

Whole Brain Revelation Meditation  
&  
Biblical Interpretation

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# Whole Brain Revelation Meditation & Biblical Interpretation

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# Whole Brain Revelation Meditation & Biblical Interpretation

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## **Chapter 1 Whole Brain Revelation Meditation Approach to Biblical Interpretation**

I must start out in this book on biblical interpretation by commenting on the very serious task of communicating the authentic word of God to the people of today. The Godhead is revealed throughout scripture, and it is not as though the revelation of the character, purposes and saving actions of God in the Old covenant are of less relevance than those in the new. How God worked in the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham etc have many lessons on getting to know the person of God, and the faithfulness and grace he revealed to these figures of biblical history as he did in the time of Christ and the early church.

“Bringing the meaning of Christ into the lives of our young and older people today does not face any challenges which it has not faced in the past. Just because we live in a multi media society, which has created multiple imaginative realities for it self, it does not mean that every phase of human society has not had its own fantasies and realities in the past.” To what extent can this generation take a view like this seriously? Is it way off the mark? Is some of it flying in cloud cuckoo land? Or is there more truth in the view than misconception?

Whatever might be said in response to these questions there is something so different about this generation that it cannot be missed in comparison to all other historical societies and cultures. It is the incredible availability of new and old ideas, and the way that each version cycles quickly across cyber space, and the multiple TV channels available to us. What used to be this months news is now this 5 minute slots’ news. What grabbed our attention one hour ago is replaced with something else. Society has become corporately information hungry expressed in addictive terms. It is possible that the human mind is so bombarded with information that it can’t determine right from wrong, truth from error, empirically based from sci fi fantasy. People of today face information overload. They also take part in the addictions of this decade – Xbox, Play station, the alternate realities of cyber space – where a persons own world can be fashioned. What is behind all of this? Who is behind it all?

We are talking about biblical interpretation in this section – bringing the meaning of Christ into the lives of the people of today! What about the distractions that are getting in the way of starting this process? How are we bringing the message of the bible to their attention? The internet is the new arena that catches their interest! If we look at each piece of the mega hertz recycling capability of cyber space, then we are considering the bewildering information frenzy which is impacting young minds. Minds which love to soak up the latest thing out there. However, what about the bigger issues at stake for the young? What does psychology teach us about a bombarded mind? What did the Stalinist propaganda schools bear in common with this present phenomenon? What did Hitler youth achieve in terms of establishing the world view of fascist Germany? It is interesting that psychological experiments of the 1950s demonstrated that if another leader like Hitler were to appear again, then as many as 53% of people in any given society would follow him! But Hitler and Stalin had only one ideology, fascism and Marxism. They realised that in order to get followers they

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needed a paradigmatic ideology. But what is the ideology of today? Is there a hunger in young minds for a Christian ideology? What do post modern people want?

Well, as the mega hertz society of today reveals, people take less time to find a particular ideology that they have thought through for themselves; instead they are bombarded with so many that they can become confused. Are the people of today confused? What damage can such confusion cause? How can they sift fantasy from reality when there is no time to do it? Have they become mega hertz junkies?

Indeed the effectiveness of brainwashing techniques are based on wearing down a person's mind with too much information, mixed with contradicting ideas, leading to too much data for the brain to decipher. If you break a person's identity by multiple takes on ideological contradictions, then those people become vulnerable to either disinterest in any one thing or belief, or highly vulnerable to a growing deep seated need to embrace something, or someone, who can save them from all the confusion? Hence we have the definition of the cult leader and cultic devotees. The cult of relativity has become the new non religious nebula of today. Is it just a mistake that things have gone this way? Where is God in all of this? Did not God confuse the languages of mankind at Babel? Has cyber space undone much of the benefit that Babel brought to mankind when multiple languages were introduced, thus making it harder for mankind to unify itself by communicating multiple inventions that could lead to evil. Is the common language found in cyber space a reversal of a positive confusion of shared language? Is the global web a means of bringing so much of the evil genius of mankind together in one place that the brain becomes numbed with all the various takes on reality? Babylon in Revelation's terminology means confusion, but is the confusion of today based on a reversal of Babel so that mankind can confuse itself with too much shared contradicting information? What is the Babylon of today Rev. 17 & 18? What has fallen in the babble of the mega hertz generation [Rev. 14]?

Perhaps we can say that no other generation has ever faced the confusion of today. Who is behind it? Satan! Who has ultimate control of how far it will all go? God [Rev. 18]!!!! The church must help its' young people to come out of the mega hertz Babel of the racing cyber world, and to rather take a revolutionary stand on mount Zion with Jesus the lamb [Rev. 14:1-5]! The church cannot embrace the about to fall Babylon, but rather it needs to meet the need of those God is calling out of it! People are still seeking the real meaning in life amidst millions of competing versions. It is the confusion of ideas that has stopped the traffic flowing, because it seems impossible to spend enough time seeking the single most important meaning to everything found in Christ alone? The church needs to be calling her young and older people to come out, away from, the racing information global highway. "Come out of her my people!" [Rev. 14:6-10].

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Yes it is strange to talk about biblical interpretation by looking at an information confused world of ideas, but it might be fairly said that true hermeneutics means finding “meaning”, and that meaning can only come from meeting Jesus [John 14:6]. I am not knocking the churches attempts to share Jesus in cyber space, Jesus is even Lord there, but I am challenging the youth ministers of today to encourage their young people to come off the mega hertz race track in order to find real meaning that defines life by spending time getting to know Christ! That is hermeneutics made practical!

The challenge to biblical interpretation today is to call young and older people back to understand Jesus Christ. It is the challenge to know him for themselves and to know he is the way the truth and the life [John 14:6]. If they want to be radical then they can start by being radical enough to know Jesus as a certainty in their lives. This is one of the great challenges!

Another is how can we bring across the heart of the meaning of scripture into the culture of today? We so often think of the difficulties of difference. Western culture is inclusive in philosophy towards racial differences, gender, sexual orientation etc. Is the Bible? Well on the issue of women’s roles in the church it is clear that Luke and Acts see them as equal partners. Even the Pharisee Paul says there is no more male or female.....we are all one in Christ [Gal. 3:20]. Racial differences are equalised in Christ so we are all one impartially in his sight. However, sexual orientation, and the covenant of heterosexual marriage are clearly upheld, consider the clear statements of Romans 1 to sexual relationships to the contrary. Old covenant scriptures in the OT do not possess the full light found in Christ [see in later discussions below 2 Cor. 3 & 4]. When Christ appeared then Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, men and women disappear – all have equal opportunities in the new dispensation of grace [Gal. 3:20].

So hermeneutics, what is it all about? It is about the most profoundly important dilemma of the human soul. Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going to? Is there any meaning to life? Does anyone, let alone God, really care about me? And what about me? Do I really care about anyone except myself? To what extent do young and older people of today seek elusive meaning for life by filling the God shaped hole with multiple fantasies? In what ways can we call them off the internet highway to take time to find the real meaning to life? How can we detoxify their rapacious racing minds? Can we do it? What is in the way of fulfilling the task at hand?

I lift up Jesus for you to consider. He is the hermeneutic! He is the only being found in human history that based his life on the principle of gift love totally. He is the only one who could give everything without needing anything back from us for him to survive. O yes God does not need us to survive in order to maintain himself, but he loves us and wants us to survive. He loves to share the complete riches of himself with us. There is no selfishness in this desire at all, for he does not need us in order to survive. He is completely whole in every aspect of his omnipotent self. God did not need to share

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life with others, but he wanted to because the nature of love is to share itself, and God is ultimate love [1 John 4:7]. He holds nothing back in the eternal life found in Jesus, for those who trust the wonderfully selfless act of God delivering all things to them in Christ eternally. Now that is why if Jesus is lifted up, if we behold him bleeding and dying on the cross for us, then we will find that hermeneutics, bible reading, biblical scholarship, theology everything is all about a person and not a massive collection of ideas. It is all about our God who although he did not need to create us for any selfish purpose in his complete sufficiency, he nevertheless made other beings in order to be able to share the joy of his eternal self with us as real beings made in his image. So that is the task of all the ideas we will be looking at in this paper. It is the task of discovering how the tools we use can be aided by the Holy Spirit so that we might find Jesus, and what he means to us, and what he means for us to understand about him. This is eternal life that we know God, know Jesus and the Spirit [John 17:3], it is not about knowing theological ideas, or bible study techniques, if these are not based on having a passion for Jesus. The Spirit can speak that passion into being through scripture, but without seeking the Spirit's passion for Jesus, then our task is fruitless.

Sadly, too often, evangelicals have become deists rather than theists. What I mean is that the doctrine of the trinity has too often been watered down to something like this: "I believe in Father, Son and Holy Scripture." Did you get that? We too often hear very little about the Holy Spirit, plenty about Jesus and the Father. But for some evangelicals there has been a damaging reaction against the third person of the Godhead [the Spirit] by stating their position on his role in the church today in cessation terms. The concept here is that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit stopped after the apostolic age, and that they will never operate in the church again! This is a deistic position – In this view God wound up the church in the apostolic age, and ever since left it to its own devices without the supernatural presence of the Spirit of Jesus guiding it. However, our hermeneutics need to be based on a Trinitarian belief in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He still speaks to us today, not just through scripture, but still through prophecy, tongues etc [1 Cor. 12 & 14]. He will always agree with the tenor of scripture, and won't contradict it, but if we are to be effective bible interpreters we need to believe that God is active in our lives today, and that Scripture is an expression of the blue print of authentic Christianity; and the work of the Spirit. In other words bible interpreters today need to be theist's, they need a living connection with God through the Spirit's direct operation in their minds, and lives, just as in the times of the apostles.

The single passion of the Godhead is to lovingly maintain a real relationship based on communication with us through the Spirit of Jesus [Acts 16:8]. The passion of the Holy Spirit is Jesus, Father God and God's children. The passion of Father God is the Spirit, Jesus and us. The passion of Jesus is Father, Spirit and us. The passion of the Godhead is that we come to share in this all giving inclusive family of the Godhead - sharing peace forevermore [John 17]. So Lord Jesus let us be part of this wonderful meaning, this great hermeneutic – You Father, You Jesus, And You Holy Spirit! Save us from everything which would get in the way. Lord Jesus thank you we are eternally yours [John 5:24]; thank you that nothing can separate us from your love [Romans 8:28 – 38]; thank you Lord Jesus that you are the good shepherd who will never permit us to be snatched from your hand [John

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10:27 – 30]. Thank you that we had our names written in your book of life before the world was made, and this is your promise that we will stand in the face of the enemy; for he cannot frustrate the salvation of those who are eternally foreknown [Rev. 13:8]. Thank you that you had a plan for each individual before our conception took place [Jer. 1:5]. Thank you that you made us as individuals who can trust you, choose you, and choose to trust and love each other in you! Thank you that sharing you, means it is safe to share with everyone else, and thank you that we do not need to think of selfishly keeping things for ourselves because you give to others so that they give to us as we share in your family of faith. So the circuit of beneficence is complete in you Lord; for we are all your sons and daughters resourced by you, looking out for one another without needing to think about ourselves; because others look out for us in your family! Let the restoration of your self giving agape love [1 Cor. 13] liberate us to become primitive Christians once again [Act 2:42]. Let us find the liberty of letting go of all our mammon of selfishness! Let us start to live the meaning of your self giving love in the family of your church today. For you once said this is the one true evangelistic reality – that “by this all men will know you are my disciples by the love you show toward one another” [John. 13:35]. Love covers a multitude of sins. May no man or woman owe us anything! May all be forgiven so that the real meaning of forgiveness is demonstrated in our lives lived toward one another. Thank you Jesus for we have come home when we really know you. Self grabbing is terminated, and selfless living for others begins. Oh Jesus let us come home to you, and one to another. Let us live the real meaning of life in the kingdom of God starting here right now. It is our prayer “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” [Mat. 6:10]. Let this “will be done” in your church united beyond human boundaries. Let our young people be radical enough to start this restoration and regeneration. Let them be beacons, and let your church light its torches from theirs, which is all sourced and resourced through you! What a vision, what a dream! Do we dare to live that dream? Thank you Lord Jesus for just being you, and thanks that you will pull us through! In your name Amen! Now that is real hermeneutics!

## **Journaling**

[1] In groups of 3 reflect on the discussion above, what things to God draw to your attention from it?

Record your insights below:

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[2] Individually select one things from your insights recorded above and ask God what he wants to say to you about it. Use the four keys so that you may dialogue with God seeking Rhema and Vision. Journal your conversation with God below:

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[3] Get back into your groups and share what God said to you from your journaling. Record each others insights below and then pray together thanking God for them.

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## Chapter 2 How to reflect utilising the Lamad Approach

The following couple of sessions are meant to give the individual or group using this book to utilise its' resources as a way to receive revelation knowledge whilst reflecting on the Word of God. My hope is that the individual or group may do some of the exercises as appropriate from below before proceeding with seeking revelation knowledge through the word of Scripture.

### Session 1 – Four Keys to Hearing the Voice of God

#### 1.0 Introduction



In this session we are going to be exploring four keys to hearing God's voice, and in order to do this we will be considering what scripture has to say about it based on the revelation model of how God communicates. However, before we come to this it is important to consider some important Scriptural teaching on the work and nature of the Holy Spirit. It is through the flow of spontaneous thoughts, and pictures perceived by the eyes and ears of our hearts that the Holy Spirit communicates with us. So we will start from this point.

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#### 1.1 The “Spirit of Jesus”



The best place to start with the question concerning “who is the Holy Spirit?” Is with Matthew 28:19:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” [RSV].

Notice how Jesus expresses the equality of the Godhead in this command. We are to baptise in the name of the three persons of God. If you have read the verse carefully you will notice that the word “the” prefaces each of the persons of God – “the Father”, “the Son” and the “Holy Spirit”. Stated simply Jesus shows that each of the persons

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of God are equal, and the same, in relationship and authority. So if one speaks then all speak and agree because they are one. This is what John indicates in John 5:18:

“This is why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” [RSV].

Moreover, Jesus taught a woman he had a meeting with by a well in Samaria the following:

“God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” [John 5:23 - 24RSV].

Hence John’s gospel demonstrates the tri-partite nature of the Godhead. All three persons of God are referred to in John’s gospel, and Jesus gave clear teaching on the role of each person of God. He taught the disciples that after his return to God the Holy Spirit would have a special Job:

“I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them



**now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will** guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his

own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” [John 16:12 – 15 RSV]

The Holy Spirit’s special role in the age of the church of Christ is to draw attention to Jesus and all that he has done for us and still wishes to say to us. The book of Acts particularly reinforces this point, Luke writes:

“In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.” [Acts 1:1 RSV].

Acts is the second book which Luke has written to “Theophilus” explaining in the first [the gospel of Luke] what Jesus did and said, and in his second book [Acts] he reminds Theophilus about the gospel which he summarises as the “doings” and “teachings” of Jesus. He uses a very interesting little word when he reminds Theophilus of what Jesus “did” and “taught”,

he indicates that this was just what Jesus had “began to do and teach.” This means that the book of Acts is telling us what he was going to continue to “do and teach” by the power of the Holy Spirit; working in the hearts of his followers. Acts 1:8 informs us:

**“But you shall receive power [Jesus said] when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” [RSV]**

Jesus continues to do his works, and speak his words, through his disciples as they look to Christ who lives in their inner most beings by the Holy Spirit. He allows his words and works to bubble up deep inside our hearts and for them to flow out to others. The book of Acts is about Jesus continuing his mission through us his people. It is a mission which he shares with us deep inside; in the intimacy of a deep hearted relationship. The Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of Jesus” in Acts 16:6 - 10:

“And



they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” [RSV].

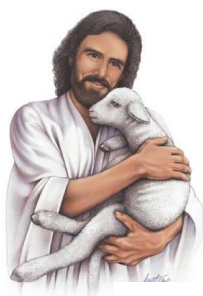
Notice how Luke was with Paul and his friends when these things happened [notice the use of “we” and “us”]. This is what the book of Acts tells us about the way early Christians lived – they followed the guidance of the “Spirit of Jesus” by direct communication with him – as his words bubbled up inside them speaking to the ears of their hearts, and as he communicated with them through the eyes of their hearts.

And this is vital to understand when we discuss the “LAMAD” approach to Christian reflection on Scripture – it is vital to recognise that the way we know that the words and pictures which God causes to spontaneously to light upon our hearts and minds come from

the “Spirit of Jesus”. The Holy Spirit always draws attention to Jesus. And when we seek the guidance of his Spirit we need to picture Jesus, and focus on Jesus as we dialogue with him. If this is new to us then we may worry that the enemy may be speaking, but there is a great promise that Jesus gives to us:

“And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” [Luke 11:9 – 13 RSV].

We need not fear the gift of the Holy Spirit – the “Spirit of Jesus”, he will give us his Spirit, and he will not allow us to be harmed by the enemy if we look in faith to Jesus to give us his gifts, words, guidance and visions. Indeed we are instructed from Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out:



“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophecy.” [Acts 2:17, 18 RSV].

### **Conclusion**

The river of the Holy Spirit [John 7:38, 39] gives us intimacy with our Lord Jesus, he speaks to us continuously through spontaneous thoughts, feelings, visions, dreams. We are to live by his selfless life giving enhancing flow. “LAMAD” is based on aiding the reflective reader to receive revelation knowledge from the River of the free flow of the “Spirit of Jesus” as he

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speaks words of comfort and healing into our hearts. This is the Acts model, the New Testament model of Christian living, and it should be the primary aim of Christians to enable them to trustingly look to the flow of the messages that God causes to bubble up from deep inside their most intimate heart.

## 1.2 – Group or



## Personal Exercise

In groups of three or four look up the following short passages and discuss what they tell you about the sort of intimacy God wants with you [take 10 minutes].

A. Jesus our example – John 5:19, 20?

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B. John 14:18 – 23

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C. John 15:1-7

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## D. John 17:20 - 26

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NB: If there is a group leader take a few minutes to get group feed back on intimacy with God.

It is important to recognise that when we live by revelation knowledge and spontaneous flow it is not a tool which we can use, it is not a method to get what we want, but it is the core of what Christian life is all about, that we have an intimate friendship within the family of God and with the person of God expressed in terms of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is all based on us having a loving relationship with God.

### **1.3 Four keys to hearing the voice of God**

I remember saying to a close friend in leadership concerning a talk I was to give at a conference "I want to share the four keys to hearing God's voice today." He said to me, tongue in cheek, "Yes and I will share my five keys". He was saying it with a twinkle in his eye making the point that we should not break down God into a method. So I tend to say to people now I would like to share four keys that I find useful in order to aid me in hearing God's voice. I must start this section by saying that I have learnt the importance of these four keys through studies I have done with Christian Leadership University. I recommend to any one working through these sections to seriously consider doing some of their courses, particularly to begin with a course entitled "Communion with God." This course thoroughly examines the whole area of hearing God, dialoguing with God, and having intimacy with God. I am indebted to CLU for these great lessons, and I will utilise many of these lessons in these few sessions as they have become part of my Christian experience. In other words I have proven them for myself.

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So what are four keys to hearing God's voice? Let us consider a key Scripture:

"I will take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint. And the LORD answered me: 'Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it.'" [Habakkuk :1, 2 RSV].

## Four Keys to Hear God's Voice!

- [1] Stillness – I still my own thoughts**
- [2] Vision – I look to Jesus**
- [3] Spontaneity – Spontaneous thoughts**
- [4] Journaling – I write down these thoughts**

From this verse we may deduce how the prophet Habakkuk approached his times of dialoguing with God, so let's examine the verses:



1. He took his "stand" and waited in stillness of being to "see what he [God]" would "say to" him. The first principle to hearing God's voice is to "still" your self; this can be demonstrated from a variety of instances in Scripture, and it is crucial in the process of dialoguing with God.

So how can we bring ourselves to stillness? Here are some things that work for me:

- i. I pray in tongues, which opens up the part of my mind which is particularly involved in intuitive flow – the things of the heart.
- ii. I put on worship music without words, and ask God to create a still space inside of myself where my thoughts, worries, plans etc can be laid aside for my time with him.

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- iii. If I can't do this then I write down my concerns on a piece of paper and decide to leave them until later.
- iv. I look at some nice relaxing pictures from nature.
- v. I breathe deeply and slowly.
- vi. I picture a scene which brings me to relaxation.

By coming to stillness, letting my mind be empty of my thoughts, I invite Jesus to come and fill my heart.

2. And this brings us to the second great approach to dialoguing with God – I



“watch” to “see” what he will say to me. I look with the eyes of my heart, and listen with the ears of my heart to see what Jesus wants to say to me. So the next step is I look

for vision, I look to Jesus. There are two great verses which help me here:

“Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” [Hebrew 12:2 a, RSV].

“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” [2 Corinthians 5:6, RSV].

We will rarely go wrong when we seek the voice of the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts. We must look to the “Spirit of Jesus” to give us his thoughts, his feelings, his vision. If we were to read 2 Corinthians chapters 3 – 4:6 then we would clearly see that for Paul he knew that Jesus was living in his heart by his Spirit. He quite literally expected to see Jesus face in his heart, and he believed that his Spirit was living inside his heart and mind in deep interactive intimacy with him. When I look to vision I see Jesus face.

3. Next we come to “and the LORD answered me”. If we are still and do not



look to ourselves but to Christ then we will find that spontaneous thoughts, pictures and feelings will light upon our minds. We will

sense that these thoughts are too wise for us, too comforting, beyond our normal way of coping, or dealing with things. These thoughts, feelings or pictures come as a spontaneous flow. If I try to engage my mind at this time the tendency will be for me to try to take control, and then the flow of the



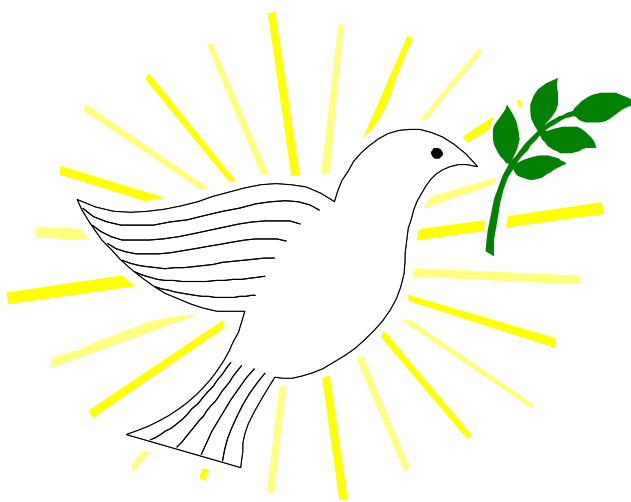
river of God's Spirit is stopped, but if I allow them to come without judging them or stopping them until they have finished then I will find that they are truly from Christ. We will discuss safe guards later if we find the thoughts are negative or harmful, but a simple rule to follow at this early stage is to say that if we look to Jesus then his wonderful presence of light shuts out the enemy. If you just let the thoughts flow in this time of listening to the God who speaks you can decide to test what has been communicated later. Testing them during this time will just stop the flow. However, if you are worried about opening up in this way, then you can ask God what he wants to say to you about your worries, and then you can continue in the flow of what he communicates. Remember God always wants to build a deep loving and safe intimate relationship with you, deep inside your heart.

