

# How to Read Your Bible

**BRIDGEWAY**  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



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Roseville, CA 95678

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## Episode 1

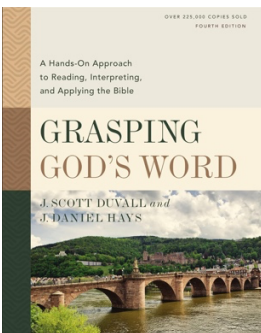
# Introduction

### Key Idea

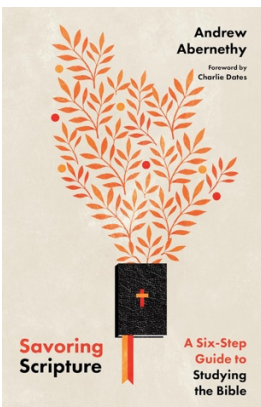
Practically anyone with a helping of patience and love for Scripture can study the Bible.

## KEY RESOURCES

### Textbooks



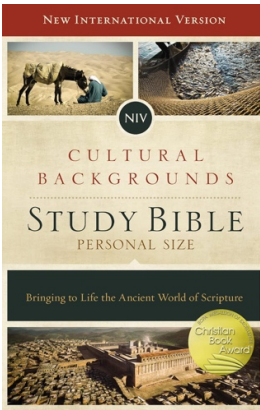
Duvall, J. Scott, and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020.



Abernethy, Andrew. *Savoring Scripture: A Six-Step Guide to Studying the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022.



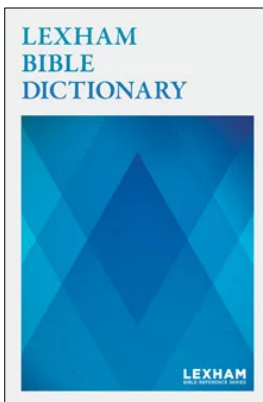
## Study Bible



Keener, Craig S., and John H. Walton, eds.  
*Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: NIV*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2016.



## Bible Dictionary



Barry, John D., David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder, eds. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.



## Digital Bible



STEP Bible. Tyndale House, Cambridge, UK.  
[www.stepbible.org](http://www.stepbible.org)



# **Module 1**

## **Reading the Bible**



## *Episode 2*

# What is the Bible?

### **Key Idea**

What a person thinks the Bible is (and is not) and does (and does not do) will influence how they read the Bible.

### **DEFINING THE BIBLE**

#### **Reflect: How do I define the Bible?**

*Answer the prompt: "The Bible is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_."*

The Bible is ...

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Because ...

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## **A Working Definition**

The following definitions, while not intended to be exhaustive, will serve as our guide for how we will approach reading the Bible in this course.

- **Materially**, the Bible is an anthology of different types of texts.
- **Historically**, the Bible is the writings of ancient Israel and Judah and the early Jewish followers of Jesus of Nazareth.
- **Culturally**, the Bible is written from ancient Middle Eastern, Jewish, and Greco-Roman perspectives and concerns.
- **Religiously**, the Bible—Old and New Testaments—is the sacred text of Christianity.
- **Spiritually**, the Bible is the complete and divinely inspired testimony to (1) the history of God’s intervention in human affairs, centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and (2) the revelation of God’s will for humanity. It is trustworthy in all that it affirms.

## WHICH BIBLE?

<p><b>Torah</b></p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>	<p><b>Nevi'im ("Prophets")</b></p> <p><b>1. Former Prophets</b> Joshua Judges Samuel Kings</p> <p><b>2. Latter Prophets</b> Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel</p> <p><b>3. The Book of the Twelve</b> Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah</p>	<p><b>Ketuvim ("Writings")</b></p> <p><b>1. Poetic Books</b> Psalms 1-150 Job Proverbs</p> <p><b>2. The Five Scrolls</b> Ruth Song of Songs Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) Lamentations Esther</p> <p><b>3. The Book of the Twelve</b> Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles</p>
<p><b>Hebrew Bible (aka TaNaK)</b></p>		

**Septuagint.** Biblical texts written in Hebrew were translated into Greek from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. Together, these Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible are usually referred to as the Septuagint.

<p><b>PENTATEUCH</b></p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>	<p><b>HISTORICAL BOOKS</b></p> <p>Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings</p> <p>1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah <b>Tobit*</b> <b>Judith*</b> <b>Esther+</b> <b>1 Maccabees*</b> <b>2 Maccabees*</b></p>	<p><b>WISDOM &amp; POETIC BOOKS</b></p> <p>Job Psalms 1-150 Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs <b>Wisdom (of Solomon)*</b> <b>Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)*</b></p>
<p><b>CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT</b></p> <p><small>*Apocryphal books +Includes additional chapters found in the Septuagint</small></p>	<p><b>MAJOR PROPHETS</b></p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations <b>Baruch*</b></p> <p>Ezekiel <b>Daniel+</b></p>	<p><b>MINOR PROPHETS</b></p> <p>Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah</p> <p>Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk</p> <p>Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p>

<p><b>PENTATEUCH</b></p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>	<p><b>HISTORICAL BOOKS</b></p> <p>Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings</p> <p>1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah</p>	<p><b>WISDOM &amp; POETIC BOOKS</b></p> <p>Job Psalms 1-150 Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs</p>
<p><b>PROTESTANT OLD TESTAMENT</b></p>	<p><b>MAJOR PROPHETS</b></p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations</p> <p>Ezekiel Daniel</p>	<p><b>MINOR PROPHETS</b></p> <p>Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah</p> <p>Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk</p> <p>Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p>

<p><b>GOSPELS</b></p> <p><b>Synoptics</b> Matthew Mark Luke</p> <p><b>Fourth Gospel</b> John</p>	<p><b>NARRATIVE</b></p> <p>Acts</p>	<p><b>PAULINE LETTERS</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="716 1121 1031 1446"> <p><b>Letters to Communities</b></p> <p>Romans 1-2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1-2 Thessalonians</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1031 1121 1435 1446"> <p><b>Letters to Individuals</b></p> <p>1-2 Timothy Titus Philemon</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p><b>Letters to Communities</b></p> <p>Romans 1-2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1-2 Thessalonians</p>	<p><b>Letters to Individuals</b></p> <p>1-2 Timothy Titus Philemon</p>
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<p><b>NEW TESTAMENT</b></p>	<p><b>ADDITIONAL LETTERS</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="446 1545 673 1705"> <p><b>Anonymous</b></p> <p>Hebrews</p> </td> <td data-bbox="673 1545 1031 1705"> <p><b>Catholic Letters</b></p> <p>James 1-2 Peter</p> <p>1-3 John Jude</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p><b>Anonymous</b></p> <p>Hebrews</p>	<p><b>Catholic Letters</b></p> <p>James 1-2 Peter</p> <p>1-3 John Jude</p>	<p><b>APOCALYPTIC</b></p> <p>Revelation</p>
<p><b>Anonymous</b></p> <p>Hebrews</p>	<p><b>Catholic Letters</b></p> <p>James 1-2 Peter</p> <p>1-3 John Jude</p>				

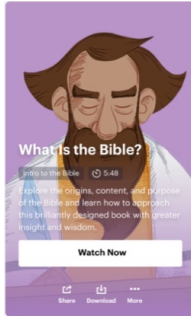
# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



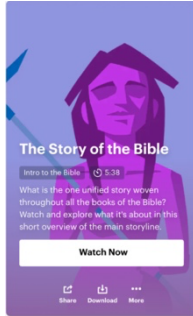
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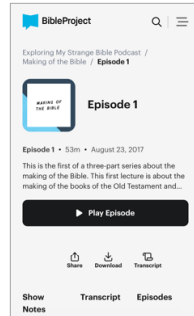
LISTEN



What is the Bible?



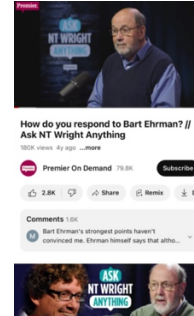
The Story of the Bible



Making of the Bible



WATCH



Trust NT Manuscripts?





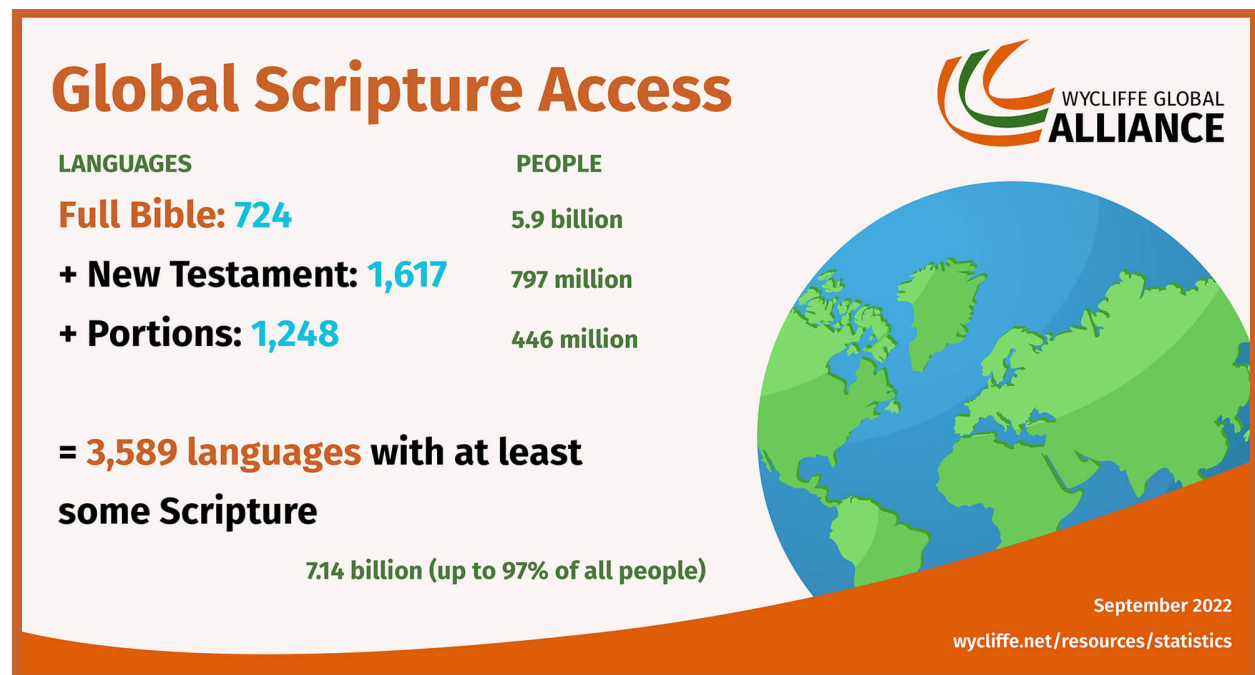
## Episode 3

# Which Translation?

### Key Idea

There are many good Bible translations. Choose a reliable translation you can understand and that fits the task.

### THE BIBLE AROUND THE WORLD



## A Truly Very Brief History of Bible Translation

- Greek Septuagint/LXX (3rd–1st centuries BC)
- Latin Vulgate (AD 383–405)
- *Wycliffe Bible* (1380s)
- William Tyndale’s New Testament (1526/1534) and Pentateuch (1530)
- *Great Bible* (1539)
- *Geneva Bible* (1560)
- *Bishops’ Bible* (1568)
- *Douai-Rheims Bible* (1593)
- *Authorized Version*, aka KJV (1611)
- Revised KJV (1769)

## WHAT DOES TRANSLATION INVOLVE ANYWAY?

### Reflect: How do I think translation works?

*By yourself, identify the purpose, factors, and potential pitfalls of translating from one language to another. Then discuss your answers with a friend or group.*

Purpose:

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Factors:

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Pitfalls:

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## The Goal of Translation

“...reproducing the \_\_\_\_\_ of a [verbal communication] that is in one language (the source language), as fully as possible, in another language (the receptor language).”

—Mark Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998, 77, as quoted in Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 16

## Consider *Meaning* in the *Form* of Alphabetic Acrostics in the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew alphabet is 22 letters long, from aleph (א) to tav (ת). A basic alphabetic acrostic begins each verse with the next letter of the alphabet—22 letters, 22 verses.

### *Psalm 119 (aka “The Great Psalm”)*

<b>Aleph</b>	א	1	<b>Blessed (’ashrey)</b> are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!
<b>Bet</b>	ב	9	<b>How (bammeh)</b> can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.
<b>Gimmel</b>	ג	17	<b>Deal bountifully (g<sup>e</sup>mol)</b> with your servant, that I may live and keep your word.
<b>Dalet</b>	ד	25	<b>My soul clings (dab<sup>e</sup>qah)</b> to the dust; give me life according to your word!
<b>Hey</b>	ה	33	<b>Teach me (horeyniy)</b> , O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.
<b>Waw</b>	ו	41	<b>Let</b> your steadfast love <b>come to me (wiybo’uniy)</b> , O LORD, your salvation according to your promise;
<b>Zayin</b>	ז	49	<b>Remember (z<sup>e</sup>kor)</b> your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.

### *Lamentations (a response to the destruction of Jerusalem)*

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Aleph (א) – Tav (ת)	Aleph (א) – Tav (ת)	Aleph (א) – Tav (ת)	Aleph (א) – Tav (ת)	
22 verses	22 verses	66 verses	22 verses	22 verses
1 verse / letter	1 verse / letter	3 verses / letter	1 verse / letter	random order

## **The Translator's Challenge**

When a translator must decide between rendering form or the meaning of the text, Duvall and Hays lay out the principle that determines the way forward:

“The form of the original language is important, but form should not have priority over \_\_\_\_\_. What is most important is that the contemporary reader understands the meaning of the original text. When a translator can reproduce the meaning while preserving form, all the better.”

—Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 16

## **Key Point About Translation**

Translation is an act of \_\_\_\_\_.

## **TWO MAIN APPROACHES TO BIBLE TRANSLATION**

Generally, English versions fall somewhere on a scale between two translation approaches.

### **More Formal Translation Approach**

- Characterized by a keen responsibility to reproduce the words and language patterns of the source text.
- Characterized by a lesser concern for how well the translation sounds in the target language.

### **More Functional Translation Approach**

- Aims to convey the meaning of the original by reproducing a similar effect on the target audience as the original would have had on an original audience.

## CHOOSING A TRANSLATION

No worthwhile translation will be purely formal or purely functional, but a blend of both on a matter of degree.

**More  
Formal**

**More  
Functional**

KJV NASB RSV NRSV NAB NIV NJB NCV GNB The Message  
ASV NKJV HCSB NET TNIV REB NLT CEV  
ESV

See Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, page 17.

### Four Tips for Choosing a Translation

1. Choose a translation that uses \_\_\_\_\_ English.
2. Choose a translation based on the standard \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ texts.
  - For the Old Testament: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)*.
  - For the New Testament: United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament (GNT)* or Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*.
3. Prefer a translation by \_\_\_\_\_ over one by a single translator.
4. Choose a translation that \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_.

## **GIVE IT A TRY**

### **Form and Meaning in Song of Songs 2:12**

*Spend some time by yourself noting differences in how the following English versions have translated and **formatted** Song 2:12. What wording (concepts) and formatting differences stand out to you? What might the differences tell you about how each translation is interpreting the verse? Feel free to markup the texts and/or write your observations and questions in the open space.*

#### **New Living Translation (NLT, 1996)**

The flowers are springing up, and the time of singing birds has come, even the cooing of turtledoves.

#### **English Standard Version (ESV)**

The flowers appear on the earth,  
the time of singing<sup>4</sup> has come,  
and the voice of the turtledove  
is heard in our land.

#### **New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995)**

'The flowers have already appeared in the land;  
The time has arrived for <sup>a</sup>pruning the vines,  
And the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land.

#### **Lexham English Bible (LEB)**

The blossoms appear in the land;  
the time of singing<sup>s</sup> has arrived;  
the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

## ***Episode 4***

# **Our Posture as Bible Readers**

### **Key Idea**

We must be *diligent students* of the Word so that we may be *faithful doers* of the Word. Our minds and hearts matter for faithful Bible study.

## **OUR POSTURE**

### **The Posture We Need**

The process of reading the Bible well can come to feel like pure “head work” rather than “heart work” if we lose sight of Scripture as a place where we may encounter God.

“... entry into the Bible demands a particular posture of mind and heart. When we read the Bible with the right posture, the odds of meeting with God and hearing his voice increases.”

—Abernethy, *Savoring Scripture*, 2

A posture of \_\_\_\_\_ can position us to hear God through Scripture.

### **Childlikeness and Jesus**

Jesus applauded the lowly and marginalized for their openness to the things of God:

“At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.’” (Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21)

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 18:3; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:17)

### **Childlikeness and the Apostle Paul**

Paul disciples Timothy, Titus, and Onesimus in the faith:

#### **Timothy**

“my true child in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2)

“my child” (1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:1)

“my beloved child” (2 Tim 1:2)

#### **Titus**

“my true child in a common faith” (Titus 1:4)

#### **Onesimus**

“my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment” (Philemon 10)

### **Reflect: What do I think makes for a posture of childlikeness?**

*Spend some time by yourself contemplating one of the following questions, then discuss your thoughts with someone else or with your group.*

What does it take to cultivate a spirit of childlikeness?

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What does it reveal about God’s character that he delights in revealing himself to “little children”?

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What causes a posture of suspicion when it comes to the Bible?

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What difference would having a posture of trust make when reading the Bible?

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#### **Four Attributes of Childlikeness**

A diligent student of Scripture is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ like a child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ like a child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ like a child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on family like a child.



# **Module 2**

## **Reading Ourselves**



## Episode 5

# The Reader as Interpreter

### Key Idea

A self-aware reader is better positioned to hear the Bible on its own term.

### THE READER AS INTERPRETER

The reader stands in **indirect** communication with an author because the author's message is mediated by a text.



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Figure 5.1 Relationship between author and audience

### The Author's Role

For the author's part, effective communication will depend on such factors as:

- the author's language skills,
- how clear the author wants to be,
- who the author assumes the audience will be,
- and how much information the author expects the audience will need.

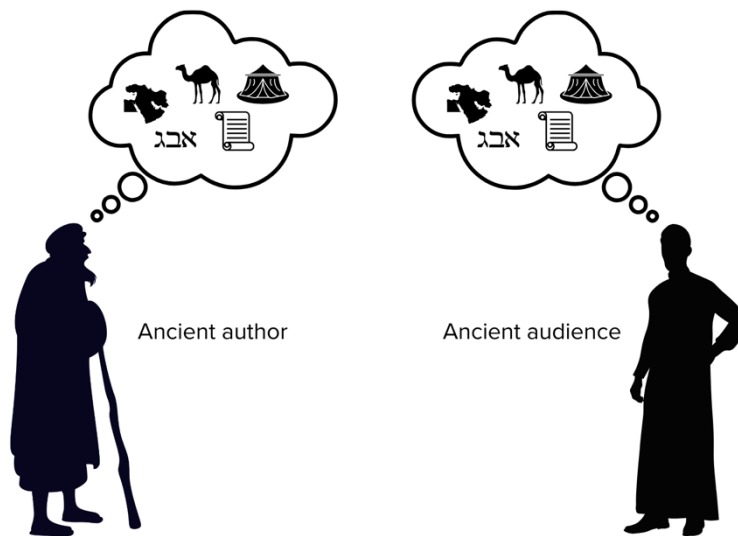
## The Reader's Role

A reader's ability to comprehend an author's meaning also depends on many factors, such as:

- the reader's proficiency in the author's language,
- how much cultural overlap the reader shares with the author,
- how well the reader can relate to or understand the author's perspective,
- and how well the reader knows the author.

## Shared Knowledge

The amount of knowledge and background a reader shares with an author will determine how well the reader will interpret the author.



