3:19**, **“to whom the promise was made.”** God’s Word tells us that **“all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen**

[meaning sure and certain], ***unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20)***. The promise of salvation and all its blessings has never been (and never will be) conditioned on sinners. If salvation or any part of it were conditioned on sinners, it would fail. But being conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ for God's chosen people, in Him all the promises of salvation and all blessings thereof are sure and certain. Christ cannot and did not fail!

(c) The Books of the Bible – This refers to words and phrases as they appear within the context of the categories of the books in the Bible. The Bible is a collection of books. It contains books of law, history, poetry, prophecy, and letters written to churches.

(d) The Passages of Scripture – This refers to words and phrases as they appear within the immediate context of particular passages of Scripture. Sometimes the meanings of words and phrases can be determined by simply asking the questions: who is speaking, to whom is he speaking, and what is the subject? Many interpret Scripture wrongly by applying words and phrases outside this context.

Consider two examples of words and phrases that must be interpreted by the rule of context:

**EXAMPLE #1 –**

***1 John 3 – (9) Whosoever is born of God DOTH NOT COMMIT SIN; for His seed remaineth in Him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.***

This verse plainly states that anyone who has been born again does not ***"commit sin."*** How can we interpret this? Does it mean that if we are truly born again we no longer have any sins in our lives? And did not the apostle John write earlier that ***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not***

**in us" (1 John 1:8-9)?** Are these statements contradictory? The answer is found by interpreting **1 John 3:9** within its context.

First of all within the context of the whole Bible we are taught that basically there are only two types of people on this earth: (1) sinners still lost in their sins, and (2) sinners saved by the grace of God. We read of the sins committed by some of the greatest saints of God in the Old Testament. We read passages such as **Romans 7:14-25** and **Galatians 5:17-26** where the apostle Paul describes the true believer (one born of God) as one who struggles with sin and is engaged in the warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. Many of the epistles are warnings and encouragements for believers to fight the remaining influences, corruptions, and contaminations of sin still present within their hearts and minds. Many of them are written to correct the bad behavior of believers and bring them to Godly repentance and sorrow over sin (**2 Corinthians 7:8-11**). If believers did not commit sin in the sense of thinking and behaving in ways of disobedience and selfishness, none of these things would have been written and delivered to the churches. THE ONLY SINLESS PERFECTION THAT TRUE BELIEVERS CAN CLAIM WHILE ON THIS EARTH IS THAT WHICH THEY HAVE IN CHRIST, BY VIRTUE OF HAVING BEEN WASHED IN HIS BLOOD AND CLOTHED IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPUTED. This is the legal perfection (righteousness) in the Lord Jesus Christ which every believer has and enjoys. As they stand in Christ, they are still sinners in themselves, but legally they cannot be charged with sin because their sins have been charged to Christ their Surety and Substitute –

***Romans 8 – (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."***

***1 John 2 – (1) My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:***



Secondly, the book of **1 John** is a letter written by the apostle John under inspiration of the Holy Spirit to professing believers encouraging them to persevere in the faith in opposition to false teachers who were trying to seduce them away from the Gospel and who had successfully drawn some away unto apostasy (total abandonment of the Gospel) – ***“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you” (1 John 2:26)***. A major theme of John’s first epistle is that TRUE believers (all who have been truly born again by the Holy Spirit) by the grace of God will continue in the faith without falling away unto damnation. This is in contrast to false professors who claimed to believe in Christ but who eventually fell away from the faith. True believers cannot and will not totally fall away from the faith unto damnation (*cf. Hebrews 10:38-39*) –

***1 John 2 – (18) Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (20) But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.***

Thirdly, **First John** is a polemic which means it presents people, ideas, and situations that are opposites (poles apart). John presents the stark contrasts between true believers who walk in the light of God’s glory, truth, and love in Christ Jesus and unbelievers who walk in darkness (**1 John 1:5-10**). He describes the vast differences between saved sinners who are born of God and who walk in righteousness and lost sinners who are of the devil and who walk in sin (**1 John 3:6-12**). He explains how the true children of God love their brethren in the faith and are hated by the world (**1 John 3:13-18**). One of his concluding statements summarizes this polemic –

***1 John 5 – (18) We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. (19) And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.***

So what did the apostle mean when he wrote that those who are born again by the Holy Spirit do not **“commit sin” (1 John 3:9)** and **“sinneth not” (1 John 5:18)**. The context shows us that John was speaking, not of all sin in general with which every truly born again person struggles while in this life, but of something very specific – the sin of apostasy. Consider the verse again –

**“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,”** i.e. they do not commit the sin of final apostasy so as to forsake Christ and His truth totally as those who had no more than a mere profession of faith without having been born again **(1 John 2:18-19)**.