4. Finally we come to Journaling. Habakkuk is instructed by the Lord to "write the vision." I find it very helpful to write down in my journal the questions I have for God, and to also record the spontaneous thoughts and pictures which flow through the eyes of my heart and the ears of my heart. Writing what God is communicating to me helps me to stay focussed for longer periods of time on the free flow of the spontaneous thoughts and pictures God is giving me. It has the benefit of keeping my mind occupied so that it does not try to take control of the time, and it gives me a record of what God is saying to me, and allows me to share things with a close spiritual mentoring friend, as well as giving me a record of what God has said, and allowing me time to meditate on it, and to also test it.



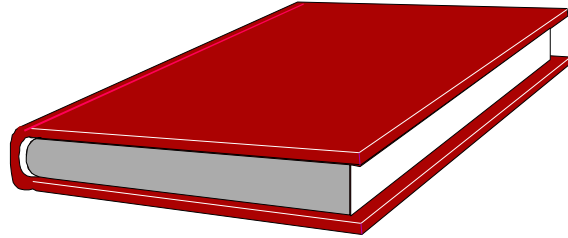
We will return in the next session to safe guards which we need to put in place when approaching God in this way, but at this point I would recommend the four keys as a vital thing for the reflective Bible reader to practice.

Remember that the "LAMAD" approach to reflective reading is based on revelation knowledge. God is the only one who really knows us and understands us. Human beings cannot sort out their hearts, lives or salvation. Humanistic approaches fail to be able to offer any lasting solutions to our sin damaged lives. God is the only one who can save us. Jesus is the only way to Father God [John 14:6]. The "Spirit of Jesus" is the only one who can bring us into a deep, healing and loving relationship with the family of God!



## **1.4 – Journaling**

Now I would like you to take a few minutes to do some journaling below. Still your self down, asking Jesus to make a still and relaxed space for him to talk with you. Perhaps think of a favourite passage from one of the gospels



where you can picture Jesus. Enter into that story and watch what Jesus wants to say or do. Listen and watch for spontaneous thoughts and pictures and start writing what you see or hear as thoughts come to mind. If you have questions write them down, perhaps start with the question what do you want to say to me about what I have learnt today about spontaneity and journaling? When you sense thoughts coming then do not feel worried about using the word “I” for when you sense it is Jesus speaking. At the end of this session you will have a chance to share your journaling with others if you want to [if you are in a group].

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## **Session 2 – Using Vision in Reflectively**

### **2.0 Introduction**

We closed the last session with a journaling exercise utilising the four keys to hearing God's voice which we discussed. As we went through the last session I said that we would begin this one by considering safe guards to protect us, especially if you are new to receiving words and pictures. Many worry that we are engaging in some sort of weird New Age form of mysticism. It is feared that we will let in a wrong spirit or a demonic spirit. It is thought by others that the Holy Spirit was only given to the early Christian church as a head start, and that with the passing of the Apostolic' age the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were no longer available to Christians; that the Spirit from then on would speak primarily through the Scriptures. I think that we dealt with what the New Testament model really teaches in a nut shell last session. If you wish to explore this field in a more comprehensive way then please consult "cwgministries". I have already mentioned my view that Christian Leadership University offers some excellent courses on this which all arise out of the "LAMAD" style of learning, as mentioned in the first session. So in this session we will consider first of all 5 safe guards that all must be in place before we start to explore the four keys on our own.

### **2.1 Safe Guards**



The five safe guards may be expressed in the following way:

- A. That you are a born again Christian with a relationship with Jesus Christ, having repented of all known sins, and having trust in him, and obedient to him as your master and Lord.
- B. That the Bible is the sole standard for testing all experiences, ideas and spiritual phenomenon against.
- C. That you are committed to getting to know God through meditation on Scripture.
- D. That you submit your will to the Will of God in everything as it is revealed to you.

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- E. That you have 2 or 3 spiritual advisors who you trust as good friends that you can share your journaling and spiritual growth experiences with – particularly when big decisions are involved.

There are also six qualities which a spiritual advisor needs to possess. It must be said that Christians must be supervised and mentored by at least two advisors/good friends. The six



qualities are:

- A. That your advisor be a good friend who you can talk to and have an open trusting and trustworthy relationship with.
- B. That your advisor has a strong and comprehensive Biblical orientation.
- C. That your advisor receives words, visions and walks in the fruits of the Holy Spirit.
- D. That your advisor has a commitment to people under his or her pastoral care.
- E. That your advisor receives counsel from others as you do.
- F. That your advisor be ahead of you in an area in which you wish to learn about and grow into.

## **2.2 Exercise**



Get into groups of 3 or 4 and discuss the following questions for 10 minutes, and then report back at the end of the exercise.

- A. In what ways is it important to utilise the five safe guards as Christians?

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- B. In what areas does my present experience with God measure up to the five safe guards – think about strengths and weaknesses?

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C. What sort of spiritual advisors do I relate to at the moment? Are they close friends? What are the strengths and weaknesses of having a close friend as an advisor in your experience?

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D. What are the benefits of being open to intimacy with God through flow and spontaneity? What are some of the blocks I am facing?

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At the close of this exercise, after feeding back to the wider group, we will then take a few minutes to pray for each other based on what each of our small groups shared.

## 2.3 – Utilising Vision Reflectively

### ***KEY PRINCIPLE!***

***What you focus on you***

***Magnify!***

***1. Focus on Jesus = Abundant life***

***Positive World View***

***2. Focus on Negatives = Enemies***

***Realm of Negativity, depression***

***& Darkness***

When Christians try to sort out problems for themselves without reference to revelation knowledge they will find that reflective Bible reading sessions may be fruitless in terms of really having gone very far. This is because we so often rely on a system or model of trying to understand Scripture which is thought to be the best way to proceed because it does not seek to bring too much outside influence into the relationship as this might mean we feel manipulated by another's ideas.

It is true that this is also a major concern in the "LAMAD" approach. When we consider the way Jesus related to people he helped we see that he did not treat them with disrespect. He did not force his disciples to follow him, but he invited them to follow. He did not judge the woman at the well, who was probably a prostitute with condemning words, but rather with words of invitation which she could respond to. She responded in such a big way that she brought the whole village back to meet Jesus saying: "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did." [John 4:39].

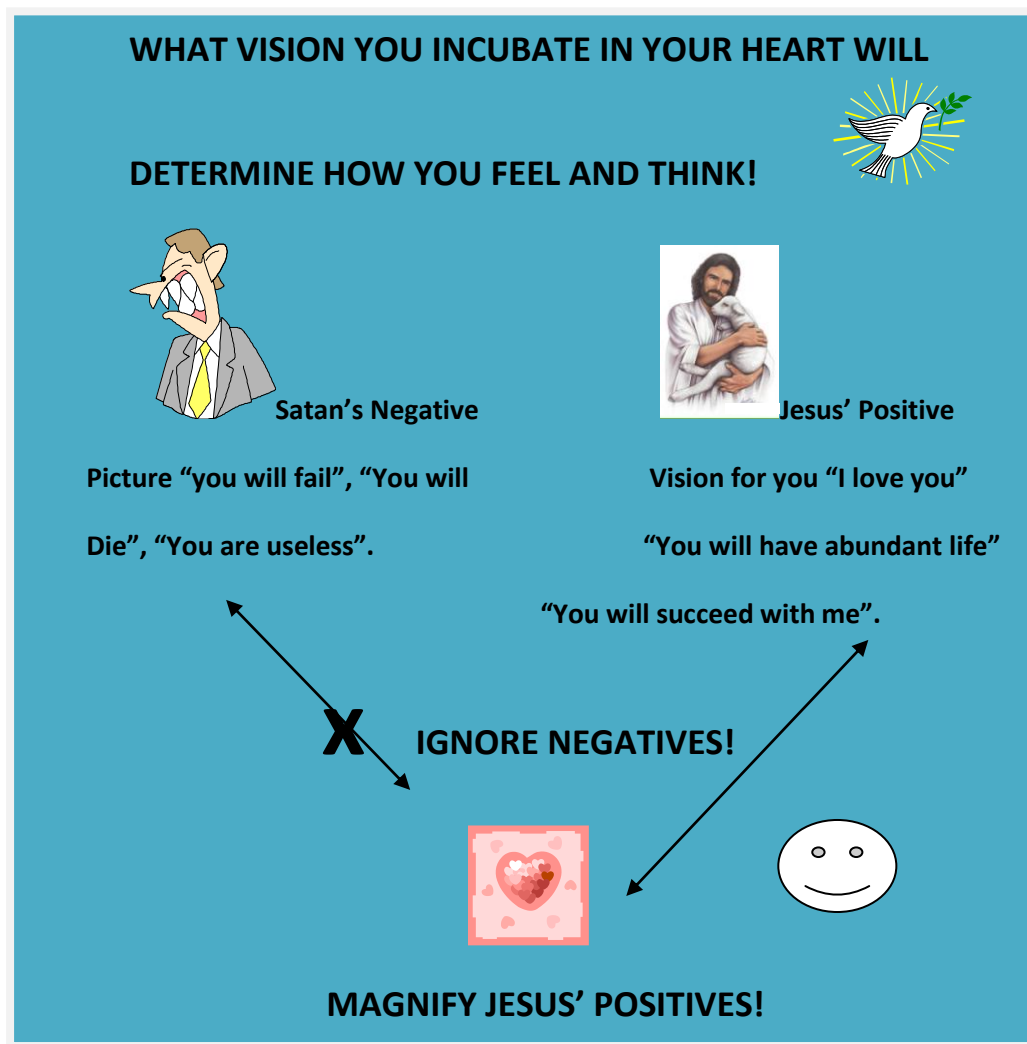
The approach of Christ when he speaks to us through the spontaneous flow of his Spirit in our hearts is to share his love for us. He seeks to build us up. He delights in a relationship with us. He loves to just be with us, if you like just to hang out with us. He does not force us to do anything against our will. We always have a choice. It may simply be said at this stage

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that the enemy always uses manipulation, or deception in one way or another which in the end comes down to a desire to harm us; this indicates a wrong spirit being behind our reflective times. The Holy Spirit's main role as he communicates Jesus to us is to comfort us, and to come alongside and help us to make the next steps with him by our side.

So this brings us to the use of the eyes and ears of our heart as we seek new perspectives and healing of their inner most beings. Reflective Bible reading has much to do with healing as we dialogue with the God who speaks!

Let us consider a situation in which you have a deep hurt from the past, perhaps it is child abuse, perhaps it is the loss of a loved one. You have struggled with the hurt, anger, grief and pain of this damaging event for many years. No matter how many times you try to find healing or release as you have talked about it, or prayed about it, it has just remained a set of unanswered questions and emotional pain. It affects your relationship with people. It makes you have questions about God – why did he let it happen?



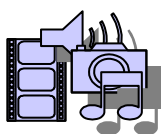
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This is where the “LAMAD” approach to healing vision comes into play. The Christian knows his or her painful past memory only too well. Above all you want a divine perspective on it. So it is suggested that you use the first three of the four keys to help the your self to come to stillness; ready to receive spontaneous vision from the “Spirit of Jesus”. There are simple steps that can be taken:

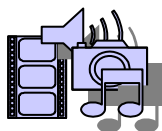


**Step # 1** – Put yourself back into the

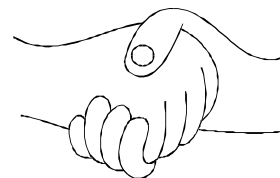


hurtful past experience. Picture the place where it happened, the people concerned, and what happened. But particularly watch what Jesus is doing or saying, whilst the experience is relived.

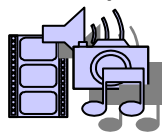
**Step # 2** – Take Jesus by his hand, look on



at your self during this event and ask Jesus to give you his reason for allowing you to go through the experience. What was he doing while you were going through it?

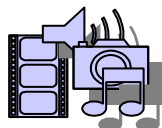


**Step # 3** – As Jesus gives you a new perspective on what happened this may be enough in it self to transform your whole outlook on what happened.



Looking at things from Jesus divine perspective will enable you to find answers and healing which no one else could ever give. Of course there could be several steps Jesus wants you to take with him over a few sessions. Jesus knows best – just go with the flow until it ends.

**Step # 4** – You may choose to ask Jesus to heal your hurts, or anger, or to



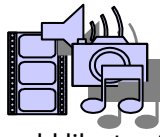
enable you to forgive the person involved. The important thing is that the vision encounter through the eyes of your heart will not be the your answers, but they need to be allowed to flow through your being like a pure refreshing river of God’s healing love. It will not be a controlled event, but rather just watch Jesus, see what he is doing and saying. Remain in the vision until the flow of it has been allowed to cease when the Spirit has said all he wants to.

**Step # 5** - It is important to end the vision session with thanks giving for the new



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perspective and for the healing given. It is also important to journal what God has done for you.

I would like to stress that these steps are not to be rigidly followed when seeking vision, they are rather a guideline. Anything which becomes a formula, or is used as one, will be in danger of becoming reliant on methods, and human systems which will block flow. When the free flow of spontaneous pictures light on our minds looking to Jesus for vision then we can have confidence that Jesus will show up. At the most basic level I often ask people to invite Jesus into the past hurtful event, and to await spontaneous vision. This is simply how vision can be utilised. Particularly in terms of vision that arises in our hearts during reflective spontaneous Bible reading when Jesus brings an old hurtful memory from the past to your mind's eye for healing.

## **2.4 – Vision Exercise**



On your own take a few minutes or a little longer to think of a minor thing which has happened to you for which you want to get a divine perspective. Utilising the four keys picture yourself in the situation, watch what Jesus does. Listen as thoughts and feelings flow into your being. Record exactly what Jesus was doing. What expression was on his face? What were his hands doing? Where was he standing? Was he moving around the room? Follow him and watch and listen. Record this in your journal as you look to the vision that Jesus brings to the eyes and ears of your heart. At the end of this exercise you may be asked, if you want, to share what you saw [if doing this as a group].

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I would like to encourage groups and individuals who take time to listen reflectively to the God who speaks in this Lamad version of Matthew to consider purchasing Mark and Patti Virkler’s book “How to Hear God’s Voice”. You can find information for this on the cwgministries website

## **Chapter 3 A Seven Step prayer ministry to heal the Heart<sup>1</sup>**

What I am outlining in this section must be considered as a basic introduction to the way that healing needs to be sought for areas of oppression and sin in the Christian's life; this is vital to this book's unfolding later as groups apply the principles outlined as they meditate on the Pentateuch. I would say a vital tool which the Christian should obtain is the book "Prayers that Heal the Heart" by Mark and Patti Virkler [see on Bibliography]. This book sets out a ministry plan which this brief section, because of limitations of space, cannot do. My hope is that the small group will work their way through Mark and Patti's book.

Having said this let us consider the prayer ministry model which in its basic form will be pragmatically outlined.

My suggestion is the group doing this section invite somebody experienced in this type of ministry to lead it. Hence I have not included reflection exercises for this section because I feel it is vital to have supervision as you explore the information below. It is vital that a small group explore, understand and act on the information below at some point in my view!

### **1. Generational Sins and Curses**

1. How do I know that I am suffering from a curse that has come down the family line?

The answer to this question needs to be sought utilising the four keys, and with someone who is used to prayer ministry that identifies these things. Ask the Spirit of Jesus' to give you discernment of your family line. What sins or curses come to mind spontaneously as you think about them? Consider grandparents, uncles, aunts etc. What comes to mind? Sometimes there are well known family curses, such as many of the women have suffered from breast cancer. Or depression is something a large number of extended family members suffer from as you do. These may be termed "curses".

2. How do I pray for these things that have been passed on to me?

Really it is very simple. There is no magic about it. Once a doctor gets the diagnosis right then he can treat the illness. All the patient has to do is accept he or she has the illness. Praying for generational curses needs a prayer something like this:

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<sup>1</sup> Virkler, PHH, 2001: 134 - 137

- A. Specifically identify the sin or curse which has been passed down the family line which you are struggling with. Repent for your part in keeping it alive.
- B. Ask for forgiveness and forgive your ancestors.
- C. Picture yourself in your mother's womb and ask Christ to put his cross between you and the ancestors.

It is the atoning death of Christ which saves us from every curse and every sin or oppressive bondage. When we specifically pray for particular identified curses and sins the Lord Jesus will minister to these for us. Remember this does not mean we are saved all over again, we already belong to him, but this is part of sanctification.

People often find that they receive healing from something like depression by the simple virtue of cutting off this generational route into their lives. We are not blaming the ancestors by doing this, in fact positive blessings which we have received from them we never cut off. What we are doing is identifying an avenue of negative influence on our lives which we no longer want as Christians.

## **2. Ungodly Soul-ties**

It may be useful to itemise some clues that indicate a soul-tie, and these can really be applied to all seven areas we have discussed above. They are:

1. Pressures within that feel like they are being held in abeyance but have not really gone after [let us say] prayer for generational curses.
2. You may have issues that come back to haunt you regularly.
3. You may be experiencing habitual or stubborn patterns of sin.
4. You may suffer from weaknesses in any of the following areas, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically.
5. Anything which is within that is contrary to the peace of Christ, faith, hope or love.
6. Anything within that lines up with any activity of Satan.
7. You may suffer from addictions to sex, drugs, alcohol, pornography – in other words any out of control area in your life is a symptom of something you need healing from.<sup>2</sup>

Ungodly Soul-ties operate when we have got a connection with somebody else who takes away our natural freedom to serve Christ without sin dominating our lives, or any other person being put first.

To break an Ungodly Soul-tie it is important to once again identify the source of it. Utilise the four keys and seek revelation knowledge for the source of the soul-tie. Once again it is

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<sup>2</sup> Virkler, PHH, 2001:95

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important to seek guidance from someone who understands this sort of ministry. The soul-tie may be a former sexual partner from the time before you became a Christian. It could be an old teacher who had had a strong influence on your thinking which established attitudes which make you look down on matters of faith.

Once you have specifically identified the soul-tie, and where the particular avenue or, opening to this person still exists you need to remove it.

So a prayer like this is the most effective in terms of what it asks for,

- A. Confess and repent of your ungodly soul-tie with the person concerned [name him or her], and of your anger and resentment against them, or for that matter God if you feel it.
- B. Forgive that person by name for their involvement in the sin concerned. Ask for forgiveness for yourself. And ask that God will enable you to forgive yourself for what you did.
- C. Ask the Lord to sever the ungodly soul-tie between you and that specific person. Ask God to destroy anything evil which has come into you through that soul-tie. Ask him to return to you that which you lost by way of it, and ask him to give back to the other person anything which you took from them.

You will almost certainly feel a weight lift in your being as this happens, and you will find that the negative energy which has felt held in abeyance will dissipate.

### **3. Replacing Negative Confessions and beliefs**

We have already discussed some of the dynamics of negative beliefs and expectations above. So we may consider how we go about identifying them. Once again utilising the four keys and an experienced prayer counsellor ask the Spirit of Jesus' to reveal specific negative beliefs you hold and expectations. Then pray through them one at a time something like below;

- A. Confess and repent of your sin in believing the lie which is always false beliefs and negative Confessions. Be specific in your confession taking responsibility for your part in keeping them alive, basing your life on a lie.
- B. Forgive any person who has contributed to this or fed it. Ask for forgiveness for your part in keeping it alive, and ask God to enable you to forgive yourself for what you once thought and are now revoking.

- C. Confess the countering divine truth to the untrue belief or negative expectation you have held and ask God to enable you by his Spirit from now on to live by the truth which he has planted in your heart instead.

#### **4. Renounce your inner vows**

We have discussed how a vow usually comes about because of an associated hurtful and painful experience which we hope to avoid in the future by making the vow. The greater the injury the more powerful the hold the vow has over us.

Once again ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the vows which you have made specifically, then pray a prayer something like the one below,

- A. Confess and repent of your sin of making the specific vow you are bringing before God for healing.
- B. Forgive those who hurt you and contributed to your vow, and ask for forgiveness for your part in it, and for making it. Ask God to enable you to forgive your self for making it.
- C. Instead, propose by the power of the Holy Spirit to live free from the vow, and speak a corresponding Bible truth into the void which revoking the vow has left open.

#### **5. Receive Divine Visions**

I have already outlined the process of vision healing to heal hurtful pictures from the past [in chapter 5]. Hence refer to this chapter to first of all do a vision exercise for healing painful memories and pictures from the past.

Here is a brief summary of the vision prayer approach to healing hurtful memories,

- A. Confess and repent of any anger or bitterness you have against those who hurt you, God if you blame him some how. Ask him to forgive you and that you will be enabled to receive his forgiveness.
- B. Ask the Spirit of Jesus' to take you back in your minds eye to the appropriate memory that underlies the issue you are specifically focussing on.
- C. Ask the Spirit of Jesus' to show you where he was in the scene [look to see where he was]. Ask the Holy Spirit to take over this scene and give you a vision showing you what Jesus was doing there [respond to what the Lord is showing you he was doing].
- D. Healing comes in this process because once Jesus enters the vision he brings healing. You may not have known what he was doing then, but when you see it you get a new healing picture that moves you on to healing.

## **6. Cast out Demons**

I include, to begin this section, some exercises which I did as part of a course I did with Christian Leadership University called “Prayers that heal the heart”. I include these exercises as I feel they answer some questions which I had prior to doing the course.