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Figure 5.2 Author and reader with shared knowledge sets

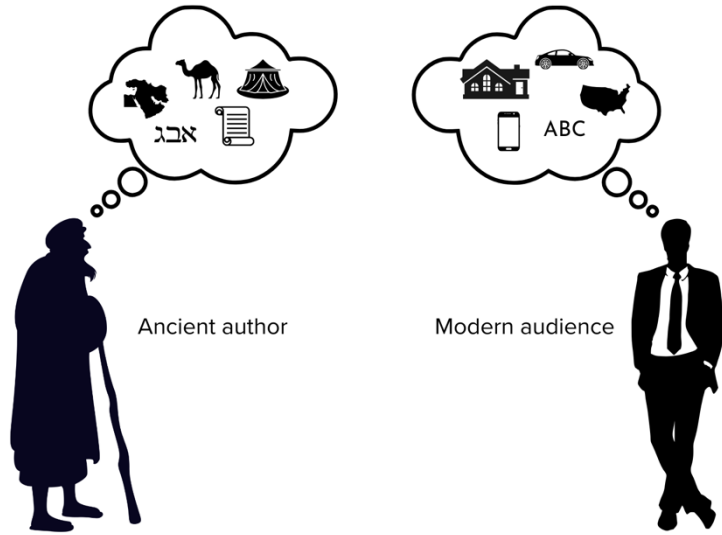


Figure 5.3 Author and reader with different knowledge sets

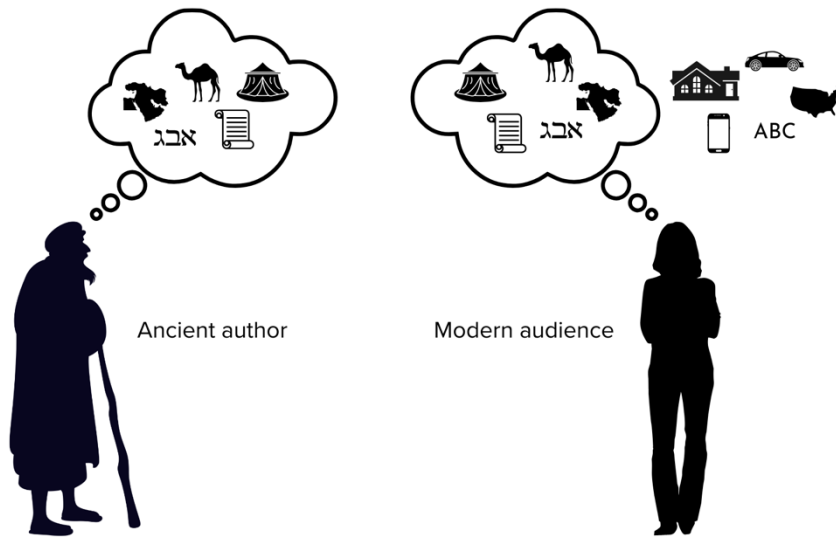


Figure 5.4 Reader retrieving author's perspective

## THE SELF-AWARE READER

The dynamics at work in the practice of reading also apply, and we might even say are amplified, when we read the Bible.

### The Value of Self-Awareness

*Isaiah 40:31 KJV*

But they that **wait** upon the LORD shall renew their strength;  
They shall mount up with wings as eagles;  
They shall run, and not be weary;  
And they shall walk, and not faint.



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Figure 5.5 The meaning of “wait” in Isaiah 40:31

### Reflect: Who am I?

*List at least ten specific factors, attributes, experiences about yourself that might influence the way you interpret the Bible. Spend some time sharing your list, as you feel comfortable, with someone else or with your group.*

1. Nationality/Race/Ethnicity:
2. Age/Generation:
3. Gender:
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

## Episode 6

# Who Controls the Meaning

### Key Idea

The meaning of a biblical passage is found in the message the biblical writer intended to communicate and how they intended to communicate it.

## TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

### Who Controls the Meaning?

- Author: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_
- Reader: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ or death of the author

What do we do with the meaning question? How do we decide who controls meaning?

- \_\_\_\_\_ is key

“We do not create the meaning. Rather we seek to discover the meaning that has been placed there by the author.”

—Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 197

### Divine Authorial Intent

Because God inspired the human biblical authors in the composition of Scripture, we affirm that the human biblical author’s intent is \_\_\_\_\_ in God’s authorial intent.

## TYPES OF MEANING

### Inner-Biblical Interpretation / Scripture Interpreting Scripture

*Old Testament interprets the Old Testament: Daniel interprets Jeremiah:*

#### **Jeremiah 25:11-12**

<sup>11</sup>This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. <sup>12</sup>Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

#### **Daniel 9:1-2**

<sup>1</sup>In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— <sup>2</sup>in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

*New Testament interprets the Old Testament: Matthew interprets Isaiah's prophecy:*

#### **Isaiah 7:14-16 NRSV**

<sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the 'almah is<sup>1</sup> with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup> He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup> For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Historical background:

- Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel plan to team up and attack the nation of Judah.
- Judah is led by King Ahaz.
- Isaiah is speaking to Ahaz about the two kings, Rezin and Pekah.
- The 'almah is a young woman living in Judah, and Ahaz likely knows her.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew wording suggests the 'almah is already pregnant. Many English versions interpret the pregnancy as a future event, but the NRSV seems to reflect the Hebrew more accurately.

Linguistic background:

- The Hebrew word *‘almah* refers to an adolescent girl or young woman who has yet to become a mother.
- *‘almah* can be applied to a virgin teenage girl still living with her parents or a young married woman who is pregnant.
- The related abstract words *‘alumim* and *‘almanut* describe a barren rejected wife in Isaiah 54:4. Barrenness was not for lack of trying; couples consummated their marriages.

***Septuagint translates/interprets Isaiah 7:14 into Greek (LES, 2nd edition)***

Because of this, the Lord himself will give you a sign: Look, the **parthenos** will conceive in the womb and will bear a son, and you will call his name Immanuel.

Linguistic background:

- The Classical Greek word *parthenos* can refer to a virgin, but not always.
- The Septuagint translator of Isaiah is known to be imprecise.
- A few centuries later, the New Testament uses *parthenos* to mean “virgin.”

***Matthew 1:20–25 (ESV) quotes the Greek Septuagint to interpret Isaiah***

<sup>20</sup> ... behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> ‘Behold, the **parthenos** shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel!’

(which means, God with us). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Linguistic background:

- A few centuries after the Septuagint, the New Testament uses *parthenos* exclusively to mean “virgin.”

## **Allegorical or Symbolic Meaning**

Finds symbolic meaning in people, things, places, actions, events, etc., in addition to the literal meaning of the words of a biblical author.

### ***Philo of Alexandria allegorizes Sarah and Hagar from the book of Genesis***

1 (Gen. 16:5) Why does Sarah, as it were, repent, saying to Abraham, “I am  
2 wronged by thee. I have given my maidservant into thy bosom, but seeing  
3 that she is pregnant, I have been dishonoured before her”?

4 This statement contains doubt and indecision. And it is clear that the  
5 “since” is the same as “the time when I gave my maidservant.” And the other  
6 statement refers to a person, that is, when she says, “By thee I am wronged.”

7 For this is a reproach. And it is proper (for Scripture) to keep the good,  
8 worthy, truthful and unforgetting husband from blame and accusation and  
9 always to present him with all honour, calling him “lord.” But the first  
10 statement is true, for since the time when she gave (him) her maidservant  
11 and made her his concubine, she seemed to be disesteemed and

**12 dishonoured. That is the literal meaning. But as for the deeper meaning,  
13 when someone gives (to another) the maidservant of wisdom, the latter,  
14 being ignorant and through sophistic reasoning, dishonours the mistress.**

15 For when he receives and delights in the splendour of the school studies,  
16 since each of them is very attractive and seductive and, as it were, has the  
17 power of forcibly drawing (others) to itself, he is from then on no longer able  
18 to find time to unite with the mistress either in respect of enjoying the  
19 image of wisdom or her wonderful appearance until that cutter of things, the  
20 divine Logos, supervenes and separates, divides and cuts off the probable  
21 from the true, and the means from the ends, and secondary things from  
22 those ranged in the first rank. Wherefore she says later, “God will judge  
23 between me and thee.”

(Loeb Classical Library, 1:210–211, III 23)

## **Typological Meaning**

Appreciates the literal meaning of the text, but also observes that the literal point of reference in the Old Testament serves as a *type* that points beyond itself to a later referent in the New Testament:

“a biblical event, person or institution which serves as an example or pattern for other events, persons or institutions.”

—Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 222

## **Literal Meaning**

The text says what it says, and means no more.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, **and the sea was no more.** (Revelation 21:1)

*Q: A strictly literal interpretation concludes that bodies of water will be absent in the new earth. Is that what this passage intends to communicate?*

## **Which Meaning?**

The Bible attests to allegorical, typological, and literal meanings, and we should follow the clues of the biblical text to detect which meaning(s) are present.

## **Literary Meaning**

The biblical authors were well versed in literary and rhetorical devices, and they drew upon their own cultural contexts to speak to the people, situations, and institutions of their own day.

## THINK ABOUT THIS

### Reflect: Authorial Intention vs Reader Response

Answer the following prompts on your own. If you're with someone else or with your group, share your thoughts.

How would you explain to a child the difference between *authorial intention* and *reader response*?

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What results would you expect when reading the Bible according to either approach?

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In what situation(s) might a reader change an author's intended meaning?

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Is there a place to practice both approaches to reading the Bible? Why?

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## GIVE IT A TRY

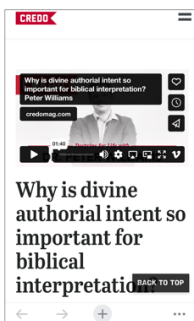
How active is your imagination? If you can come up with a far-fetched, “superspiritual” allegorical interpretation of 2 Kings 2:23-24, you just might be an ancient interpreter!

<sup>23</sup> He [Elisha] went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!” <sup>24</sup> And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



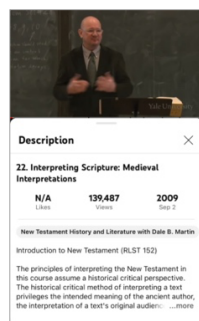
WATCH



Divine authorial intent



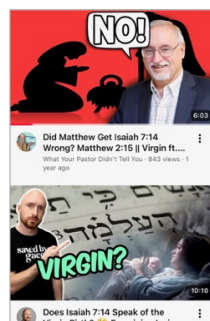
WATCH



Medieval Interpretation



WATCH



Matthew and Isaiah 7:14





## *Episode 7*

# The Role of the Holy Spirit

### **Key Idea**

We study the meaning of the text; the Holy Spirit brings the meaning to bear on our lives.

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT'S RELATIONSHIP TO SCRIPTURE**

#### **Reflect: Spirit and Scripture**

*How do you understand the Holy Spirit's relationship to Scripture? Record your answer. If you're with someone or with your group, share your thoughts.*

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With help from the Apostle Paul, we can view the Holy Spirit's relationship to Scripture as a two-fold dynamic. First, Paul tells Timothy that:

All Scripture is breathed out by God (*theopneustos*) ... (2 Tim 3:16a)

Second, Paul continues his statement to Timothy, affirming that all Scripture is:

... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16b-17)

Jesus's testimony about the Holy Spirit's role in changing hearts and affirming truth:

<sup>8</sup> And when he [the Helper/Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment ... <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. (John 16:8, 13)

The Spirit does not necessarily distance himself from our brains:

*"Some [Christian scholars] thus suggest that, ultimately, illumination's object may be less about enabling grammatical exegesis of the sort we are already capable of doing on our own, and instead about enabling us to recognize the text's demands for us and to embrace the text's message in faith... Still, the Spirit can be active even on the level of exegesis, most often through the clear functioning of our cognitive faculties in exploring and embracing the text."*

—Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, Introduction

### **SPIRIT-EMPOWERED INTERPRETATION**

Duvall and Hays list what we can expect the Spirit to do and not do when we interpret the Bible.

- ✗ The Spirit does not make valid interpretation \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ The Spirit does expect us to use our \_\_\_\_\_, proper interpretive methods, and good study resources to interpret the Bible accurately.
  
- ✗ The Spirit does not create new \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ The Spirit does help us to grasp the theological \_\_\_\_\_ of God's word.
  
- ✗ The Spirit does not \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible to suit our purposes or match our circumstances.
- ✓ The Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ the meaning of the Bible to bear on the reader.

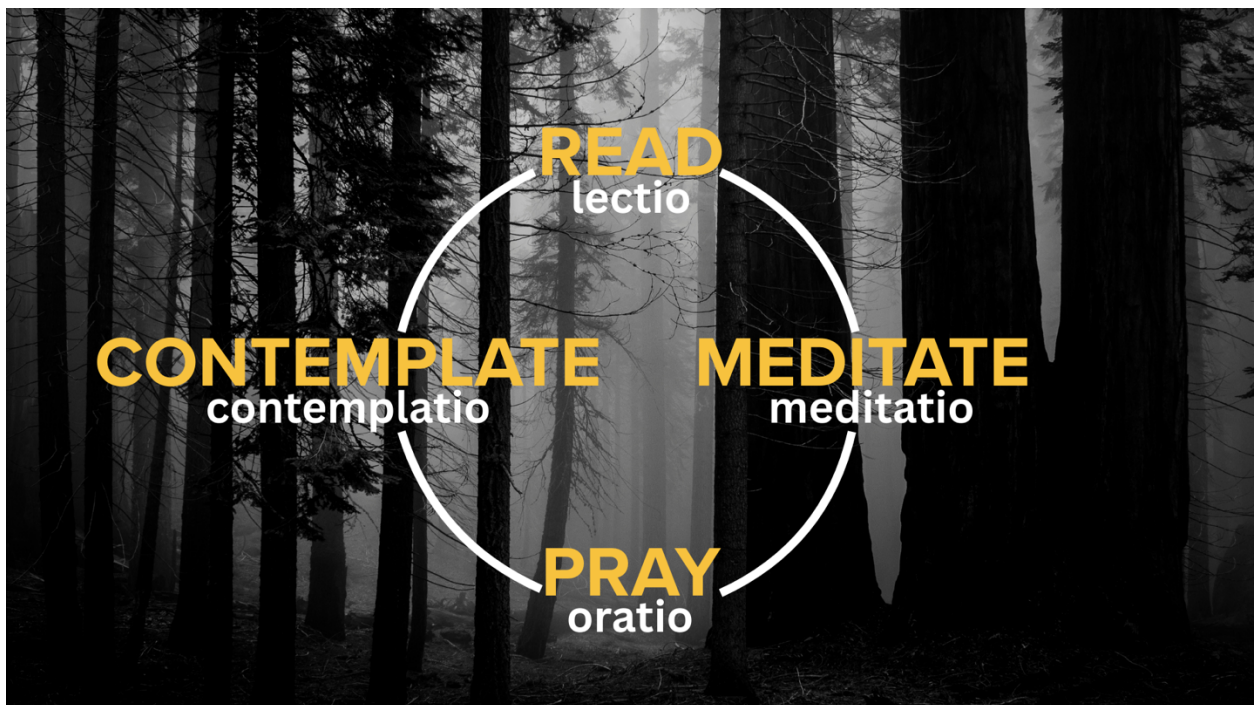
## The Holy Spirit in the Community of Believers

You never know what the Spirit has in store for you and through you when happens around God's Word!

### SPIRIT-LED READING

#### Lectio Divina

Devotional reading of Scripture, where we savor God's Word, is just as vital to our spiritual formation.



“*Lectio divina* brings us to the heart of Bible reading: prayerful (*oratio*) study (*lectio*) that seeps (*meditatio*) into our heart and draws us into communion with God (*contemplatio*).”

—Abernethy, *Savoring Scripture*, 124

Integrating studious and devotional readings of Scripture:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (*oratio*) the Spirit to illuminate, personalize, and empower your reading.
2. Carefully \_\_\_\_\_ (*lectio*) the biblical passage for the biblical author's intended meaning, with an eye for details in the passage and an ear for the author's intended response by the reader/hearer.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (*meditatio*) on the passage's meaning and \_\_\_\_\_ (*contemplatio*) with the Spirit as he helps you see how you can faithfully respond to Scripture.
4. Following the Holy Spirit's lead, go and \_\_\_\_\_ your faithful response.

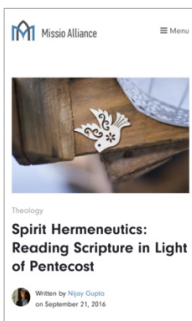
## GIVE IT A TRY

If you've never tried *lectio divina*, then give it a test drive on Psalm 23. Check out the 24-7 Prayer vids at the QR code below for an excellent entry into this spiritual discipline.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



READ



Nijay Gupta reviews  
*Spirit Hermeneutics*



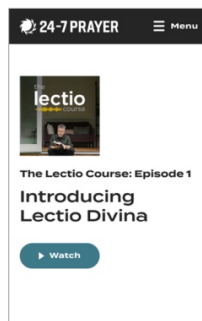
READ



Role of the Holy Spirit



WATCH



Lectio Divina



# **Module 3**

## **Reading the Text**



## Episode 8

# Reading the Text

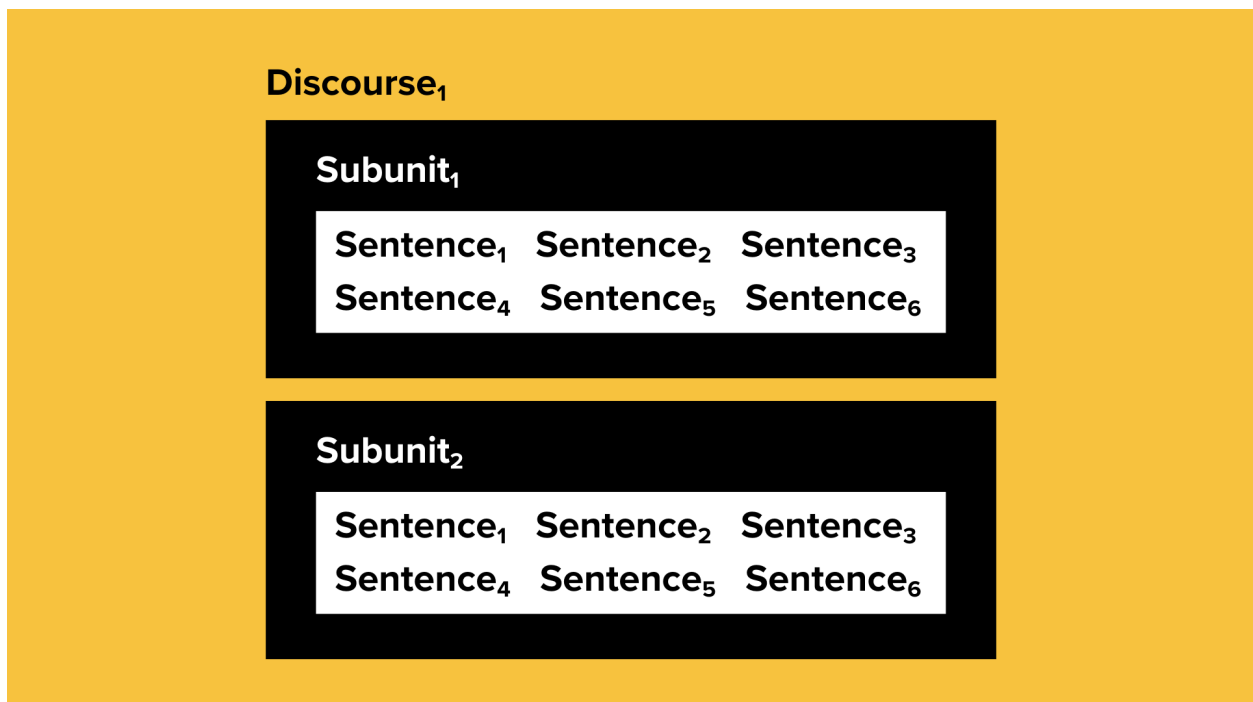
### Key Idea

Reading closely means slowing down to notice the details and asking questions.

### FLOW & CONTEXT

#### Anatomy of a Text

We can stave off much confusion and misunderstanding by discerning different levels of textual organization. Let's work with three levels of how a text is organized:



## Attention to Detail

We can detect a biblical author's interests and flow of thought by observing details and patterns in a text.

### **Genesis 22:1–14**

<sup>1</sup> After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup> He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of **Moriah**, and offer him there as **a burnt offering on one of the mountains** of which I shall tell you." <sup>3</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham lifted up his **eyes** and **saw (r'h)** **the place** from afar. <sup>5</sup> Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." <sup>6</sup> And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. <sup>7</sup> And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is **the lamb for a burnt offering**?" <sup>8</sup> Abraham said, "God will **provide (r'h)** for himself **the lamb for a burnt offering**, my son." So they went both of them together. <sup>9</sup> When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>12</sup> He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." <sup>13</sup> And Abraham lifted up his **eyes** and **looked (r'h)**, and behold, **behind him was a ram**, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took **the ram** and offered it up as **a burnt offering** instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called the name of **that place**, "The LORD will **provide (r'h)**"; as it is said to this day, "**On the mount of the LORD** it shall be **provided (r'h)**."

## THE SENTENCE

### Ten Points of Sentence Observation:

1. **Repetition** of words
2. **Contrasts** between words, characters, actions, etc.
3. **Comparisons** between words, characters, actions, etc.
4. **Lists** of three or more items
5. **Cause** and **Effect**
6. **Figures of Speech**, such as metaphor and hyperbole
7. **Conjunctions** (e.g., *and*, *but*, *or*) that signal how ideas connect to each other
8. **Verbs**, which express active/passive, past/present/ongoing/future action or states of being
9. **Pronouns** that identify who is doing what to whom
10. **Attraction** between ideas, concepts, activities, etc.<sup>2</sup>

### Close Reading Ephesians 2:4

#### Reading Ephesians 2:4 (ESV)



**But God, being rich in mercy, because of  
the great love with which he loved us,**

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<sup>2</sup> Duvall and Hays provide nine points; this tenth point has been added.

## THE SUBUNIT

### The Boundaries of a Text

Most subunits or paragraphs will have a relatively clear beginning and end, and sometimes a biblical author will use ancient literary devices that explicitly signal the boundaries of a subunit.

#### ***Inclusio* in Psalm 150**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD!

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!

<sup>2</sup> Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

<sup>3</sup> Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

<sup>4</sup> Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

<sup>5</sup> Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

<sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD!