**“For HIS seed remaineth in HIM: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”** – Christ’s **“seed”** (His true children) stay **“in HIM”** (they will not leave Him totally and finally). They cannot apostatize because they have been **“born of God”** (cf. **Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:38-40; John 10:27-30**). John follows this verse with a statement of this contrast – **“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10)**.

## EXAMPLE #2 –

### **“ALL,” “EVERY,” “WORLD”**

When many people today read the Bible and find the words **“all,” “every,”** and **“world,”** they automatically assume the following – **“all”** means all people without exception, **“every”** means every person without exception, and **“world”** means every person in the world without exception. However, this is far from the truth because these words have so many different meanings in the Bible and can only be defined within their respective contexts. Consider –

**Luke 2 – (1) And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that ALL THE WORLD should be taxed.**

Does this mean all the people all over the whole world without exception? No, it means all citizens under the Roman Empire over which Caesar Augustus ruled at that time. We know this by the context in which we find this phrase **“all the world.”** We must recognize then that whenever we read the word **“world”** in the Bible, we cannot automatically assume it means “every individual in the world without exception.” We will consider other examples, but it is important to recognize that many, many people interpret these particular words wrongly because of a preconceived notion concerning the love of God and the extent of the death of Christ. People who are ignorant of the Bible’s teachings are told by false preachers that “God loves everyone without exception; Christ died for everyone without exception; and the difference between saved and lost (heaven and hell) is totally up to the sinner’s decision.” Thus, whenever they read the words **“all,” “every”** (or **“everyone”**), and **“world”** in connection with God’s love and the death of Christ, they wrongly assume that this includes all people without exception that have ever lived, are living, or will live in this world. This is why it is common to hear preachers give invitations such as, “God loves you; Christ died for you; now the rest is up to you.” They believe that God’s love and Christ’s death in reality secured the personal salvation of no one. It is suggested that one must accept Him personally or else His death is not effectual for that person. So many people today who claim to be Christians believe that their faith (their decision for Christ) is what made His death effectual and successful in their salvation, not the other way around.

FIRST, the Bible does not teach that God loves all without exception and that Jesus Christ died for all without exception, saving them only upon the condition of their believing. If that were the case then all would perish. The Bible teaches that God hates **“all workers of iniquity” (Psalm 5:5)**, and that God hated **“Esau”** and loved **“Jacob” (Romans 9:13)**. Unlike the hatred found among sinful men, God’s hatred is not sinful, unjust, or unreasonable. It is His just wrath against those to whom iniquity is imputed (charged, accounted, reckoned). We are all sinners who deserve God’s hatred (His wrath and justice). Then how could God love Jacob, or how could God love any of us? The only way is found in the sovereign grace of God through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety and Substitute of God’s chosen people. This is how God does not impute iniquity to His

people and still remains just in doing so. God imputed the iniquity of His chosen people to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to them –

***2 Corinthians 5 – (21) For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.***

The evidence that any particular sinner has been chosen of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ is that in time that sinner is brought under the preaching of the Gospel and regenerated (born again) by the Holy Spirit. They are changed by the sovereign power of Christ and drawn to Him by the holy calling and powerful conviction of the Holy Spirit –

***John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.***

***John 6 – (44) No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.***

Secondly, the death of Jesus Christ secured and insures the complete salvation of all for whom He died. His death insures the work of the Holy Spirit within them and the faith that unites them to Himself. This is actually what **John 3:16** teaches within its context. Keep in mind as you read these verses, Christ had already told Nicodemus, ***“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).***

***John 3 – (14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: (15) That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (16) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (17) For God sent not His***

***Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. (18) He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.***

***John 3:14*** speaks of the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of His people. As all of God's elect were RUINED BY THE FALL OF MAN IN ADAM, they must be REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. Redemption means they are bought and owned by Jesus Christ. He calls them His own, His sheep, His brethren. Because they were born dead in trespasses and sins, they must be REGENERATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, i.e. given spiritual life from Christ. This spiritual life is evidenced by God-given faith to receive and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. ***John 3:15*** speaks of the fruit of Christ's death. It is not suggesting that by believing sinners empower the death of Christ so as to obtain eternal life for themselves. The Lord said in another place, ***"I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10:11)***, and then He said to those who refused to believe, ***"But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:26-28)***.