1. What is the meaning of daiminizomai<sup>3</sup>, and why is it impossible for the King James Version to translate it “demon possessed”?

It is correct as the Hammonds’ suggest that daiminizomai is best translated to be demonized rather than possessed. The Christian cannot be owned by Satan because he is owned by Christ as he lives in the heart as Lord through the Holy Spirit.

2. Briefly and in your own words, discuss the meaning and significance of the four expressions used in Ephesians 6:12 to describe our enemy.

“Principalities” demonstrates that there is a highly organised structure to the satanic organisation. As the Hammonds’ mention there are demons of different ranks that are assigned to nations, kingdoms, areas churches etc. One example is Daniel chapter 10. The Kingdom of God is so organised that even a four year old child who is born again can order any demon to leave through Jesus name’.

“Powers” is a translation of ἐξουσία<sup>4</sup> which means “right or authority, possession of power that makes authority to act possible”. The Satanic organisation has power delegated from Satan to other lower ranking demons to exercise authority over those who open the doors to them. However, as Christians we have authority in Jesus’ name to annul that supposed authority.

“The rulers of darkness of this world” may be translated as “masters or lords of the world”. Essentially it describes Satan’s intention to control people through manipulation etc. He is spoken of as “prince of this age, or god of this world”<sup>5</sup>. He is a completely defeated foe who has no power over us as Christians; for we are now living the life of the future in the present<sup>6</sup> in the Kingdom of God. We only give him opportunity if we open the door to his manipulative influence. He cannot take our salvation away as we are owned by Christ, but he can seek to get at us through our sin damaged bodies and souls.

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<sup>3</sup> Moulton, 1981:84

<sup>4</sup> Moulton, 1981:148

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4

<sup>6</sup> John 5:24

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This Satanic organisation is also termed “spiritual wickedness in high places”. The term expresses a desire to do<sup>7</sup>. This means we have to be involved in the ministry of spiritual warfare – for Satan surely is. We will overcome him if we use discernment and our natural authority in Christ <sup>8</sup>.

### 3. Discuss how demons may enter an individual.

To begin with this is where many get confused because they say if we cannot be possessed then how can demons enter our bodies? Well as Paul says in Romans 7 our bodies can be resistant to the new heart, and for us to live in open sin, let us say lust, is to let the demon of lust have an oppressive foothold, although at the same time he does not possess our spirits’ which belong to God eternally. Yet as things come to light in my life through revelation knowledge they come into light from darkness, and then I choose by the Spirit’s enabling to close the door to the selfish demon who until then has oppressed me in a certain area of my fleshy self. So the primary ways of entrance may be said to be:

- i. Through deliberate sin
- ii. Through sins of omission
- iii. Through sins of connection – books etc
- iv. Through false doctrine
- v. Through majoring on one area of truth and neglecting others
- vi. Through former membership of a cult or association with some one like a fortune teller.

Etc

### 4. How does one determine the need for deliverance?

I like Mark Virkler’s logic here that the best assumption is to assume we all have some demonic oppression. Some signs might be,

- i. Emotional scars
- ii. Emotional uncontrolled outbursts,
- iii. Mental illness
- iv. Besetting habitual sin – pornography etc
- v. Self destructive thoughts
- vi. Un-forgiveness
- vii. Obsessions,

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<sup>7</sup> John 10:10

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 28:19 etc



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- viii. Illnesses with no clinical diagnosis etc. The biggest sign for me is to discern the need for it by the Spirit. Also definite resistance to a work or proclamation of Christ!

I could also add: Religious error, speech problems, sex problems, addictions.

5. What are the seven steps to deliverance?
- i. Honesty – bringing hidden demonic things to light
  - ii. Humility – Recognition of complete dependence on God
  - iii. Repentance – specifically repenting for known sins and leaving Satan behind by turning from the sin and selfishness of the enemy.
  - iv. Renunciation – means to completely separate self from the sin and previous demonic influences.
  - v. Forgiveness – Confess all known sins and to completely forgive all who have wronged us.
  - vi. Prayer – Ask God to deliver me, and ask God to enable me to live by the flow of the perfect life of the living Jesus.
  - vii. Warfare – Identify spirits directly, and by specific names, and command them by the authority we all possess in Christ to leave and to never return. To make sure the void is filled with Christ!
6. What must one do to retain deliverance?

Mostly I think it is to live by the free flowing power and presence of a two way relationship with Jesus who will keep me in the light of God's presence.

Seven things keep me delivered:

- Putting on the whole armour of God which is so well known from Ephesians 6. It is to live through flow by these in Christ,
- 1. To confess positively who I am now in Christ, to no longer allow negative confessions to shape my mind and heart.

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2. To stay focussed specifically on the flowing Rhema as the Holy Spirit makes the Word of God live within me.
3. To crucify my flesh, by walking by the law of the Spirit of life.
4. To maintain a life of fellowship with other Christians and to keep involved in spiritual ministry to others, as well as receiving it my self.
5. To develop a life style of praise, worship and prayer
6. To be totally committed to Christ in every aspect of my life without question!
7. As if you were talking to a new Christian, explain why the “house” must be filled after deliverance, and how this is done.

“Well John now that you have experienced this ministry it is important to make sure you close the doors which we identified which originally let the enemy in. We noticed how you had had a real problem with your boss who used to be a Christian, and had started to do and say unfair things to you at work. Jesus helped us to discover that you had developed an attitude of real hatred toward him, and a deep seated resentment. You couldn’t even think about forgiving him when it all came to the surface. In the end we discovered a number of demons who had got a real foothold in you..... . You are really feeling good about this now, and it probably seems like you feel you don’t ever want this to happen to you again. And I believe that is true. However, you need to fill some of the holes left in you with the Spirit of Christ’, and this means that you will need to really start to live a life of praise, worship and a two way relationship with Jesus, so that those holes can be filled with him completely. The best way to keep the door of your self locked to demonic oppression is to be so full of the presence of Jesus that you won’t even open the door a little. He will fulfil the needs which you used to feel that the demonic/sinful things used to fill in your life before.”

I can take a little time with his wife and family as well, if they wanted, to learn how to hear God’s voice clearly and how to live with Jesus filling every part of their lives. For John the most important thing would be to choose to invite Jesus to be his teacher, and to fill him with his Spirit. I would share the four keys, and take time to help him to learn journaling. Above all I would want him to practice bringing every secret of his hearts to light before Jesus; thus making sure doors are kept closed to the enemy. I would want to attach him to a more mature mentor who could also befriend him.

8. In your own words, describe the benefits and drawbacks of both public and private deliverance ministries.

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I have been part of both. I never felt comfortable to join a big queue just because everybody seemed to be doing it, whilst others find that the best way in large meetings. So my experience has been the personal stuff toward me and with other people individually.

I think the big event makes the most dramatic impact as people are encouraged to go forward as they see others being delivered. In our last 12,000 strong youth Soul Survivor Conference many were released of demons every day. 1200 young people gave their lives to Jesus in two nights. Deliverance played a big role, and the power of the Spirit was manifest. Some of the young people, who had been in bondage to all sorts of fears, and reasons not to commit to Christ, went home and parents were emailing me saying “thank you for taking them, what a difference!” Or, “Wow we have never seen anything like it. Give me some of that etc.” So for young people the large event creates enough anonymity, as many are being delivered, and filled with the Spirit at the same time. At Soul Survivor the emphasis is on delegation of ministry so that, as in my case, we continued to work with our 20 or 30 young people at a later time. So a combined process works well. Not every one will receive enough ministry in a large event, some barely enough, and others nothing. So a smaller referral network of local pastoral ministries is vital to mop up, or implement the same, as in the large event. Any way if there is not personal fellowship after such events many will soon be even more oppressed. So the personal fellowship, support, and having equipped ministers to do the deliverance is vital for training, discipleship and growth. I guess local situations are challenged when a person comes back baptised in the Spirit and the church is not. Mostly this seems to be more positive and negative for the church when suddenly young people are delivered and come back full of faith and power.

9. In your own words, discuss why self-deliverance is possible and necessary, and how it could be accomplished.

Simply stated self deliverance is possible if a person has an open and willing heart to bring everything to light through Christ as he opens the doors of our hearts bringing everything into his light. Every Christian has a God-given right to personally claim deliverance through the authority of Jesus' name. Any other teaching would be anti Christian as everything is equally every Christians to personally claim in Christ. It is necessary as God wants us to develop a mature and open personal relationship with Him as Lord, and this maturity is the aim. If we learn of our rightful authority in Christ then as we live in intimacy with him he will be the complete answer to our salvation and sanctification in its on-going sense. It is accomplished by developing a heart, through Christ which is open to flow, Rhema, discernment and Vision.

Having recorded this, here is the type of prayer that is the most effective,

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- A. Make sure that you have gone through the other steps of prayers 1 – 5 before you seek deliverance from a particular oppressive demonic stronghold. If you have sought healing for a specific sin problem in each of the five areas above then deliverance will be a whole lot easier. If the demon does not come out then go back to the above five prayers because something has been missed. Ask God what has been missed and respond as he leads you. Ask God to name the demon or stronghold which has been oppressing you. If it is pornography then call the demon “pornography”; if it is jealousy, call it “jealousy”.
- B. Then pray this prayer: “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I renounce and break all agreements with the demon/s [strongholds] of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, etc”
- C. “I take authority over the demons [strongholds] of \_\_\_\_\_ and I bind you and command you to leave me now in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

## **7. Experience the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus**

Make sure that you have specifically identified the way you have been trying to live the Christian life by your own strength by seeking revelation knowledge on this utilising the four keys. Then pray a prayer like the one below,

- A. “Lord God, I cannot overcome the sin of \_\_\_\_\_ in my own strength at all, so I surrender my whole life to you in this area and I confess that the power to overcome the sin of \_\_\_\_\_ comes only from you through Jesus Christ your Son and my Lord and Saviour.”
- B. “I turn away from my self-effort to save myself from the sin of \_\_\_\_\_ and I open my whole being to embrace the power of your Holy Spirit to flow within me and do what I cannot.
- C. Jesus, I give you permission to set me free by the flow of your Holy Spirit working through me, to overcome the sin of \_\_\_\_\_ completely [Some people do this during vision prayer counselling].

I would like to complete this section by including my testimony of what God did for me as I went through this sort of process whilst I did the course “Prayers that Heal the Heart” with Christian Leadership University. I did it in the form of a paper, and I include it as a personal testimony of praise to God for what he has done for me through the Spirit of Jesus’.

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## **Chapter 4 Introduction to a Lamad New Testament Translation and Interpretation**

I have chosen to include the general introduction to my ongoing work on a Lamad translation of the New Testament from Greek to English at this point because it describes many important aspects of Biblical interpretation; and how interpretation and hermeneutics are involved in the way translators choose possible translations of original koine Greek texts, or in the case of the Old Testament Hebrew and Aramaic texts. I hope the student will see what is different in the way I approach translation and hermeneutics compared to a more rationalistic approach to biblical translation than many of my contemporaries. I suggest that students use more than one type of translation when reading the Scriptures.

“Oh No! Not another Translation of the Bible!” Yes I can understand the sentiments. As I have pursued a study of the Greek New Testament in the last 23 years it has struck me that there has not as yet been one which particularly focuses on the charismatic background to its language and composition.

What I particularly mean by this is that the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century particularly, and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, has been so broadly influenced by rationalism that the revelation knowledge background behind the New Testament documents has been lost sight of to a lesser or greater extent in the interests of objective purity of purpose, and a desire, to some extent, to make the Biblical documents more intelligible to a post supernatural Western world view. Translations are more readily using language and phraseology which is perceived to be more palatable to our so called scientific and empirical age. However, the Middle Eastern Jesus, and his contemporaries lived with a high awareness of revelation that came from beyond the five senses; rather coming mystically via a revelation communicated to their inner most beings by the Spirit of God.

The Middle Eastern Jesus was a product of his times as much as he was the Son of God and the Son of Man. He grew up in a society which valued spontaneous intuitive revelation and inspiration far more than we do with our inheritance of Greek rationalism. The language of the heart, or so called emotional intelligence, was far more highly valued by Jesus and his followers. To them they depended on intuitive spontaneous revelation and inspiration through, spontaneous thoughts, ideas, dreams, visions and providential guidance than the world of today does. Jesus only did what he saw the Father was doing [John 5:19]; and the apostles clearly lived by the same mantra. Paul for instance spoke of the eyes of the Christian heart receiving a Spirit of Revelation and Inspiration [Ephesians 1:16-18]. Indeed he wrote to the Galatians,

“O foolish Galatians, who has put a spell on you, was not Jesus publicly shown, before your very eyes, to have been crucified? This one thing I want to learn from you, was it by works of the law or by the Spirit that you came to hear and believe? Are you really that stupid?

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Having began your journey with the Spirit are you now ending it with human knowledge?" [Galatians 3:1-3 My Translation].

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" [Galatians 3:1-3 RSV]

What I think is different between my translation and the RSV's is that the RSV is taking some of the sting out of the tail of the Middle Eastern Paul's language. It uses "bewitched" rather than "spell" which can be taken as a metaphor for some sort of brainwashing, whereas the word "spell" fits into the Middle Eastern mindset far more readily; as people of that period definitely believed in the supernatural and associated soul ties and curses which people could gain a spiritual hold over a persons' mind, if they made themselves vulnerable to them. Moreover, the RSV speaks of Jesus being "publicly portrayed as crucified" where as I translate it as "Was not Jesus publicly shown, before your very eyes, to have been crucified". Perhaps it might at first seem I am splitting hairs here, but on deeper reflection I hope the reader can see the difference. Paul has been speaking about how the Galatians received the Spirit the first time around; in revelatory fashion. There is a sense that the Spirit became real in their experience, and what he seems to be implying here, is that they actually had a Spirit derived vision of Jesus dying on the cross to the inner spiritual eyes of their hearts. However, the RSV seems to down play this possible implication to the extent that it is not made clear enough to be assumed.

Moreover, we may consider a translation of Ephesians 1:17 in the light of a broader analysis of the New Testament outlook on Revelation knowledge as a continuing dialogue which God has with us through the eyes and ears of our hearts; as the basis for the back ground noise of the epistemologies of the New Testament writers as they wrote by dialoguing with the God who speaks, in order to accurately record the things of God in Christ for our enrichment and guidance in salvation. I will start by considering a few translations of Ephesians 1:17;

[1] NIV – Ephesians 1:17

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better."

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[2] Living Bible – Ephesians 1:17

“I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you wisdom to see clearly and really understand who Christ is and all that he has done for you.”

[3] RSV – Ephesians 1:17

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,”

[4] Novum Testamentum Graece [Nestle-Aland] Ephesians 1:17

“ἵνα ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης, δῶῃ ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ,”

[5] My Translation

“In order that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of an uncovering of the things of God which come by God given revelation in an intimate knowing relationship with him.”

## **Translations Analysed**

In the case of the NIV the translator agrees with my translation regarding the use of the definite article “the” with “Spirit”. The sense of the passage requires that the God who is giving the

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revelation does so by his “Spirit” rather than “a spirit” in the case of the RSV. The RSV considers the use of “spirit” as a way of being [being wise] rather than the source of the being [i.e. God]. Hence the RSV down plays the role of an uncovering of the secret mysteries of God which can only come by divine communication and enabling rather than as a more obscure process of this so called essence of being given “a spirit of wisdom”. Clearly the RSV downplays the supernatural nature of communicated knowledge which is not attainable by human reasoning. Clearly the Living Bible follows the RSV’s hermeneutics when it translates “ὕμιν πνευμα σοφίας” [literally “to you [the] Spirit of wisdom] by:

“To give you wisdom to see clearly.....”

The sense of the translation plays down the revelation understanding of “something which is unknown to our normal human reasoning processes without it being:

- A. Revealed supernaturally as an uncovered mystery of divine origins not attainable by human means at all, and
- B. That the mind of man needs to be supernaturally enabled to understand, accept and act on this knowledge by divine enabling rather than humanistic resources – by which human beings try to live their lives self directing them individually.

So far then we may argue that the NIV is closest to my sense of the translation as we both agree that the agent of the revelation is none other than the “Spirit” of God himself, not just any old “spirit” of less definition or substance.

Where the NIV and my translation parts company is in the translation of “αποκαλυψεως” [of a supernaturally uncovered mystery in Pauline terms, not attainable to the normal discovery processes of human reason]; the NIV parts company with my translation of this term by simply translating it as a genitive of relationship without highlighting the mystery implied in the word. However “αποκαλυψεως” is a genitive singular future indicative participle which has a definite sense of description implied in its’ morphology etymologically. The genitive of relationship describes the derivative nature of something, in this case the derivation of the delivered wisdom given by the Spirit which brings about the intimate knowledge of the living Christ today as Christians know him in a two way relationship which is attained by the Spirit communicating with our spiritual eyes and ears [Ephesians 1:18]. Hence my translation, I believe, does highlight this more intimate type of relational knowing relationship which comes by direct communication of the Holy Spirit with the human spirit. It must be seen in terms of Paul’s comments in Romans 8:16:



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“αυτο το πνευμα συμματυρει τω πνευματι ημων οτι εσμεν τεγκα θεου.”

This is to be literally translated:

“It [is] the Spirit witnessing in accord with the spirit of ours that we are children of God.”

There is the sense of the joining together of our “spirits” with “the Spirit” of God in a reciprocal relationship which is experienced as “witnessing in accord with” each other. There is “spirit” to “Spirit” interaction taking place. There is the further description of this “revelation” in Colossians 1:26,

“το μυστηριον το αποκεκρυμμενον απο των αιωνων και απο των γενεω – νυν δε εφαν  
ερωθη τοις αγιοις αυτου,”

This may be rendered literally,

“The [hidden] mystery the having been covered away from the sight away from the ages  
even away from the generations – now but it has been completely made known to the holy  
ones of him.”

The sense of that which has been hidden in mystery is now available for all to understand who can receive it through their renewed “spirits” which are open to understand that which the natural man cannot understand, but the man with a new heart open to the “uncovering” of the mysteries of God can attain in intimacy with God. Consider 1 Corinthians 2:6 – 13,

“Σοφian δε λαλουμεν εν τοις τελειοις, σοφian δε ου του αιωνος τουτου ουδε των αρχο  
ντων του αιωνος τουτου των καταψουμενων, αλλα λαλουμεν θεου σοφian ενμυστη  
ριω την αποκεκρυμμενην ην προωρισεν ο θεος προ των αιωνων εις δοξαν

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ημων, ην ουδεις των αρχοντων του αιωνος τουτου εγνωκεν, ει γαρ εγνωσαν, ουκ αν τον κυριον της δοξης εσταυρωσαν. αλλα καφωσ γεγραπται,

α οφθαλμος ουκ ειδεν και ους ουκ ηκουσεν

και επι καρδιαν ανθρωπου ουκ ανεβη,

α ητοιμασεν ο θεος τοις αγαπωσιν αυτον.

ημιν δε απεκαλυψεν ο θεος δια του πνευματος, το γαρ πνευμα παντα επαυνα, και τα βαθη του θεου. τις γαρ οιδεν ανθρωπων τα του ανθρωπου ει μη το πνευμα του ανθρωπου το εν αυτω; ουτως και τα του θεου ουδεις εγνωκεν ει μη το πνευμα του θεου. η μεις δε ου το πνευμα του κοσμου ελαβομεν αλλα το πνευμα το εκ του θεου, ινα ειδωμεν τα υπο του θεου χαρισθεντα ημιν, α και λαλουμεν ουκ εν διδακτοις ανθρωπινη σοφιας λογοις αλλ εν διδακτοις πνευματος, πνευματικοις πνευματικα

συγκρινοντες.”

This may be literally translated as,

“Wisdom but we are continuously speaking among the mature, wisdom but not of the present age this not [is] of the rulers of the present age this the ones being doomed to pass away; but we are continuously speaking of God wisdom in [hidden] mystery the having been hidden, was completely predestined the [by] God before of the ages for glory ours, was no one of the rulers of the age this had known it at all; if for they had known it at all, not ever the Lord of the glory they had crucified. But just as it has been written and still applies today [as a continuing message],”

‘What eye not has seen at all and not they have heard at all

Even upon heart of man not has perceived,

What has completely prepared in advance the God for those that love him.’

“To us but it has been uncovered [that was hidden] the God through of the Spirit; for the Spirit all things manifests, and the things deep of the God. Who for he knew a man the

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things of the man if not the spirit of the man the [being] in him? Thus even things of the God no one knew if not the Spirit of the God. We but not the spirit of the world have received but the Spirit the out of [proceeding] of the God, in order that we might know things by of the God having been freely given to us; what even we are continuously speaking [as we hear it] not in teaching of human origin wisdom for words but in teaching [produced by] Spirit, for spiritual [matters] spiritually interpreted.”

Notice how Paul clearly identifies that it is only by the Spirit that revelation can come, and that those revelations which come by the Spirit can only be brought to life and interpreted by the Spirit of God.

Clearly for Paul Revelation is based on an intimate relationship with Christ based on his continuous revelation to us, as the use of the present continuous tense of “λαλουμεν” clearly implies. The continuity of the revelation knowledge attained is based on the continuity of the continuous power of the Christ of powerful revelation. Indeed in Galatians 3:3 he asks them,

“οὕτως ἀνοήτοι ἐστε, ἐναπξάμενοι πνεύματι νυν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεισθε;”

This may be literally translated,

“Thus foolish are you, having begun with Spirit now in human efforts you come to your end?”

Paul wants them to continue in the Spirit’s work in their lives. He wants them to continue to receive revelation knowledge, and the power of the Christ to live in intimacy with him. We are to receive revelation knowledge in the future and today by the Holy Spirit [John 16:12]. We are also to live out of the passion of seeing what the Father is doing and saying just as Jesus our prototype did [John 5:19,20]. The Spirit of Jesus is to still guide his people in all they do and say today [Acts 1:1,9; 2:17-21; 16:6-10 etc].