**Ten Points of Subunit Observation** that can help guide our observation process:

1. **General to specific and specific to general** statements that sum up or specify
2. **Questions and answers**
3. **Dialogue**
4. **Means:** indicates that something was done *by means of* someone/something
5. **Purpose/result statements:** indicates *why* something was/is/will be done
6. **Conditional clauses:** note if a condition is placed on an outcome
7. **Actions/roles of people:** note how the text characterizes people by what they do or should do
8. **Actions/roles of God:** note how the text characterizes God
9. **Emotional terms**
10. **Tone:** note the tenor and mood of a passage

## Andrew Abernethy's 7-Step Reading Strategy

1. **Identify** the beginning and end of the passage
2. **Read** the passage at least 5 times, slowly
3. **Mark off** units of thought
4. **Mark up** repeated or related ideas and terms
5. **Write a title** for each subunit
6. **Reread** the passage slowly
7. **Write a summary** sentence of the entire passage

## THE DISCOURSE

For our purposes, *discourse* refers to a span of text that encompasses two or more subunits.

### Creative Arrangement of Discourse

Reading biblical discourse well also means being alert to how large spans of biblical text may be organized or arranged differently than we might expect.

## Chiasm of Isaiah 56-66

- A Preface: the place of foreigners in the service of Yhwh (56:1-8)
- B Yhwh's challenges concerning the Jerusalem community's life (56:9-59:8)
- C Prayers for Yhwh's forgiveness and restoration (59:9-15a)
- D Visions of Yhwh acting in judgment (59:15b-21)
- E Visions of Jerusalem restored (60:1-22)
- F The prophet's commission (61:1-9)
- E' Visions of Jerusalem restored (61:10-62:12)
- D' Visions of Yhwh acting in judgment (63:1-6)
- C' Prayers for Yhwh's forgiveness and restoration (63:7-64:12[11])
- B' Yhwh's challenges concerning the Jerusalem community's life (65:1-66:17)
- A' Postscript: the place of foreigners in the service of Yhwh (66:18-24)

John Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 14, 75-76.

John Goldingay proposes that the entire book of Isaiah has a strategic literary pattern:



### Five Points of Discourse Observation

1. **Connections between paragraphs and episodes**
2. **Story shifts and pivots**
3. **Interchange:** does the passage shift back and forth between two scenes or characters?
4. **Chiasm:** is the passage symmetrically arranged, e.g., **a-b-c-d-c'-b'-a'** or **a-b-b'-a'**?
5. **Inclusio:** does the passage open and close with similar statements or events?

### NEXT STEP

For an example of close reading a subunit, watch Bonus Module Episode 18 for a demonstration on Ephesians 2:1–10.

Then practice on the GIVE IT A TRY exercises on the following pages.

## GIVE IT A TRY

### Practice 8.1

Using the list of Ten Points of Sentence Observation as a guide, make as many specific observations as possible on Acts 1:8. Avoid interpreting the verse, just note observations. Be patient with the process. Read and reread.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

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## Practice 8.2

Using the list of Ten Points of Sentence Observation as a guide, make as many specific observations as possible on Deuteronomy 6:4–6. Avoid interpreting the verse, just note observations. Be patient with the process. Read and reread.

<sup>4</sup> “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

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### Practice 8.3

Using the two lists of Ten Points of Sentence & Subunit Observation as guides, make as many specific observations as possible on Philippians 2:1–4. Avoid interpreting the verse, just note observations. Be patient with the process. Read and reread.

<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

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### **Practice 8.4**

Using the list of Ten Points of Sentence & Subunit Observation as guides, make as many specific observations as possible on Psalm 1. Be patient. Think hard. Read and reread.

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

nor stands in the way of sinners,

nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

<sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the LORD,

and on his law he meditates day and night.

<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree

planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season,

and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so,

but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

<sup>6</sup> for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked will perish.

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## Practice 8.5

Read Mark 5:21–43 combines a story about Jairus and his daughter and one about a bleeding woman. Mark off where the stories intersect. Then list as many comparisons and contrasts between the stories. Read and reread the passage several times to get the flow of the text and the big picture. Be patient.

<sup>21</sup> And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea.

<sup>22</sup> Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet

<sup>23</sup> and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.”

<sup>24</sup> And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him.

<sup>25</sup> And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years,

<sup>26</sup> and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.

<sup>27</sup> She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.

<sup>28</sup> For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.”

<sup>29</sup> And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

<sup>30</sup> And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?”

<sup>31</sup> And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

<sup>32</sup> And he looked around to see who had done it.

<sup>33</sup> But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

<sup>34</sup> And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

<sup>35</sup> While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?”

<sup>36</sup> But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”

<sup>37</sup> And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

<sup>38</sup> They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

<sup>39</sup> And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.”

<sup>40</sup> And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was.

<sup>41</sup> Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

<sup>42</sup> And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

<sup>43</sup> And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

**Jairus story**

**Bleeding woman story**

1. Jairus is a man	1. a woman
2. Jairus goes to Jesus for help publicly	2. woman goes to Jesus for help privately

## Practice 8.6

Using all the points of observation discussed in this lesson as guides, make as many specific observations as possible on Mark 11:12–21. In addition to making sentence-level notes and observations, mark off subunits and explain how you think they relate to each other. Read the passage several times to get the flow of the text and the big picture. Be patient. Read and reread.

<sup>12</sup> On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry.

<sup>13</sup> And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

<sup>14</sup> And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.

<sup>15</sup> And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

<sup>16</sup> And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.

<sup>17</sup> And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”

<sup>18</sup> And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.

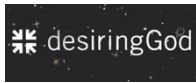
<sup>19</sup> And when evening came they went out of the city.

<sup>20</sup> As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots.

<sup>21</sup> And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.”

*Use this page for your notes to Practice 8.6*

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



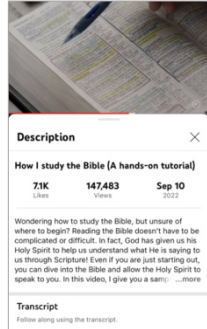
WATCH



Keep Looking



WATCH



How I Study the Bible



WATCH



Digging into Bible Study:  
*Intro*



Digging into Bible Study:  
*Day 1 – Starting Steps*



Digging into Bible Study:  
*Day 2 – Making Notes*



**Module 4**

**Reading with the**

**Ancient Audience**



## *Episode 9*

# **Bible Backgrounds and Geographic Context**

### **Key Idea**

Every time we read the Bible, we step into ancient foreign territory.

### **CONTEXT OF THE BIBLICAL WORLD**

We will consider five areas of context or background that will help us understand the message of Scripture more accurately:

1. **Geography**
2. **History**
3. **Culture**
4. **Language**
5. **Literature**

Resources to start studying Bible backgrounds:

- *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*
- *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, a free electronic dictionary available on the free Logos Bible Software app.
- Step Bible at [stepbible.org](http://stepbible.org) for searching the biblical text

## GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Human history plays out on the game board of geography.

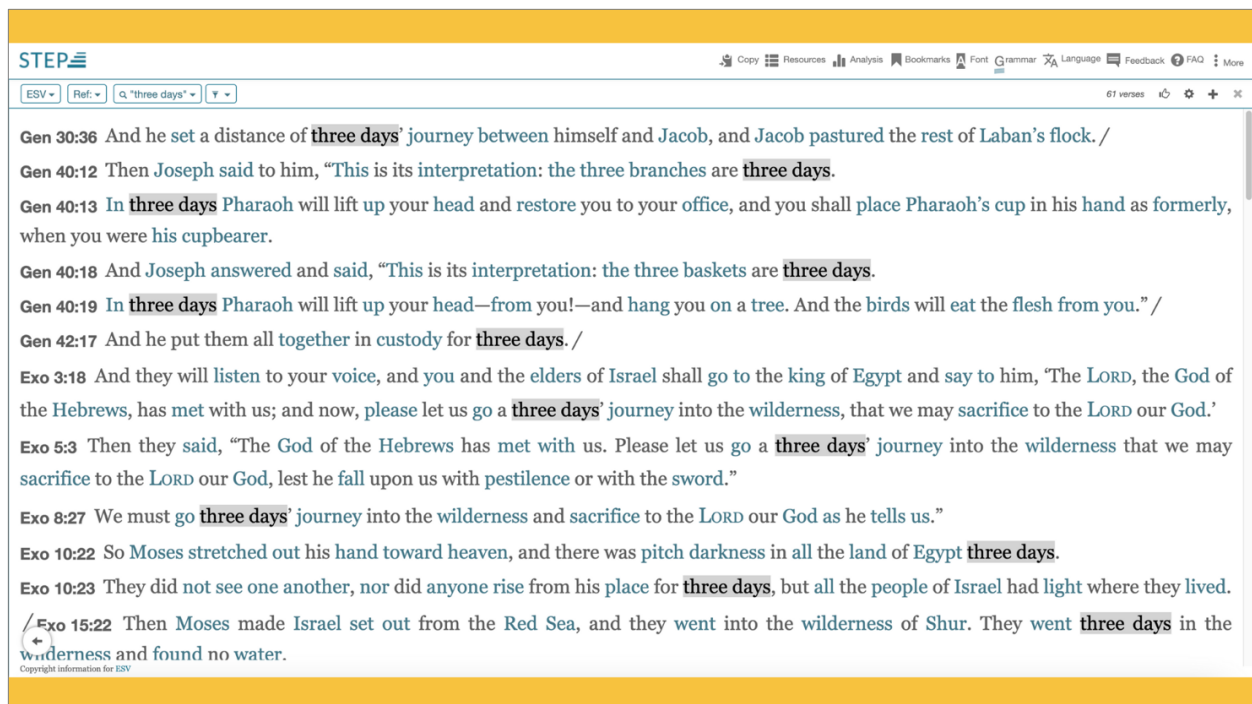
### *The Sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:39–40 (cf. Matt 16:1-4; Luke 11:16, 29-32)*

<sup>39</sup> An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

**Key idea:** The sign of Jonah, the three days and nights that Jonah spent in the belly of a fish.

**Question:** Why did Jesus choose the sign of Jonah at this point, for this audience?

**Research:** Search for “three days” in the Old Testament using the Step Bible website:



The screenshot shows the Step Bible website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Step Bible logo and various utility icons like Copy, Resources, Analysis, Bookmarks, Font, Grammar, Language, Feedback, FAQ, and More. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar with the text "three days" entered. The search results are displayed in a list of verses, with the phrase "three days" highlighted in each entry. The verses include:

- Gen 30:36 And he set a distance of **three days**’ journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob pastured the rest of Laban’s flock. /
- Gen 40:12 Then Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three branches are **three days**.”
- Gen 40:13 In **three days** Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer.
- Gen 40:18 And Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are **three days**.”
- Gen 40:19 In **three days** Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.” /
- Gen 42:17 And he put them all together in custody for **three days**. /
- Exo 3:18 And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a **three days**’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.”
- Exo 5:3 Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a **three days**’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”
- Exo 8:27 We must go **three days**’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he tells us.”
- Exo 10:22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt **three days**.
- Exo 10:23 They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for **three days**, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived.
- Exo 15:22 Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went **three days** in the wilderness and found no water.

At the bottom of the page, there is a small copyright notice for ESV.

**Question:** Who is Jonah?

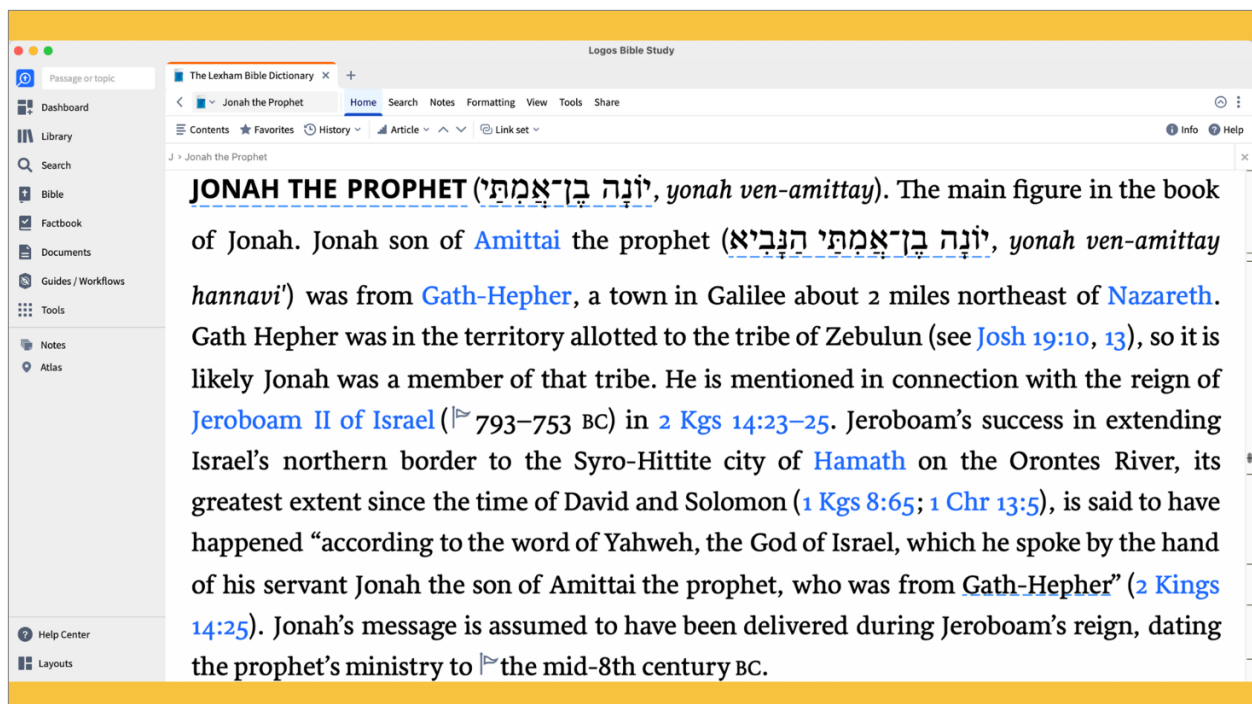
**Research:** Search for Jonah in the Bible.

*Jonah's first mention appears in 2 Kings 14:25:*

[Jeroboam] restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.

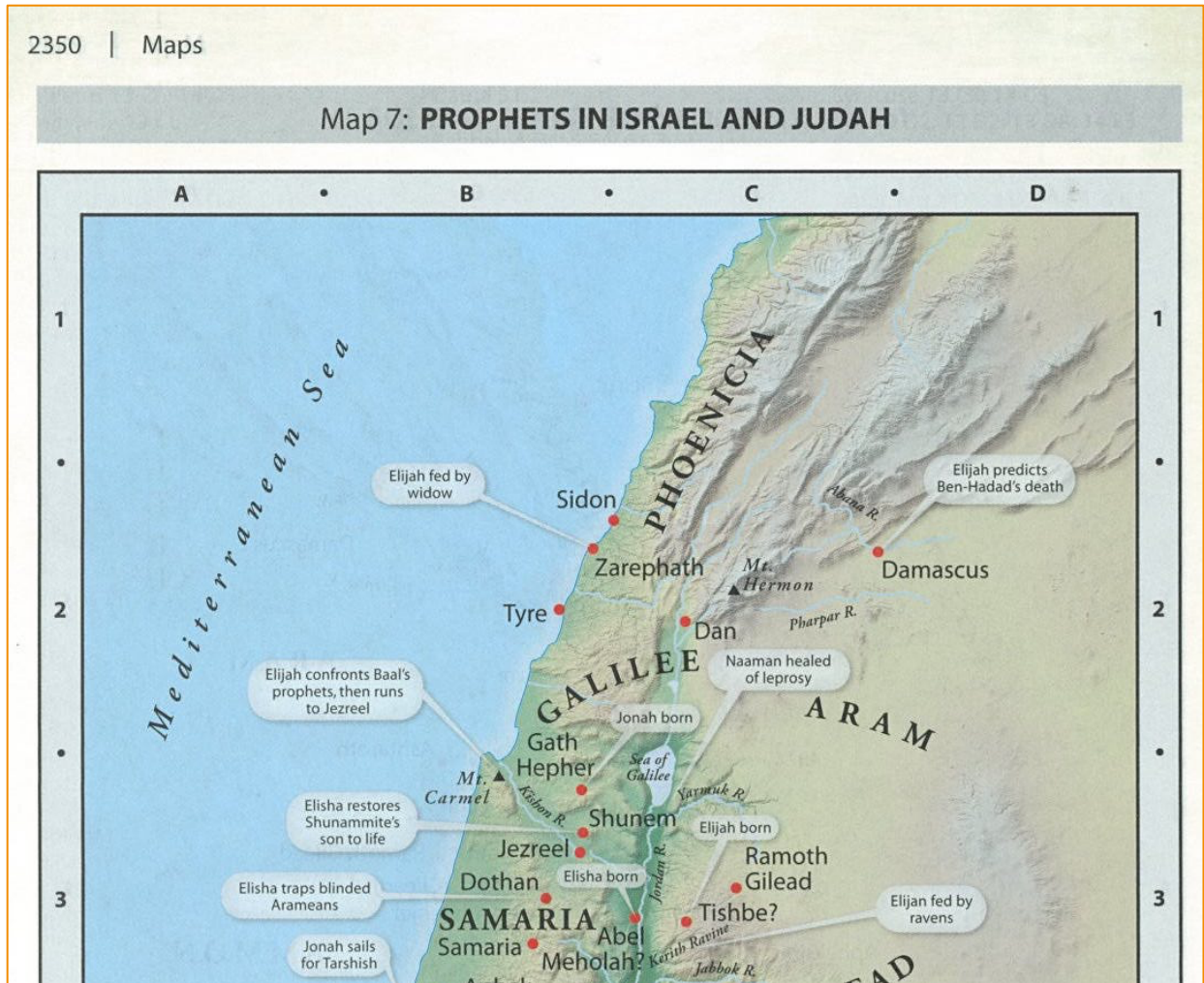
**Question:** What is there to know about Jonah's hometown of Gath-hepher?

**Research:** Look up "Jonah" (and "Gath-hepher") in the *Lexham Bible Dictionary*:

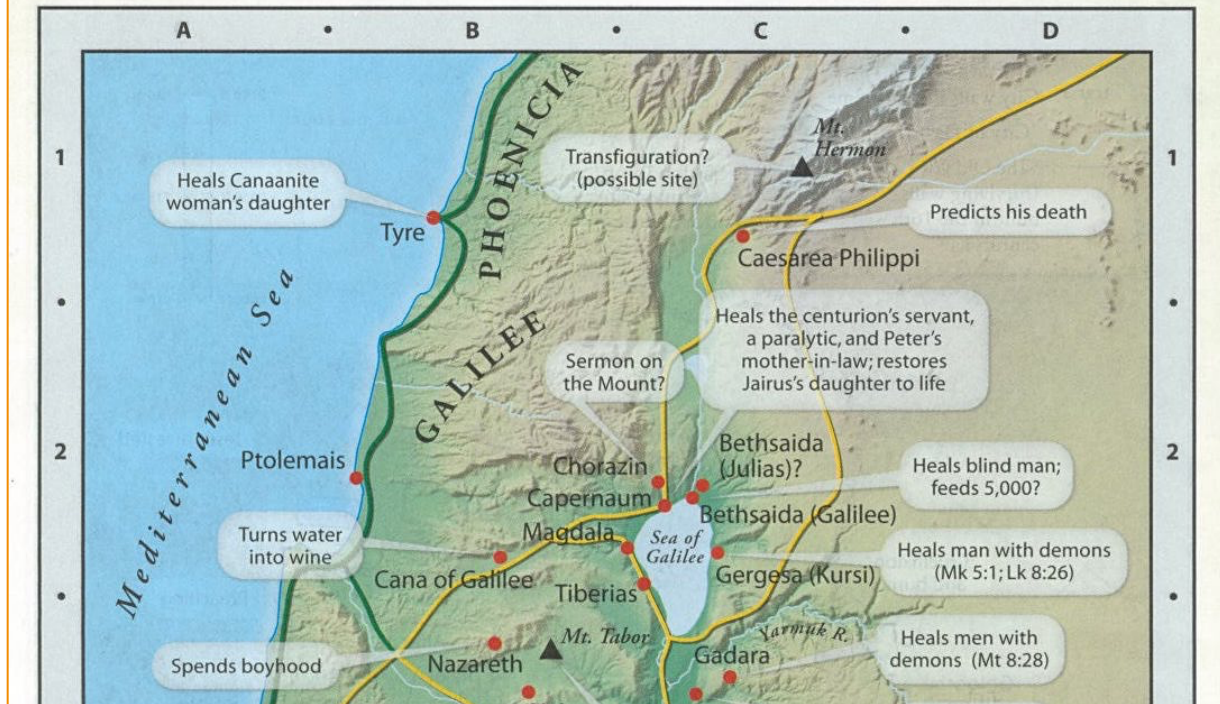


The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Lexham Bible Dictionary entry for "Jonah the Prophet". The page title is "JONAH THE PROPHET (יֹנָה בֶן-אֲמִטַּי, *yonah ven-amittay*)". The text describes Jonah as the main figure in the book of Jonah, son of Amittai the prophet (יֹנָה בֶן-אֲמִטַּי הַנְּבִיא, *yonah ven-amittay hannavi'*), from Gath-Hepher, a town in Galilee about 2 miles northeast of Nazareth. It mentions that Gath Hepher was in the territory allotted to the tribe of Zebulun (see [Josh 19:10, 13](#)), so it is likely Jonah was a member of that tribe. He is mentioned in connection with the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (c. 793–753 BC) in [2 Kgs 14:23–25](#). Jeroboam's success in extending Israel's northern border to the Syro-Hittite city of Hamath on the Orontes River, its greatest extent since the time of David and Solomon ([1 Kgs 8:65](#); [1 Chr 13:5](#)), is said to have happened "according to the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel, which he spoke by the hand of his servant Jonah the son of Amittai the prophet, who was from Gath-Hepher" ([2 Kings 14:25](#)). Jonah's message is assumed to have been delivered during Jeroboam's reign, dating the prophet's ministry to c. the mid-8th century BC.