Clearly, those who ***"believe not"*** are not among those for whom Christ died (His sheep). So the ***"world"*** in ***John 3:16-17*** is not every individual without exception. It is not, as some interpret it, promoting the idea that "God loves you and is doing his best to save you if you will just let him." The word ***"world"*** is translated from the Greek word *κόσμος* (pronounced ko'-smos or cosmos). It is a word for God's creation, the created universe. Sometimes it is used to describe the fallen world under the dominion of Satan –

***1 John 5 – (19) And we know that we are of God, and the WHOLE WORLD lieth in wickedness.***

In other verses it refers to the world of unbelievers (***John 15:18***). In ***John 3:16*** it describes God's creation and means that God did not create

this **“world”** only to destroy it. He created it for His glory, and His glory will be realized in the salvation of sinners which finds its source in His sovereign, unconditional love towards His chosen people in the Lord Jesus Christ, chosen from all over this world, both Jew and Gentile. Who are the objects of God’s sovereign, redemptive love in Christ? They are described by **“whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)**. This would include God’s elect out of every tribe and nation (Jew and Gentile) who are brought by God through faith into a personal union with Jesus Christ. The **“world”** in **John 3:16** is the world of God’s chosen and redeemed people.

THIRDLY, included in the false notion that salvation is decided by man’s “free-will” decision is the false teaching that man by nature has a spark of goodness whereby he can exercise his “free will” to rise above the rest of stubborn, rebellious humanity and accept Jesus Christ as his savior. In other words, it is presumed that man has the innate ability to make the right decision in order to be saved. But, as we have stated before, the Bible does not teach that fallen, sinful man has a spark of goodness or a “free will.” The Bible teaches that man is inherently evil (even at his best) and that man’s will is in bondage to the darkness and deception of sin. It is true that one may be a moral person (as other men measure morality), and he is free to choose what he desires. In that sense he can be called a “free agent,” but he does not and will not desire the things that honor and glorify God in Jesus Christ –

***John 3 – (19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (21) But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.***

***Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

***1 Corinthians 2 – (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

Consider who these verses describe. Do these verses describe all of us as sinners fallen in Adam, by nature born dead in trespasses and sins, or is this some segment of society more evil and depraved than the ones who choose of their own “free-will” to believe and “accept Jesus as their personal savior”? If I (or you) really receive the true Christ as Lord and Savior, is it because we are less sinful, less stubborn and rebellious, even better and more humble than those who refuse? If this is the case (and it is not) then let’s stop talking about salvation by grace. If we have been truly convicted by the Holy Spirit of the reality of our own sinfulness, and if we know the truth of the Bible, we have to admit that these verses describe all of us by nature. This is what we are at our best and what we will remain to be if left to ourselves and our own choices. If any sinner receives Christ as Lord and Savior, it is because he has been born again by the Holy Spirit. He has been given a new heart and a new spirit which includes spiritual eyes and ears to see and hear and desire the things that honor and glorify God in Jesus Christ. These things leave sinners no room for boasting. If we are true Christians we cannot boast in our decision to believe in and receive Christ, because we know if left to ourselves we would have never believed in and received Him. The true Christian’s personal relationship and union with Jesus Christ by faith is a true miracle of God’s sovereign power and grace. Again we see –

***John 1 – (12) But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***

***Romans 9 – (16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.***

The same rule of interpretation applies to the words “all” and “every.” Consider that the little Greek word **πᾶς** (pronounced *pä’s*) is used over 1200 times in the New Testament and translated variously as follows: *all, all things, every, all men, whosoever, everyone, whole, all manner of, every man, no, every thing, any, whatsoever, whosoever, always, daily, any thing*, and other miscellaneous words. Can we automatically assume, as one preacher stated in a sermon, that “all means all and that’s all all means”? Do the words “all” and “every” always mean “all” and “every” without exception and without any limitation? It only takes a very surface reading of the New Testament to find that these terms are always limited to some specific category, and who or what they describe can only be determined by their context. One may argue that verses such as **Romans 3:23** mean all without exception, but even this verse has its limitations –

***Romans 3 – (23) For ALL have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;***

The meaning of the word “all” here is limited to all human beings who fell in Adam into sin and death and who are born dead in trespasses and sins as evidenced by their sins. It would not include the angels who did not fall, and it certainly would not include the Lord Jesus Christ who never sinned. The context of **Romans 1 – 3** clearly defines “all” for us. Paul is clearly speaking of the entire race of humanity (both Jew and Gentile) since our fall in Adam. Every individual who is part of this fallen humanity has sinned and cannot be saved by their works. And in light of what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in **Romans 3:10-11**, it would be contradictory for him to hold that certain individuals of that fallen race were naturally or basically good and could choose good over evil according to God’s standard of both.