Hence my translation of Ephesians 1:17, and indeed of Galatians 3:1-5 before that is supported by the broader context of Pauline, Lukan and Johannine epistemology. If we wish to derive a hermeneutic for interpretation of New Testament passages, and books then we need our epistemology to be derived a priori by the paradigms of the New Testament writers themselves as we define the etymologies of terms like “ἀποκαλυψεως” [revelation uncovered not by human

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means, or understood or put into action in the Christian's life by human means] by hermeneutically deriving the sense of the middle eastern mindset of the apostles of Christ and early Christians. The concept of "revelation" and "mystery" were common themes of the inter-testament-al period as much as they were of the first century Middle Eastern Jewish people, and Christ himself. Christ is uncovered by revelation knowledge to be the Son of God and Saviour of the World. Once again I will say that what I want to get across about my translation of Matthew is the need for a translation to reflect the revelatory nature of Jesus, and the apostle Matthew as he records the stories and words of Jesus by flow. It is the "Spirit of Jesus" [Acts 16:6-10] who enables Matthew to structure his gospel based on the revelation he receives from the continuously dialoguing "Spirit of Christ" [John 16:12] through the eyes and ears of his heart [Ephesians 1:17, 18].

So once again I propose that there is a difference in my translation of verses like Ephesians 1:17 and other translations as demonstrated above. Here it is again,

"In order that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of an uncovering of the things of God which come by God given revelation in an intimate knowing continuous relationship with him."

This does fly in the face of many translations which do play down the continuous dialoguing relationship God wishes to have Spirit to spirit with us. I hope this demonstrates to some extent that my translation is coming at the New Testament documents in translation from a different exegetical, hermeneutical and homiletic point of view when executing translation by the flow of the Spirit [John 7:37 – 39].

Moreover, many such observations could be detailed. I am not meaning in this process to down play the value of the RSV's word equivalence ideals, or the NIV or the Living Bible, as I hold them in high esteem, but rather I am trying to point out how this high ideal can be very much coloured by modern understanding and scientific epistemology in biblical linguistics which down plays the super natural.

Hence the high ideal for my translation has been to open the eyes and ears of my heart to allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Middle Eastern revelation background; with its' intuitively based background noise to bring it out in this translation.

It must also be noted that the many translations of the Bible fall into three categories;

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1. There are three basic types of translations—(1) Literal (formally equivalent) translations, (2) Idiomatic (functionally equivalent) translations, and (3) Periphrastic (Free) translations:

- Literal (formally equivalent) translations keep the English translation as close as possible to the form of the Hebrew or Greek words and grammatical order. Often literal translations render Hebrew and Greek into English that is otherwise never written or spoken that way—like translating Spanish "casa Blanca" or French "mason blanche" as "a house white." Literal translations are useful for study in that they give the reader a view of what the Hebrew or Greek wording was actually like: Young's Literal Translation 1 Cor. 5:1 "Whoredom is actually heard of among you, and such whoredom as is not even named among the nations — as that one hath the wife of the father!"  
Examples: KJV, NKJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, ESV, NET

- Idiomatic (functionally equivalent) translations render the Greek and Hebrew words and phrases with equivalent phrases in English in such a way as to represent the normal way of saying the same thing in English—like translating Spanish casa Blanca or French maison blanche as "a white house": NIV 1 Cor. 5:1 "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife."  
Examples: NIV, NAB, GNB, CEV, JB, NJB

- Periphrastic (Free) translations are less connected to the exact words of the Hebrew and Greek texts but try to represent the same general ideas in English with a freedom of adding as many English words as needed to get the intended meaning across—like translating Spanish casa Blanca or French maison blanche as "that house over there that has a white exterior." A periphrastic translation can "put too many words in the mouth" of the original Hebrew or Greek text, and can be highly interpretive. But they often act like commentaries and can get at the heart of what the Hebrew or Greek text is really trying to say with fresh, vivid ways of interpreting the original wording of the text: BBE 1 Cor. 5:1 "It is said, in fact, that there is among you a sin of the flesh, such as is not seen even among the Gentiles, that one of you has his father's wife."  
NEB, NLT, The Message, Amplified Bible.

What I hope the reader will take from the above is the importance of approaching Scripture in the light of revelation knowledge even when it is translated. It is so easy for our scientific age to impose its' empirical methodology on to Scripture, and even translation to the extent that it colours how much of the world view of the Middle Eastern Jesus and his Apostles came from.

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## **Chapter 5 The Epistemology of the Lamad Approach to Biblical Interpretation**

Interpretation is an action which our brains undertake every moment of every day. God has created us to seek meaning. In Biblical Interpretation it is crucial to ask the question, “How do we come to really understand what God meant in the past to the original readers and Means today for us?”

This may seem like an easy question to resolve, but it is true to say that it has had a long history of scholarly discussion surrounding it. Some of the key views which people have taken are as follows:

- A. That the original meanings of Scriptural passages can only be understood if we look at what they would have meant to the original readers, and for those to whom certain recorded events happened. Once we understand this then we can make the right interpretation and application of passages to our lives today.
- B. That the meaning of Scripture for today is more important than what it once meant to the people of God when it was originally recorded.
- C. That it is impossible to know what it meant to original readers as most of the stories and events are mythological.
- D. That the Holy Spirit will give us insight by revelation into what the Scripture meant for original readers and for us today. That it is the meanings and applications which he confirms in our hearts, and by the objective standard of Scripture that we come to know the true meaning for us today.

Clearly “A” and “B” above are coming at how we are to understand Scriptural meaning for us today from two different stand points. “A” seems to be the most logical position to take if we are to just simply study Scripture as if it were a text book looking for meaning. Surely the best cipher for understanding it will be to make sure that what we think it means agrees with what the Bible writers thought it meant. So this view is solid enough, but neither “A” or “B” say enough for the living faith of the Christian who is seeking a relationship with God. Any one can read the Bible and approach it through “A, B, or C” above. The point is that we can just read the bible through any of these epistemologies using our own reason and our own abilities to interpret Scripture as we think it should be interpreted.

However, in the case of “D” we have the clue to a better approach. It is clear from 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is “God-breathed”, it has come about through a revelation process which can only come to life and have meaning for the Christian if the Holy Spirit breaths meaning and life into those words in the heart of the Christian. “Spiritual truths are spiritually discerned” [1]; they come to life

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when God speaks those words to life by his living dialoguing Spirit working in our hearts. The Bible does not use the word “study” once to describe how Christians should approach Scripture [Ref. Virkler]. Rather it uses the word “Meditate” which can mean many things in the Scriptural world view, but it primarily stands for a meditation process which is brought about by God giving us “the Spirit of revelation and inspiration in the knowledge of him” [Eph. 1:17,18]. So as we ponder Scripture we seek to listen to the God who speaks to our hearts and minds through his life giving Spirit which brings his words to life in our hearts as we meditate on it by his guidance. So this type of pondering approach to Scripture meditation is based on a living two way dialoguing relationship with God through his Spirit who lives in our hearts. We get to dialogue with God as we consider his living “God-breathed” words.

In the Old Testament Hebrew text of Scripture God’s words come from the Hebrew word “DABAR” which can mean two things:

1. Spoken words
2. A thing

In other words when God speaks his words spontaneously into the prophet’s heart they become more than just words, but living words – if you like – living entities; because God’s words remain the same forever [Hebrews 13:8]. So whenever we reflect on the canonical words of Scripture they are alive – they are still potentially “spoken forth” as God’s still speaking voice today, and when we engage with these words of Scripture the Holy Spirit spring boards through these words their meanings into our current context and situations. God speaks because his words are still speaking and his Spirit dialogues with our spirits concerning what God wants to say to us today [Romans 8:12 – 16 & 26]!

When the New Testament uses Scripture, or reports something God or Jesus says the Greek word used is “RHEMA” – which does not simply mean a written word, but a spoken forth word or words being spoken right now. So God’s word is living and active sharper than a double edged sword now today as the Holy Spirit continues to breath his meanings into our hearts as we read them and dialogue with him [Hebrews 4:12,13].

This all fits together perfectly with the way that Jesus received revelation knowledge; what I mean by the term “revelation knowledge” is a knowledge which is revealed to our hearts as we read Scripture which does not derive from our own reason or abilities, but from God’s Spirit. It is not possible to study for ourselves without sensing Scripture as a kind of dead word, but rather we need to ponder it as God’s living words to us – and indeed when we approach it in this way we will open up the door in our hearts to listen to the God who is still speaking to us today. The word

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“Revelation” in it self describes something which God reveals which is not available to any man or woman unless he reveals it or it remains hidden from our hearts and minds [Ephesians 1:16 – 18 & 2 Timothy 3:16]. So there is only one way to read Scripture as a Christian if we are to do justice to it as the word of God – to do so through the epistemology of the living and speaking Spirit of Jesus’ who lives in our hearts, because he is alive now, and that his Spirit agrees with the “God-breathed” words of Scripture exactly. Indeed any Spirit who does not agree with the words of Scripture is weighed and found not to be of God. Hence Scripture is the blueprint by which The Spirit speaking in our hearts is tested, and when the Spirit in our hearts agrees with Scripture then we can be sure it is the Spirit of Jesus’. Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing and saying and nothing else – this came out of revelation knowledge for him just as it is to for us as we ponder the Word of God.

The charts below describe this process of meditation as we approach God’s Word.

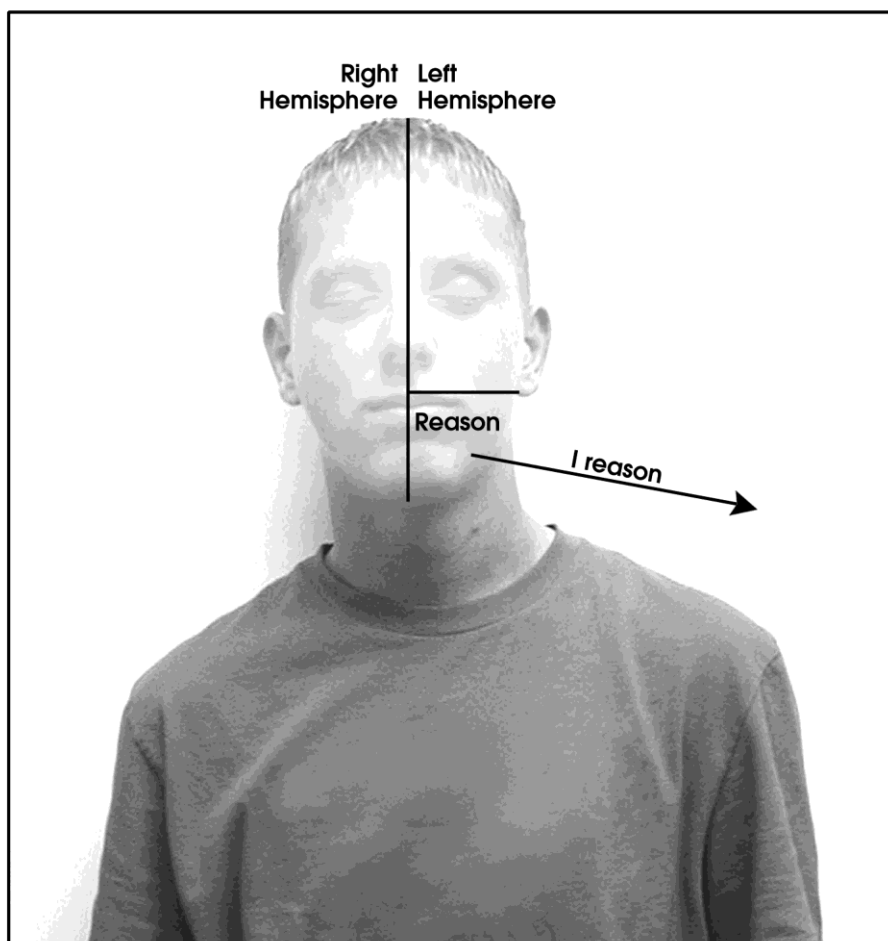


## Study

(Greek/Western)

“Application of the mental faculties  
to the acquisition of knowledge.”

(Webster)



Study (My use of one part of one hemisphere of my brain)

1. Is nowhere endorsed in Scripture (II Tim. 2:15 is a miss-translation in the KJV Bible).
2. Is self in action (Humanism - a false god).

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3. Is self using reason (Rationalism - a false god)?
4. Results in wisdom from below - earthly, natural, demonic (Jas. 3:15). For example, reason caused Peter to be at odds with the purposes of God (Jn. 18:10,11).

Study violates the following biblical principles:

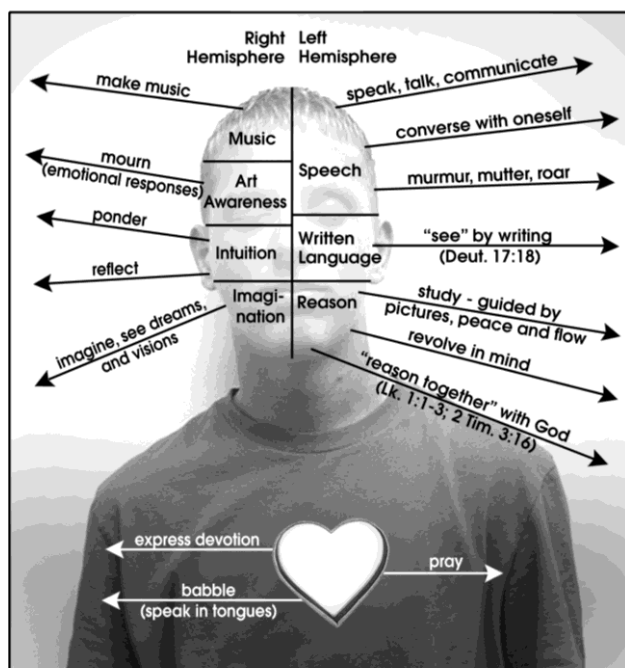
1. Gal. 2:20 - I resurrect self, which no longer lives.
2. Rom. 12:1 - I am using my faculties rather than presenting them to God to use.
3. Is. 1:18 – I'm reasoning, rather than reasoning together with God.
4. Gen. 3:5 – I've fallen prey to the temptation of the Garden of Eden that "I can know good and evil."

## Meditation

(Hebrew/Lamad)

“To murmur; to converse with oneself, and hence aloud; speak; talk; babbling; communication; mutter; roar; mourn; a murmuring sound; i.e. a musical notation; to study; to ponder; revolve in the mind; imagine; pray; prayer; reflection; devotion.”

(Strong's Exhaustive Concordance\*)



Meditation (God's use of every part of both hemispheres of my brain as He fills and flows out through my heart by His Spirit)

1. Is endorsed 18 times in the KJV Bible.

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2. Is God in action within the individual?
3. Is God granting revelation through the heart and mind which has been yielded to Him?
4. Results in wisdom from above - pure, peaceable, gentle (Jas. 3:17).

Meditation applies the following biblical principles:

1. Gal. 2:20 - I let Christ live through me.
2. Rom. 12:1 - I am yielding my outer faculties to the indwelling Spirit (i.e. to “flow” - Jn. 7:38).
3. Is. 11:2 - When reasoning together with God, I receive a spirit of wisdom and understanding and knowledge.
4. Jn. 5:19,20,30 – I’m living as Jesus did, out of divine initiative, doing what I see and hear my Father doing.

\*Old Testament numbers: 1897, 1900, 1901, 1902, 7878, 7879, 7881; New Testament numbers: 3191, 4304

[Used by kind permission Dr. Mark Virkler – President CLU]

As we can clearly see from the above that the mind God has given us is made up of two hemispheres. One, our right brain, deals with the intuitive and Spontaneous, the other, our left brain deals with reason, logic and calculation. When we ponder God’s Word the Holy Spirit enables us to use our whole brain in whole brain meditation. He does not limit us to reason, logic and study, but rather to every aspect of the ways God has made us to function. So central to the thesis of this short book is that we are to approach Scripture using whole brain meditation as the Spirit of Jesus’ flows through our hearts giving us RHEMA and Vision.

So as you meditate on the exercises in this book I encourage you to use whole brain meditation, and ask God to give you his interpretations and meanings which he wants you to be guided by and to live by as you listen to the God who speaks. It is important to utilise whole brain meditation rather than just rationalism and study. I am outlining how modern views on biblical interpretation can work together with whole brain revelation knowledge meditation. It is my hope that the reader will experience a paradigm shift away from rationalism to revelation knowledge based epistemology of how they go about biblical interpretation. I hope that we all may come to allow God to speak to us as he interprets his messages found in Scripture into our current real living heart contexts. And let us be clear about this it is possible to read the Scriptures as the Jews of Jesus’ day did and to think they have live from God, and to actually be children of the Devil [John 8:44].

## Whole Brain Revelation Meditation & Biblical Interpretation

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1] In a group of three reflect on what you have read above and note below what spoke to your hearts.

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[2] Individually use one of the things that spoke to you above and ask God what he wants to say to you about. Journal below utilising the four keys to hear God's voice.

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[3] Get back into your group and spend time praying and praising God together for what he has revealed.

## **Chapter 6 Developing Whole Brain Revelation Based Meditation When Seeking the Interpretation of Scripture**

### **1. Approaches to Biblical Interpretation**

In the following pages we will start to develop a whole brain approach to biblical interpretation. We will be drawing on the New Testament considerably as well as the Old Testament. It is recognised that this broader discussion of Revelation based whole brain meditation on the meaning of Scripture is being outlined in the light of the Pentateuch. It is important for the reader to understand the broader picture of the many rich ways that he or she may approach Bible meditation. At the end of the various pieces of material I will demonstrate to the reader how whole brained meditation works for me when I reflect on the Pentateuch. I have done this in two ways:

1. I will give an example of how this works for me as I seek revelation.
2. Then my reflective comments which came to me when I meditated on the Pentateuch will be outlined for the reader.
- 3.

It must be noted that the reader is encouraged to utilise whole brain meditation when seeking to understand Scripture – so there will be one special exercise at the end of each of the five books of the Pentateuch so that the reader may practice whole brain meditation.

These approaches to biblical interpretation must not be taken as rigid formulas to follow, but rather to learn from as they can inform the way we approach our understanding of Scripture. I usually focus on Scripture letting the Holy Spirit quicken the truths to my heart and mind as he wishes. Often he also reminds me of an idea which arises from one of these approaches which help me to further understand the passage. I seek to do all of this by the flow of the Holy Spirit as he pours out his revelations to my heart from Scripture. Scripture is always the means to be utilised to test all revelation knowledge by. This is how we seek to test the source of the spirit behind the revelation. This is why the section above on discerning the spirits is vital to consider. There are some other safeguards to have in place as well. These may be expressed as safe guards;

The five safe guards may be expressed in the following way:

- A. That you are a born again Christian with a relationship with Jesus Christ, having repented of all known sins, and having trust in him, and obedient to him as your master and Lord.
- B. That the Bible is the sole standard for testing all experiences, ideas and spiritual phenomenon against.

# Whole Brain Revelation Meditation & Biblical Interpretation

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- C. That you are committed to getting to know God through meditation on Scripture.
- D. That you submit your will to the Will of God in everything as it is revealed to you.
- E. That you have 2 or 3 spiritual advisors who you trust as good friends that you can share your journaling and spiritual growth experiences with – particularly when big decisions are involved.

As Christian Bible readers seeking revelation interpretation we need to utilise these safeguards. This will become quickly evident as we further discuss biblical interpretation.

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Now that the reader has gone through the sessions above it is my suggestion that you utilise the four keys to hearing God's voice in order to understand the discussions below. So to end each section of what follows their will be reflective exercises so you can ask God what he wants to teach from these approaches and how they can be utilised using full brain revelation based meditation as the Spirit of Jesus' speaks through the flow of the Holy Spirit to the eyes and ears of your hearts. Once we have gone through this process I will demonstrate using my experience of whole brain meditation to focus on a passage of Scripture. I hope to demonstrate how the Holy Spirit can and does utilise insights which scholars have derived in a wholly different paradigm that what has often been for these scholars a wholly academic exercise.

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There are numerous approaches to biblical interpretation and they are all driven by philosophical predisposition. So here are the basic approaches which have been practiced in the history of the church:

[A] Allegorical interpretation. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish theologian, of the first century AD employed an allegorical approach to interpreting scripture. He was strongly influenced by Plato, and he tried to redefine many scriptures in the light of the platonic world view. For instance he was impressed by the concept of the "LOGOS" [Greek for "Word"]. He sought new interpretations on Old Testament scriptures, which spoke of the "Word of the Lord", in the light of Plato's understanding of the concept of "LOGOS" - being in essence the so called "reason behind the existence of all things". Rather than taking a literal interpretation of scriptures he allegorically interpreted them, fashioning them into something which fitted better with his new Platonic philosophical world view. The

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weakness with Philo's approach was that he was manipulating scripture by trying to read into it things which were not there. So for instance when we read "Hear the word of the LORD" [Isa. 1:10], we understand it to literally mean this is what God wants to communicate to us. For Philo, in certain instances, this sort of declaration would have involved the personification of the "Word", as if the "Word" is more than a description of what God wants to say to his people; it becomes reified as a reality all of its own - almost becoming a living being or principle. So Philo was reading into scripture what he wanted it to say [eisegesis], rather than reading out of it [exegesis] what it was really saying. He was putting his own philosophical preconceptions first, rather than listening carefully to what scripture was saying.

[B] If we look at how Jesus interpreted Old Testament Scripture we find that he does it in a wholly new way, which shows real authority. No other person in history has ever had the God given right to pronounce new teachings into existence as Jesus had [Mt. 7:28,29]. So in the case of Matthew 5:21 & 22 he redefines "Thou shalt not kill" by taking it further; even an angry thought that premeditates murder is a sin. Matthew's gospel demonstrates again and again how Jesus pointed to the fulfilment of all Old Testament scripture in himself [Mt. 1:22; 2:6; 2:18] etc. What this indicates is that Jesus' life, death and resurrection, give a new hermeneutic [interpretation] to the way Christian's read the Old Testament. We read it in the light of Jesus as fulfilment. If you like we see how the old tells the story of redemption again and again as it points forward to Jesus the culmination of history. Hence when we interpret the Old Testament [OT] it is always important to look at it in the light of the hermeneutic which Jesus fulfils in it. For instance the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is still interpreted to this day by Jewish theologians as the whole people of Israel. However, the apostles, guided by the Spirit of Jesus, interpreted the "servant" as Jesus [Acts 8:26 – 40]. Moreover, Jesus introduces new teachings as the authoritative Son of God [John 14 – 17].