**Research (cont.):** Locate Gath-hepher on Bible maps in the *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*.



## Map 11: JESUS' MINISTRY



**An answer to our initial question:** Jonah's story was part of the local history. Jesus chose Jonah's three days because the local audience, the people of Galilee, would immediately connect to Jonah's story.





## Practice 9.2

*Step 1: Read and chart it.*

Read part of Paul’s second missionary journey in Acts 16:1–12. Read it once to get a feel for the story. Then, read the passage a second time, writing down each city and region in the order they are mentioned. Note the verse that mentions each location. Write a C or R if you can identify a place as a city or a region; if you can’t, leave it blank (for now).

<b>Verse</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>C/R</b>	<b>Verse</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>C/R</b>
1	Derbe				

*Step 2: Map it.*

Using the Bible Mapper WebViewer (<https://biblemapper.com/web/>), create a map of all the places mentioned in Acts 16:1–12. Return to Step 1 and fill in any missing C/R blanks.

### ***Tips***

- Go to the Bible Mapper link (above).
- Click on the magnifying glass.
- Correctly type the name of a place in the search box.
- Select the place from the generated list.
- Zoom out/in using the plus/minus that sits to the right of the magnifying glass.

*Step 3: Align and measure it.*

Chart Paul’s movement from place to place in the chart below. Align the cities within their larger regions. Then, using the Bible Mapper, measure the distance Paul travels from one place to the next. Tally up the total distance that Paul had to travel. How many miles by foot? How many miles by boat?

**Tips**

- Click on the Get Distance box [↔] that sits to the right of the minus box.
- The Distance Calculator will pop up.
- Correctly type the name of the starting City into the Location 1 search box.
- Select the place from the dropdown list.
- Correctly type the name of the Next City into the Location 2 search box.
- Select the place from the dropdown list.
- Click the “Get Distance” button to generate the miles/kilometers.

<b>Verse</b>	<b>City (Region)</b>	<b>Next City (Region)</b>	<b>Miles</b>
1	Derbe (Galatia)	Lystra (Galatia)	58.7472
2,4	Lystra (Galatia)	Iconium (Galatia)	

*Step 4: Imagine it.*

Imagine yourself on Paul’s travelling missionary team 2000 years ago. Describe **in as much detail as possible** the difficulties, threats, and opportunities that the task of travelling—by foot and by boat—between cities would present. This imagined experience doesn’t even include what takes place in the different cities you would visit.

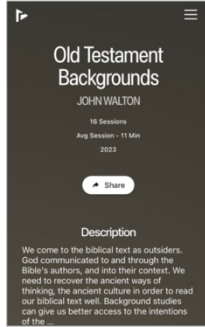
*Step 5: Reflect on it.*

Now that you’ve imagined yourself travelling with Paul to spread the gospel, read Philippians 4:10–13. How does studying and imagining the geography of Acts 16:1–12 influence your reading of Paul’s testimony to the Philippians?

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



**WATCH**

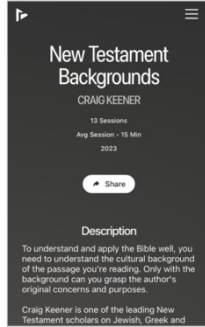


Old Testament Background

Link to RightNow Media



**WATCH**

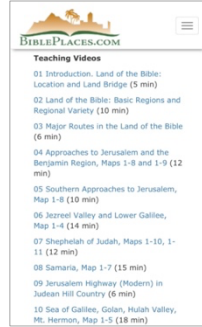


New Testament Background

Link to RightNow Media



**WATCH**



Bible Lands Teaching Videos



**VISIT**



Bible Mapper



**VISIT**



Online Bible Dictionary

(dated but good)



## *Episode 10*

# Historical Context

### **Key Idea**

The Bible bears witness to God's intervention in human history. We do well to know biblical history to better understand the biblical message.

### **LAYERS OF HISTORICAL RELEVANCE**

As we consider historical context, we want to be mindful that there may be multiple layers of historical relevance.

1. **Temporal setting**
2. **Historical setting**
3. **Reception history**

### **GETTING TO THE HISTORICAL-CONTEXT**

We can access and use the historical context in three general steps:

1. **Read the biblical passage closely**
2. **Consult a study Bible and Bible dictionary**
3. **Reread the biblical passage**

## Example of Historical Context

### **Isaiah 6:1**

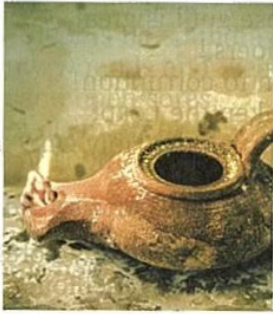
In the year that King Uzziah died I [Isaiah] saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

### **Step 1: Read and Make Notes**

- Who is King Uzziah?
- What year did Uzziah die?
- Isaiah has his vision in the temple, so that means this vision takes place when the temple still exists.

### **Step 2a: Consult Study Bible Articles and Explainers**

The *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* describes the book of Isaiah's historical settings:



ORACLES OF THE  
PROPHETS

.....

ISAIAH

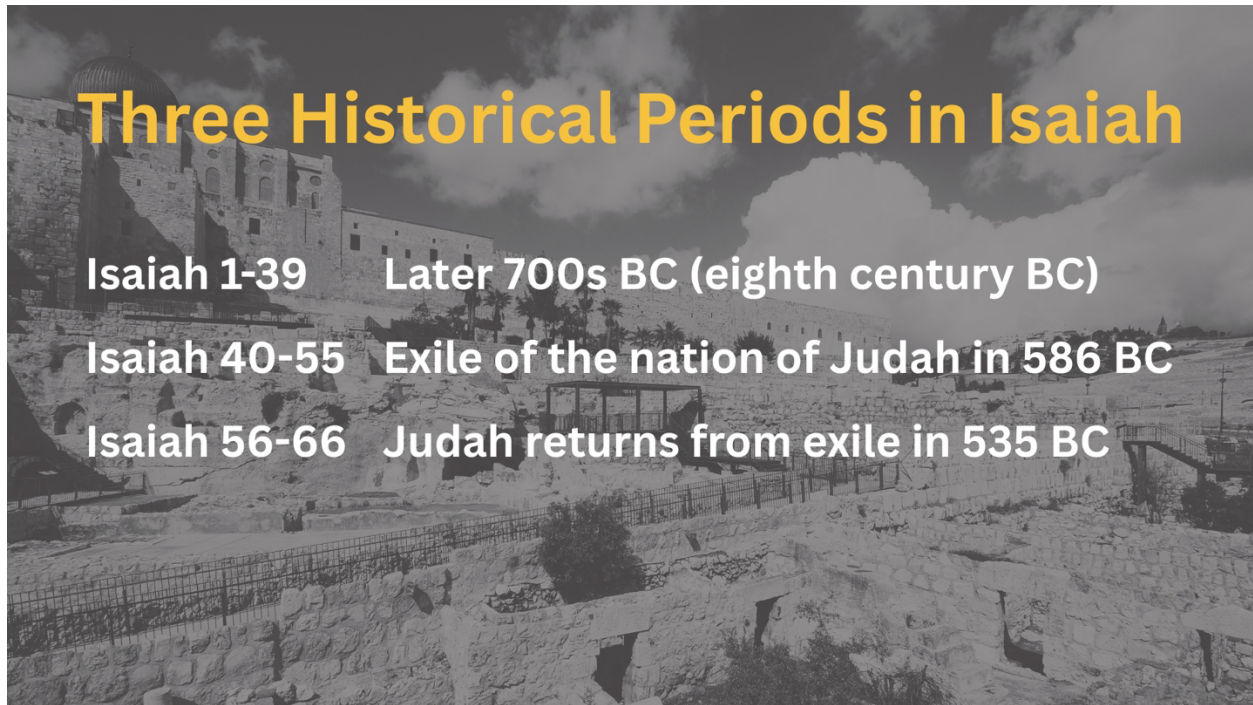
**Historical Setting**

Isaiah prophesied during the latter half of the eighth century BC during the reign of four named kings (1:1). His prophecies did not simply concern his own era, however; they anticipated both horrifying and hopeful events in Judah's future. The prophecies describe a period of destruction and exile: many of the people would be deported far away from their own land, and the land itself would be ravaged and destroyed (586 BC). Some of the book of Isaiah addresses the situation of exile (chs. 40–55). This is not the end, however, since the exiles would return and the cities would be rebuilt (c. 535 BC). Other sections of the book seem to be directed toward this later situation (chs. 56–66).

**KEY CONCEPTS**

- Kings who trusted alliances brought on disaster, while kings who trusted

This description provides some important historical data:



Our *Study Bible* also includes a more detailed historical explanation:

1106 | Isaiah 1
Isaiah 1 | 1107

ISAIAH 1:1

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISAIAH

In the beginning of this period, Israel was controlled by Assyria, a major world power. Assyria's capital, Nineveh (modern-day Mosul in Iraq), was on the Tigris River, but Assyria's empire in this period stretched from what is now Iran as far west as Egypt. Lying across major land routes between Assyria and Egypt, Israel felt repeatedly the horrors of war and destruction.

Just prior to the period of Isaiah, there arose a succession of three Assyrian kings who were weaker and less aggressive than their predecessors, so Israel and Judah had enjoyed relative peace and prosperity. This came to an abrupt end in 745 BC when a new and powerful king gained the Assyrian throne. Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC; 2Ki 15:29; cf. 2Ki 15:19, where he is called Pul) reinvigorated Assyrian expansion and aggression until the end of the Assyrian Empire, which occurred late in the following century. With Tiglath-Pileser's rise to power, the northern kingdom of Israel faced more imminent external pressure. Jeroboam II, Israel's king, had just died, and his dynasty was brought to an end by the assassination of his son Zechariah (2Ki 15:8–12), which was then followed by a rapid succession of multiple rulers, likely influenced by the Assyrian pressure (2Ki 15:19).

Judah's king Uzziah also died (740 BC; Isa 6:1), but his passing, though traumatic, was expected since he had been suffering from an incapacitating skin disease for some time and his son, Jotham, was effectively ruling in his place (2Ki 15:5). Jotham's reign was not seriously affected by Assyria directly; however, it was, ironically, affected by an alliance between Judah's sister nation, Israel (under Israel's king Pekah), and Israel's northern neighbor Aram (under Rezin) (2Ki 15:37). Israel and Aram allied against Judah, perhaps wanting Judah to join their coalition against Assyria, though their actual motives are unstated. They were too small to oppose Assyria on their own. Judah's refusal to join the Israel-Aram coalition led to the confrontation known as the Syro-Ephraimite War (2Ki 16:5–9; 2Ch 28:5–21; Isa 6–7), which particularly affected Ahaz, Jotham's son. Ahaz wavered back and forth as to whether to side with Assyria, which was strong and brutal, or Israel and Aram, which were stronger than Judah and also close by. He finally opted for a pro-Assyrian policy, against the urgings of Isaiah (Isa 7:7–9), and bribed Tiglath-Pileser to leave him alone and instead deal with the opposing alliance, which Tiglath-Pileser did in 734–732 BC (2Ki 16:7–9).

#### ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN MONARCHS: 750–530 BC\*

DATE*	EGYPT	ASSYRIA	BABYLONIA	PERSIA
750	23rd Dynasty	Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727)		
725	24th Dynasty	Shalmaneser V (726–722) Sargon II (722–705)		
	25th Dynasty			
700	Shabako (716–702)	Sennacherb (704–681)		
	Tirhakah (685–664)	Esarhaddon (680–669)		
675		Ashurbanipal (668–627)		
650				
625			Nabopolassar (626–605)	
600	Necho II (610–594)		Nebuchadnezzar (605–562)	
	Psammetichus II (594–589)			
	Hophra/Apries (589–570)			
575	Amasis (570–526)			
			Amel-Marduk (562–560)	
550			Neriglissar (560–556)	
				Cyrus (550–530)
			Nabonidus (556–539)	
525				Cambyses (530–522)

\* All dates are BC and are those of the kings' reigns.

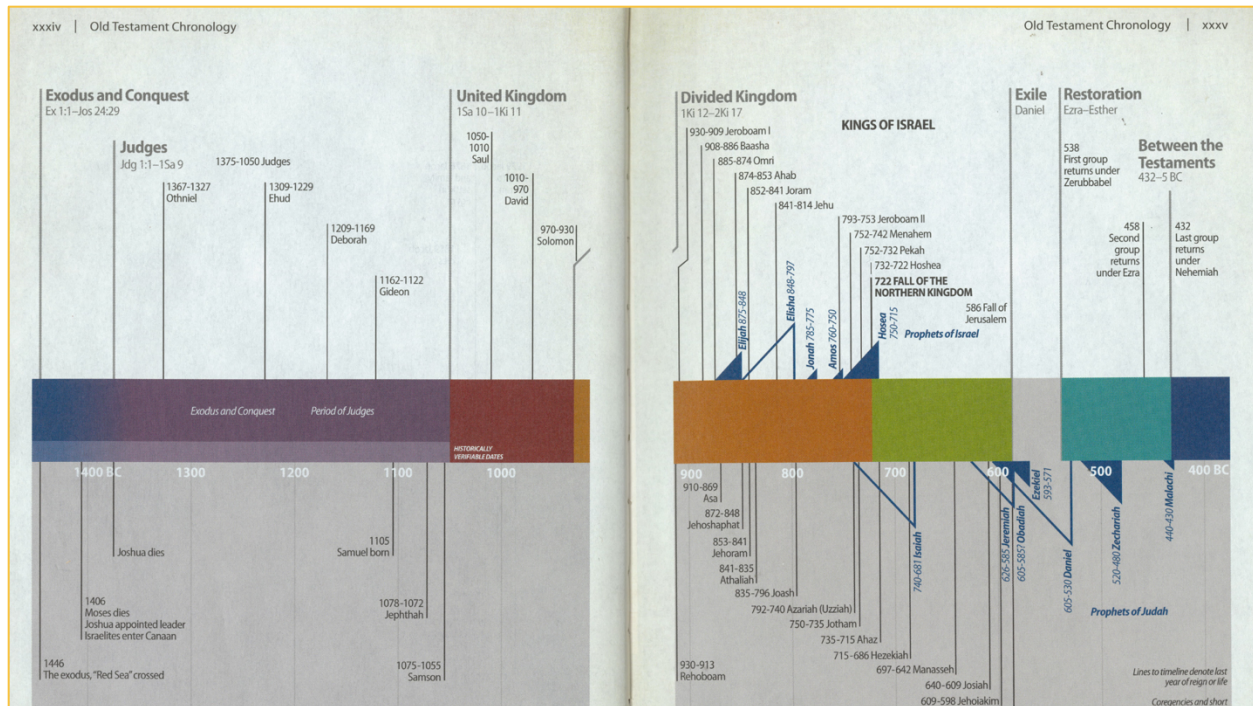
Even so, Hezekiah apparently did not join a coalition against Assyria spearheaded by Philistia in 715–713 BC, which was short-lived, with the Philistine capital, Ashdod, destroyed (Isa 14:28–31; 20:1–6). Subduing his opponents to the west, Sargon turned to the south, soundly defeating Babylon in 710, but he was soon thereafter killed in battle. Again rebellion broke out among Assyria's vassals, including Babylonia under Marduk-apla-iddina/Marduk-Baladan (perhaps Isa 39:1 fits here) and Judah under Hezekiah in alliance with Philistia, Edom and Moab, apparently with Egyptian encour-

This historical explanation provides more data to work with:

## Historical Notes on Isaiah

- Prior to Isaiah’s prophetic involvement, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous existence.
- King Uzziah fell ill near the end of his life, so his son co-reigned with him.
- King Uzziah died in 740 BC, five years after the rise of the powerful Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III (745 BC).
- Tiglath-pileser III expanded the Assyrian empire and dominated the Middle East.
- When King Jeroboam II of Israel died, his dynasty collapsed, followed by political turmoil in Israel, and Assyrian pressure.

Our *Study Bible* includes a timeline that helps us visualize this period in biblical history:

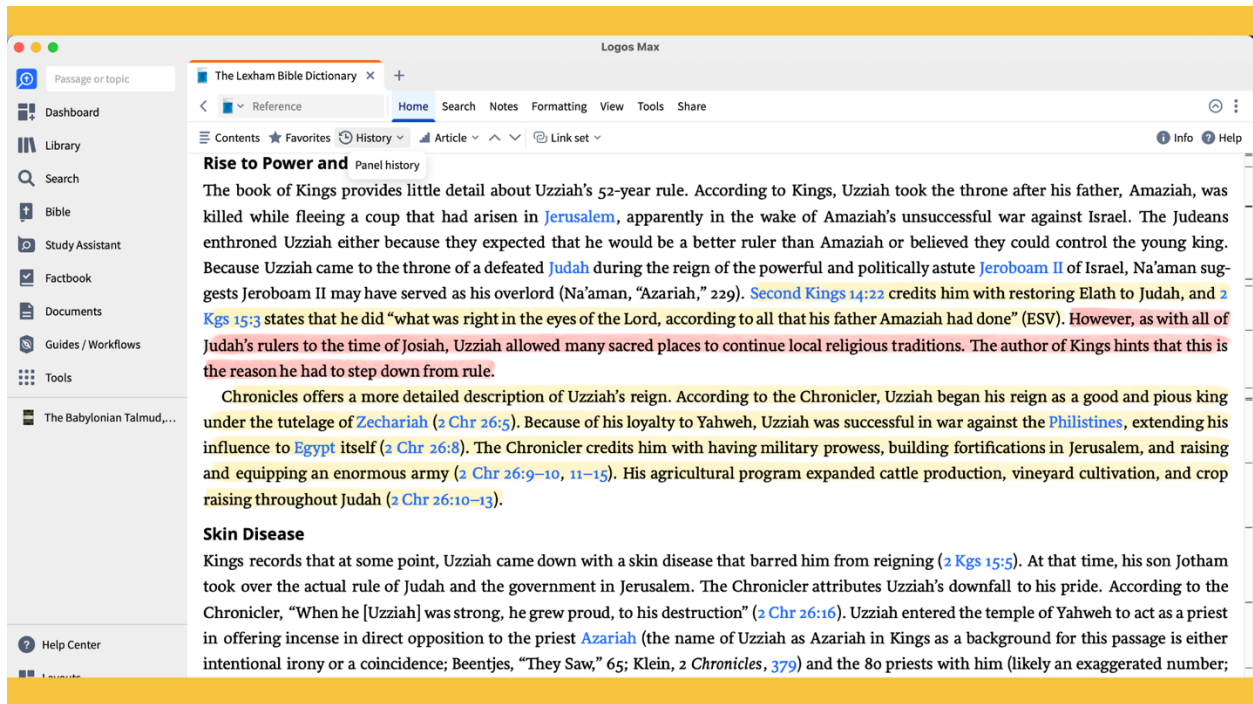


The timeline clarifies the dates relevant to Uzzah's reign:

- Uzziah (aka Azariah) reigned 52 years, the longest reign in Judah over the last 170 years, which accords with the historical explanation that Judah enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous existence for some time.
- Jeroboam II died in 753 BC, eight years before Tiglath-pileser III rose to power.

## Step 2b: Consult Bible Dictionary

The *Lexham Bible Dictionary's* article on Uzziah describes the reign of this king of Judah.



The screenshot shows the Lexham Bible Dictionary article on Uzziah in the Logos Max software. The article is titled "Rise to Power and" and is divided into several sections. The first section, "Rise to Power and", discusses Uzziah's 52-year reign, his father Amaziah, and his restoration of Elath to Judah. The second section, "Chronicles offers a more detailed description of Uzziah's reign", describes his military success, building fortifications, and raising an army. The third section, "Skin Disease", describes how Uzziah's pride led to his downfall and the death of his son Jotham.