Consider another passage that is commonly misinterpreted because of not considering the context –

***2 Peter 3 – (9) The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that ANY should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance.***



So many interpret this to mean that it is not God's will that anyone should perish but God wants everyone without exception to come to repentance. This is not the meaning of this verse at all. Peter's subject is the longsuffering of God displayed in the fact that He has not already destroyed this sinful world and all unbelievers with it. The point Peter makes here is that God is most certainly going to destroy this world. But the reason God has held back this wrath in not immediately destroying the world is because God has a people whom He chose (identified by "*usward*") and whom He intends to save out of this fallen world. God is not willing that "*ANY*" of them (the "*usward*") should perish, but He intends "*ALL*" of them "*come to repentance.*" Also, the Bible teaches us that no sinner will repent of his own choice (***Romans 3:10-12***), and godly repentance is a gift from God by His grace through Christ Jesus (***Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25***). If any sinner repents and believes the Gospel, it is God who brings that sinner to Himself for salvation. This is the context within which we must consider these verses if we are to find the true meaning of God's Holy Word.

# RULE 7

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## The Rule of Comparison

The Rule of Comparison states that the Bible itself is its own best interpreter, therefore, the best way to interpret the meaning of its words, phrases, and passages, is to compare Scripture with Scripture. It also states that no part of Scripture can be interpreted so as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught in other Scriptures. This rule of Biblical interpretation rests on the understanding that the Bible is the verbally inspired, inerrant Word of God, and, therefore, contains no contradictions. Using this rule of interpretation is part of God’s way of teaching His people the truth by what is described in the Bible as *“comparing spiritual things with spiritual things”* –

***1 Corinthians 2 – (6) Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: (7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: (8) Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (9) But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into***

***the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. (10) But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; COMPARING SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH SPIRITUAL.***

One of the most important and vital ways of using this particular rule involves how we are to interpret promises in the Old Testament that fall under the Old Covenant Law of Moses as compared with promises in the New Testament that fall under the New Covenant revealed in the Gospel of God's grace in Christ? We have already seen some of this method in the first rule of Biblical interpretation, the Rule of Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen from the dead. The Old Testament is to be interpreted with a Christ-centered view – in light of the law to convict men of sin, and in light of the Gospel to reveal Christ as the righteousness of His people. How do we know this? We know this by comparing the whole Old Testament with what the Lord stated in the following –

***Luke 24 – (27) And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.***

***Luke 24 – (44) And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. (45) Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) And ye are witnesses of these things.***

***John 5 – (39) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.***

***John 5 – (45) Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. 46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. (47) But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?***

Another aspect of this has to do with how we view and interpret the historical narratives of Scripture. We cannot determine our doctrine (the teachings of Scripture) from the historical narratives. We must interpret the historical accounts recorded in the Bible by comparing them to the doctrinal passages which plainly set forth the teachings of God's Word. For example, many people try to use the historical record of the salvation of the thief on the cross to teach that one does not necessarily have to hear and believe the Gospel for salvation. In most cases people do this to try to justify their own claim of salvation apart from having heard and believed the TRUE Gospel. The thief on the cross is a beautiful historical illustration of how the Lord Jesus Christ in His death on the cross is the one and only way of salvation for sinners, and how that the salvation of sinners is totally by the sovereign grace and mercy of God. There is no doubt that the thief had nothing in himself and no works to recommend him unto God. However, in this historical record we do not have all the details of the thief's life, so it is wrong for anyone to try to fill in the blanks with explanations that deny the plain teachings of other Scriptures. Did this thief at some time hear the Gospel? We know he heard the Lord Himself speak. Did the thief hear any other preacher preach the Gospel? If so, when did he hear it? I cannot answer all of these questions simply by reading the historical record of the thief on the cross. But I can answer these questions by referring to the explicit teachings of God's Word –

***Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.***

***Romans 10 – (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***

***1 Corinthians 1 – (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.***

If the Lord states that it pleases and glorifies Him to save sinners by means of preaching the Gospel, then we have no right or liberty to try to prove otherwise based on speculations and reasonings from historical narratives where all details are not recorded. Many have gone astray and have gone so far as to deny the Gospel and the Word of God (even plunged into damnable heresies) through such irresponsible interpretations of the Bible.