In fact in John's gospel we see how he is the fulfilment of the sacraments of Israel; he surpasses the temple [John 2]. He is the true bread of God [John 6] etc. So what we are saying here is that Jesus has authority to give new teaching, and to interpret and amplify old teaching from the O T. His teaching is always true to the deeper meanings of the O T scriptures, but where things seem less than obvious, in what the O T means in the light of Jesus, we are best recommended to cautiously interpret them in the light of Jesus hermeneutical standard [this standard is further discussed below]. Jesus is the supreme guide in our understanding of scripture.

When we compare Philo's allegorical method to Jesus' method one thing sticks out proudly, Philo was but a man influenced by man's philosophy; Jesus is the Son of God with absolute authority to give real meaning and interpretation [John 8:48 – 58].

[C] The core of Jesus theology demonstrated a number of important things:



- i. He had a living trusting connected relationship with the Father through the Spirit [John 5:19,20]. He is the only one who has ever had this in a perfect sense. However, we all must have this connection with our Saviour through his Spirit as well. It is the Spirit of Jesus in our relationship with him who teaches us all things [John 16:12-15]. Without Jesus living in us by his Spirit, without us listening carefully to him, in a dialogical relationship based on scripture, and revelation, there will never be a time when any of our biblical interpretations will be of any value [Eph. 1:18]. Without Christ guiding our interpretations by his Spirit we will lose our way and seriously go off the mark in our efforts.
- ii. Jesus carefully listened to what the O T Word of God was really saying - based on his connection with Father God by his Spirit. Jesus is the supreme example for us to follow. When the devil tempts him in the wilderness Jesus uses his deep understanding of God's revealed will in scripture to fight off the enemies lies. When satan tries to use the Word of God against Jesus, Jesus immediately knows that it has been misinterpreted to him [Luke. 4:1 – 13]. He had listened to what the revealed will of God in scripture had to say so carefully that he had come to know when the heart of its meaning was being twisted. This is why it is so important for us to listen very carefully to what the Word of God is really saying to us in Jesus. So that we can come to understand the heart of God by accurate understanding. This accurate understanding has to be guided by us knowing God's revealed living self in the person of Jesus. Satan used a proof text method of reading scripture on Jesus [Lk.4:9], he took the scripture out of context and twisted it to his own ends, to try to get things his own way. Jesus knew the heart of the Father, he was filled with his values and presence, and he knew the true Spirit led context of the real meaning of the verses twisted by the enemy. Hence he sent the enemy packing! So Jesus knew scripture in the context of what it really communicated about the heart of God because he had read out of it, by the guidance of the Spirit, the true interpretation, which led him to powerful application in the context of his present life situation. Thus he overcame the enemy! Jesus approach gives us the correct evangelical process by which we should exegete scripture, and then hermeneutically understand its meaning. Finally applying that meaning to our present life situations. All of this needs to be done under the guidance of the Spirit in a living trusting relationship with Jesus.

[d] So we come to secular/liberal approaches/philosophies to understanding the bible. These go beyond Jesus' approach to scripture as the authentic Word of God, and rather see scripture as just another example of human literature. Generally speaking liberal secular criticism of the literature of the bible treats it as a human production without divine origination or inspiration. The so called German school of criticism, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early twentieth century, saw such things as the gospels as no more than myths and legend - with a small core of historical truth about the real Jesus of Nazareth. Hence miracle stories need demythologising, or explaining in a non supernatural way. Jesus' statements about himself as the "Christ" were pictured as words put into his mouth in later Christian generations - years after the real Jesus walked the earth. The birth narratives of Matthew and Luke were seen as myth and legend possibly borrowed from paganism. The so called cosmic redeemer myth of the living, dying and resurrected Son of God was considered as borrowed from

pagan religions like the Isis cult etc. In essence the aim of the German school was to try to reconstruct what they termed as the real historical Jesus. For instance the Jewish theologian Geza Vermes, in his book “Jesus the Jew”, tries to reconstruct his idea of the historical Jesus in the light of him being a Jewish Rabbi, who had the misfortune to be crucified by the Romans. In views like his, the change from the historical Rabbinic Jesus, to Jesus the supernatural Christ, were implanted into the story when gentile Christians needed to paint Jesus in mythological ways to compete with their pagan counterparts.

However, this approach has received so many serious blows that it is no longer entertained as credible for many scholars from the most unlikely of sources. For example, in the German school, theologians attacked the historicity of Luke’s gospel, and the Acts, by claiming that Luke’s historical data was not based on the real historical evidence. But their criticism was made in a time when all the archaeological and historical evidence had not even come fully to light. In fact modern day Greco/Roman historians view Luke’s historical content, about the world he lived in, as first rate evidence of the real historical situation in his time [If you want to read more about this then email [ar.hardy@ntlworld.com](mailto:ar.hardy@ntlworld.com), and I will send you a paper highlighting these wonderful proofs of the reliability of Luke as a careful historian who we can rely on for the truth about Jesus. You could also consult J. Stott’s commentary on Acts, he has some very useful observations about the current position of Luke/Acts in his introduction – see on bibliography for details].

The German school has been so readily contradicted by current evidence as to make their criticism highly questionable even taken from a more liberal position. Way off the mark! Would be my summary of the current credibility of the secular higher critical school. The writer of this paper had the misfortune to study liberal criticism at university, and his tutors in this field put evidence forward which was out of date, and unreliable in a number of critical assumptions that were presented as fact! When this writer studied the massive body of literature of the past 30 or 40 years he realised that the attempts of secular theologians were based on poor historical data in certain key assumptions they considered scientific fact. However, to this day unbelieving secular critics of the bible still point to their views of the historical Jesus as credibly based on the real facts; this is still held on to even in the light of evidence which proves them completely wrong on many of their key assumptions. In any court room situation where rules of evidence are strictly adhered to their case would not be acceptable compared to the body of modern research which upholds the reliability of men like Luke who used the highest standards of presenting accurate evidence. Broadly speaking Luke demonstrates the highest standard of gathering and presenting historical empirical evidence out of the gospel writers [see on Luke 1:1-4], but this does not mean that Matthew, Mark and John do not do the same, for what guided Luke the classically trained doctor of medicine also guided them. They were in awe of the words and works of the risen Jesus, and they carefully, only, allowed verified evidence to enter the apostolically accredited accounts of the real Jesus. May God help us to hold to the very highest standards today.

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So to conclude this section it may be said that Jesus sets the standard for our approach to interpreting scripture. May we take on the awesome task of doing this to the highest objective, and Spirit led, standards. May we not let modern day liberalism and relativism cloud our understanding, and communication, of the Word of God. May we apply the very highest standards to communicating the Word of God, just as the early church applied these high standards to the precious facts about Jesus' words and works - which they have passed on to us. In Jesus name amen!

## **Group or Individual Meditation**

[1] Using the four keys to hear God's voice ask him to tell you what he wants to say to you about the discussion above. Journal your insights below.

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[2] Share your journaling with another person. Record each other's insights below.

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# Whole Brain Revelation Meditation & Biblical Interpretation

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## **Fundamentals of Biblical Interpretation**

Starting from an evangelical approach to New Testament interpretation it may be said that any believer who reads scripture needs to take the real meanings behind scripture very seriously as God's living word to them. There is no place for a lazy attitude which side steps proper bible study, replacing it with a slap stick devotional system which reads into single verses taken out of context meanings which are not really there. Serious bible study seeking to know God more deeply has become less popular in the evangelical scene. This seems to have corresponded to the increased emphasis of seeking an experience of God with a bias to emotional experience being at the forefront. Although we need the heart and head to be involved in serving God, and coming to know him, it has become pronounced that people do not know their bibles so well. If we consider some of the great names behind modern evangelicalism, such as John Wesley, we find that they were great bible students. Wesley read through his Greek New Testament [NT] once every month, and also read his Hebrew bible thoroughly. He had learnt the value of listening carefully to Scripture in context. He did not value a proof text approach to scriptural study, or teaching, but a contextual understanding of verses as they worked in the particular passage in which they were found, and also how they fitted into the broader context of author's theme, and then into the overall themes as they were further expanded by other biblical writers. So we can break some of Wesley's core values down as good interpretive practice for all evangelical theologians:

[A] We need to look at particular single verses of interest in their overall place in the passage in which they are found.

For instance Paul writes in Romans 3:7 "If through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner" [RSV].

Taken on its own, as a proof text, it can seem that Paul is saying that once we belong to Christ it doesn't matter what we do after, sinning or whatever else; because all we do will show God's glory

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off as he shows mercy to us. Indeed a certain type of theology has grown out of misconceived understandings of this verse [and others], to the point where certain Christian groups hold that once you are saved you are then free to go and live just as you like. However, when we look at this verse in context we discover that Paul is not saying this at all. In fact he holds a very clear doctrine of sin, and the danger of living our lives just as we like. This is developed in chapter 3 of Romans.

[B] We need to look at particular verses, and the passages they are connected to, in the broader themes that the author is developing.

For instance, in John's gospel, Jesus is spoken of in 1:1 as the "Word of God" who was with God "in the beginning". Jehovah's witnesses interpret "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" [RSV] to mean something quite different. They argue that it should be translated that "a god was the word." So they say when in verse 14, of chapter 1, it is said "the Word [Jesus] became flesh" that Jesus was not equal to God, but that rather he himself was a creation of God in the beginning. He is not "the God" to them, but "a god", a lesser being than God in their view. However, if we look at the person of Jesus as he reveals his intimate relationship with God in John's gospel, he clearly pictures himself as God's equal, as the Son of God [see on 2:24,25; 4:25,26; 8:58, 14:6,9,10;20:28,30,31]. It is true that Jesus said the Father was greater than himself [14:28], but this must be seen in the context of Jesus the one true Son of God living his life on earth as an example of a life wholly trustingly submitted to God his Father. He accepted worship for himself, and the supreme example of this is when Thomas addressed him as his Lord [YAHWEH God's special covenant name], and his God [20:28].

With regard to the view which translates John 1:1 by indentifying Jesus as "a god", rather than "the God", we come to two other key principles in biblical interpretation.

[C] It is useful to consult expert scholarship in good technical commentaries which will give an accurate translation of the original languages. In the case of the Greek text in John 1:1 there is no doubt at all that John meant the text to be translated as "the Word was God" rather than "a god was the word". Any competent Greek scholar of New Testament Greek will tell you that the definite article ["the"] is regularly dropped when the predicate follows the subject. So it is vital to have a good commentary, or even to learn New Testament Greek. A good commentary is of as much use as knowing some Greek, or Hebrew; whether you go on to learn original languages anyway. What must be emphasized is the need to seek after accurate translations in order to determine accurate readings, and meanings.

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[D] It is vital that any serious bible student use a recognised accurate translation of the scriptures when seriously studying the Bible. Amplified translations are alright, but they do not represent the full weight of good technical scholarship in translation. Current scholarly translations are to be found in the “New International Version”, the “Revised Standard Version”, the “New Revised Standard Version”, The “Jerusalem Bible” and the “New Jerusalem Bible”, the “New English Bible” and the “New English Bible”.

For instance the RSV is what is known as a word equivalence translation. The translators sought to keep as closely to the original sense and meanings of biblical syntax and words as possible. The NIV tends to be more of an interpretive version, which aims to bring out the original text by equating the language with a more current form of spoken English. It is suggested that both translations can be read side by side during bible study, with a good commentary, and a favourite amplified bible in order to bring life and meaning to bear to your time spent with God.

[E] When seeking understanding of the person of Christ, and his divine nature, it is also Important to go beyond one book in the Bible, and to consult more widely in other books, and letters contained within scripture. For instance the equality of Jesus in the Trinity of the Godhead is a case in point in its Matthean demand that all should be baptised in the three names of the persons of the Godhead [Mt. 28:19]. It does not say in the name of “a son” or “a spirit” in the command to baptise, but in the name of “the Son” and “the Spirit”. What we are saying is that we need to listen to what scripture has to say carefully.

[F] Hence we need to practice three critical tools in interpretation.

- i. We need to use exegesis. The term means to “read out of a text” what it is really saying. We are not to “read into a text” what we think or feel it should say. So first of all we need to listen very carefully to what a text is really saying, the syntax; how it fits into the broader context of a chapter, then the book it is found in. We must listen getting the words clear in our minds. We ask then “what is it really saying?” “What do the key words mean?”
- ii. Next we need to utilise hermeneutics. We need to interpret what it is saying by seeking the meaning/s behind what we have carefully exegeted. Put another way we ask “what does it mean?” What does it mean in its context, language, syntax, and the world it fitted into? What is its linguistic context, social context, historical context, and cultural context?

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- iii. Next we need to utilise homiletics. Once we have understood what it originally said, and originally meant to its original readers, then we can seek to apply it to our lives today. So the last question is “how does this apply?”

So in summary we ask [1] what does it say? [2] What does it mean? [3] How does it apply?

[g] We need to seek etymologies of key words in passages being exegeted. For instance John’s use of the term “word” to describe Jesus pre-existence must be understood in its Greek and Hebrew background. John uses “LOGOS” [Greek for “word”], LOGOS has a classical connection found in Plato, and Philo, as already noted. Essentially it stands for the mind, principle, or designer, or design behind all created things. In the case of John’s use it relates to the Son of God’s participation in the Triune Godhead in creation. Gen. 1:26 speaks of “us” making man in “our” image, which implies that man is composed of the essence of the trinity in his self, and in his socio familial structures and culture. The Hebrew word for LOGOS is “DABHAR”, which stands for a spoken word, or a real thing. In the OT the DABHAR becomes incarnate in the words of God; in the NT the DABHAR becomes incarnate in a real breathing, living man. Jesus the DABHAR YHWH [Word of the LORD] translates YHWH into humanity, so as to be able to communicate God at the most intimate and personal levels, as he lives among men and women. So we may conclude that etymologies start at a basic level by asking what does the Greek mean in the case above? How does it relate to the Hebrew? How does it fit into the culture of the Hellenised world under Rome? Etc.

So we have considered some elementary foundations for biblical interpretation. Now we move on to some intermediate considerations in this field. It must be said that these elementary steps must be mastered before one move’s on to intermediate methods of biblical interpretation.

## **Meditation and Reflection Exercises**

[1] Using the four keys reflect on what God wants to say to you about the discussion above. What pictures has he given you? What spontaneous thoughts did he bring to mind while you read it? Or what is he spontaneously saying to you now?

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[2] Share your journaling with a friend and write down each others insights below.

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## **Literary forms, styles and approaches which influence the way a text should be interpreted – intermediate biblical interpretation.**

Basic biblical interpretation, although basic, is the bread and butter of accurate hermeneutics. If a bible student were just to apply the basic principles he or she could not go to far wrong. It is the foundation to a deep relationship with the God who speaks today.

Intermediate biblical interpretation has a lot more to do with understanding the different types of literature in the Bible, and becoming proficient in exegesis of types of literature in the light of the type of literature being studied. Here are a few of the literary forms which we find in the bible:

[a] The Synoptic gospels [called synoptic because Matthew, Mark and Luke share much the same material in common]. Each of these gospels is structured with certain literary forms. These are:



- i. The Passion narratives – the story of Passion Week. This is reckoned to be the earliest form of story which was passed on, in oral and written form. Obviously Jesus sufferings, death and resurrection were the one thing early Christians could not stop rejoicing about and meditating on.

When exegesis is carried out on the events of the passion story it is important to understand the fundamental importance of the historical narrative as each piece leads on to the next. For instance in Matthew 26:6 – 13 we find a woman anointing Jesus. This is interpreted by Jesus for us when he says “she has done it to prepare me for my burial” [v.12 RSV]. The process of preparation for the crucifixion is prophetically announced in advance. Hence this leads to Jesus organising the Passover meal, and then setting up the paschal supper as a sacramental means of historical reminder of the meaning of the death of Jesus [26:26 – 28]. The initiation of this supper is directly related to the fulfilment of the Passover festival by Jesus the true lamb completing the true meaning of Passover in his sacrifice for sins. This meal in the first place is a celebration of the end of the old covenant system foreshadowing the Saviours death. Secondly, it is a prophecy to the disciples which demonstrates Jesus knew what was about to happen to him. Thirdly it establishes the sacrament of the Eucharist as a continuous historical reminder of the passion of Christ until he comes [See also 1 Cor. 11].

The passion story needs to be understood in the context of the historical process of what happened in the week leading up to Jesus death and resurrection. If we just focus on one story, without regard to the linear narrative process, we will miss much of the significance of each part of the story as it fits into the historical process. Jesus’ Gethsemane experience [Mt. 26:36 – 56] cannot be properly understood if we have not first of all considered what has gone before. When Jesus accepts the anointing of oil in Mt. 26:6-13 he is preparing his disciples to understand the great value of what he is about to do [26:11]. In other words Matthew is reminding us that this is done at great cost for each of us; just as the oil is expensive, so is the price Jesus is about to pay. When he shares the supper he declares that history is about to meet its fulfilment in him [26:27 – 28], and that all church life after this event will focus on what he is about to do. It is to be an axial point of reference for the Christian church to celebrate ever after. Each of these stages has been aimed at preparing the disciples, and the future church, for what Jesus then finally chooses to embrace on our behalf. He accepts the cup of suffering - bearing the punishment for all sin upon his self [26:42]. This is not to be interpreted as an involuntary meaningless act, but a voluntary act which involves Jesus deliberately choosing to bear the complete punishment for our sin. Jumping some steps forward we can see why the early exegetical and hermeneutic steps listed above are important to interpret the later steps in what Jesus is doing. So let’s consider Jesus’ dereliction of the Cross: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, la’ma sabach-tha’ni?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’” [Mt. 27:46].

In the light of what has gone before we start to understand the consequences of Jesus Gethsemane choice to bear our sins. In doing so, not only has he accepted a death which is died for everyone who believes, but he has also embraced the punishment for all sin, for all time, for our sakes. When he cries out in dereliction not long before his death, he knows complete separation from God. He dies completely without any sense of a feeling of hope in his soul, and he does it so that we might live. It declares his love for God, his love for us, and his hatred of sin and the consequences that it brings; terrible separation from our loving Father God.

Hence it is important to let the sequential interpretation of the passion story to be carried out step by step. Each piece is vital in the task of its interpretation.

The passion story, and the other key components of the gospel structure, listed below, make up what is know as the Kerugma. This comes from the Greek word meaning “proclamation”. The passion story was at the heart of all early Christian preaching. If we consider Acts chapter 2 we can see the vital components of the kerugma’s content. In fact early church tradition says that the apostle Peter’s preaching was written down for the church to remember in the gospel of Mark. Many think that Mark was the earliest gospel written. It is very interesting that if we compare the structure of Mark to Peter’s Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, we find a common structural thread linking the two. So we might say that Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 is a cipher which enables us to understand the key Christian teachings which need to be preached from the passion story. This speech [of Peter] also gives a useful hermeneutical cipher for understanding the interpretation of the passion story in the gospels.

- ii. Sayings – these are sayings of Jesus which stand on their own without particular reference to a narrative.

The sayings of Jesus are numerous in the gospels; the Sermon on the Mount is a classic case in point. As mentioned above, sayings can stand on their own. You can mostly understand their meaning without reference to other sayings. Sayings are usually structured using a literary style known as inverted parallelism. The structure of this style follows the formula ABBA. Hence Jesus says: “Are Grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles” [Mt. 7:16]. This style of inverted parallelism is known as antithetical parallelism.

A	B
Grapes	Thorns

B	A
Thistles	figs

Notice the ABBA construction. Jesus compares two opposites. He does not add to the meaning of the saying so much as repeats the concept by using the similes demonstrated. Most sayings have this inverted style of parallelism in them. It is important to understand this when interpreting sayings. It was a common Rabbinic teaching method, and in the days in which people memorised things, rather than having books to keep the memories in, it was important to have a successful pneumatic aid. We must be careful not to read too much into these parallelisms; finding things that are not there, or not meant to be understood. In the case of the grapes and figs, and thorns and thistles, the fruits and thorns are not important but the concept of their essential difference to each other is.

- iii. Parables – These are basically stories which function as metaphor and simile. Once again these forms can stand on their own without needing a context to be understood.

There are a variety of different types of parables:

- There are eschatological parables which speak of the end times, an example being Matthew 25:31-46. Obviously interpretation of these kinds of parable have to recognise that they are speaking of future apocalyptic events [see further on for apocalyptic]. Moreover, they often need interpreting in the light of the Christians' need to prepare for the events foreshadowed.

- There are kingdom parables which speak of the nature of the kingdom of God, for example see on Matthew 13:24. The key to interpreting these parables is to see them as definitions of what it means for the Christian to be part of the present kingdom of God.
- There are parables of Crisis which aim to keep believers always ready, and off balance, not becoming lukewarm. C.H. Dodd commenting on them remarks: "These parables, as we have them, are set in the context of exhortations to be ready, alert, and wide-awake. Such exhortations belong to the current paroenesis of the early church." [p.115, the parables of the kingdom, see on bibliography]. An example would be Mark 13:33-37. This genre is best interpreted in the light of the churches' need to be focussed on the world to come as its goal. All earthly pursuits need to be considered in the light of the coming crisis when all will have to stand before God.
- There are parables of growth which delineate the principles of spiritual development, and growth of the kingdom of God in the world. An example being Mark 4:26-29. These parables should be interpreted on a personal level challenging the believer to self examination, and on a corporate level challenging the church to think of how they are involved in the proactive activity of reaching out to a lost world.

Beyond these simple principles for interpretation it may be said that there are a few key interpretive pitfalls to avoid:

- Avoid reading too much into the meanings of the details of the parable stories. There are usually one or two key teaching points which the parables have. Too often in the past evangelicals have fallen into the trap of trying to find new meanings in the parables through images used thus formulating new teachings. For instance in the parable of the talents some have interpreted the investment process of the three men, given the master's money to invest, as a case either for or against taking out endowment policies [see on Mt. 25:14-30].
  - Try to look at the parables in the context in which the gospel writers put them into. Too often they are arrested from their present context, and are forced to mean things which the context of the surrounding linear narrative development of the gospel they are found in does not allow.
  - Keep to the main teaching point of the parable and do not wander into speculation over the details of each story.
  - Identify the specific roles of the metaphors and similes as they inform the key teaching point of a parable.
  - If in doubt about a parables' meaning then consult its synoptic counterpart, if one exists, in another of the synoptics'. A case in point is the parable of the sewer. An interpretation is given of it in Matthew 13 which aids the student not to go astray.
- iv. Miracle stories – These forms are characterised by their design which is to bring about awe in the power of Christ.