**Rise to Power and**

The book of Kings provides little detail about Uzziah's 52-year rule. According to Kings, Uzziah took the throne after his father, Amaziah, was killed while fleeing a coup that had arisen in [Jerusalem](#), apparently in the wake of Amaziah's unsuccessful war against Israel. The Judeans enthroned Uzziah either because they expected that he would be a better ruler than Amaziah or believed they could control the young king. Because Uzziah came to the throne of a defeated [Judah](#) during the reign of the powerful and politically astute [Jeroboam II](#) of Israel, Na'aman suggests Jeroboam II may have served as his overlord (Na'aman, "Azariah," 229). [Second Kings 14:22](#) credits him with restoring Elath to Judah, and [2 Kgs 15:3](#) states that he did "what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done" (ESV). However, as with all of [Judah's rulers to the time of Josiah](#), Uzziah allowed many sacred places to continue local religious traditions. The author of Kings hints that this is the reason he had to step down from rule.

Chronicles offers a more detailed description of Uzziah's reign. According to the Chronicler, Uzziah began his reign as a good and pious king under the tutelage of [Zechariah](#) ([2 Chr 26:5](#)). Because of his loyalty to Yahweh, Uzziah was successful in war against the [Philistines](#), extending his influence to [Egypt](#) itself ([2 Chr 26:8](#)). The Chronicler credits him with having military prowess, building fortifications in Jerusalem, and raising and equipping an enormous army ([2 Chr 26:9-10, 11-15](#)). His agricultural program expanded cattle production, vineyard cultivation, and crop raising throughout Judah ([2 Chr 26:10-13](#)).

**Skin Disease**

Kings records that at some point, Uzziah came down with a skin disease that barred him from reigning ([2 Kgs 15:5](#)). At that time, his son Jotham took over the actual rule of Judah and the government in Jerusalem. The Chronicler attributes Uzziah's downfall to his pride. According to the Chronicler, "When he [Uzziah] was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction" ([2 Chr 26:16](#)). Uzziah entered the temple of Yahweh to act as a priest in offering incense in direct opposition to the priest [Azariah](#) (the name of Uzziah as Azariah in Kings as a background for this passage is either intentional irony or a coincidence; Beentjes, "They Saw," 65; Klein, [2 Chronicles](#), 379) and the 80 priests with him (likely an exaggerated number;

The dictionary article describes Uzziah's reign as:

- Generally favorable, he was a righteous king (2 Kings 15:3)
- He restored Elath and built up Judah (2 Kings 14:22; 2 Chronicles 26:9-15)
- He had military success and influence (2 Chronicles 26:8)
- His reign enjoyed productive harvest and livestock (2 Chronicles 26:10-13)

## Step 2c: Consult Study Bible Notes

The note to Isaiah 6:1 summarizes the historical situation around Uzziah's reign:

<p>away,<sup>w</sup> his hand is still upraised.<sup>x</sup></p> <p><sup>26</sup>He lifts up a banner for the distant nations,</p>	<p>Isa 6:2-7 Jer 4:23-28 Joel 2:10 6:1<sup>k</sup> 2Ch 26:22, 23<sup>l</sup> 2Ki 15:7 <sup>m</sup>Jn 12:41 <sup>n</sup>Rev 4:2</p>	<h3>Isaiah's Commission</h3> <p><b>6</b> In the year that King Uzziah<sup>k</sup> died,<sup>l</sup> I saw the Lord,<sup>m</sup> high and exalted, seated on a throne;<sup>n</sup> and the train of his</p>
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**5:22** *heroes ... champions.* Two military terms are used satirically, since the only opponent conquered is alcohol. *wine.* A common beverage in the area, made from grapes, honey or dates. *mixing drinks.* Drinks could be flavored by adding herbs and spices. Intoxicants were often consumed through a long, straw-like tube, which also served as a strainer.

**5:23** *bribe.* A major role for a national leader was to establish justice for those unable to secure it for themselves, i.e., the weak and the disenfranchised (see note on 1:23 ["fatherless ... widow's case"]). For this reason, law codes were common. *deny justice.* When those charged with administering the law are corrupt, basing their decisions on their own economic advantage rather than on justice, they pervert justice. Because bribery makes the entire enterprise of governance problematic, it is dealt with harshly.

**5:25** *dead bodies are like refuse in the streets.* The lack of a proper burial was scandalous in Israel and among her neighbors — a sign of disrespect for the departed (see notes on 1Ki 14:11; 2Ki 9:10; Ecc 6:3).

**5:26** *banner.* Or standard; used as a means of calling out an army of a particular territory or indicating the place where a muster was taking place or a camp was located. It often featured an insignia of the tribe or division. *whistles.* The Hebrew can also refer to a hiss (see 7:18).

**5:27** *not a belt is loosened at the waist, not a sandal strap is broken.* Preparation for battle or for work is exemplified by one's clothing being in good repair and functioning properly. In the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers*, when Anubis finishes engaging in battle and other work, he takes off his sandals and clothes and discards his staff and weapons. This suggests a possible military connotation for the Isaiah passage.

**5:28** *arrows.* Made from reeds tipped with stone, bone or metal. *bows.* Composite bows, so called because they were formed of several materials, possibly originated in Assyria and were curved, which allowed arrows to fly greater distance. *horses' hooves.* Shoeing of horses was not practiced, so some terrain was difficult for them; however, they developed hard hooves. See note on 2:7. *chariot wheels.* See note on 2:7.

**5:29** *roar ... of the lion.* The ferocity and roar of lions proverbially inspires fear. They are shown roaring in numerous Israelite seal impressions and in other representations. They are pictured as mauling unfortunate prey and are themselves prey of mighty hunters. A hero is shown in his power holding a lion.

**6:1** *Uzziah.* Also called Azariah (e.g., see 2Ki 14:21 and NIV text note), he became the tenth king of Judah after the assassination of his father, Amaziah, though they probably shared the throne while Amaziah was a prisoner of war. Uzziah, in turn, shared the throne with his son Jotham after being infected with leprosy, which perhaps led to his death. Leprosy made Uzziah ritually unclean and therefore unable to fulfill any public duties. Grief in Judah must have been great since Uzziah was the only king whom many, including Isaiah, knew, since his reign was so long (792–740 BC). The anguish could well have been exacerbated by fear, since just prior to Uzziah's death in 742 BC, the great Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III had ascended his throne (745 BC), reviving the waning Neo-Assyrian Empire. He turned his attention to Israel and the west, starting with military campaigns in 743 BC. In one such campaign he encountered "[Azr]iau (Azariah) of Judah," leading some to suggest that Uzziah/Azariah was the opponent mentioned by Tiglath-Pileser. Fear at this juncture in Israel's history provided opportunity for a prophet to be heard, as it did in the reign of Ahaz in Isa 7. *Lord.* See note on v. 3 ("LORD"). *high and exalted.* In a hierarchy of power and authority, God is followed by the king, with the people falling below them. We use this

Summarize the historical picture for yourself:

Uzziah was king of Judah for 52 years (792-740 BC), the longest reigning king in Judah for quite some time. His reign was marked by peace, military strength, economic prosperity, and influence. He was also a decent king, doing what was right in Yhwh's eyes. His contemporary in Israel was King Jeroboam II. When Jeroboam died, political turmoil in Israel followed, and the Assyrian empire seems to have applied pressure on this situation. Then in 745 BC, a new king in Assyria rose to power, Tiglath-pileser III. This king dominated the Middle East and expanded the Assyrian empire. Five years into Tiglath-pileser's reign, King Uzziah of Judah dies. As the *Study Bible* note to this verse explains, the death of Uzziah likely prompted grief and fear in Judah since he was likely the only king most of the people ever knew, and during his reign, the nation enjoyed peace and prosperity. If Israel suffered political turmoil and foreign pressure after Jeroboam's death, how much more might the nation of Judah suffer now that Tiglath-pileser III is on the scene?

### **Step 3: Reread the Passage with Its Historical Context in Mind**

In the year that King Uzziah died I [Isaiah] saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

## **GIVE IT A TRY**

### **Practice 10.1**

Carefully read Nahum 1 (only 15 verses) at least twice.

1. Make notes about any person, nation, event, and location mentioned that might help you understand the historical context to the book of Nahum. Raise questions among your notes.
2. Use a reliable study Bible and Bible dictionary to make more notes about Nahum's historical backdrop, noting dates, historical periods, world powers, empires, key persons, etc. Synthesize the historical data into a summarizing backstory.
3. Reread Nahum 1 with the historical background in mind.

## **Practice 10.2**

Carefully read Amos 1:1 and 7:10-17 at least twice.

1. Make notes about any person, nation, event, and location mentioned that might help you understand the historical context to the book of Amos. Raise questions among your notes.
2. Use a reliable study Bible and/or Bible dictionary to make more notes about Amos's historical backdrop, noting dates, historical periods, world powers, empires, key persons, etc. Synthesize the historical data into a summarizing backstory.
3. Reread Amos 1:1 and 7:10-17 with the historical background in mind.

### **Practice 10.3**

Carefully read the book of Haggai (only 2 chapters; 38 verses) at least twice.

1. Make notes about any person, nation, event, and location mentioned that might help you understand the historical context to the book of Haggai. Raise questions among your notes.
2. Use a reliable study Bible and/or Bible dictionary to make more notes about Haggai's historical backdrop, noting dates, historical periods, world powers, empires, key persons, etc. Synthesize the historical data into a summarizing backstory.
3. Reread Haggai with the historical background in mind.

## *Episode 11*

# Cultural Context

### **Key Idea**

God did not override the biblical writers' culture, he spoke through it as he redeemed it.

### **CULTURAL CONTEXT BEHIND THE BIBLE**

The world of the Bible emerged out of four broad cultural contexts:

- **Ancient Near East:** spans over 2000 years of civilization that includes Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Aramean/Syrian, Phoenician, Israelite/Judahite, and other related cultures of the biblical period. This is the cultural context of the Old Testament.
- **Greek Hellenism:** is the cultural background to the so-called "Intertestamental Period," or (more helpfully) the "Second Temple Period," the latter of which includes the New Testament.
- **Roman Empire:** succeeded the Greek empire while also adopting and adapting Greek Hellenism. Greco-Roman culture is part of the backdrop to the New Testament.
- **Early Judaism:** emerged out of the experience of the Jews' return from exile back to the Holy Land, having much continuity with their ancestors while also adapting to new circumstances, political realities, and the influence of Hellenism. Hellenistic or Second Temple Period Judaism produced a wealth of literature, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, the so-called Deuterocanonical and Apocryphal books, and the New Testament.

## **Primary Sources for Cultural Context**

The best way to read the Bible through ancient Near Eastern and ancient Jewish eyes is by reading ancient primary sources. Here are a few handy resources to get started:

- Christopher B. Hays, *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014).
- Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002).
- John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989).
- Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Readings from the First-Century World: Primary Sources for New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998).

## **Accessing the Cultural Context**

We can access and use the cultural context in four general steps:

1. **Read the biblical passage carefully for cultural references.**
2. **Note where the cultural reference appears in the Bible.**
3. **Consult a study Bible and/or Bible dictionary.**
4. **Reread the biblical passage with new cultural background in mind.**

## THE CASE OF ISAIAH 27:1

### *Isaiah 27:1*

In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

### Step 1: Read and make notes

- “In that day” – it sounds like Isaiah has a specific day in mind, what is it?
- Yhwh fights Leviathan – if Leviathan is simply an ancient animal, a dinosaur, why would Yhwh fight it?
- Leviathan is a serpent, dragon that lives in the sea.

### Step 2: Search the Bible for key references

Searching for “Leviathan” on stepbible.org, we find that this reference occurs a total of six times.

The screenshot shows the STEP Bible search interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the STEP logo and various utility icons like Copy, Resources, Analysis, Bookmarks, Font, Grammar, Language, Feedback, FAQ, and More. Below this is a search bar with 'Leviathan' entered. The results are displayed in a list format, showing six verses where the word 'Leviathan' is used. The verses are: Job 3:8, Job 41:1, Psa 74:14, Psa 104:26, and Isa 27:1. The word 'Leviathan' is highlighted in each verse. At the bottom left, there is a copyright notice for ESV, and at the bottom right, there is a link to HTRYB Scripts.

STEP

Copy Resources Analysis Bookmarks Font Grammar Language Feedback FAQ More

ESV Ref: "Leviathan" 5 verses

Job 3:8 /Let those curse it who curse the day, / who are ready to rouse up Leviathan.

Job 41:1 / “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook / or press down his tongue with a cord?

Psa 74:14 /You crushed the heads of Leviathan; / you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

Psa 104:26 /There go the ships, / and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

/ Isa 27:1 In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea. /

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HTRYB Scripts

### Step 3a: Consult study Bible

Our *Study Bible* note to Isaiah 27:1 includes an extensive note about Leviathan:

<sup>20</sup>Go, my people, enter your rooms  
and shut the doors<sup>m</sup> behind you;  
hide<sup>n</sup> yourselves for a little while  
until his wrath has passed by.<sup>o</sup>  
<sup>21</sup>See, the LORD is coming<sup>p</sup> out of his  
dwelling<sup>q</sup>  
to punish<sup>r</sup> the people of the earth for  
their sins.  
The earth will disclose the blood<sup>s</sup> shed  
on it;  
the earth will conceal its slain no  
longer.

**26:20**  
<sup>m</sup>Ex 12:23  
<sup>n</sup>Ps 91:1;  
4 <sup>o</sup>Ps 30:5;  
Isa 54:7-8  
**26:21**  
<sup>p</sup>Jude 1:14  
<sup>q</sup>Mic 1:3  
<sup>r</sup>Isa 13:9;  
11; 30:12-14  
<sup>s</sup>Job 16:18;  
Lk 11:50-51  
**27:1** <sup>t</sup>Isa 34:6;  
66:16 <sup>u</sup>Job 3:8  
<sup>v</sup>Ps 74:13

#### Deliverance of Israel

**27** In that day,  
the LORD will punish with his  
sword<sup>t</sup>—  
his fierce, great and powerful  
sword—  
Leviathan<sup>u</sup> the gliding serpent,  
Leviathan the coiling serpent;  
he will slay the monster<sup>v</sup> of the sea.  
<sup>2</sup>In that day—

**27:1** *Leviathan.* See note on Job 3:8; see also the articles "Identification of Behemoth and Leviathan," p. 871; "Leviathan," p. 874; "Chaos Monsters," p. 953. Ugaritic and Canaanite myth contain detailed descriptions of a chaos beast, representing the seas or watery anarchy, in the form of a many-headed, twisting sea serpent. There is a close affinity between the description of Leviathan in Isaiah as a "coiling serpent" and the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, which speaks of how the storm-god Baal "smote Litan

[i.e., Leviathan] the twisting serpent." In both cases there is a sense of the God of order and fertility vanquishing a chaos monster. Several other passages in the OT mention Leviathan, but most of them (e.g., Ps 74:14; Job 41:1–34) speak in terms of God's creative act that establishes control over watery chaos (personified by the sea serpent). Here, however, that struggle between order and chaos occurs at the end of time. It may be that the fall of Satan, portrayed as a seven-headed dragon in

"Sing about a fruitful vineyard:<sup>w</sup>  
<sup>3</sup> I, the LORD, watch over it;  
I water<sup>x</sup> it continually.  
I guard it day and night  
so that no one may harm it.  
<sup>4</sup> I am not angry.  
If only there were briars and thorns  
confronting me!  
I would march against them in battle;  
I would set them all on fire.<sup>y</sup>  
<sup>5</sup>Or else let them come to me for  
refuge;<sup>z</sup>

**27:2** <sup>w</sup>Jer 2:21  
**27:3** <sup>x</sup>Isa 58:11  
**27:4** <sup>y</sup>Isa 10:17;  
Mt 3:12;  
Heb 6:8  
**27:5** <sup>z</sup>Isa 25:4  
  
<sup>a</sup>Job 22:21;  
Ro 5:1; 2Co 5:20  
**27:6**  
<sup>b</sup>Hos 14:5-6  
<sup>c</sup>Isa 37:31  
**27:7**  
<sup>d</sup>Isa 37:36-38

let them make peace<sup>a</sup> with me,  
yes, let them make peace with me."  
<sup>6</sup>In days to come Jacob will take root,  
Israel will bud and blossom<sup>b</sup>  
and fill all the world with fruit.<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>7</sup>Has the LORD struck her  
as he struck<sup>d</sup> down those who struck  
her?  
Has she been killed  
as those were killed who killed  
her?

Rev 12:3–9, also echoes the Ugaritic image of Litan as "the tyrant with seven heads." *monster of the sea.* See the article "Chaos Monsters," p. 953. The battle between sea and dry land is not only literally visible but also found in mythological texts. Many references place the serpent/dragon in the context of the sea. In the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Baal confronts the sea itself (Yamm); in the Egyptian "Instruction of Merikare," a deity subdues the "water monster" as part of the creative activity; and in

the Akkadian creation epic *Enuma Elish*, Tiamat, a sea goddess in dragon form, is defeated by Marduk. Here it is Yahweh who will be triumphant. While he is said to use a ferocious sword, the text highlights God's triumph over any ferocious enemy.

**27:3** *I guard it.* As Yahweh guards the vineyard, so in the Ugaritic tale of Dawn and Dusk one god is called "guard of the sown," and another is "guard of the vineyard."

The note confirms our preliminary picture of Leviathan:

- Leviathan is a fantastical, multi-headed, serpentine sea creature in ancient Near Eastern tradition.
- Leviathan represents chaos in ancient Near Eastern tradition.
- There is a “close affinity” between Isaiah’s Leviathan and Ugaritic Litan.
- Baal in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle fights Litan just like Yhwh fights Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1 and Psalm 74:14.
- The note mentions several articles about Leviathan and Chaos Monsters that are in the *Study Bible*.

The three articles in the *Study Bible* unpack the cultural meaning and significance of the Leviathan figure in the ancient Near East and how it relates to the Bible:

874 | Job 41:31
Job 42:15 | 875


LEVIATHAN

**L**eviathan is found in Ugaritic texts that contain detailed descriptions of a chaos beast, representing the seas or watery anarchy in the form of a many-headed, twisting sea serpent, who is defeated by Baal. There is a close affinity between the description of Leviathan in Isa 27:1 as a “coiling serpent” and the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, which speaks of how the storm-god “smote Litan the twisting serpent.” In both cases, there is a sense of the God of order and fertility vanquishing a chaos monster. Several other passages in the OT mention Leviathan, but most of them, like Ps 74:14, speak in terms of God’s creative act that establishes control over watery chaos (personified by the sea serpent). In Isa 27:1, however, that struggle between order and chaos occurs at the end of time. It may be that Satan, portrayed as a seven-headed dragon in Rev 12:3–9, also echoes the Leviathan, “the tyrant with seven heads.” Biblically, Leviathan would therefore most easily fit into the category of a “supernatural” creature (like cherubim) as opposed to a natural or purely mythological creature. As such, it may appear in extra-Biblical mythology, as well as being symbolized by something like a crocodile (as in Eze 29:3, though Leviathan is not specifically referenced in that context). The point in Job is that if Job cannot domesticate and control Leviathan, he certainly should not expect to control God.

Some interpret Leviathan as connected to what is called a *chaoskampf* motif—a battle of God against chaos to bring order to the world at its creation. A more substantiable motif for cosmogony is that of the “Lord of the Cosmos.” The Hebrew Bible is consistently interested in divine kingship, an interest it holds in common with the rest of the ancient world. Cosmogony is one context in which divine kingship can be demonstrated, but it is only one of many. Yahweh’s kingship is expressed over the operations of the cosmos, whether they pertain to precipitation or politics. He is

*continued on next page*

superior to other gods (though he does not bother to fight them and is not said to rule over them—these would give them too high a standing), and he rules nations and empires. Theomachy (God in battle) is typically a motif in contexts in which Yahweh is harnessing those powers that would rebel against his rule. The passages in the Prophets and the Psalms nowhere indicate that the *formation* of the cosmos is accomplished as a result of defeat of other powers, only that Yahweh’s *rule* of the cosmos is accomplished as he defeats rebels or harnesses powers. ♦



**Seven-headed monster plaque, Mesopotamian, 2450 BC. Leviathan (Job 41:1) is a cosmic monster often thought to have multiple heads.**  
Z. Radwan/www.bibleandpictures.com

<sup>31</sup>It makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment.

<sup>32</sup>It leaves a glistening wake behind it; one would think the deep had white hair.

<sup>33</sup>Nothing on earth is its equal—

**41:33** <sup>1</sup>Job 40:19 **41:34** Job 28:8 **42:2** <sup>1</sup>Ge 18:14 <sup>2</sup>Mt 19:26 <sup>3</sup>2Ch 20:6 **42:3** <sup>1</sup>Job 38:2

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup>You said, “Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you,

seven bulls and seven rams\* and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering<sup>1</sup> for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer<sup>2</sup> and not deal with you according to your folly.<sup>2</sup> You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.”<sup>3</sup> So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar

**42:8** <sup>1</sup>Nu 23:1, 29<sup>2</sup> Job 1:5 <sup>3</sup>Ge 20:17; Job 5:15–16; 11a:5–6 <sup>4</sup>Job 22:30 **42:10** <sup>1</sup>1Co 30:3; <sup>2</sup>Ps 147<sup>3</sup> Job 1:3; <sup>4</sup>Ps 85:1–3; <sup>5</sup>1Co 6:4

him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver<sup>6</sup> and a gold ring.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>12</sup>The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and

<sup>2</sup>Remember the nation you purchased<sup>a</sup> long ago,<sup>1</sup> the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed— Mount Zion, where you dwell.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins, all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary.