The same principle of interpretation holds true with the parables of the Bible. The parables have already been mentioned under the Rule of Language because parables contain metaphors that need to be interpreted. The word “parable” means “to stand alongside of,” meaning that the parables are illustrations given NOT to establish doctrine and truth by use of symbols. They were given to stand alongside of and illustrate the already established doctrines of the Scripture. Many people try to read into parables more than what was originally intended. They try to formulate doctrinal principles based upon symbols used in parables. This is another irresponsible way of interpreting Scripture.

One of the most common examples of the necessity of this rule of comparison for proper Biblical interpretation is found in a commonly held

misunderstanding of truths expressed by the apostle Paul in the book of **Romans** and by James in the book of **James**. The issue concerns the word “**justified**” as it applies to Abraham and, in essence, to all the elect of God. Paul wrote –

***Romans 4 – (1) What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (2) For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. (3) For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (4) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (5) But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.***

James wrote –

***James 2 – (21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? (22) Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? (23) And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (24) Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.***

Does James contradict Paul here? Does this support the claim of false Christians today who say, “We are all Christians, but we just differ in our doctrine?” By using the rules of context and comparison, we easily can see that there was no contradiction between these two men of God, but that there is complete harmony. First of all, we must realize that the truths expressed here are the words of God and not the words of mere men. God never contradicts Himself. We may see paradoxes of thought and action recorded in the Bible, but there are no contradictions with God. Secondly, the Bible as a whole is clear that sinners are not and cannot be justified before God by their works. So as we compare what James wrote with the whole Bible, we would have to conclude either that James was wrong (and therefore should not be included in the canon of Holy Scripture), or that

James was right in a way that is consistent with the whole canon of the Bible. The latter is the case. Consider the following statements concerning context and comparison that prove both Paul and James were right –

(1) In **Romans 4** the apostle Paul is dealing with HOW SINNERS ARE JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD. To be justified before God is to be declared by God as not guilty and righteous before God. It has to do with a right relationship with God on the basis of what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished in His obedience unto death as the Surety and Substitute of God’s chosen people. The whole Bible clearly teaches throughout that the justification of sinners BEFORE GOD is by grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. The works of sinners are totally excluded from any part of the ground of justification BEFORE GOD.

(2) In **James 2:14-26** James is dealing NOT with how sinners are justified before God, but with how a saved sinner’s faith (belief in the Lord Jesus Christ) is justified (vindicated and proven genuine) BEFORE MEN. James is refuting the belief that a person can have true God-given faith without bearing the fruit of good works by the grace and power of God (**James 2:17-18**). James is emphasizing the point that genuine faith in Christ will be evidenced by good works and the obedience of faith (**James 2:20-26**). James is not saying that justification before God is by faith plus works, but rather that a person who is truly justified before God in and by Christ will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit (born again from above) and have the fruit of good works in his/her life. If a person claims to be a believer, but has no good works in his/her life, then he/she has no genuine faith in Christ (**James 2:14, 17, 20, 26**).

(3) Paul is in full agreement with James on this issue – ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10)***. Read also what God the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in the following verses –

***Galatians 5 – (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (24) And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (26) Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.***

We see another example of the Rule of Comparison in passages where the Bible provides its own commentary, one explaining the other. Consider the words of the psalmist David in ***Psalms 32:1-2*** –

***Psalms 32 – (1) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.***

What exactly did David mean by these words? God the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to state David’s meaning in the context of ***Romans 4*** where He revealed once again how God justifies sinners. He began by using Abraham as an example of God justifying the ungodly by His grace, based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith (***Romans 4:1-5***). Paul then cited David as an example of justification by the grace of God based on the same ground by quoting David’s inspired words from ***Psalms 32*** –

***Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.***

We see then that David’s faith was in the Lord Jesus Christ. David viewed Christ by the Word of God’s promise - the Messiah who would come in time and redeem David from his sins by working righteousness as David’s Surety and Substitute. The non-imputation of sins means that God did not charge David with the debt due unto God’s justice for his sins –



**Romans 8 – (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**

Like all the elect of God, David’s sins were charged to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ’s righteousness was charged to David. David’s words alone do not explain this, but by comparing David’s inspired words with **Romans 4:6-8** (also inspired words), the meaning becomes clear. It is the same truth described by the apostle Paul in **2 Corinthians 5 –**

**2 Corinthians 5 – (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For He [God the Father] hath made Him (the Lord Jesus Christ) to be sin for us, [Christ] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.**