Luke 8:22 – 25 is a classic example of the function of a miracle story. Jesus instructs the disciples to go over to the other side of the lake of Galilee. Jesus then falls asleep. He even remains peacefully asleep when a terrible storm ensues. The disciples are frantically trying to keep the boat afloat. Here we have a picture of the power and trust of Jesus all in one. He is so certain of his personal security, and that of the disciples, that he remains unaffected by a seemingly life threatening storm. When the disciples awake him he rebukes them for their lack of trust in his Father, and he then simply commands the storm to stop, and a great calm follows. The key to the miracle story is concluded by noting the disciples' response: "Who then is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?" [Lk. 8:25]. The key to interpreting this parable is to present the awesome power of Jesus, and our complete need of submission to him in trust, confidence and obedience.

- v. Pronouncement stories – The characteristic of these forms is that they are connected to historical narrative, and are dependant on it. These stories end with a pronouncement which is the key to understanding the interpretation of the narrative event.

Luke 6:1 – 5 is a classic example of a pronouncement story. Jesus allows his disciples to do something forbidden on the Sabbath. When he was challenged about this he reminds the Jewish leaders that David as a mere man had broken the Sabbath, the story ends with the key pronouncement which is the key to the interpretation of the story. Jesus pronounces: "The Son of man is LORD of the Sabbath" [Lk. 6:5 RSV].

The pronouncement gives the key to the interpretation of the narrative. Jesus has authority to executively define and redefine the meaning of the Sabbath.

In conclusion to this brief introduction to gospel literature it may be said that it is vital to understand the ways in which different literary forms work within the synoptic tradition. Without paying careful attention to literary function it is likely that the student of scripture will not fully appreciate the full force of the passage being considered. Exegesis, hermeneutics and homiletics will be at the foundation of studying any gospel passage, but to take the next step in developing biblical interpretation skills it is important to let literary form guide the process.

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With particular reference to John's gospel we find a different genre of literature to the synoptic tradition. Whereas, the synoptic gospels utilise the forms highlighted above, making them a composite eclectic collection of teaching styles, John's gospel makes use of a dialectical form of teaching. It is highly influenced by Greek didactics. Many of the teaching sections are presented as disputes, or debates which Jesus has with Jewish religious leaders [See on John 8&9]. A classic example is Jesus conversation with Nicodemus [John 3]. It is noticeable that Jesus takes time to explain what he means to groups, individuals and crowds. In the synoptic gospels Jesus does not take the same amount of time explaining his meanings compared to the Johannine frequency [See on John 14 – 16]. And this is a significant issue to be aware of. John's gospel particularly records the deeper meanings to Jesus' teachings, as well as taking the Christian deeper into the intimate presence of the heart of God [John 14:9]. Thus it may be said that John's gospel offers far more help to the student in understanding the way that Jesus interpreted his mission and teaching. It is vital to utilise exegesis and hermeneutics by listening carefully to how Jesus explains his meanings.

Eusebius, the church historian of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, explains that the Apostle John recognised that the three synoptic gospels had shared all that was necessary for the broad goals of the growing church, so it is said that he prepared a more "spiritual gospel" account than his peers. It seems that he recognised that a vital aspect of Jesus' self revelation had not been communicated by his contemporaries, so he recorded the more intimate and individual accounts of the heart of the spiritual Christ. So John only shares 7% of his material content in common with the synoptic gospels. Whereas, Mark is followed in the way he orders and frames his material with 90% similarity with Matthew and Luke. Matthew has his own material which is not found in Mark and Luke, and Luke has his own material which is not found in Mark and Matthew. Luke seems to share some things in common with John's outlook that Matthew and Mark do not. However, all four evangelists have put their own particular stamp on their gospel records. So, particularly in the case of the synoptic gospels, it is important to compare the same accounts in each of the gospels in order to get the different perspectives that each author has been guided by the Spirit to emphasize. 2 Timothy 3:16 is critical to consider in this regard, Paul says: "All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." [RSV].

The Greek term for "inspired" means "God-breathed". It is not so much that the gospel writers were dictated to by the Holy Spirit as a secretary might be, but rather they were guided to share material which allowed them to put their own special creative flavour into their work. So in terms of biblical interpretation the student needs to recognise the influence of the editorial role that each of the evangelists have had on the flavour of their gospel account.

What is useful about John's account is his deep heartfelt love of the deeper things of God. These offer an immensely important insight into the mind of Christ, and further to that it also adds to the process of hermeneutics, and personal/corporate application for today.

Moreover, the first letter of John has many important correspondences with the gospel. It is probable that this was the covering letter which accompanied the publication of the gospel. The letter offers some important insights into a particular heresy which the church in Asia Minor was facing. This was a Gnostic heresy known as Docetism. It basically denied that Jesus came as a real man, and God, at the same time. It rather presented that he only appeared to be human, but never really became so. This background demonstrates the importance of understanding biblical backgrounds concisely. Also the gospel of John shows that Jesus was versatile in his teaching, whether it was rabbinic as with the synoptic tradition, or discursive as in John.

[C] The Johannine literature has an important development in its form as well. This is to be found in the book of Revelation. Revelation represents a special genre all of its own. Apocalyptic literature always arose in times of persecution. It is heavily dominated by an imminent eschatology. The present time of persecution, that the people of God are facing, is seen as evidence that the world is about to end with the coming of Christ, judgment and travail. The book of Revelation arose in one of two persecutions carried out on the church. The first being the persecution initiated by Nero Caesar who blamed the great fire of Rome on Christians, leading to a persecution in Rome/ Italy, possibly spreading as far as Asia Minor. This occurred in about AD67/68. Many scholars would say that this earlier date is not so well supported as a later date. Indeed about AD90 the emperor Domitian initiated a persecution which had a definite impact on Asia Minor. Ephesus felt its effects, and it is argued that the apostle John was arrested and sent to the mining colony based on the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean during this one.

The present writer favours an earlier date, but it is also known that the Apostle John lived to a ripe old age up into the 90s. The church father Polycarp of Smyrna was a disciple of John, and Eusebius records much of what he had to say. Ireaneas of Lyons was a disciple of Polycarp, and he records much of what he had to teach from what Polycarp learnt from John. Eusebius records that John wrote the apocalypse in the 90s from Patmos.

So let's return to apocalyptic literature and make some key observations about its characteristics as it relates hermeneutics and exegesis:

- i. It is written in times of persecution to strengthen the church. It aims to encourage believers in the light of God's bigger historical purposes. Particularly with reference to the soon to be realised kingdom of God. So we must see it as a literature which is to help us understand the big picture [meta-narrative]. It is to be interpreted in the light of God's bigger plans as his overall purposes are worked out in the world, as they move

- toward the final judgment of the wicked, and the final physical establishment of the kingdom.
- ii. It is written in apocalyptic code language. Apocalyptic literature flourished in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, and the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. For instance, the image of the great primeval leviathan is an image of chaos and evil. The beast from the sea, in Revelation 13, and, the dragon of chapter 12, fit into this recognised code language. But other keys to interpretation are found in numerous OT apocalyptic material [the book of Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Matthew 25,25, Mark 13, Luke 21, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians etc]. It is vital to have a good cross reference bible at hand as the student exegetes and interprets the jargon of the apocalypse of John. Virtually every verse has one or more cross references to the OT. One professor mentioned at a conference I attended that what convinces him of the inspiration of Revelation is its awesome interconnectedness with the whole of scripture. It is like Revelation is the spaghetti junction.
  - iii. It is essential to recognise that Revelation is not wholly an apocalypse to be put on a level with Jewish apocalypses. It is firstly about what John had revealed to him in vision, and symbol, by the Risen Jesus - through his Spirit. Revelation 1:1-3 makes the chain of revelation intelligible. God the Father gives his revelation to Jesus who shares it through his angel with his servant John. Revelation is essentially to be interpreted as a book about worship. It demonstrates that only Jesus in the whole of history, and creation, is worthy to be worshiped with Father and Holy Spirit [Rev. 4,5]. It is a Trinitarian document which shows that there is a cosmic conflict which centres around who is worthy of Worship, Christ or Satan. Satan is always trying to selfishly take things for himself. To set himself up on a throne in opposition to God. His intention has always been to try to destroy Christ – who is revealed as the self sacrificing Saviour [Revelation 5 & 12]. He tries to destroy Christ's people through earthly agencies like the beast. This was Rome in John's day, it is secular society in the west today, with its relativism that tries to undermine absolute belief systems - like belief in Christ alone as our Saviour [Acts 4:11,12]. The central conflict is framed around demonstrating that Christ is worthy of our worship, and Satan, the selfish would be pretender, is shown for all the wickedness of his evil soul - as completely desiring to take the place of Christ for himself. The principle of Christ's mission is self giving and sacrifice, the enemies grabbing ego driven evil motives are uncovered! Who is worthy? Whom would you rather serve? Revelation makes it clear. Hence the hermeneutic is set out clearly for the student to find his or her way through. Revelation is often viewed as a maze, which can be interpreted in any way. However, this is seriously to doubt that it is a revelation of the Trinity of God, which can only rightly be understood in the light of Worship [Rev. 4,5 etc].
  - iv. The approach which has viewed Revelation as a text book of history, with hidden coded messages about events in history, must be seriously reconsidered in the light of the apocalypses' primary purpose in lifting Jesus up our worthy Saviour, who deserves our worship and praise. There is no other contender. The motives of the enemy are clearly highlighted for us to reject in comparison to our unsurpassable Lord Jesus.

[D] Luke/Acts. Luke the doctor has a very special role in NT criticism and interpretation; particularly in his historical/spiritual record of the early church and its development. We would fail to



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understand the letters of Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John and Hebrews far less if we did not have his record.

It is thought that in the beginning Luke firstly wrote his gospel with the most conservative estimate around AD 56 from Macedonia. Then by AD62 he completed the Acts. These were both written as published works possibly being commissioned by Theophilus his patron. So the two works need to be taken as a whole. The key theme of Luke is the Holy Spirit's work. He is behind all that Jesus does. It is the Spirit of Jesus who empowers the apostolic church [Acts 1:1-3 and 16:8]. Hence the key to interpretation of Luke-Acts needs to be seen in the light of the overriding theme of the Spirit of Jesus as he continues the words and works of Jesus through the church and his disciples. Moreover, biblical interpretation of the Pauline writings rely to a great extent on the vital background information that Acts provides the student with. For instance we would have a far harder task in understanding the so called Judaizers who tried to maintain the practices of the Torah, along with the teaching of salvation by grace, if it were not for Acts 15 etc.

Luke-Acts also give a marvellous insight into the way that the early church expanded, conducted evangelism, sorted out difficult issues, and faced persecution. Luke is not the inventor of the key role of the Holy Spirit's in the church, but rather he captures the absolute centrality of the Spirit's foundational nature to all early Christian life.

So it may be said that Luke-Acts give the paradigmatic cipher by which the church of today may understand the key role of the Holy Spirit in church mission, personal spirituality and revelation of Christ's ongoing function in leading his church – continuing his words and works through his followers. As mentioned above the Holy Spirit's main passion is defined as revelatory concerning Christ's presence and plans for each Christian in his church. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is firstly, and foremost, the "Spirit of Jesus" [Acts 16:8; see also Galatians 3:1-5].

Biblical interpretation is profoundly informed by the Lukan literary output.

[E] The Pauline correspondence. Paul's Letters were never meant to be in the first place scripture. He did not write them to be included in an authoritative collection of writings to be kept and read ever after. However, by about AD 70/80 they had probably been collected together, and they were being used as scripture. The book of Romans was written less as a letter, and more as an authoritative digest of Paul's teachings on Law and grace, and election. So the closest Paul himself came to publishing a digest of his views was Romans. Having said that he did intend his letters to be read as authoritative among the churches to which they were sent, and he claimed the very highest

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authority for their contents in the light of his role as the chosen apostle of Christ to the gentiles [See on Galatians 1 for his views on the authority of the gospel teaching he communicated to Galatia].

There is no doubt, however, that Jesus meant his apostle to the gentiles to have his letters preserved as they bore the background authority and sanction of Christ himself. Moreover, Paul was certainly aware of the weight of authority to be attached to his position as ambassador for Christ – he went as far as pronouncing a curse on any one who denied the gospel communicated by him about salvation in Christ [Gal. 1:8,9]. The early church saw the intrinsic inspired nature of the Pauline correspondence, and it made the letters part of the weekly readings in the church within the first century AD. Paul himself expected his letters to be read in all the churches in the locality of the church/s to which they had been sent. Of course Luke goes to great pains to repeat the story of Paul's conversion experience, mentioning it three times in Acts. Part of the reason for this was because Jesus' commission to Paul as a chosen privileged member of the other 12 apostles, who had seen the risen Lord, made what he said and wrote of a canonical value in the making. For Jesus commissioned the 12 to be the authoritative repository of his teaching [1:1 – 8 & 2:2:42], and this was passed on to Paul as well in the commission Jesus gave to him at his conversion [Acts 9:15,16].

Having said the above we now turn to the interpretation of the Pauline letters. First of all it must be said that they preserve two vital components, Kerugma and didache.

Paul's central soteriological concerns with regard to the death and resurrection of Jesus proclaim the basic kerugma that Jesus is the only means of human salvation.

Didache, meaning the Pauline teachings about what the death and resurrection mean in the life of the Christian, and the church, at a practical level can be found in issues that he discusses about Marriage [Eph. 5 & 6], Sex [1 Cor. 7], Worship [1 Cor. 14], Spiritual gifts [1 Cor. 12], the resurrection [1 Cor. 15], church discipline [1 Cor. 6] and church unity [1 Cor. 1], to name but a few. He discusses these topics in response to the imminence of Jesus' return, the kingdom of God and the new values and ethics Christians need to live by. These teachings are always in response to issues that local churches throughout the Roman Empire are facing. He either heard of false teaching which needed to be avoided. The Spirit working through Paul demonstrated in the letters what was wrong about these teachings.

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And the very practical nature of the letters in the light of church life needs to be taken into account as the student seeks to understand and interpret them. The student needs to ask some important questions:

- i. What do we know about the people, culture, society and beliefs of the people to whom the letter is written?
- ii. Does archaeology help us to understand anything significant which can inform the background to this letter?
- iii. What are the key concerns of the church being written to that Paul was trying to address?
- iv. How does it answer false teaching or other issues? How does he use the OT? How does he expand other teachings which he has used in other letters he has written? What other backgrounds can be found in other biblical passages? How do different biblical translations modify meanings? What does the original Greek and syntax do to inform the text? What do commentators say?
- v. How is the letter structured? Paul often starts off by discussing one idea, then stops and moves to something else, and then returns to an original idea later.
- vi. At what time was the letter written? How does the acts narrative help you to understand it?
- vii. Ask the key questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? And how?

Moreover, there is another important process to understand. This has to do with the way ancient letters were written. Although it could be quite easily assumed that Paul invented his own letter writing structure, we in fact know that he followed the common letter writing forms of his day. For instance consider a letter written by a soldier, called Apion, as he wrote to his father Epimachus:

- i. “Apion sends heartiest greetings to his father and lord Epimachus. I pray above all that you are well and fit; and that things are going well with you and my sister and her daughter and my brother. I thank my Lord Serapis [his god] that he kept me safe when I was in peril on the sea. As soon as I got to Misenum I got my journey money from Caesar – three gold pieces. And things are going fine with me. So I beg you, my dear father, send me a line, first to let me know how you are, and then about my brothers, and thirdly, that I may kiss your hand, because you brought me up well, and because of that I hope, God willing, soon to be promoted. Give Capito my heartiest greetings, and my brothers and Serenilla and my friends. I sent you a little picture of myself painted by Euctemon. My military name is Antonius Maximus. I pray for your good health. Serenus sends good wishes, Agathos Daimon’s boy, and Turbo, Gallonius’s son.”
- ii. This is from: G. Milligan, *Selections from Greek Papyri*, 36.

Now this letter falls into some important sections which match perfectly with Paul’s letters from a structural point of view. These are:

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- i. There is a greeting
- ii. There is a prayer for the health of the recipients
- iii. There is thanksgiving to the gods
- iv. There are special contents
- v. Finally there are the special salutations and the personal greetings

Now let's compare these elements to Paul's letters:

- i. The greeting: Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1,2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1.
- ii. The prayer: Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2.
- iii. The thanks giving: Rom 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; Phil. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:3.
- iv. The Special contents: The main body of each of the letters.
- v. Special salutations and personal greetings: Rom. 16; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Cor. 13:13; Phil. 4:21,22; Col. 4:12 – 15; 1 Thess. 5:26.

So it may be said that we need to understand the basic structural forms of Letters of Paul's day, and how these forms worked in the context of letters written by the New Testament writers. Hence it may be said:

- i. That each letter must be read as a letter, not as a text book, or a well thought out reasoned treaty.
- ii. That these letters are about the pastoral love and care that Paul had for each church and its people.
- iii. They are based on forging a deeper relationship with Christ, and also with the writer – and in the fellowship.
- iv. That they cannot be read as a systematic development of theological ideas, or systematic theology, but rather as the apostles outpouring of love, and concern to keep the church pure and holy.
- v. Hence they should be read as real human responses to real human needs.
- vi. That the letters should be read as a letter to the church today only as certain principles are deduced from their contents.
- vii. That we ask the Spirit to bring his meanings out as they apply to our churches today.

Exegesis of these letters must be cautiously undertaken. It is very easy to read present day meanings into the text of a letter, rather than carefully seeking to read out of them the original meaning for the recipients of the period and situation they were written to address.

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To conclude this section it must be noted that this current writer has only addressed NT interpretation from the perspective of an intermediate Evangelical approach to biblical interpretation. It is not an exhaustive discussion, but rather a taste and see approach has been utilised to further aid the student to explore further texts on the subject by reading books in the bibliography.

## **Reflection Exercise**

[1] Use the four keys and ask God what he wants to say to you about what you read above. Listen to spontaneous ideas and consider pictures he gives to you.

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[2] Share your insights with a friend, and record each others insights below.

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## **Advanced Evangelical biblical Interpretation – a brief limited survey**

[A] Old Testament interpretation. It may seem very strange to begin a section on advanced interpretation with the OT. However, there are good reasons for this decision. There are three elementary approaches to all hermeneutics viz, [i] to read the OT trying to discover what the passage under consideration meant to the first readers who received it, [ii] to read it in the light of what a passage says to the present situation of the reader, or [iii] to read it in the light of Christ.

As someone who specialises in NT studies this present writer considers all three approaches as valid, but particularly favours “i” and “iii”. It is not possible for any NT student or scholar to read the NT without paying careful attention to the OT influence on the NT. Any credible study must first of all understand the original meanings of the OT passage under consideration in its original context, and then seek to understand how that passage looked forward to the appearance of Christ, and how Jesus and the NT writers apply fulfilment in terms of the new covenant [Heb. 8]. Further to this, and critically, the OT must be seen in the light of the NT hermeneutic presented by Paul: “These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” [Col. 2:17]. Here Paul speaks of the role of the Jewish Sabbath and festivals and regulations and Laws – embodied in the Torah, the first 5 books of Moses. The Torah was considered the most holy collection of writings, the other two categories of the Jewish testament, “prophets” and “Writings” were not considered as of so much status as the Torah. Paul the trained Pharisee, student of the famous Gamaliel, was saying in other words, everything that had led up to Jesus the fulfilment of the OT was of less substance, and not properly understood, until the reality which had cast the shadow, Christ, came and gave the full meaning of the old covenant. Hence NT evangelical scholars always consider original meanings for OT passages, but they put a lot more weight on how Jesus Christ brings full meaning and substance to them!

I would like to also insert the observation here that it is essential to read the OT revelation of God in his faithfulness to his people, and the revelation of his character and purpose just for what they are in the context of OT literature. Much is to be gained by letting the great stories of God’s faithfulness to his people inform us, encourage us, and lead us to a deeper confidence in our wonderful Father [Heb. 11]. The student needs to realise that God is God in all scripture not just in the light of NT records. Hence it is vital to recognise him as such in all of the scriptures. All scripture is inspired by

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God [2 Tim 3:16,17]. I would encourage the student to consider the comments in this section by balancing them with the later comments found in the section on the covenants.

Moreover, the basic tools of Exegesis, Hermeneutics and homiletics will aid the student to keep on course when these are informed by “i” and “iii” above.

Further to this it might be noted that the OT in the light of “iii” above can be viewed as a telling of the story of redemption on several levels. We will focus on one briefly. The history of redemption is:

- i. Progressive – when we look at the NT we find the full light of the gospel and its implications expounded. There is a gradual dawning of light which is at its brightest when Jesus arrives. We find a series of stages, each with its own climax, and each leading to a further movement towards dawn, as we follow the OT process. Firstly, each begins with a fall from grace or an aspect of grace. Secondly, comes a promise of redemption and the kingdom, thirdly, this is foreshadowed prophetically, fourthly, it is imminent and at hand, and finally it is consummated by an act of redemption. We will come back to this soon.
- ii. The history of redemption is incomplete without the NT.
- iii. The history of redemption needs to be interpreted in the OT as follows
  - We begin with the NT for in it we learn of the salvation which is ours in Christ.
  - We are driven by the NT back to the OT because the NT everywhere refers to the OT as the basis for the gospel.
  - The OT points towards the goal of Christ and his gospel. The OT leads to the arrival of Jesus, expects to lead us to grace and faith.

The OT concept of Covenant corresponds to the Kingdom of God and redemption in NT terms. Hence we find the story of redemption being repeated in the OT each time reaching a new level of revelation about Christ the goal of redemption.

In terms of meta-narrative the story of redemption may be said to follow a pattern in a general sense. For example:

- i. The kingdom pattern is established in the purity and Trust in God in Eden
- ii. The fall undermines this perfect state and temporarily frustrates its fulfilment for mankind.
- iii. Noah carries out a redemptive act, he represents Christ, and the arc the means of salvation in Christ.
- iv. The rainbow, and the new earth cleansed of the wicked foreshadows consummation of the new kingdom when Christ returns again.