<sup>4</sup>Your foes roared<sup>l</sup> in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards<sup>m</sup> as signs.

<sup>5</sup>They behaved like men wielding axes to cut through a thicket of trees.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>6</sup>They smashed all the carved<sup>o</sup> paneling with their axes and hatchets.

<sup>7</sup>They burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.

<sup>8</sup>They said in their hearts, "We will crush<sup>p</sup> them completely!" They burned every place where God was worshipped in the land.

<sup>9</sup>We are given no signs from God; no prophets<sup>q</sup> are left, and none of us knows how long this will be.

Abandonment of the city is tantamount to abandoning the people, who are like sheep (cf. 83:12).

**74:2** *where you dwell.* In Sumerian city laments, it is only after a deity has abandoned his or her city that it is vulnerable to attack. See note on 46:5; see also the articles "Entrenchment in the Ancient Near East," p. 925; "Hymns to Holy Cities," p. 927.

**74:3** *destruction . . . brought on the sanctuary.* The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (586 BC), described in 2Ki 25:8–17, lies at the heart of this psalm. While there are no extra-Biblical descriptions of this event, the Babylonian Chronicle does record the capture of Jerusalem and the deportation of the king of Judah (Jehoiachin) 11 years earlier in 597 BC (2Kj 24:8–17), at which time the temple treasures were plundered.

**74:4** *standards.* The Hebrew word can refer to a military banner with insignia to distinguish different troop units (see note on 1Kj 4:22).

<sup>10</sup>How long will the enemy mock you, God? Will the foe revile<sup>r</sup> your name forever?

<sup>11</sup>Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?<sup>s</sup> Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!

<sup>12</sup>But God is my King<sup>t</sup> from long ago; he brings salvation on the earth.

<sup>13</sup>It was you who split open the sea<sup>u</sup> by your power; you broke the heads of the monster<sup>v</sup> in the waters.

<sup>14</sup>It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert.

<sup>15</sup>It was you who opened up springs<sup>w</sup> and streams; you dried up<sup>x</sup> the ever-flowing rivers.

<sup>16</sup>The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon.<sup>y</sup>

<sup>17</sup>It was you who set all the boundaries<sup>z</sup> of the earth; you made both summer and winter.<sup>a</sup>

**74:8** *every place where God was worshiped.* It is not likely the psalmist would lament the destruction of illegitimate places of worship, whether within the temple complex or at various sites throughout the land (2Ki 21:1–6; 23:1–20). Perhaps these were simply special meeting places for prayer. In cities and villages of the ancient Near East, local shrines other than central, regional temple complexes accommodated the needs of the common people. Even at times when orthodox worship prevailed in Jerusalem, one might expect multiple gathering places that did not necessarily provide for sacrifices or other unauthorized rituals in competition with the Jerusalem temple. Unfortunately, the only places for religious gathering that would leave a clear trace in the archaeological record are those with illicit features such as altars or figurines.

**74:13** *split open the sea.* There is nothing in this psalm to suggest that reference is being made to the dividing

of the Red Sea.

## CHAOS MONSTERS

In order to underscore the power of God to intervene if he so chooses, the psalmist alludes to a well-known myth in the ancient Near East about the triumph of a god over the sea serpent. The closest neighbors to ancient Israel that preserved this myth were the Canaanites, whose religion is best represented by the texts from Ugarit (c. 1300 BC). In the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Baal defeats the sea-god Yamm (Ugaritic *ym* = Hebrew *yam*, "sea") and thereby earns the title "king" together with the right to a palace-temple (see the article "Psalm 29: A Canaanite Hymn" p. 905). The epic refers to Yamm using the same names and imagery as those in Ps 74:13–14: "When you killed Litan (Ugaritic *ltn* = Hebrew *lutyn*, "Leviathan"), the Fleeting Serpent, annihilated the Twisty Serpent, The Potentate with Seven Heads." Yahweh and Baal both conquer the "Sea," also called "Litan/Leviathan." In the Baal Cycle, the sea is portrayed as a multiheaded serpent, corresponding to the "heads" (plural) in Ps 74:13. Yamm is also called by the same name ("monster") used of Yahweh's opponent (Ugaritic *tnn* = Hebrew *taninim*). A Ugaritic magical text might also describe the scattering of Yamm's corpse in the desert (cf. Ps 74:14), although the Ugaritic text is too difficult to decipher at this point for anyone to be certain of this meaning.

The use of the Baal Cycle as an analogy to illustrate the power of Yahweh can be found in other OT passages. Isaiah describes Yahweh's final victory over evil in terms of slaying "Leviathan . . . the monster [taninim] of the sea" (Isa 27:1). To describe the serpent, Isaiah also uses the same two adjectives that are used in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle: "fleeing" / "gliding" (Hebrew *brh*) and "twisting" / "coiling" (Hebrew *qltn*). Job 3:8 and Job 41:1–34 refer to Leviathan, and Job 7:12 equates the sea (*yam*) with the monster (*tanin*). Other Biblical texts combine allusions to this myth with another name for the sea monster: "Rahab" (Job 9:13; 26:12–13; Ps 89:9–10; Isa 51:9–10). The name "Rahab" is used as a derogatory name for Egypt (Ps 87:4;



Will it till the valleys behind you?<sup>1</sup> Will you rely on it for its great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to it?

<sup>12</sup>Can you trust it to haul in your grain and bring it to your threshing floor?

<sup>13</sup>"The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, though they cannot compare with the wings and feathers of the stork.

<sup>14</sup>She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, un mindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them.

<sup>16</sup>She treats her young harshly,<sup>1</sup> as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labor was in vain.

<sup>17</sup>For God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense.<sup>u</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Yet when she spreads her feathers to run, she laughs at horse and rider.

<sup>19</sup>"Do you give the horse its strength or clothe its neck with a flowing mane?"

larger ears. Here the donkey is not the dumb and lazy animal of the popular Western image, but a symbol of the wild, as it cannot be tamed (v. 7; cf. 16:12; Isa 32:14; Jer 2:24, 14:6). Assyrian reliefs depict the hunting of such wild donkeys. People who break treaties are cursed to roam the desert like the wild ass, the desert symbolizing the periphery of civilization. This sequence of animals in ch. 39 includes those that were considered mysterious in the ancient world and had admirable qualities.

**39:9** *the wild ox.* This animal is very strong and difficult to tame (cf. Dt 33:17; Ps 92:10). In the Ugaritic texts, the goddess Astarte hunts a bull, as did the Assyrian kings. Ox hunting is also depicted on Assyrian reliefs, and a beautiful golden dish from Ugarit shows a king in his chariot hunting wild bulls.

**39:16** *treats her young harshly.* Ancient people thought that the ostrich, out of cruelty (cf. La 4:3; "heartless like ostriches"), left its young after laying the eggs.

**39:18** *laughs at horse and rider.* The ostrich can outrun a

horse, as observed by Xenophon. Ostriches are depicted in Egyptian paintings, and the ostrich feather was the symbol of the goddess Maat. They are objects of curiosity as demonstrated in art that shows Tutankhamun hunting ostriches and an Assyrian hero pursuing an ostrich.

**39:19** *the horse.* Described as a war animal that is used for carrying a quiver, spear and lance (v. 23), and that is familiar with the scent and cry of battle (v. 25). Horses were used to pull chariots, but riding came later. Assyrian reliefs show soldiers on horseback, but cavalry was applied on a large scale only by Alexander the Great, the Scythians and the Parthians. In v. 20, the horse leaps like a locust, and in Joel 2:4 locusts are compared to running horses.

**39:26–27** *the hawk . . . the eagle.* The last two animals described are birds of prey and large meat eaters. They have mighty wings (v. 26) extending 6.5 feet (2 meters) in length. The young birds drink blood and, like vultures, they eat corpses on the battlefield (v. 30; cf. Mt 24:28).

**40** The Lord said to Job:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>"Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"

it cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>25</sup>At the blast of the trumpet<sup>2</sup> it snorts, "Aha!" It catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread its wings toward the south?

<sup>27</sup>Does the eagle soar at your command and build its nest on high?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>28</sup>It dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is its stronghold.

<sup>29</sup>From there it looks for food; its eyes detect it from afar.

<sup>30</sup>Its young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there it is.<sup>5</sup>

someone greater than him. This same gesture is seen much earlier on the stele of Hammurabi as he stands before the god Shamash. Though it is a well-known ges-

**40:9** *an arm like God's.* The arm (like the hand) can indicate power and strength, as in the Hebrew of 22:8 (see note there). In Ex 6:6, God saves Israel with an "outstretched arm." In a letter from Ugarit, the hands of the

## IDENTIFICATION OF BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN

In the dialogues, Job wonders why God is treating him like a chaos creature (Job 7:12); in the discourses, Job suggests that God is acting like a chaos creature (Job 30:20–23). Here in God's second set of speeches, Yahweh picks up both of Job's charges and alters Job's fundamental assumption by implying that chaos creatures are in fact part of God's ordered world.

Most of the ancient world believed that chaos creatures were outside of the established order and often viewed them as a threat to that order. In contrast, the Hebrew Bible consistently expresses God's control of chaos creatures and merges them into the ordered cosmos. For example, they are created (which entails being drawn into the ordered cosmos) in Ge 1:21, and they are passive rather than threatening in Ps 104:26.

The passages about Behemoth and Leviathan appropriately follow Yahweh's challenge to Job to bring low all the proud (Job 40:11), for Leviathan is identified as the king over all who are proud (Job 41:34). Leviathan should be labeled an "anti-cosmos creature" rather than a "chaos creature." These creatures exist on the fringes of the ordered world. Although creation entailed bringing order to the cosmos, the cosmos was not seen as a totally ordered system. The fact that there is a Garden of Eden, where a high level of order exists, but also space outside the garden, where order has yet to be established, evidences the distinction. Liminal creatures (such as coyote, owl and ostrich) are near the boundaries of the ordered world. Nonzoological creatures such as Behemoth, Leviathan, Rahab and Tannin are not viewed as unbridled threats, but neither are they drawn totally into the ordered sphere. Nahash, the serpent of Ge 3, is another example of an anti-cosmos creature. Anti-cosmos creatures are creations of God, but are the "thorns" and "thistles" of the animal world.

Significant problems exist for the suggestions that Behemoth and Leviathan are either zoological specimens or now-extinct creatures that once roamed the earth. In the former category, while Behemoth's location among the lotus plants in the reeds of the marsh (Job 40:21–24) might bring to mind the mighty hippopotamus, the description of the tail (Job 40:17) makes such identification impossible. Likewise, those who

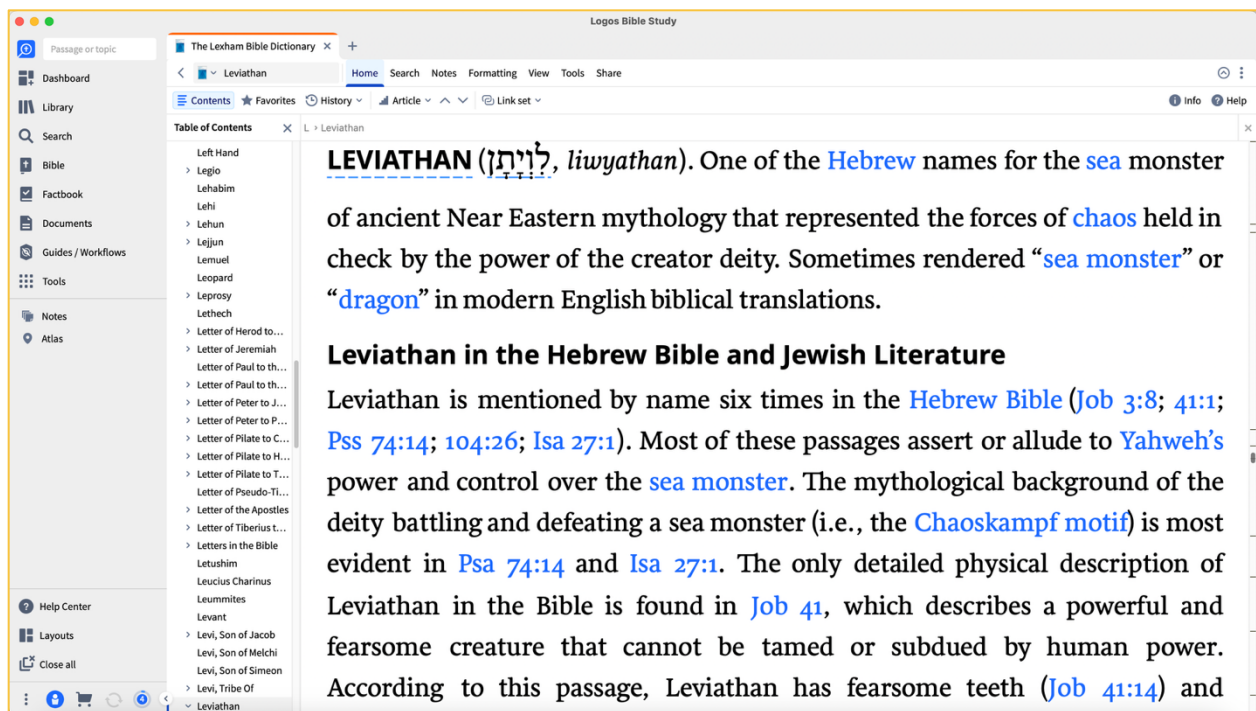
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The article on “Chaos Monsters” helpfully points out that the Leviathan figure is part of a larger ancient Near Eastern motif:

- There is a rivalry between the forces of chaos, represented by the uncontrollable sea and embodied by the Leviathan figure, and a deity who intends to bring order to the chaos.
- The deity who vanquishes chaos/Leviathan is the divine king.
- In the Bible, Yhwh is always depicted as superior to Leviathan.

### Step 3b: Consult Bible dictionary

The *LBD*'s article on “Leviathan” provides additional cultural background:



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Lexham Bible Dictionary article on Leviathan. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'The Lexham Bible Dictionary'. The article title is 'LEVIATHAN (לְוִיָּתָן, *liwyathan*)'. The main text describes Leviathan as a sea monster of ancient Near Eastern mythology, representing chaos, and mentions its biblical references in Job 3:8, 41:1, Psalm 74:14, Isaiah 27:1, and Job 41:14. A sub-section titled 'Leviathan in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish Literature' provides further details on its biblical mentions and the Chaoskampf motif.

Some notes worth taking from the dictionary article include the following:

- The Hebrew text of Isaiah 27:1 matches up with the Ugaritic excerpt.
- The phrase “Baal Epic” is hyperlinked to another dictionary entry.
- The Ugaritic language is close to Hebrew and that the Ugaritic civilization came to an end around 1200 BC.
- The Ugaritic Baal Epic predates Isaiah by at least 500 years, yet Isaiah 27:1 matches up with the Ugaritic text. That must mean Isaiah was familiar with Ugaritic tradition, either in its written or oral form.

Summarize its cultural meaning and significance for ourselves.

The biblical portrayal of Leviathan fits the imagery of the hostile, multi-headed, serpentine sea creature that is evidenced throughout the ancient Near Eastern world. This creature embodied the forces of chaos that must be vanquished by a supreme divine being. Whoever could subdue chaos and bring order to the cosmos would be hailed as the divine king and worthy of adoration and worship.

#### **Step 4: Reread the Passage with Cultural Context in Mind**

Reread Isaiah 27:1 with its cultural context in mind:

In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

## **INSPIRATION AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

### **Two Concerns about Studying Cultural Backgrounds**

1. **Concern:** Exposure to pagan influence from nonbiblical sources.

**Reaction:** Avoid ancient nonbiblical sources.

**Response:** This is a valid concern if we are seeking ultimate spiritual truth from nonbiblical sources. The prophet Isaiah shows us that we can be well-versed in cultural ideas without losing sight of biblical truth.

2. **Concern:** Parallels between the Bible and nonbiblical sources.

**Reactions:** (1) Explain the parallels as borrowing by the Bible. (2) Downplay the parallels. (3) Explain the parallels as borrowing by the pagan cultures.

**Response:** As diligent and honest students of Scripture, we can think about the parallels in ways that are both intellectually honest and faithful to the inspiration of Scripture. Some parallels point to a biblical author's strategy to polemicize against the religious claims of their surrounding nations. Some parallels reflect shared imagery that works as a cultural grammar for conveying theological ideas. God knew exactly what he was working with when he sovereignly chose the ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman contexts from which to inspire Scripture. We need to respect God's choice and work with the material he's given us.

## GIVE IT A TRY

### Practice 11.1

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul writes to a man named Philemon on behalf of Philemon's slave, Onesimus. Many have struggled over the fact that Paul doesn't urge Philemon to release Onesimus as a slave, especially in light of the tragic memory of chattel slavery of Africans in the modern West. Studying the cultural institution of slavery in Paul's time and place in the world may not satisfy all our questions about his letter to Philemon, but it can help us better understand his words in their own cultural context.

Study the cultural background to Paul's letter to Philemon as it relates to slavery:

- Read Philemon at least twice (it's only one chapter; 25 verses).
  - Make notes about Paul's statements regarding slavery and any concept that could be related to this.
- Consult a reliable study Bible and Bible dictionary:
  - Note when, where, and under what circumstances Paul wrote his letter.
  - Note how slavery was practiced and experienced in Paul's time and place.
  - The articles on slavery at bibleodyssey.org (scan the QR code) may also be helpful.<sup>3</sup>



- Write a summarizing backstory to the letter of Philemon. Use the notetaking space on the next page.
- Reread Philemon with the cultural context of slavery in mind.

---

<sup>3</sup> This website is produced by the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), the oldest active scholarly society for biblical studies in the world. Scholars of diverse religious and nonreligious persuasions and backgrounds make up SBL's membership and contribute to bibleodyssey.org. Consult with this in mind and glean what is useful.



## Episode 12

# Genre

### Key Idea

Genre establishes for the reader a set of expectations for how to read a text.

### GENRE

Genre refers to a set of characteristics that define a type of expression, such as literature, music, and aesthetic.

Narrative	Prophecy	Poetry & Wisdom	
<p><b>OLD TESTAMENT</b></p> <p>Genesis            1 &amp; 2 Kings            Exodus            1 &amp; 2 Chronicles            Numbers           Ezra            Joshua            Nehemiah            Judges            Esther            Ruth               Daniel 1-6            1 &amp; 2 Samuel</p> <p><b>NEW TESTAMENT</b></p> <p>Matthew           John            Mark               Acts            Luke</p>	<p><b>MINOR</b></p> <p>Hosea              Habakkuk            Joel                Zephaniah            Amos               Haggai            Obadiah           Zechariah            Jonah               Malachi            Micah               Daniel 7-12            Nahum</p> <p><b>MAJOR</b></p> <p>Isaiah            Jeremiah            Ezekiel</p> <p><b>APOCALYPTIC</b></p> <p>Revelation</p>	<p><b>SONGS</b></p> <p>Psalms            Song of Songs            Lamentations</p> <p><b>WISDOM</b></p> <p>Proverbs            Ecclesiasties            Job</p>	
		<p><b>Law</b></p> <p><b>COVENANT</b></p> <p>Exodus 20-23            Deuteronomy</p> <p><b>RITUAL &amp; CIVIL</b></p> <p>Leviticus            Numbers 5-6,            15, 28-30</p>	
<p><b>GENRES OF THE BIBLE</b></p>		<p><b>Letters</b></p> <p>Romans            1 &amp; 2 Corinthians            Galatians</p> <p>Galatians            Ephesians            Philippians            Colossians            1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians</p> <p>1 &amp; 2 Timothy            Titus            Philemon            Hebrews            James</p> <p>1 &amp; 2 Peter            1, 2, 3 John            Jude</p>	


## The Modern Pentchant for Naming Genres

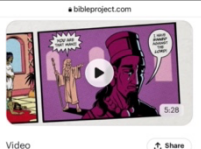
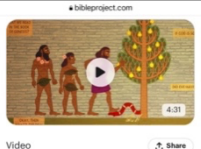
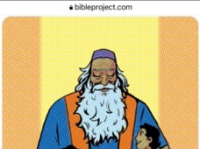







Because many, if not most, of our biblical genre labels are modern descriptors, we want to be careful not to force texts of Scripture into our literary categories. The door is open for us to hear Scripture more authentically when we use our genre labels as a guide rather than as a strict rule.

## Keep It Simple

Perhaps the best way to become acquainted with the biblical genres is to ease into them with the help of accessible resources.

BibleProject organizes the biblical genres into three overarching genres: (1) narrative, (2) poetry, and (3) prose, which they further refine into various subgenres.