This answers the great question of all questions – How can a holy and just God justify and forgive sinners and still be true to Himself as a just and righteous God? This proves that the Gospel way (and message) of salvation by God’s grace based on the merits of Christ obedience unto death has always been the same. It was true in the beginning when God dealt with Adam and Eve through sacrifice and by clothing them with coats of skin, illustrating the death, burial, and resurrection of the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (**Genesis 3:15,21**). It was true during the time of the Old Covenant when God dealt with the nation Israel by the law showing them the impossibility of salvation (of being justified before Him) based on their best efforts to keep the law (**Galatians 3:10-29**). It was true during the time of the Lord’s earthly ministry with His disciples (**Matthew 5:21; Luke 18:9-14**). It is true today and will be true forever.

Another example of the Rule of Comparison concerns one of the most misinterpreted, misused, and abused statements found in the whole Bible – **“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1)**. So many people

who claim to be Christians use this verse to teach that we should never judge anyone's state as to whether or not they are saved or lost. Even some of the most respected so-called Christian leaders misuse this verse to do the same. Some use it to try to prohibit all judgment, but this is far from the truth the Lord taught in this verse. The fact is that if we compare this verse with a multitude of other verses in the Bible, we find that those who use this verse to prohibit all judgment are not only wrong but in denial of the clear teachings of the Lord Himself. Consider what follows **Matthew 7:1** in **Matthew 7:15 – 15-16a** – ***“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.”*** How can we ***“beware of false prophets”*** if we are forbidden to judge whether or not they are false? The Lord commanded His disciples, ***“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”*** (**John 7:24**). The apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, ***“mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”*** (**Romans 16:17**). Consider the following verses –

***John 3 – (36) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.***

***Galatians 1 – (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.***

***1 John 4 – (1) Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (2) Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: (3) And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.***

All of these statements require proper judgment, but what kind of judgment? In **Matthew 7:1** the Lord forbids self-righteous judgment based on false standards –

***Matthew 7 – (2) For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (3) And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (4) Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? (5) Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.***

Self-righteous judgment includes judgments based on outward appearance or judgments using ourselves as the standard of judgment. Righteous judgment is judgment based on God's Word alone – ***“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20)***. Such verses as these show us clearly why the Rule of Comparison is so valuable for a right understanding of the Bible. Always remember to compare Scripture with Scripture.

# *RULE* 8

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## The Rule of Typology

We have already shown in the Rule of Language that the Bible is full of images, symbols, figures of speech, axioms, laws, and doctrines. The Bible also contains what is commonly called TYPES, therefore we need to apply the Rule of Typology. This rule is closely related to the Rule of Language and could be considered a branch of that rule. But Hebrew typology is so prevalent in the Bible that it needs to be a category all its own. A TYPE in scripture is a person, thing, or an event in the Old Testament which foreshadows (typifies) a person, thing, or event in the New Testament. That which is found in the New Testament is the FULFILLMENT (not the replacement) of the type found in the Old Testament. Typology then is a method of Biblical interpretation whereby an element found in the Old Testament is seen to prefigure one found in the New Testament. The one in the Old Testament is called the TYPE, and the fulfillment in the New Testament is called the ANTE-TYPE. For example, a major type found in the Old Testament is the physical nation Israel which was a type or picture of God's chosen people (His elect, His church). We must be very, very careful when considering these types. The types in the Old Testament were limited (and inferior) in their application to the ante-type found in the New

Testament. Not everything found in the actual type or picture can be applied to the fulfillment (ante-type) found in the New Testament. Consider how the physical nation Israel was made up mostly of unbelieving, rebellious, and disobedient people. They lived under the Old Covenant law, and they broke that covenant –

***Jeremiah 31 – (31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; WHICH MY COVENANT THEY BRAKE, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:***

In this case we can say that the physical nation Israel typified all of God’s chosen people by nature as sinners who break God’s law and who cannot be saved by their works and attempts to obey God’s law. But the true church of the living God (spiritual Israel), which the physical nation Israel typified in many ways, by the grace of God, is different –

***Jeremiah 31 – (33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.***

How else, then, did the physical nation Israel typify the true church of the living God – spiritual Israel? Consider the following –

(1) Just as the physical nation of Israel were PHYSICAL DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM, the spiritual nation of Israel are SPIRITUAL DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM – ***Galatians 3:26-29.***

(2) Just as the physical descendants were chosen of God to be His people based on no qualifications in them and no conditions met by them, the spiritual descendants of Abraham (spiritual Israel) were chosen by God in the Lord Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world based on no qualifications in them and no conditions met by them – **Romans 9:11-15; 11:5-6**.