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- v. This kingdom is further promised to Abraham as based on a promise of grace to be trusted.
- vi. The kingdom is further foreshadowed by King David and the Jewish monarchy. David stands for the paradigmatic king who rules Israel justly, a man after God's own heart. Of course he is only a very poor sinful example of the perfection of the real king of the eternal kingdom found in Jesus. The prophets also point forward to Christ and his redemptive act [Isa. 53].
- vii. The kingdom is at hand with Jesus, and once he has died, risen, ascended, and sent his Spirit a new covenant era which is final and fully completed for all time, for eternal salvation, and for the certainty of the eternal rule of God's kingdom as a hope yet to be physically brought to bear at the coming of Christ.
- viii. Complete consummation of this kingdom arrives with the second coming. The story of redemption will be forever completed.

We can see progressive steps in the movement towards Christ and final kingdom establishment taken in the OT.

- i. We noted Noah's role here.
- ii. Abraham is called from the corrupt Ur of the Chaldeans to a new promised land.
- iii. His attempt at sacrificing Isaac at God's command is not permitted by God because he supplies his substitute. What is foreshadowed in Abraham the father of many nations, and the Messiah's race or birth is the story of Father God sacrificing his Son for all generations of lost mankind. Abraham is the prophetic vehicle by which Judaism is set on its true course as a prophetic light to the nations to prepare the gentile world for the arrival of the Son of God sent by his father, and empowered by his Spirit. Redemption, in the heart of God is intended to be in the heart of his people as they prepare for the arrival of the true king of the eternal kingdom of God.
- iv. However, these prophetic Jewish people sin again and again against their God, bringing about judgment, redemption is retold again and again. It is as if God is saying to his people "why don't you realise your real purpose and destiny?"
  - They become enslaved in Egypt; they are redeemed, released; only to worship false God's in the dessert for 40 years [See on Heb. 3,4 and Acts 7 & 8 to see how redemption is interpreted by the writer to the Hebrews and Steven in the light of Christ].
  - They eventually enter the promised land a symbol of the kingdom of God, only to eventually to ask for a human king opposed to the kingship of God [1 Sam.]. They fall again. The kings become more and more corrupt until in 722BC the 10 tribes of Israel are deported by the Assyrians, to be sought out for redemption again by the early church [Acts 2, 8 and Romans 9 – 11].
  - Even the last two tribes in Judah are deported to Babylon for disobedience, and then they are released by the Medo-Persian King Cyrus, pictured by Isaiah [Isa 44,45] as God's "Messiah" a type of the true redeemer to arrive in Jesus.
  - Jesus arrives, but the Jews fail again in following the road set up for them in their Father Abraham, by crucifying their redeemer [John 8, Acts 2,3,4,6,7,8].



They completely miss the prophecy of the coming Saviour which Isaac's sacrifice put prophetically at the heart of their mission!

- But God's purpose will not be frustrated, his church is established by the Son of God, and the gospel goes out to all the nations as it was originally proposed to happen with the rebellious Jews.
- The church is now living the life of the future kingdom in the present [John 5:24, Hebrews 12:21 – 24]. We await the final consummation of the eternal kingdom realisation as it is culminated at Christ's return [Daniel 2 and Mat. 24 and 25]. We live between times now in the age of the church preparing the nations for our Lord's return. The age of the Old covenant is over, the new has come, and when this gospel has been preached to all nations then the end will come [Mat. 24:14]. I want to be there Jesus, I want us all to be there, please keep us your weak people faithful to the end. Please give us a heart for the gospel, you yourself, and the lost, until kingdom finally arrives, in Jesus name Amen!

So as bible interpreters we need to understand how the story of redemption is developed progressively in the light of the NT. As maturing scholars we need also to appreciate the many and various literary types and styles, and cultural, social and historical backgrounds which the vast literary output of the OT era represents. These may be briefly categorised as:

- i. Folk stories – Abraham, Isaac etc
- ii. Legal literature – the Torah
- iii. Historical literature – Samuel, Kings Chronicles etc
- iv. Poetic literature – The Psalms
- v. Wisdom literature – Proverbs etc
- vi. Classical prophetic literature –Isaiah, Jeremiah etc
- vii. Apocalyptic literature, Isaiah 20 – 24, Daniel, Zechariah etc

We could go further. But each literary type needs to be understood from a structural point of view, a historical point of view, a cultural point of view and its developments as the revelation from God develops in the 3,000 odd years it covers. It is a diverse body of literature. This is why OT interpretation at a scholarly level is considered to need advanced knowledge, training and awareness of the issues it presents. This is also true of the same sorts of backgrounds represented in the NT as well.

[B] Form Criticism. The secular/liberal approaches to form criticism have been very over rated. In secular terms form critics seek to make it seem that they have a ready made iron cast approach to undermine the traditional Christian view of the historical Jesus presented in the synoptic gospels. This in fact does not prove to be the case at all, but rather is based on a set of philosophical presuppositions which are down to fanciful manipulation of evidence rather than empirical fact based science.

However, there are some useful developments in form criticism which are helpful in conjunction with interpretation of the gospels. We have mentioned the five literary types above, passion narrative, pronouncement story, miracle story, sayings and parables. These might be said to be the foundation to understanding how various stories were remembered and passed on in oral transmission. We must never forget that in the ancient world the average person did not know how to read and write past a rudimentary level. Most people did not possess books. Books were scrolls. So the early Christians passed on stories about Jesus orally.

These stories recorded in the gospels were often taught in memorised blocks using the various formulas above. In fact in terms of structural development of one story moving on to another as a collection of stories the passion narrative represents a composite whole of what would have been a teaching block about the final days of Jesus leading up to his death and resurrection. Of course most Christians orally transmitted these to prospective converts. The Lord's Supper practiced week by week on the first day of the week was a sacramental history of the passion story.

A singular unit of oral teaching, such as the temptation in the wilderness [Matt. 4:1-11] represents what is known as a "pericope" [meaning a cut out]. This story could be memorised and taught as a singular story. It had everything in it which was needed to communicate a particular truth about Jesus. This is not to say that usually stories were told as singular units of information regardless of a group of memorised teaching material, but it is to say that each story was more easily remembered in a collection of related stories for its distinct contents because the various stories had a special structure, such as a miracle story has, or pronouncement story, so that stories could be taught accurately, and sometimes randomly as the situation demanded.

So when we come to interpret the classical five types of synoptic story we need to take two things into account initially:

- i. The type of pericope, its structure, and its key teaching point
- ii. How it fits into the developing units of related teaching that our gospel writers have written for us.

And this second point is important, because when this material was put together in the fashion we find it, it was because there were important situations that had developed in the early Christian communities which made the information as we have it recorded important. So the way the information is recorded including its content tells us about the present life situation of the early church which led to the records we have. This is not to say that all of this information is not based on

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Jesus real life, real teachings, and real events as they happened in his life. But nevertheless the stories we have were recorded in the fashion they were because it was essential for early Christians to understand them to answer challenges posed by Jews and gentiles.

For example when Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection Luke goes to the trouble of recording that Jesus wanted his disciples to know he was a real flesh and blood being still [Luke 24:39 – 40]. Let us remember when Luke was recording this event; it was during the closing stages of the third missionary journey. We know from reading 1 Corinthians 15 that new Christians of Greek extraction in Corinth had a hard time accepting the physical resurrection of the dead. They thought more in terms of future life as a bodily spirit kind of state. Luke points out from his eyewitness apostolic evidence that Jesus had proven that he was still a physical being after the resurrection. So by extension this helps us to understand thoughts that were in Luke's mind when he was writing in the context of the gentile churches world view. After all Luke was a devoted companion of Paul. Eusebius, the earliest church historian recorded the tradition going around in his time that when Paul spoke of his gospel, he was actually speaking of Luke's. There was such a close sharing of minds between the two men as to make their literary efforts seem as something they shared together. Clearly Luke loved Paul, and was a close companion of his we only need to read Acts to find that out [See on Acts 16, and note the "we" passage in which Luke shows he was Paul's companion at the beginning of the second missionary journey].

Why is this advanced approach to biblical interpretation important? Well it is important if a student wants to construct a Spirit guided understanding of the deeper heartfelt motives of the early Christian writers and apostles.

[C] Redaction Criticism. All that has been said about the excesses of the secular liberal approach above, can also be said in relationship to this branch of literary criticism. But let us not throw the baby out with the bath water. Redaction criticism has offered a useful tool to the scholars' craft. This is to give a proper appreciation for the synoptic writers themselves as Spirit led editors. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit writers like Luke considered the authenticity of the material they used in their written gospels [Luke 1:1-4]. It is not as if the gospel writers were receiving dictation from the Spirit, but rather they were influenced to record their material observing high regard to material which had proven provenance. Luke's criterion is that he has got his data from eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, who had actually been there with Jesus when the things recorded happened. We know from 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul could refer his Corinthian gentile churches to the many witnesses, 500 or more [1 Cor. 15], who were still alive, who had met the risen Jesus in the flesh. Luke Paul's close companion often met with the apostles, and probably some of these other 500 witnesses, and was able to verify his accounts. Indeed when he was with Paul during his two year imprisonment in Palestine, Luke must have met with the apostles, witnesses, Jesus brothers, James and Jude, even his sisters, and many verified stories were told that convinced Luke the medical man

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of the facts of the story about Jesus. And Luke the medical doctor took a lot of care to gather evidence that confirmed credible empirical diagnoses of diseases and verified historical data for his background studies.

Moreover, each of the three synoptic writers had their own Spirit led interests and points to put over about Jesus. For Matthew, the trained scribe, known also in the gospels as Levi; he is interested in presenting Jesus as the Messiah who has come in fulfilment of the OT prophecies. He is writing to Jews yet to be converted, and he wants them to embrace their true King – Jesus.

Luke's great interests demonstrate that he wanted to present Jesus as the divine Son of God. His birth narratives demonstrate the divine origins of Jesus in his birth by miracle to a virgin through the Spirit of God. He writes to the gentiles. He wants them to see that Jesus is the real Son of God, above all the other supposed sons of a god which even emperor worship of the supposed divinity of the Roman emperors promoted. His interests are to demonstrate that the Spirit of God was behind all Jesus did in his Mission, and that he was still present in the people of the church who were now motivated by the Spirit of Jesus [Acts 1:1-4 and 16:1-10].

Mark presented Jesus as a real man, with real emotions. He was not just the Son of God at some unattainable level of divinity which was unreachable for mankind, he was real in his humanity and love for the human family. Mark is the action gospel – demonstrating that Jesus' ministry was following a dynamic mission which led to death and resurrection for himself, and the promise of his return to collect his people in the future. He had not left them. The implications of Mark's emphasis is that the church should be full of men and women of action just like Jesus was the one true God man of action. We need to follow his example.

In advanced redaction criticism terms it is very important to compare how the various gospel writers record the stories they share in common. The differences are probably the most important aspects to consider. It is also important to note what they don't include, or have which the others do not have in them as well. As in each case it gives us some interesting glimpses into what the Holy Spirit particularly wanted to emphasize through them.

In redaction terms we refer to Matthew Redactor as MTR, to Mark Redactor as MKR and to Luke Redactor as LKR. So let's do a quick example of how this is helpful to formulating interpretations of stories shared in common by all three synoptic writers.

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Let's look at the story of the temptation of Jesus. We will focus on just one verse which appears in all three accounts, but with a slightly different shade of meaning in each:

- i. Matthew 4:1 [RSV] "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."
- ii. Mark 1:12 [RSV] "The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness."
- iii. Luke 4:1,2 [RSV] "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil....."

In MTR Jesus the subject of the verb is led by the agency of the Spirit into the wilderness for the direct purpose "to be tempted by the devil." Whereas, in MKR the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness, without an expression of purposefulness in the object of the action being carried out. In LKR there is no expression in the Greek of it being the Spirit's purpose to send Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil; although LKR records the temptation.

What degree of significance should we give to LKR's and MKR's difference with MTR's expression of purpose in the Spirit's action in leading Jesus to be tempted? Does MTR theologically disagree with LKR's seeming dislike of saying that the Spirit would lead the Lord "to be" tempted? Or do MTR and LKR not really think about the meaning of the language when it comes to inclusion of purpose for temptation, or lack of a purpose for it? Or do they both really agree? After all MTR, MKR and LKR all agree that Jesus was really tempted. It is in a case like this that we need to look at the broader context of the thematic development of our Redactors. When we consider Peter's speech in Acts 2:23 we discover that Luke records the purposive nature of God's broader mission in the Life of Christ [Meta – narrative]. Peter says that God had a purpose he was working out and fulfilling in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Hence in this case it might be fairly certainly said that LKR although not using purposive language to describe the Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted as MTR does, he nevertheless would have presupposed it in the light of his bigger view of Jesus mission to defeat the devil at every level of human life [as the second Adam – Romans 5]. The fact that he beats the tempter in every sense demonstrates that it was God's purpose to let him encounter all situations in life and temptation, but coming out without ever sinning once. Thus making him the only name under heaven that we might be saved by [Acts 4:12,12]. Many scholars note important similarities between Luke's style and that of the writer to the Hebrews. Probably the writer to the Hebrews was the famous eloquent Appolos. We know that he was in the same areas in Greece and probably Macedonia during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary Journey as Luke was. Luke was living in Philippi in Macedonia at this time, and he probably was introduced to Appolos by other Christian peers. As Luke was a scholar, as was the Alexandrian trained Appolos, it seems likely that Luke taught Appolos, and influenced his theology directly. Both Luke and Appolos demonstrate the best classical use of the LXX [The Greek version of the OT] in the way they quote it and use it. It is in Hebrews that the writer declares of Jesus:

“Therefore, he [Jesus] had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.” [Heb. 2:17-18, RSV].

The strong Pauline influence in Hebrews can be explained by LKR’s knowledge of Paul’s theology. Also it can be deduced from Hebrew’s understanding of the significance of Jesus’ temptations that the writer had spoken with Luke about the significance of the temptation in terms of God’s redemptive plan to release mankind from the power of the devil. Jesus would empower them to be victorious by his victory. He could understand them because he had been tempted in every point like them without ever sinning or falling to temptation [Heb. 4:14 – 16].

Luke the doctor of human sickness also understood the sickness of the human spirit. He knew the value of the Saviours’ healing power over sin and sickness well for himself, and he passed this on in his gospel, and also via Appolos who he must have influenced, at least that is this writers’ view!

So what do we learn about interpretation here?

- i. Comparison of LKR MKR and MTR raised an important question over the hermeneutics of the Spirit’s role in leading Jesus throughout his life in order to fulfil his mission to overcome the devil and offer salvation. We could not answer the question of why there was a seeming contradiction between MTR and LKR by comparing the accounts on their own.
- ii. So next we looked at LKR’s broader picture of the mission of Jesus in the light of Acts 2. We realised that Luke understood the missional purposive nature of God’s mission in Christ’s life, death and resurrection. We reached the conclusion that this mission implies a purpose to defeat the tempter. This missional nature of Jesus’ life work informs the question of God’s purpose in sending him into the wilderness; it was so that he could defeat the tempter and his temptations. So in essence LKR and MTR agree. Of course we do not know if Luke had Matthew’s gospel in front of him when he was writing his gospel doing as it were, a critique. However, I believe he was aware of it, as I hold to the view that Matthew published a proto gospel in Hebrew within a couple of years of the resurrection. LKR may have MTR’s Hellenised Greek gospel in front of him, or in his possession.
- iii. Next we looked into Hebrew’s which probably has Lukan influence on it. We noted the very important role Jesus victory over temptation has for the believer. Let us never forget that all theology must follow the rule that God wants to help his children. So we reach application in the last step to the other purpose in LKR’s material, and that is that he wants his readers to know what the victory over temptation in Jesus life means for them! It means they are released from satan’s dominion over them!

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So in conclusion it may be said that advanced scholarly approaches to biblical interpretation are founded on some extra tools that need practice to be used well in the hermeneutical process, but when mastered they offer invaluable insights. But even these advanced approaches rely on all the basic and intermediate steps, and are founded on exegesis, hermeneutics and homiletics.

May God teach us how to grow in faith and knowledge of him for the salvation of all men. In Jesus name amen!

[D] Another approach in interpretation is to consider textual variant structures found in scripture. Probably one of the most broadly used structures is inverted parallelism and chiastic structure. These can be found in most of the books, treatises and letters in the OT and NT.

Inverted parallelism follows the formula ABBA, as noted above. There are three types of parallelism used regularly in scripture. These are:

- i. Simple synthetic parallelism such as it is found in Psalm 31:14: But I trust in thee, O LORD, I say, Thou art my God.” This is a simple repetition of parallel ideas adding in an important step in the Psalmist’s response to the LORD. Notice the structure below.

I trust [A]

My God [B]

I say [A]

O LORD [B]

Interpretation of simple synthetic parallelisms must appreciate how one parallel idea builds on to another. In the case of the example above the psalmist adds to his trust in God by identifying the LORD as his true and only God.

- ii. Simple inverted parallelisms do not add anything substantively new to a piece of Psalmic poetry, but rather heighten the thought being presented. For example Psalm 33:2: "Praise the LORD with the Lyre, make melody to him with the harp of ten strings." Structurally it looks like this:

Praise the Lord [A]

Harp of ten strings [B]

Make melody to him [A]

with the Lyre [B]

Interpretation in this case should not try to find extra added meanings to the poetic transposition. Rather it should understand the parallelism as a single unit of thought without significant addition.

- iii. Then we come to simple antithetical parallelisms. In instances where this poetic style is utilised two thoughts are put into tension with each other, or are compared as being in antithesis with each other. For example: Psalm 31:17: "Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call on thee; let the wicked be put to shame, let them go dumbfounded to Sheol." The structure looks like this:



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Let me not O LORD [A]

go....to Sheol [B]

Let the wicked [A]

not be put to shame [B]

The interpretation of this antithetical state of affairs between the wicked's punishment, and the Psalmist's desire to remain in a right state with God is based on his desire to live a pleasing righteous life compared to a life lived without reference to God's justice. Hence the interpretation is that reward comes only to those who seek God.

So, inverted parallelisms are foundational both in the gospels, Paul's writings, the book of Revelation to name but a few examples, and in most OT scripture. It is important for the advanced student to grasp the different types of parallelisms, and to practice interpretation based on the nature of the variant structural forms. Because so much Semitic literature of the ancient world relied on parallelism, the OT is one case in point; the Gilgamesh epic of the ancient Sumerians gives many examples of this. Indeed even Hama rabbi's law code, which pre-dated Moses Torah has many examples [just to name a few]; the point is that Semitic thought patterns varied from later Hellenised forms, and Hellenised forms greatly influenced the modern Western mind set. Syllogistic reasoning is a classic example of Platonic thought. An example could be: All swans that I have observed are white, I have seen no black swans, and therefore, all swans are white. This is based on an empirical deduction based on current observation. So it consists of two observations compared to each other ending with a logical conclusion. This is only one of the types of reasoning we use today in a formulaic fashion, but this is quite different from Semitic thought. Semitic thought is not so much based on proposal + evidence = conclusion, but rather on statement of a culturally accepted fact + culturally accepted conclusion. Semitic mind sets are not so much about proving a statement to be true, but rather accepting something is true based on passed on knowledge. A classical example is the folk stories about Abraham and his descendants. The stories are simply accepted as true, and they present the events in his life as God impacts it. This is not to say that the stories are

not true, but it is to give recognition of a process set in action in past time with the results of this story being accepted as authoritative and unquestionable in the present; whereas, Greek thought tended toward public debate, and disputation of evidence. We have inherited this method of gaining knowledge which is fundamentally based on the presupposition of doubt until we can produce evidence to support it as empirically true. The Semitic mind started with the position of belief in a story without a process of doubting it until empirical evidence could be produced. The real difference is the philosophical starting point based on doubt or faith. The Semitic mind did not however, have untested stories which were accepted without criticism; it was rather based on trust in a clan's oral tradition. The story was passed on word for word through generation after generation without change. The stories were sacred, and grandfather would check the retelling of the story by listening to his sons' recounting of it, and the son's recounting of it to his children was confirmed by the living grandfather as he nodded in agreement to his son's recounting. When the father's children obtained a family they passed it on with the story being confirmed by Great grandfather, grandfather and father to child. Memory was a highly prized possession by which stories were transmitted. Of course when Moses committed stories, teachings, laws and histories to cows-hide a new method of confirming transmission was started. 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars who only had 8<sup>th</sup> century copies of the Hebrew OT argued that there must have been many omissions and additions to OT data, and hence it must be unreliable. For many years evangelical Christians had no answer except faith to contradict this, with a few archaeological discoveries giving them some evidence of their faith position. However, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947, with a complete collection of the OT scriptures in Hebrew, except for Ester, comparison was made with the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century AD copies that were available to that date, and it was found that there were very few differences found by comparison. Faith won the day. Indeed faith as the Semitic starting point proved its worth when considering the truthfulness of God's Word. Let us evaluate our outlook on scripture in the light of the Semitic mind. Let us be careful not to start with doubt. Interpretations of OT biblical texts really need to begin with a real appreciation of the honour and integrity of the biblical writers who found it to be an awesome responsibility to pass on the autograph integrity of the original texts of scripture.

And this leads to the importance of structures like inverted parallelisms as memory aids so that material could be easily transmitted. It gave a useful method of verification of copied texts as well, because the scribe could check what he had copied over against what he had memorised word for word from his youth. The Masoretic text of the OT added vowel pointings to the Hebrew text. In earliest times the OT was transported in rolled up velum scrolls with consonants only. It took up too much space to have vowels as well, making scrolls too long and unwieldy. So the vowels were memorised. It was from this passed on memory [from childhood in the scribal schools] that these vowels were remembered. The Masoretes added vowel pointings to the Hebrew bible from this national scribal memory in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, because it was easier to secure the text.

A development of inverted parallelism was chiasmic structure; given its name from its shape which mirrored that of the Greek letter Chi, which looks much like the English capital "X".

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Chiastic structures differ from inverted parallelisms in one very important way. They follow the structure ABCBA:

A

B

C

A

B

The heart, or central thesis, of a chiastic structure is the axial point in the middle “C”. This is where the most important aspects of teachings, or ideas or conclusions are located. Chiastic structures can be found throughout the bible. For instance if we consider Genesis 1 & 2 we find a chiastic structure. If you read chapter 1 you will notice that man is made on the last day of creation, being preceded by the creation of all lesser plants and animals etc. In chapter 2, man, is created first before plants and animals. Now what is going on here? Well we are really looking at a classical chiastic structure:

A - plants and animals [Ch.1]

B – plants & animals

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C – Man is made first and last [Ch 1 & 2]

A – Completion of creation

B – completion of creation

What is axial to all of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 is the creation of man as of first importance made in God's image, and of last importance being made in his image. How does this affect interpretation? Well it is saying that the prime reason for the creation of the earth was for the primacy of man made in God's image. He is God's designated ruler to have loving care and dominion of all God has made. Man in God's image is to keep creation [under God's guiding love and maintenance of all reality] from going back into chaos. To be made in the image of God is to maintain order based on trust in God's provision, and love for his creation.