<b>WATCH</b>	<b>WATCH</b>	<b>WATCH</b>	<b>WATCH</b>	<b>WATCH</b>
 Video <span>Share</span>	 Video <span>Share</span>	 VIDEO SERIES <span>Share</span>	 VIDEO SERIES <span>Share</span>	 VIDEO SERIES <span>Share</span>
<b>Literary Styles</b> To better understand the Bible, we have to first learn to recognize the different literary styles used by the biblical authors. <small>How to Read the Bible Series • Jun 22, 2017</small> <a href="#">Continue the Series</a>	<b>Ancient Jewish Meditation Literature</b> The Bible is a book made for a lifetime of study. Explore how the style of the Bible invites readers into deeper thought and meditation on its words. <small>How to Read the Bible Series • Aug 3, 2017</small>	<small>How to Read the Bible Series</small> <b>How to Read Biblical Narrative</b>	<small>How to Read the Bible Series</small> <b>How to Read Biblical Poetry</b>	<small>How to Read the Bible Series</small> <b>How to Read Biblical Prose</b>
Literary Styles	Ancient Jewish Meditation Literature	Biblical Narrative	Biblical Poetry	Biblical Prose
				

## GIVE IT A TRY

### Practice 12.1

Watch the How to Read Biblical Narrative series by BibleProject and then write an outline of the narrative subgenres explored in the series. Add as many defining characteristics as you can for each subgenre.

E.g.:

1. *Subgenre 1*
  - a. *Characteristic 1*
  - b. *Characteristic 2*
  - c. *Characteristic ...*

## **Practice 12.2**

Watch the How to Read Biblical Poetry series by BibleProject and then write an outline of the narrative subgenres explored in the series. Add as many defining characteristics as you can for each subgenre.

E.g.:

1. *Subgenre 1*

- a. *Characteristic 1*
- b. *Characteristic 2*
- c. *Characteristic ...*

### **Practice 12.3**

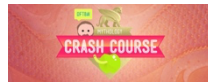
Watch the How to Read Biblical Prose series by BibleProject and then write an outline of the narrative subgenres explored in the series. Add as many defining characteristics as you can for each subgenre.

E.g.:

1. *Subgenre 1*


- a. *Characteristic 1*
- b. *Characteristic 2*
- c. *Characteristic ...*

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



## LISTEN

• bibleproject.com



PODCAST SERIES Share

### How To Read the Bible

Follow discussions between Tim & Jon as they prepare to write the "How to Read the Bible" series of videos. This series is aimed...

[▶ Play First Episode](#)

How to Read the Bible  
Podcast Series



## WATCH



**Description** ×

### What Is Myth? Crash Course World Mythology #1

55K	2,438,794	2017
Likes	Views	Feb 24

World Mythology

Welcome to Crash Course World Mythology, our latest adventure (and this series may be literally adventurous) in education. Over the next 40 episodes or so, we and Mike Rogretta are going to learn about the world by looking at the foundational stories of a bunch of different cultural traditions. We're going to look at the ways that people's stories define...more

What is Myth?



## *Episode 13*

# Linguistic Context and Word Study

### **Key Idea**

Words are like icebergs: on the surface they say something but below lies a world of meaning. Translation gets us to the iceberg. Word study takes us below the surface.

### **THE BIBLICAL LANGUAGES**

The biblical languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek—express cultural ideas and values.

### **English and Original Biblical Language (OBL) Words**

Often, English does not share a one-to-one correspondence with the biblical languages.

#### ***One OBL word to many English words***

One OBL word has many shades of meaning that a single English word does not cover. In this case, many English words can be used to translate one OBL word.

- $\tau\upsilon\pi\eta$  [*khesed*] → loyalty, lovingkindness, steadfast love, mercy

#### ***Many OBL words to one English word***

Many OBL words express very specific meanings that do not have corresponding specific English words. In this case, one English word is often used to translate different OBL words.

- *phileo, stergo, erao, agapao* → love

Often, English words include concepts that OBL words don't have, and vice versa.

- אֶהְבֵּה → love
  - o English “love” can refer to preference, but also tender feelings
  - o אֶהְבֵּה can refer to preference, but also allegiance or loyalty in legal contexts

## WORD STUDIES

We have one goal in mind when doing a word study:

Understanding what a word means \_\_\_\_\_ in a specific passage.

When studying a biblical word, we seek to understand the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word that underlies the English translation we read in a given passage.

### Illegitimate Totality Transfer

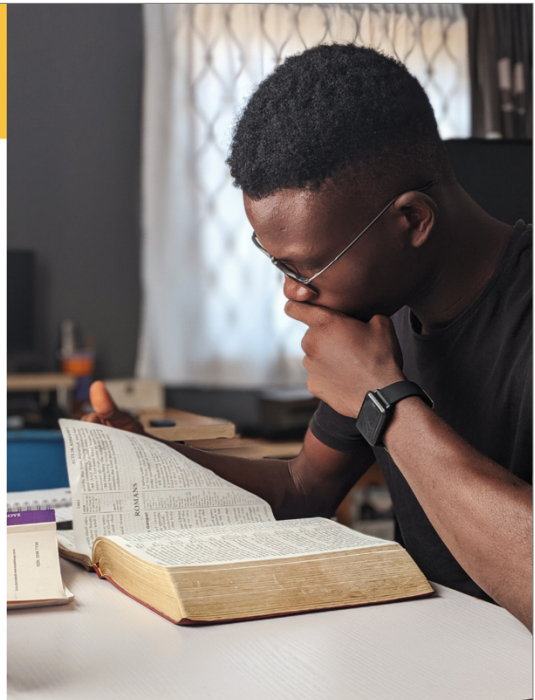
It is an error to assume all possible meanings of a word apply to every use of that word.

### Andrew Abernethy's Four-Step Word Study Process

## 4-Step Word Study

- 1 Select a word in your passage you want to study**  
*study the underlying ancient word*
- 2 Examine all occurrences of that word in the Bible**  
*start in the same book, then expand to the same genre, then the same testament*
- 3 Synthesize your findings in your own words**  
*summarize meaning(s) according to book, genre, and then other texts in the same testament*
- 4 Reread your passage in light of your study**

Andrew Abernethy, *Savoring Scripture: A Six-Step Guide to Studying the Bible*  
(Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022)



## Word Study Example

### Psalm 23:6

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

### Step 1: Select Your Word

Using STEP Bible, pull up Psalm 23:6 and click on the hyperlinked word “follow”:

The screenshot shows the STEP Bible interface. The main text is Psalm 23:6: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." The word "follow" is highlighted in blue. A word analysis panel is open on the right, showing the Hebrew root **רָדַף** (ra.daph) and its meaning: "to pursue, put to flight, chase, dog, attend closely upon". The panel also lists related words, including "persecution (mur.daph - רָדַף)".

Click on the hyperlinked “146 x” in the word analysis panel to see every usage of *radaph*:

The screenshot shows the STEP Bible interface with the word analysis panel for **רָדַף** (ra.daph) open. The panel displays 146 usages of the word across various scriptures, including Genesis 14:14, Exodus 14:15, and Leviticus 26:8. The word analysis panel also shows the meaning of the word and related words, including "persecution (mur.daph - רָדַף)".

## Step 2a: Examine Your Word – In the Same Book

Looking first at *radaph* in the book of Psalms, we count 20 occurrences in 20 verses:

The screenshot shows the STEP Bible website interface. The search bar contains 'radaph' and the results are filtered to the book of Psalms. The search results list 20 verses where the word is used, with the word highlighted in red. A 'Word analysis' panel on the right provides a Hebrew root (רָדַף) and a list of meanings and related words.

Click on a verse to open a new panel to read the verse in its literary context:

The screenshot shows the STEP Bible website interface. The search bar contains 'radaph' and the results are filtered to the book of Psalms. The search results list 20 verses where the word is used, with the word highlighted in red. A 'Word analysis' panel on the right provides a Hebrew root (רָדַף) and a list of meanings and related words.

**Tip:** One way to get a sense of this term is to say “radaph” in place of where the English translation is used. This technique helps minimize the influence of the English translation on our analysis.

O Lord my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my **radaph**-ers and deliver me (Psalm 7:1)

For he did not remember to show kindness, but **radaph**-ed the poor and needy and the brokenhearted, to put them to death. (Psalm 109:16)

Categorize the senses of *radaph* in Psalms:

## ***radaph* in Psalms**

### ***radaph* is hostile action (17x)**

- **by enemies (14x)**
  - **as harm against the innocent** (7:1; 31:15; 35:3; 69:26; 109:16; 119:84, 86, 157, 161; 142:6; 143:3)
  - **as chasing the psalmist** (7:5; 71:11; 119:50)
- **by the the psalmist (1x)**
  - **as chasing enemies** (18:37)
- **by God (2x)**
  - **as chasing enemies** (35:6)
  - **as harm against enemies** (83:15)

### ***radaph* is directional movement (3x)**

- **by good qualities (1x)**
  - **toward the psalmist** (23:6)
- **by people**
  - **toward what is good** (34:14; 38:20)

## Step 2b: Examine Your Word – In the Same Genre

Nearly all instances of *radaph* in Psalms occur in lament or prayers for God's help. Now examine *radaph* in poetic lament and prayers outside of Psalms.

### *radaph* in Job and Lamentations

*radaph* is hostile action (10x)

- by God (3x)
  - as harm against the speaker/his people (Job 13:25; Lam 3:43)
  - as harm against his people's enemies (Lam 3:66)
- by a critic (2x)
  - as criticism against the speaker (Job 19:22, 28)
- by hostile forces (1x)
  - as harm against the speaker (Job 30:15)
- by enemies (4x)
  - as chasing the people/nation of Judah (Lam 1:3, 6; 4:19; 5:5)

## Step 2c: Examine Your Word – In the Same Testament

A summary of some key observations about the meaning of *radaph* in the rest of the Old Testament:

- In narrative: *radaph* always occurs in stories about military battle to denote chasing one's enemies.
- In wisdom of Proverbs: *radaph* is used similarly to the way it denotes active action in Psalms, where one may either pursue qualities, such as righteous, but also evil, and where punitive consequences pursue the sinner. In the case of Prov 19:7, a person may (metaphorically) *radaph* after friends with words.
- In law: *radaph* expresses military or hostile chasing, just like in narrative, as part of curses against Israel should they fail to obey God's commands. Deuteronomy 28:45 states that all the curses of the law will *radaph* Israel if they betray God. In a different vein, Deuteronomy 16:20 commands the Israelites to *radaph* justice.

- In prophetic texts: *radaph* mostly exhibits a combination of hostile chasing and harm. But we also see cases where people *radaph* gifts (Isa 1:23), strong drink (Isa 5:11), righteousness (Isa 51:1), knowledge of Yhwh (Hos 6:3), and wind (Hos 12:1).

### **Step 3: Synthesize Your Findings**

Our survey of the word *radaph* in the Old Testament yields a compelling picture:

- *radaph* can be a positive or negative action, it all depends on the situation.
- In hostile contexts, which is the majority of occurrences, *radaph* always involves either chasing or inflicting harm; anyone, bad guys, good guys, even God, can be attributed with this sense of *radaph*.
- Nonhostile uses are quite rare. They usually involve *radaph*-ing after an abstract object (e.g., righteousness, evil, good) or nonperson (strong drink, wind).
- Regardless of whether the usage is hostile or not, *radaph* always has an aggressive or urgent sense to it.

### **Step 4: Reread Your Passage**

Reread Psalm 23:6 with what we've learned about *radaph* in mind:

Surely goodness and mercy shall ***radaph*** me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

## GIVE IT A TRY

### Practice 13.1

Read Matthew 5:5 in the English Standard Version (ESV) on [stepbible.org](http://stepbible.org), then do the following:

1. Click on the word “meek” and provide the following information:
  - a. Write the transliteration<sup>4</sup> of the Greek word: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Write the kind of word it is (noun, verb, adjective, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Write the number of occurrences in the New Testament: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Click on the number of occurrences link and provide the following information (use the genre chart from the previous Genre lesson for help):
  - a. How many times does the Greek word occur in the Gospel of Matthew? List each verse reference.
  - b. How many times does the Greek word occur in similar genres? List each verse reference.
  - c. How many times does the Greek word occur in a letter? List each verse reference.
  - d. How many times does the Greek word occur in Revelation?
  
3. Click on each verse reference and read each usage of the Greek word in its larger passage. Answer the following questions for each usage. Use the next page to record your notes.
  - a. Who, what object, or what action does the Greek word describe?
  - b. Is the Greek word being used as a positive or negative?
  - c. What words does it compare to?
  - d. What words does it contrast to?

---

<sup>4</sup> A transliteration uses English letters to spell out the letters and sounds of a foreign word. For example, the Greek word ἀγάπη (“love”) is transliterated with English letters as *agapē*. In STEP Bible, the transliteration can be found in the Word Analysis panel, next to the Greek word and in parenthesis.

***Use this page for making notes on step 3 from the previous page. Continue to the next page when you're ready to move to step 4.***







**Module 5**  
**Reading for the**  
**Theological**  
**Principle**



## *Episode 14*

# Defining the Theological Principle

### **Key Idea**

Hearing the Bible on its own terms equips us to hear the Bible for our own time.

### **Then and Now**

Scripture addresses context-specific situations in the past while having ongoing relevance for generations that follow. This means that even though ...

*the Bible wasn't written \_\_\_\_\_ us, it was still written \_\_\_\_\_ us as God's inspired Word.*

### **THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE**

The message of who God is and what we want is the Scriptural treasure we want to unearth when we read and study the Bible.

*The theological principles of Scripture refer to broader, universal realities that will show up in unique ways in human communities. They focus on God's attributes, his actions, and how we are to live in relationship to him and others.*

## Example: The Case of Food and Holiness

***In Leviticus 11, God connects holiness with keeping Kosher (eating only certain animals)***

<sup>44</sup> For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy, for I am holy**. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. <sup>45</sup> For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore **be holy, for I am holy.**”

<sup>46</sup> This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, <sup>47</sup> **to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean** and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.



Illumination on parchment of Christ fulfilling the Law (left) and Moses giving the food commandments (right). *Moïse explique les tables de la loi, Bible de Bury*, by Master Hugo, ca. 1135–1140.

***In Acts 10, God tells Peter in a vision to break Kosher law***

<sup>9</sup>The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. <sup>10</sup>And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance <sup>11</sup>and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. <sup>12</sup>**In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.** <sup>13</sup>**And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”** <sup>14</sup>**But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”** <sup>15</sup>**And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.”** <sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.



Woodcut for *Die Bibel in Bildern*, by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794 –1872), 1860.

***In Matthew 15, Jesus clarifies what makes a person clean or unclean***

<sup>10</sup> And he [Jesus] called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: <sup>11</sup>**it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.**”


***In 1 Peter 1, the Apostle Peter connects holiness with Christ-shaped living***

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, **do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,** <sup>15</sup> **but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,** <sup>16</sup> **since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”**

**Guidelines for Discerning the Theological Principle**

As we discern the theological principle in a passage, we can use guidelines from Duvall and Hays to keep us on track:

## Guidelines for the Theological Principle



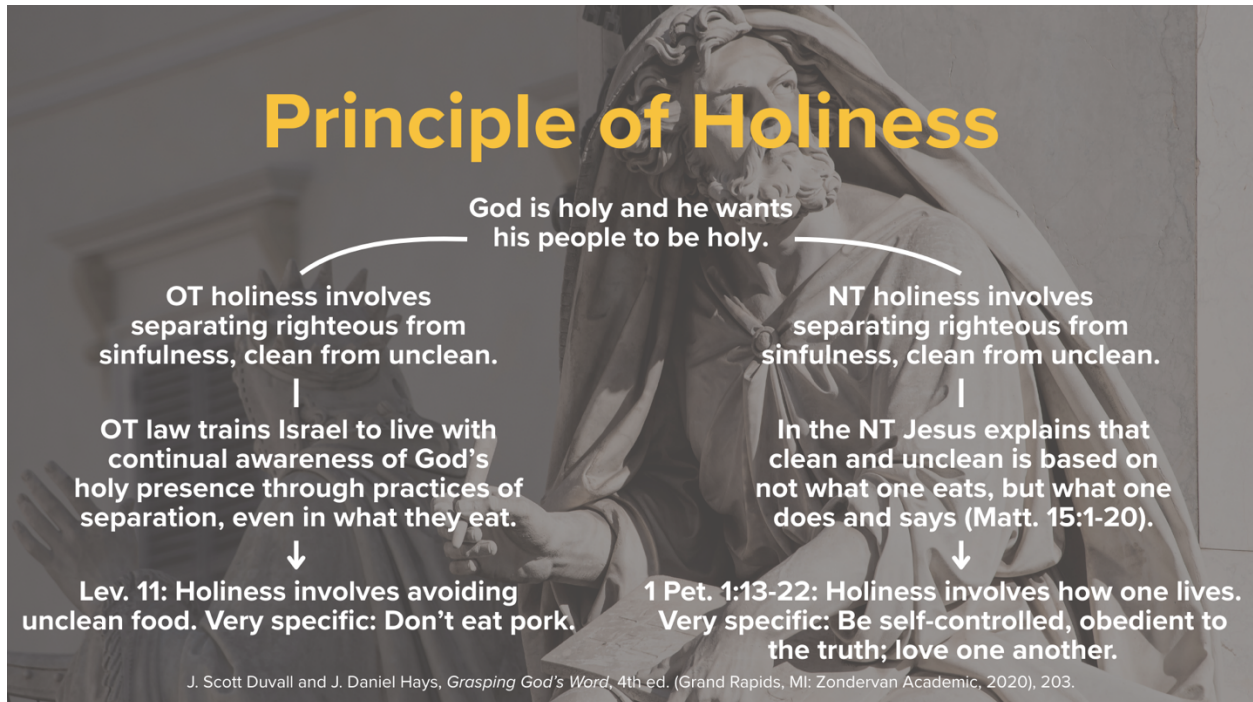
**The principle should ...**

- be reflected in the text.
- be timeless and not tied to a specific situation.
- not be culturally bound.
- correspond to the teaching of the rest of Scripture.
- be relevant to both the biblical audience and any contemporary audience.

J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 30.

## Discerning the Principle of Holiness in the Bible

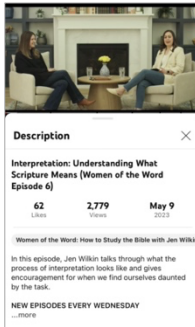
To help us visualize the move from the specifics of the biblical text to a governing theological principle, Duvall and Hays diagram for us the principle of God's holiness as it manifests at different levels of specificity in both the Old and New Testaments:



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



### WATCH



Understanding What Scripture Means



### READ



Roger E. Olson – Bible and Bible Interpretation



## THINK ABOUT THIS

- After reading Roger Olson's article linked above, how would you describe the relationship between the Bible itself and our interpretation of the Bible? Do you agree or disagree with Olson?
- Why does it matter that we even identify a passage's theological principle(s)?

## *Episode 15*

# Finding the Theological Principle

### **Key Idea**

We want to find the underlying truth that applies to everyone, everywhere, at all times.

### **UNEARTHING THE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE**

Six steps for finding the theological principle of a biblical passage:

1. **Synthesize the** \_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_ of the passage for the original audience.
2. **Identify significant** \_\_\_\_\_ between the biblical situation and the contemporary situation.
3. **Identify** \_\_\_\_\_ between the biblical situation and the contemporary situation.
4. **Articulate the** \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ **meaning** as a more general statement in one or two sentences.
5. **Select the theological principle** that is as \_\_\_\_\_ as possible while still \_\_\_\_\_ enough to apply to both the original and contemporary audiences.
6. **Test the theological principle** with the rest of \_\_\_\_\_.

## EXAMPLE: THE CASE OF ISAIAH 6:1

### *Isaiah 6:1*

In the year that King Uzziah died I [Isaiah] saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

### Step 1: Synthesize the Meaning and Purpose

The prophet Isaiah **was standing** in the Jerusalem temple when he **experienced** a vision of Yhwh sitting on a throne. Yhwh **was** so large that the bottom of his robe filled the temple. This vision **came** in the year that Judah's king, Uzziah, **had died**. Uzziah's reign saw peace and prosperity come to the nation of Judah. However, in the last five years of Uzziah's life, the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III **came** to power and **started** dominating the Middle East. Tiglath-pileser **threatened** Judah's safety and independence during a time of national vulnerability. Set within its larger literary subunit, this verse begins a vision account about describing how Yhwh commissions Isaiah to be his prophet to the nation of Judah, to tell the nation about his impending judgment upon them for their disobedience to his commands. The purpose of Isaiah 6:1 is to note when Isaiah experienced his vision and to clarify the focus of his vision.

### Step 2: Identify Significant Differences



**Isaiah 6:1**

IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

ANCIENT ISRAEL	TODAY
The nation of Judah was God's people.	The global church is God's people.
The Jerusalem temple was the designated place of worship.	Local communities of faith worship God wherever they are.
King Uzziah led God's people.	Church leaders lead God's people.
Assyria threatens the nation of Judah.	Threats to God's people manifest in unique ways depending on the local contexts.