(3) Just as the physical descendants of Abraham were under bondage in Egypt and delivered by the power of God out of this bondage under the blood of the Passover lamb, the spiritual descendants of Abraham fell into the bondage of sin and death through Adam (**Romans 5:12**), and have been delivered from this bondage by the Lord Jesus Christ – **Romans 6:3-7**.

(4) Just as the physical descendants of Abraham were circumcised in the flesh, the spiritual descendants of Abraham are circumcised in the heart – **Romans 2:28-29; Philippians 3:3**. This is their new birth when God the Holy Spirit imparts the resurrection life of Jesus Christ to them and brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works.

(5) Just as the physical nation Israel under the Old Covenant was given the tabernacle, the priesthood, animal sacrifices, the ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat, the spiritual nation Israel has the Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself as Godman the Tabernacle (dwelling-place) of God (**Matthew 1:23; John 1:14; Colossians 2:9**); the believer's great high priest (**Hebrews 4:14**); the Lamb of God who shed His own blood as the complete payment for the sins of His people (**John 1:29; Hebrews 9:13-14**); the mercy-seat of His people (**Romans 3:21-25; 1 John 2:1-2**). The writer of Hebrews stated that all the elements of the physical tabernacle (temple) were "**a figure** [the word for *parable*] **for the time then present**" (**Hebrews 9:9; cf. 9:1-14**), which was the time of the Old Covenant law. All of this typified and pictured the great Gospel truths of substitution, imputation, satisfaction, and reconciliation, all by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness alone.

The point is made that the physical nation Israel in many ways (not in all ways) typified and foreshadowed the true church (God's elect both Jew and Gentile, SPIRITUAL Israel). The church did not replace Israel. The church is the fulfillment of what God had intended from the beginning and what physical Israel typified from its formation to its final end in A.D. 70.

There are many, many other types found in the Bible. I have already mentioned one of the most important – the Passover lamb. It was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ (the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world) (**John 1:29**), which is God's people out of every nation who are at some time born again by the Spirit and brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many things about a physical lamb that cannot be said of the Lord as the Lamb of God. The fact that the blood of animals could never take away sins (**Hebrews 10:4**) is one of the most obvious. The apostle Paul wrote that "**Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us**" (**1 Corinthians 5:7**). The Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God is described in type in many ways by the Passover lamb as recorded in **Exodus 12**. Consider the following –

(1) The lamb had to be without blemish. This signifies the absolute perfection and sinlessness of the Lord Jesus (**Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21a; 1 Peter 1:18-19**). In order to be a qualified sacrifice for His people, the Lord Jesus Christ had to live a perfect life without any contamination of sin. In order to make reconciliation for the sins of His people, He could have no sin of His own – "**The sacrifice shall be perfect to be accepted**" (**Leviticus 22:21**). The only way that the Lord was "**made to be sin**" (**2 Corinthians 5:21**) was by the imputation (charging, accounting) of the debt of the sins of God's elect to Him.

(2) The lamb was to be taken out from the sheep. Christ was taken from among men. He was the seed of woman, the seed of Abraham, and made of the seed of David according to the flesh (**Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 2:14-16; Romans 1:3**).

(3) The lamb was to be a year old and was to be killed. The Lord was put to death in the prime of His physical life here on earth.

(4) The lamb was to be roasted with fire typifying the sufferings unto death as Christ went through the consuming fire of God's wrath for the sins of His people imputed to Him.

(5) The lamb was to be roasted whole and not a bone was to be broken, as the Scriptures declare of Christ (**John 19:36**).

(6) The blood of the lamb had to be sprinkled upon the lintel and the sides of the doors of the houses of the Hebrews, just as the blood of Christ is applied to the heart (the conscience) of God's elect as the Holy Spirit brings them to faith in Christ (**Hebrews 10:19-22**).

(7) The Israelites were to eat the flesh of the lamb signifying how that by God-given faith, all the true children of God feed upon Christ for their life and well-being (**John 6:55-58**).

(8) The Israelites were commanded by God to eat the lamb with unleavened bread. Leaven was a type or symbol of sin. This signified that all who come to Christ, the true Passover, are to come in repentance of sin (repentance of dead works and idolatry). Christ alone (His righteousness alone, His blood alone, without any mixture of sin and/or the works of men) saves from sin.

(9) The Israelites were to eat the lamb with bitter herbs, which symbolized Godly sorrow over sin and the continual repentance in the hearts of God's true children.

(10) The Israelites were to eat the Passover dressed and ready to move out of Egypt. This shows how the Lord's Passover (Christ) effectually saves and separates the true people of God from the world. The world (symbolized by Egypt) is no longer the home of God's people. They are citizens of the heavenly kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Philippians 3:20**).

(11) God said, "**When I see the blood, I will pass over you**" (**Exodus 12:13**). It is the blood of Jesus Christ which satisfies God's justice for the



sins of His people. Righteousness was established by the shed blood of the true Lamb, and God's wrath cannot come upon His people. They cannot be charged with their sins, because their sins were charged to Christ. All who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ have His righteousness imputed to them **(Romans 8:1,31-34)**.

I certainly cannot list all the types found in the Bible, but the following are just a few more examples:

- Adam is a contrasting type of Christ **(Romans 5:18-19)**. Adam was the representative head of the whole human race. When he fell by disobeying God, the whole human family fell into sin and death **(Romans 5:12)**. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Representative Head of the whole election of grace (God's chosen people). When He obeyed God's law unto death, He brought in righteousness by which His whole spiritual family was justified before God and from which they are all given spiritual and eternal life **(Romans 5:18-21)**.
- The coats of skin God made for Adam and Eve to replace their self-made fig-leaf aprons is a type of the imputed righteousness of Christ which came out of His death on the cross as the Surety and Substitute of His people **(Genesis 3:21)**.
- Noah's ark **(Genesis 6)** is a type of Christ. As Noah's ark took the rain of the punishment of God's wrath while Noah and his family were safe inside, Christ (the Ark of His people) took the full punishment of God's wrath for the sins of His people while they were (and are) safe in Him. As Noah's ark was the salvation of his family, Christ is the salvation of His family.
- The brazen serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness through which the people found physical healing **(Numbers 21:8)** is a type of Christ lifted up to die for His people **(John 3:14; 12:32)**, and through whom salvation and spiritual healing comes **(Isaiah 53:5)**.
- The manna from heaven that God caused to fall in the wilderness to feed the Hebrews **(Exodus 16:14-16)** is a type of Christ who came from heaven to be the spiritual Bread (life) for His people **(John 6:32-35)**.

- The Sabbath day in which the Israelites were to rest from their physical labors is a type of the true believer's eternal rest in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ who finished the work of salvation for them (**Hebrews 4:1-11**). Christ is the believer's Sabbath.
- The cities of refuge recorded in **Numbers 35** are all types of Christ who is the sinner's only refuge from God's justice and wrath against sin.

These are just a few more examples we find in God's Word covered under the rule of typology. Without understanding these and many other types in the Bible we cannot interpret its message correctly. The types are so meaningful for a right understanding of Scripture. They are more than illustrations because a type is always recognized as such in the New Testament. Consider the rock that followed Israel through the wilderness from where they got water (**Exodus 17:6**).

***1 Corinthians 10 – (4) And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.***

Consider that in **Numbers 20:8-11** when God told Moses to SPEAK to the rock and receive water for the people, Moses was angry with the people for their unbelief and murmuring. He struck the rock instead of speaking to it as the Lord commanded. What was the problem? Moses corrupted the type. The rock had already been struck ONCE by Moses. This typified the one-time suffering unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of His people. Christ only had to be struck by the wrath of God ONCE –

***Hebrews 10 – (14) For by ONE offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.***

In striking the rock again, Moses misrepresented the Gospel message of Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Later on we see that even though Moses and Aaron were personally sinners saved by grace and

believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, they were not allowed by God to enter the Promised Land because Moses struck the rock twice –

***Numbers 20 – (12) And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.***

Another reason Moses personally could not take the children of Israel into the Promised Land is that Moses was a type of the law. The law cannot save sinners or bring them into the spiritual bliss of salvation –

***Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

Joshua who is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ was the one appointed by God to take the children of Israel into the Promised Land. The name *Joshua* in Hebrew has the same meaning as the name *Jesus* in Greek – salvation or savior. Joshua was so called because he was eminently destined and raised up to deliver Israel and to conquer their enemies. What Joshua was to the physical nation in a physical way typified what the Lord Jesus Christ is to His spiritual Israel in a spiritual, eternal way. One can read the Bible and find many, many correlations between an Old Testament story and the life of Christ as well as salvation freely provided in and by Him for His people. But true typology is determined explicitly by Scripture itself. God the Holy Spirit inspired the use of types, and these are so clear that one cannot reasonably deny them.