### Step 3: Identify Similarities

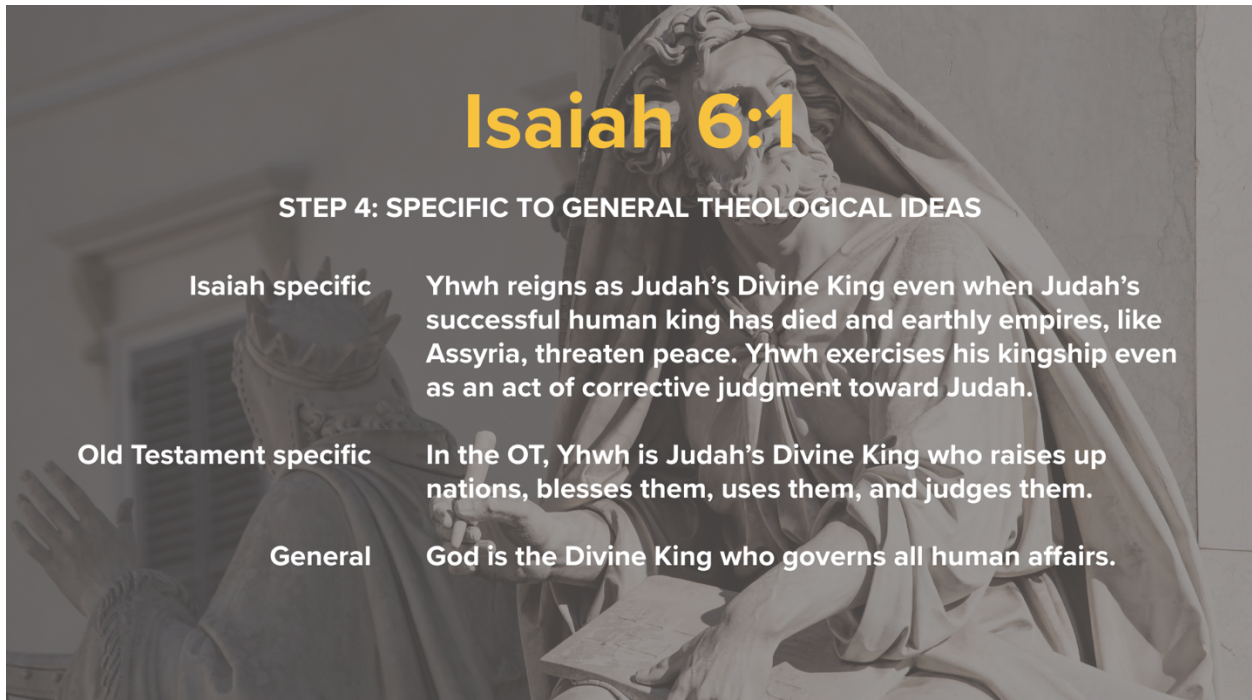


## Isaiah 6:1

**STEP 3: IDENTIFY SIMILARITIES**

ANCIENT ISRAEL	TODAY
The passage concerns the people of God.	Followers Jesus, the Church, are the people of God.
The community faced crisis and fear.	The Church suffers crises and fear.
Human leadership was frail.	Human leadership is just as frail.
Judah had a sin problem.	We struggle with that same sin problem.
God is alive and sovereign.	God hasn't changed. God still lives and reigns.

### Step 4: Articulate the Context-Specific Meaning in More General Terms



## Isaiah 6:1

**STEP 4: SPECIFIC TO GENERAL THEOLOGICAL IDEAS**

Isaiah specific	Yhwh reigns as Judah's Divine King even when Judah's successful human king has died and earthly empires, like Assyria, threaten peace. Yhwh exercises his kingship even as an act of corrective judgment toward Judah.
Old Testament specific	In the OT, Yhwh is Judah's Divine King who raises up nations, blesses them, uses them, and judges them.
General	God is the Divine King who governs all human affairs.

### **Step 5: Select the Theological Principle**

One could possibly generate additional statements that might capture the passage's underlying theology, at which point one would narrow their list down to the principle they think best reflects the text. And maybe, one would discover more than one theological principle at work in the same passage.

### **Step 6: Test Against the Rest of Scripture**

#### ***Proverbs 21:1 – Yhwh is sovereign over kings***

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD;  
he turns it wherever he will.

#### ***Ezra 6:22 – Yhwh is sovereign over kings***

And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, **for the LORD** had made them joyful and **had turned the heart of the king of Assyria** to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

#### ***Amos 6:14 – Yhwh is sovereign over nations***

“For behold, **I will raise up against you a nation**,  
O house of Israel,” **declares the LORD**, the God of hosts;  
“and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath  
to the Brook of the Arabah.”

#### ***Habakkuk 1:6 – Yhwh is sovereign over nations***

For behold, **I am raising up the Chaldeans**,  
that bitter and hasty nation,  
who march through the breadth of the earth,  
to seize dwellings not their own.

#### ***Daniel 5:18 – Yhwh is sovereign over kings***

O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty.

### ***Psalm 47 – Yhwh is King***

- 1 Clap your hands, all peoples!  
Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
- 2 **For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared,  
a great king over all the earth.**
- 6 **Sing praises to God**, sing praises!  
**Sing praises to our King**, sing praises!
- 7 **For God is the King of all the earth;**  
sing praises with a psalm!
- 8 **God reigns over the nations;**  
**God sits on his holy throne.**
- 9 The princes of the peoples gather  
as the people of the God of Abraham.  
**For the shields of the earth belong to God;**  
**he is highly exalted!**

### ***Kingdom of God in the New Testament***

The phrase “kingdom of God/heaven” occurs 85x in the Gospels, and 75 of these occurrences are spoken by Jesus.

### ***John 18:33–38 – Jesus reigns over his kingdom***

<sup>33</sup> So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, **“Are you the King of the Jews?”** <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” <sup>36</sup> **Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”** <sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.

***1 Timothy 6:15 – Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords***

<sup>13</sup> I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, <sup>14</sup> to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of **our Lord Jesus Christ**, <sup>15</sup> which he will display at the proper time—**he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords**, <sup>16</sup> who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

***Revelation 17:14 – Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords***

They will make war on **the Lamb**, and the Lamb will conquer them, **for he is Lord of lords and King of kings**, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

***Revelation 19:16 – Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords***

On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, **King of kings and Lord of lords**.

***John 5:19–29 – Jesus (Son) and Yhwh (Father) are sovereign over life and death***

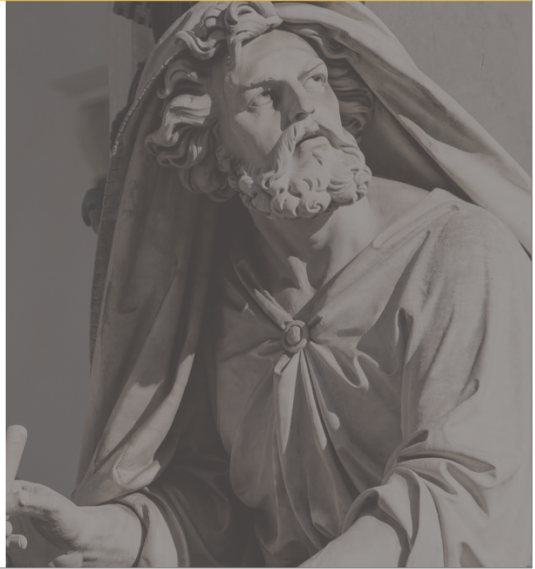
<sup>19</sup> So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. **For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.** <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. <sup>21</sup> **For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.** <sup>22</sup> **For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,** <sup>23</sup> **that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.** <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

<sup>25</sup> “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> **For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.** <sup>27</sup> **And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.** <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

## Theological Principle in Isaiah 6:1

God's divine kingship ...

- is reflected in the specifics of Isaiah 6:1.
- is timeless and not tied to a specific situation.
- transcends cultural bounds.
- corresponds to the teaching of the rest of Scripture.
- is relevant to both the original and the contemporary audience.



## **GIVE IT A TRY**

### **Practice 15.1**

In Practice 10.1 from lesson 10, you closely read and studied the background of Nahum 1. Now use your notes and our six-step method to find one of the passage's underlying theological principles.

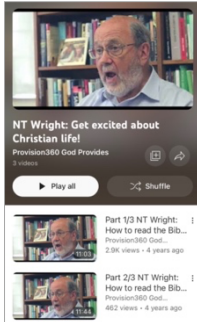
**Practice 15.2**

In lesson 13 on word studies, we worked through the meaning and significance of the Hebrew word *radaph* in Psalm 23:6. Now, return to Psalm 23 and do a close reading and background study of this psalm. Take special care to understand the ancient meaning of the shepherd imagery in this psalm by using a reliable study bible and/or bible dictionary. Then use your notes and our six-step method to find any theological principles in the psalm.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



### WATCH



How to read the Bible  
and Apply It



## THINK ABOUT THIS

- What roadblocks have you encountered or anticipate encountering when drawing out a passage's theological principles?
- After watching N.T. Wright's video series linked above, what would you say is the preventative measure we must take to avoid reducing scripture to soundbites, unconnected from other soundbites?

# **Module 6**

## **Reading For**

### **Application**



## Episode 16

# Defining Application

### Key Idea

A healthy and God-centered application of biblical truth demands our honesty and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

### DEFINITION

At a basic level, **applying** theological principles means to **live out** what we understand from the Bible.

### CHALLENGES OF APPLICATION

Even with a God-centered approach to the Bible, applying scriptural truth to our lives can be easier said than done.

### Reflect: Challenges to applying the Bible

Answer the prompt: “The Bible can be difficult to apply because \_\_\_\_\_.”

List as many challenges as you like.

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### Three Areas of Dependence

Andrew Abernethy prioritizes a prayer of dependence on the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the application phase. Prayer for three moves of the Spirit for your faithful response:

**Illumination.** Invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and heart, to shine the spotlight on the parts of yourself that need to be transformed by the truth of Scripture.

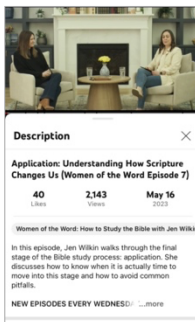
**Personalization.** Be open to how the Spirit personalizes the theological principle of Scripture for your particular situation.

**Empowerment.** You need the Spirit to empower in you a faithful and sustainable response of obedience to biblical truth.

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



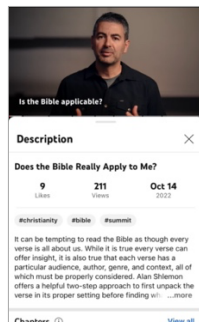
WATCH



Application: Understanding How Scripture Changes Us



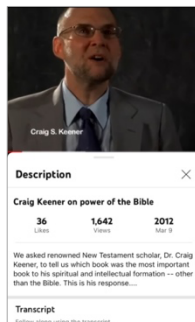
WATCH



Does the Bible Really Apply to Me?



WATCH



Craig Keener on the Power of the Bible



### THINK ABOUT THIS

- We usually expect Scripture to instruct and inspire. How often do we expect it to convict?

## Episode 17

# Applying The Text

### Key Idea

A faithful response to Scripture demands honesty, specificity, and dependence on the Spirit.

## DISCERNING FAITHFUL APPLICATION

### Discerning Faithful Application



- Step 1:** Observe how the principles in the text address the original situation.
- Step 2:** Discern a genuine parallel situation in a contemporary context.
- Step 3:** Make your application specific.

**Step 1: Observe how the principles in the text address the original situation.**

**Who is the Biblical Audience?**

**Question:** How did the biblical author want the **original audience** to respond to the intended meaning?

**Relevance to the Original Audience**

**Example:**

*Paul States in Philippians 4:13*

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

*Verse 12 clarifies*

“I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.”

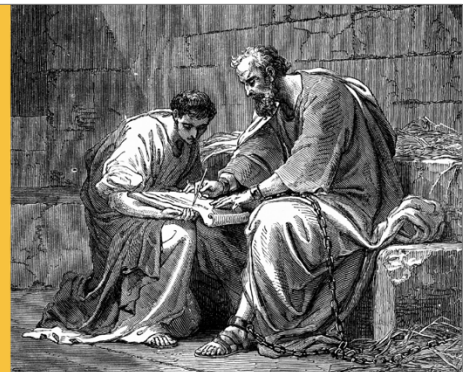
**Theological Principle in Philippians 4:13**

Christ is the true source of strength for living in obedience to the gospel.

**Applying Philippians 4:13**

*“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”*

J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 244.



**Original situation**

Paul, a Christian, who is experiencing a variety of trying circumstances as a result of following Christ faithfully.



**Theological Principle in the Text**

Christ will give Paul strength to endure such difficult situations.

## Step 2: Discern a genuine parallel situation in a contemporary context.

In Philippians 4:13, Paul's **original** situation is characterized by the following key points:

- He is a Christian.
- He is experiencing tough circumstance **because** of his commitment to Christ.
- He looks to Christ for strength to endure.

### Applying Philippians 4:13

*"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*

J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 245.



#### Parallel situation today

Christians facing a variety of trying circumstances as a result of following Christ faithfully. (Notice that all the key points in the original situation are present in this parallel situation.)



#### Application of the principle

Christ will give these Christians the strength to endure such difficult circumstances.

### **Step 3: Make your application specific.**

**Question:** *What should we/I **be** or **think** or **do** as we/I turn to Christ?*

The quality of our answers will determine the quality of our response to the message of Scripture.

Productive answers will have the following characteristics:

- **They are specific** enough to include concrete steps and how we can put the biblical truth into practice.
- **They are honest** enough about the part of our lives that the biblical truth addresses.
- **They compel you toward Christ** rather than twist your response into a matter of self-help or self-sufficiency.
- **They compel you toward Godly community** rather than isolate you from fellowship or the wisdom of godly counsel.

## GIVE IT A TRY

### Practice 17.1

In previous lessons, we considered the historical background and discerned the theological principle underlying Isaiah 6:1. Read Isaiah 6:1–6 at least twice, slowly. Review your notes and the relevant sections in lessons 10 and 15 to remind yourself of the background, meaning, and theological principle of verse 1.

With the original intended meaning in mind, prepare for a faithful response. Offer a prayer of dependence to the Holy Spirit for illumination, personalization, and empowerment.

Then work through the three steps for application discussed in this lesson:

1. Define the original situation:

<b>Original Situation</b>	<b>Theological Principle</b>

2. Discover a genuine parallel in a contemporary context:

<b>Parallel Situation Today</b>	<b>General Application of the Principle</b>

3. Make your application specific:

<b>General Application of the Principle</b>	<b>My Specific Application Today</b>

### Practice 17.2

In lesson 13, we completed a word study of “follow” (*radaph*) in Psalm 23:6. Then in Practice 15.2, you studied Psalm 23:6 in full, giving special attention to the cultural background of the psalm’s shepherd imagery and discerned a theological principle in the text. (If you haven’t completed Practice 15.2 yet, take your time to complete it, then return to this exercise.) Review your Practice 15.2 notes and the relevant section in lesson 13.

With the original intended meaning in mind, prepare for a faithful response. Offer a prayer of dependence to the Holy Spirit for illumination, personalization, and empowerment.

Then work through the three steps for application discussed in this lesson:

1. Define the original situation:

<b>Original Situation</b>	<b>Theological Principle</b>

2. Discover a genuine parallel in a contemporary context:

<b>Parallel Situation Today</b>	<b>General Application of the Principle</b>

3. Make your application specific:

<b>General Application of the Principle</b>	<b>My Specific Application Today</b>

# **Bonus Module**

## **Examples**



## *Practicing The Method*

# A Word of Encouragement

The Bonus Module includes (1) a complete outline of the Bible study methods introduced in this course, (2) an example episode of close reading Ephesians 2:1–10 with notetaking space in the study guide, and (3) an example episode of a more detailed study of Genesis 1 with notetaking space in the study guide.

But before you proceed to the bonus material, let's reflect on where we've been and why we've taken this path.

Modules 1 and 2 oriented us to the contents and nature of the Bible and to who we are as readers of the Bible. A sound understanding of the Bible as God's ancient, literary revelation of himself through divinely inspired human authors enables readers to respect the Bible for what it is and how it communicates. Likewise, awareness of our own contexts, limits, and persuasions as readers enables us to engage Scripture honestly and humbly so that its original intended meanings can speak more clearly and invite us to meet God and be transformed by our encounter with him in Scripture.

Modules 3 to 6 journeyed through our in-depth Bible study method. We learned to read the biblical text closely, to study its ancient backgrounds, to discern universal theological principles, and to discern a specific, honest, and Spirit-dependent response to Scripture.

Yes, we covered a lot of ground. Along the way, you probably realized that the Bible offers so much more beauty and depth than you've ever experienced. You may have also been surprised by what a deeper engagement with Scripture might demand of you—intellectually, devotionally, in self-awareness, in humility, and in other ways.

Like a newly discovered world, the Bible is full of life and scenery just waiting to be explored. Indeed, every time you open the pages of Scripture, you are transported back in time to the ancient Middle East. As guests in this foreign land, you will rely on your English translators—the English Bibles you read—as tour guides. And what wonderful guides they are!

But whenever you visit a foreign country, your immersive experience includes tasting the local cuisine, smelling the scents in the air, hiking the native lands, experiencing the local culture, and learning its history. Similarly, studying the Bible's backgrounds allows you to see the world of Scripture and hear its message in more authentic ways, in its own accent. When you experience the message of Scripture on its own terms, you can better grasp what it's really saying.

What Scripture is really saying has nothing to do with affirming your own biases, preferences, and earthly allegiances, and everything to do with revealing who God is, his will for creation, and our place in it. When Scripture speaks to your priorities, it tends to challenge them so that your values, desires, hopes—your entire being—align with God's character and sovereign will. Sometimes your human priorities and God's priority for you to “be holy as he is holy” clash. That's the human struggle. That's why Jesus sent the Spirit: to guide you into all truth (John 16:13).

So let your Bible study be saturated in Spirit-dependent prayer. Take your time. Keep looking. Don't rush the process. Be patient with yourself. Process with trusted believers. Seek Godly counsel. Enjoy that fact that you *get* to “Savor Scripture.”

Happy studying!

# Complete Study Method Outline

## **1. Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout the study process**

### **2. Read the text**

- a. Identify your passage and where it fits in its larger discourse.
- b. Read 5x (try spreading out your reading over different translations, keep in mind if you are using a more formal or more function version).
- c. Mark off units of thought.
- d. Mark up observations and raise questions.
- e. Write a title for each subunit.
- f. Reread slowly.
- g. Write a summary sentence of the entire passage.

### **3. Study the background**

- a. Choose relevant context(s).
  - i. Geographic, historical, cultural, literary, linguistic/word study.
- b. Study a relevant word/name in a searchable Bible (if helpful).
  - i. For word studies, see lesson 13.
- c. Consult a reliable study Bible.
- d. Consult a reliable Bible dictionary.
- e. Summarize the background picture that has emerged from your study.
- f. Reread the passage with its background in mind.

#### **4. Discern the theological principle(s)**

- a. Synthesize meaning and purpose of the passage for the original audience.
- b. Identify differences between biblical and contemporary situation.
- c. Identify similarities between biblical and contemporary situation.
- d. Articulate the original context-specific meaning in more general statements.
- e. Select a theological principle from general statements.
- f. Test the theological principle with the rest of Scripture.

#### **5. Ponder your faithful response**

- a. Pray for illumination, personalization, and empowerment.
- b. Observe how the principles in the text address the original situation.
- c. Discover a genuine parallel situation in a contemporary context.
- d. Make your application specific.
- e. Give thanks to God.

## *Episode 18*

# Example: Close Reading

## Ephesians 2:1–10

### **First Steps**

Closely read Ephesians 2:1–10 on your own or with a study partner or group using the lists of sentence, subunit, and discourse observation introduced in lesson 8. You can use the following pages to mark up the text and take notes. When you're ready, watch the Episode 18 example video.

### **Read Ephesians 2:1–10 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

## Markup and Make Notes on Ephesians 2:1–10

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

## Notes

## Notes



### **Read Genesis 1:1–2:3 (ESV)**

**1**<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2**<sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

**3**<sup>3</sup> And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. **4**<sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. **5**<sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

**6**<sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” **7**<sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. **8**<sup>8</sup> And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

**9**<sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. **10**<sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

**11**<sup>11</sup> And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. **12**<sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. **13**<sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

**14**<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, **15**<sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. **16**<sup>16</sup> And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. **17**<sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, **18**<sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19**<sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

**20**<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” **21**<sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. **22**<sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas,

and let birds multiply on the earth.”<sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**2** <sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

## Markup and Make Notes on Genesis 1:1–2:3 (ESV)

**1**<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>2</sup>The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup>And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup>And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>And God set them in the

expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.

<sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything

that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

<sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it

was so. <sup>31</sup>And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**2** <sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

## **READ THE TEXT**

**Questions I have:**

**Notes from My Close Reading:**

**STUDY THE BACKGROUND**

**Notes from a Study Bible:**

**Notes from a Bible Dictionary:**

**DISCERN THE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE(S)**

**Notes:**

**PONDER MY FAITHFUL RESPONSE**

**Notes:**



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