In terms of a passage from the NT which demonstrates Chiastic structure we might consider Matthew 24.

## **Reflection Exercises**

[1] Use the four keys and record the spontaneous ideas and pictures God gives you as you reflect on the above ideas.

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[2] Share your reflections with a friend and record each others insights below.

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## **Chiastic Structure in the Matthean Corpus structurally analysed in chapter 24**

The Gospel according to Matthew has often found itself interpreted by liberal and secular critics as a clear cut case that Jesus did not foresee the many years following his death and resurrection that the church would remain. It has been argued that Jesus considered that the final eschaton would occur within the life time of the first generation Christians.

Matthew 24:34 has typically been quoted as unquestionable evidence of the above. The text runs in the RSV: "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place". This has been taken to mean that everything including the coming of the "Son of man" on the clouds of heaven [24:30] were expected to be fulfilled in this time frame.

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The evangelical view has always been that Jesus was looking into the short term future, and the judgment of Jerusalem, and that by extension he also looked forward to the future eschaton which only his Father knew the time of [24:36]. The important point is that evangelical theologians have held this dual interpretation without really, finally, scoring the goal in a convincing way.

Well at last in the light of new biblical horizons of interpretation built on current research things have changed. Mark L. Jordon highlights ground breaking evidence of the majestic structure of Matthew as an awesome chiastic document [See on Jordon's work, available @ [www.biblicalhorizons.com](http://www.biblicalhorizons.com)].

Simply outlined in the light of Matthew 24 we find that Matthew records the typical teaching method of Jesus the Rabbi. Jesus utilises a chiastic structure to his teaching in Matthew 24. Chiasms are expressed in the shape of the Greek letter "X". Unlike in Hellenised, and modern western thought, where the most important information shared is at the conclusion of a paper etc, in chiastic structure the most important teaching is in the centre of the "X". Either side of the "X" has important information that feeds into the central axial teaching of the so called "chiastic middle". Typically true chiastic structures ABCBA, or in the case of Matthew ABCCAB.

In fact if we look at Matthew 24 we find the structure numerically formulated as 1,2,1,2,1,2. Hence the passage is broken up into six paragraphs of Chiastic teaching:

1 – Mt 24:3-14 [A]// 1 – Mt 24:29 – 31[C]// 1 – Mt 24:36 – 44[A]

2 – Mt 24:15- 28[B]// 2 – Mt 24:32 – 35[C]// 2 – Mt 24:45 – 51[B]

Hence we have the interpretation of the passage indicated in Jesus' chiastic method of teaching. This Chiastic structure clearly shows two streams of eschatological time lines.

In ACA or 1,1,1 we have the second coming stream of the chiasm. The central point being in 1C ending with the coming of the Son of man at the end of the church age.

In BCB or 2,2,2 we have the judgment of the Jewish people bringing to culmination the prophecy of the 70X7's of Daniel 9. The central point of Jesus' teaching here is 2C ending with the judgment on

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the Jews who have crucified their Messiah happening in the first generation of the Christian church in AD70; at which time the temple and city of Jerusalem were destroyed. At the axial point of Jesus' teaching we find 1C and 2C ending with judgment on Judaism and triumph for the church.

We, therefore, can see two specific time lines indicated by Jesus' teaching. In 1A we find out when the end will come for the church as the gospel has finally been preached to all nations.

In 2B we find that the Judgment of Jerusalem will occur when certain signs have been fulfilled, ending with many dead Jewish corpses being eaten by vultures. In fact the Greek word for "Vulture" can also be translated "Eagle". In this case the interpretation is that when the Roman army's eagles are seen on their banners then Jerusalem will know its end.

In 1C/1A the second coming culminates the full and final proclamation of the gospel to all nations. In 1A we are told that no man knows when the end will come for the Christian dispensation, only the Father knows – it is of course still a future event.

In 2C the age of the Jewish dispensation, and the end of the probationary time of the 70 weeks of Daniel, are about to happen in AD 70. In 2B those who have become Christians among the Jews are warned to watch and await the signs of the AD70 judgment, and are given warning so that they can escape the punishment to come on the unbelieving Jewish populace. Jesus warns their will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for those who are to be judged [Mt 24:51].

So here is the chiasm of Matthew 24 for all to study:

1A

2B

1C

2C

2B

1A

I conclude this short outline with the words “To our Lord Jesus Christ be all the glory, for only a divine mind could conceive such awesome designs.

Moreover, we can consider chiastic structures as they influence a whole book of the bible. We once again consider the gospel of Matthew in this regard. It has long been recognised that Levi Matthew in writing his gospel wanted his unbelieving and believing Jewish contemporaries to accept Jesus as the answer to the history of Israel as their Messiah. Indeed we have also earlier noted that of all the writings in the OT the five books of the Torah were the most important. It was through Moses and the patriarchs that the Jews conceived of their special covenant relationship with God as his special people.

Matthews’ Gospel is structured in such a way that it has five books – it is as if Matthew Redactor is saying to his compatriots look Jesus has given us a new Torah, a new covenant. Each of these five books begin with Jesus sitting down to give an authoritative new set of teachings [See on all five instances of this beginning each new book as it were in Mt. 5:1; 10:1; 13:1; 18:1; 24:3]. Each of these sections are concluded by the statement “when Jesus had finished” teaching. This only occurs in each of the five teaching sections [see on Mt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1].

Hence, Jesus establishes his new Torah for the New Covenant age of the church. The age of the covenant to Moses has passed away, and now Jesus establishes the new, it is interesting How the Lord’s supper appears in Chapter 26 of Matthew just after the last of the five new covenant sections ends. The words of the Lord to the disciples at the paschal meal are: “For this is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” [Mt. 26:28 – RSV].

Now the work of Mark L. Jordan mentioned above has thrown light on the awesome chiastic structure of the whole gospel of Matthew. The whole book fits together with an awesome chiastic Structure in the configuration of ABCBA. We do not have time to look at the research here, but Jordan points out that the axis of this Chiasm is found in Matthew 13. In other words the middle book of the five new books of the new covenant is the axial reference point where the heart of Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of heaven is found. Indeed it is my proposal that this



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demonstrates one of the many chiastic orientations of Matthew Redactor's record. So the five books look like this:

A – Mt 5 -7

B – Mt. 18

C – Mt. 13

A – Mt. 10

B – Mt. 24 – 25

Matthew 13:44 is the prime axis of all Matthean reflection when it records Jesus words: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." [RSV].

Here is the greatest truth that every believer needs to embrace. Get rid of everything else that you treasure above Jesus and embrace him forever as the most precious person you will ever know; for he is the king of kings and Lord of Lords.

If there was ever a challenge we all need to take on board it is this and this alone. Let Jesus be my only true treasure forever – Amen.

For many scholars and students of the scripture the awesome chiastic structure of Matthew, as Jordon captures so well, can only mean one thing. This whole structure came from the mind of Jesus, and the revelation of the Holy Spirit very shortly after Pentecost. I believe that Matthew actually recorded the very teachings of Jesus as he heard them. It was Jesus who deliberately let Matthew record from the beginning the five great new covenant Torah sections. The whole intricacy and majesty of the chiastic structure of Matthew could only have come from the mind of Jesus. This is not to say that the other gospels did not, it is rather to say that Matthew the trained Levite and scribe did what all scribes did when they sat at the feet of their Rabbi – they would write down what was taught by the Rabbi, whilst others memorised his words that were not trained scribes.

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For many years it has been believed that Mark was the first of the gospels, but before this it was generally thought that Matthew was. Although the movement to the priority of Mark is a complex field of literary scholarship, it is far from conclusive, and with Jordon's ground breaking research it seems clear to this writer, and others, that Matthew was the first of the written gospels. The Apostolic Father Papias recorded, in so many words, Matthew wrote the logia [words] of our Lord first of all in the Hebrew [Aramaic] dialect, and as the gospel gained acceptance among the gentiles he translated it into koine Greek. This conclusion seems highly credible, and it delivers a serious blow to the so called oral transmission of the gospel, which German scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and many others to this day, would hold was the only form the gospel story was in for 30 or 40 years. This view cannot be supported realistically given this new evidence!

What I have been trying to get across to the student of Bible interpretation in this discussion is the breadth of the issues that the whole field of hermeneutics spans. Structural issues, such as inverted parallelisms, and chiasmic media have to be taken into account in advanced hermeneutics of scriptural exegesis. It is beyond the scope of this paper to do any real justice to the immensity of the field of scholarship which is represented in this brief outline. In this writers practice of advanced biblical interpretation it has proved an invaluable source of a greater appreciation of the majesty of the God who has inspired his prophets, priests, kings, disciples and apostles to record. God has breathed through the massive body of human experience, and literature represented in the bible, an incredibly consistent story of redemption which can only be properly interpreted by the guidance of the Holy Spirit!

[E] Textual criticism the silent partner of modern scholarly bible versions. It is interesting as the evangelical student reads most modern popular evangelical commentaries that a vital area is so often missed which is fundamental to exegesis and hermeneutics. This is the field of textual criticism. This is the scientific study of the thousands of manuscripts which particularly make up the NT which contain thousands of variant readings of the text of scripture. These manuscripts cover at least a 900 year period, and the dating of hand written manuscript copies of copies is no guide to the authenticity or reliability of a manuscripts value.

The well known textual critic Bruce Metzger makes the following comments:

“During the early centuries of the expansion of the Christian church what are called ‘local texts’ of the New Testament gradually developed. Newly established congregations in and near a large city, such as Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Carthage, or Rome, were provided with copies of the Scriptures in the form which was current in that area.

.....Today it is possible to identify the type of text preserved in the New Testament manuscripts by comparing their characteristic readings with the quotations of these passages in the writings of Church Fathers who lived in or near the chief ecclesiastical centres." [Metzger, B., "A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament", United Bible Societies, Germany, 1975. ISBN: 3 438 06010 8. Page 17].

From comparisons made from manuscripts and fragments from these various centres 4 major families have been categorised; some being less reliable in terms of providing the closest probable readings of the original autograph copies. These families simply analysed are:

- i. The Alexandrian text. Westcott and Hort called this the neutral text, and this is the text particularly behind the translation of the RSV. This is this writers' preferred translation for bible study undertaken in the English language. In their view this was the most faithful text preserving the original. Its characteristics are brevity and austerity without excessive paraphrasing or evidence of scribal polishing to make the text read more freely. It is also generally the shorter text of the other familial forms. It is superior to the Caesarean type and the Byzantine type which exhibit a lot of stylistic polishing. The two chief witnesses to this type are the Codex Vaticanus [BETA], and the Codex Sinaiticus [Aleph]. There is reliable and convincing evidence that the Alexandrian goes back to an archetype which originated early in the second century AD. This then is a highly reliable textual family which has established the text of the NT in a way which was not possible in the days of early negative criticism of the reliability of the NT documents.
- ii. Next we come to the Western text [found in Gaul and Italy as well as North Africa]. It too can be traced back to the second century AD. This textual type is also of great importance in establishing the original autographs. The NIV bible used a combined approach in coming up with their translation which made special use of the Alexandrian and Western families. Two major manuscripts are Codex Bezae [Delta], and Codex Claromontanus [Delta]. The Western readings exhibit a fondness for paraphrase. Words, clauses, sentences are freely changed, omitted, or inserted. This nevertheless does not detract from the usefulness of the textual family. For instance, the apostolic father, Polycarp of Smyrna referred to the Western Reading of the book of Acts early in the second century AD. So it is an important text. However, this has to be balanced by the observation that the book of Acts text is 10% longer in the Western compared to what is considered the more accurate shorter text favoured by critics.
- iii. The Caesarean textual family seems to have come about in Egypt. It is best attested by the Chester Beatty Papyrus p45. It was used by both the great church father and scholar Origen and by Eusebius in his history of the Christian church written in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is an Eastern text which dates from the early third century AD. Its main characteristics are its mixture of Western readings and Alexandrian readings. It is clear from this family that there is a striving after elegance of style for reading. It, therefore, finds a ready similarity to the Byzantine text as well. This drawing together of the two earliest textual families is a clear indicator that the early church favoured both as authoritative.

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- iv. The Byzantine text also known as the Syrian is certainly the later of the families. It is characterised by lucidity and completeness. The framers of this family sought to smooth the text in a way which removed harshness of language. There was a tendency to combine two or more divergent readings into one expanded reading – which is known as conflation. Also divergent parallel readings, found let us say in the gospels, were harmonised. It was used widely in the Byzantine Empire. Its chief exemplar is the Codex Alexandrinus. It is to be dated in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is clearly a less reliable text for maintenance of the Autograph.

Hence this writer would favour first of all the Alexandrian, and next the Western. In terms of how this impacts biblical interpretation it must be said that it does it in the most fundamental of ways. If the student of scripture were to rely on the King James Bible alone then he or she would be mostly relying on a translation taken from the Byzantine text and Caesarean. Some would argue that there are as many as 53,000 possible mistakes with regard to readings as they relate to the original autographs in the KJV. The NIV, and NRSV rely on a combination of the Western and Alexandrian mainly, and the translators have tried to be interpretive of the original text bringing words and phrases into a more polished colloquial English form. The RSV is essentially based on the Alexandrian and is a word equivalence translation, the translators, Westcott and Hort tried to keep as close to original meanings as they could best be derived by translation into English. Hence this seems to be a good approach to translation, although brief and austere at times, which can be very useful to the Bible student. It is probably best to study the RSV and the NIV comparing them to each other, with a good commentary which includes textual critical apparatus, and if possible with a Greek and Hebrew Bible in front of the student.

A practical example of how textual criticism of the original Greek takes place could be considered in Matthew 16:13 which is framed in the context of the great declaration in Caesarea Philippi. Transliterated from the Greek the text runs:

“ELTHON DE HO YESOUS EIS TA MERE KAISAREIAS TES PHILIPPOU

Coming but the Jesus into the region of Caesarea of Philippi

EROTA MATHETAS AUTOU LEGON, TINA LEGOUSIN OI ANTHROPOI

Asked disciples of him saying, who they are saying the men

EINAI TON UHION TOU ANTHROPOU?

To be the son of man?

There are textual variants to this text which relate to the phrase “TINA LEGOUSIN OI ANTHROPOI EINAI”, which are given the probability of “B” for certainty of the reading. The probabilities are “A” for certain, “B” for probably correct, “C” for less probable, and “D” for improbable. So this reading adopted in the NIV is probably correct, but because other textual types give possible variant readings the critical apparatus lists all the manuscripts and church fathers for each reading starting with the most probable. Hence this is how the textual apparatus lists variant readings with manuscripts that support each variant reading:

“ V.13 [B] ‘TINA LEGOUSIN OI ANTHROPOI EINAI’ B l1353 ite vg syr<sup>h</sup>,pal cop88,bo ethro,pp origen1st ambrose // ‘TINA ME LEGOUSIN OI ANTHROPOI EINAI [see MK 8:27; Lk 9:18] K L X Delta Theta Psi f13 28 33 565 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1546 1646 2148 2174 Byz Lect L70m,150m,1761m itaur,d,f,ff2,g1,1 ethms? Geo? Irenaeus1st Tertullian Origen Adamantius Hilary [Ephraem] Epiphanius Cyril // ‘TINA ME LEGOUSIN EINAI OI ANTHROPOI’ f1 itff1 // TINA ME OI ANTHROPOI LEGOUSIN EINAI Dgr ita,b,e,q,r1 // ‘TINA OI ANTHROPOI EINAI LEGOUSIN Aleph\* [Alephc 700 ‘LEGOUSIN EINAI]

Now at first sight it can be quite disquieting to think of probabilities of textual construction. However, for the most part the science has progressed so well that the 50 or 60 odd manuscripts and early church authorities referred to are cited because of their value to confirm a reading be it very little different in each case. In fact if we look at the whole field of textual criticism today we can quite certainly say that any minor variations in readings are so insignificant as not to change any of the great truths of our faith. Indeed as the great Sir Frederick Kenyon once pointed out the differences in reading are so small as to make the variants insignificant, and that for all practical purposes we now have the autograph text of the NT. This is broadly true in terms of the OT as well, although this is not in my field of scholarship when it comes to textual criticism.

So the variant readings above change word orders a bit which does not significantly affect meaning in a substantive manner. The Greek Word ‘ME’ meaning ‘me’ is also added, which does not really change the meaning. So why is the science of textual criticism so important? Well if we did not have such a dedicated scholarly concentration of finding accurate compilations of manuscripts, close to the original autograph, then it would leave our faith open to un-necessary criticism. Let us not forget as well, that this field opened up because of the critics, who argued against the reliability of the Word of God. In my studies in this field it must be said that I am convinced that God has guaranteed the reliability of his word for us by this useful field of practical research. Men like F.F. Bruce remained until death great believers in the reliability of the scriptures. No credible modern scholar secular or otherwise seriously doubts the authenticity of the scriptures which we have today. What textual criticism has done, and still does, for Biblical Interpretation is to give it a firm footing and starting point for serious reliable biblical interpretation. Variant readings are useful in that they help the advanced interpreter to wrestle with the meanings of the word of God as it is studied at an

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exegetical level. But this wrestling is more to do with coming to know what the writer was originally communicating at a much finessed level of scrutinising the text of scripture. It is not that this delicate tweaking of words and phrases or structure will shake the theological world of evangelical to the roots, it is rather that there is a real awe and appreciation on the part of the student to try to do honour to the smallest details of scriptural exegesis and hermeneutics.

[F] So how does this all fit into the realm of applying the Word of God to the lives of men and women today in Western society? Well it all has to do with wanting to communicate the living Word of God in such a way that first of all people may hear, understand and be saved. Secondly, it is so that people may get a Spirit derived passion to come to read and understand and apply the living Word of God to themselves'. Whether that be to do so basically, intermediately, or in an advanced scholarly world of dotting "i" s and crossing "t" s, it is all to be done for the glory of God, and because we love God and want to grow forevermore in a relationship with him. May Lord Jesus aid us in every way to grow in such ways!

## **Reflection Exercises**

[1] Using the four keys ask God to reveal to you what he wants you to ponder on about the discussion above.

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[2] Now share your insights with a friend and right down each others insights below.

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## Classical Prophecy

When we speak of classical prophecy we mean that type of prophetic literature found in the OT. It differs from apocalyptic to the extent that it deals far more with the present situation of God's old covenant people as they are found in a particular situation on the historical time line.

There are two main types of OT prophet the "NABI" and the "RAWI", Meaning in the first instance one who "speaks forth" God's will for a specific time and purpose, and in the second place one who "sees what is to happen in the future". In fact OT prophets for the most part fulfil the functions of both categories above. So Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Minor Prophets and Ezekiel for the most part fulfil the primary role of "NABI", also some of the functions of the "RAWI". Isaiah does have a mini apocalyptic section in chapters 20 – 24.

Returning to the role of the "NABI" it may be said that the major way of viewing literature of this genre is to see it in the light of the original historical situation, with its major implications covering the time of the present life situation of the people of Israel, and how their present situation is going to affect future generations of God's Old Covenant people. Moreover, it may be said that the classical prophets point forward to the coming of the Messiah.

Furthermore, the book of Daniel bridges the gap between classical prophecy and immersing apocalyptic prophecy. One finds many of the images of Daniel's prophecies being incorporated into

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the book of Revelation. Much of what has already been mentioned about interpreting apocalyptic prophecy applies to Daniel, Isaiah 20 – 24, and Zechariah.

## **Reflection Exercises**

[1] Use the four keys to meditate on the above ideas.

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[2] Share your journaling with a friend and record each others insights below.

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## **The two covenants and biblical interpretation**

The role of OT scripture must be seen as a lesser light leading to the greatest light revealed in Jesus Christ. The OT people of God were located in a preparatory time which was progressively moving toward the appearance of Christ. With Christ's appearance a new covenant is established.

The Old covenant was based on a system which was fundamentally looking forward to the appearance of Christ. It was based on the Mosaic covenant in particular. In 2 Corinthians 3:7 – 11, 15 - 18 [RSV] the apostle Paul describes this covenant relationship in the following terms:

“Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendour that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, and will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendour? For if there was splendour in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendour. Indeed in this case, what once had splendour has come to have no splendour at all, because of the splendour that surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendour, what is permanent must have more splendour.....Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.”

When we interpret the OT it must be with recognition that it must be seen as of less authority in its application through the laws of the Torah, and the many injunctions which applied solely to the old covenant people of Israel. It must be read in the light of the NT/ New covenant hermeneutic of Jesus, and the pattern that his appearance has on what has passed away. The OT points forward to Jesus, Jesus, and NT writers point back to the OT as proof of God's historical activity, and as proof of the OT scriptures which prophesied the coming Messiah. Paul is very clear that the New covenant Christian is saved by Grace through faith, and not on the basis of works [of law etc] which in the Old covenant system [works] were utilised to earn God's favour as it were [Eph. 2:8 – 10]. We are not under the Laws jurisdiction any longer, but under the jurisdiction of Christ, and the new life of Grace, Faith and a life lived by his Spirit filling us with his presence and empowering us to follow in his example of living [Gal. 2:20, 3:1-5, 10 -14, 4:1-7, 5:13 – 26].

Interpretation of the OT laws, and the OT scriptures must be interpreted in the light of the new hermeneutic which Christ fulfils in and over them. The NT is the authority to be applied to understand the OT's meaning for today in the light of Christ; having said all that we must recognise

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that it is the same God/Godhead that is revealed in both. The stories of Abraham's life, Job's, Moses etc have validity as lessons we can learn from in terms of faith, grace and God's character.

And in the passage we read from 2 Corinthians 3 you will have probably noticed the fundamental importance of having the Holy Spirit guide our understanding of God's OT and NT revelation. The Holy Spirit convicts our hearts and minds of truths he wants us to consider, understand and apply to our lives, and the lives of those under our pastoral care. It is, therefore, essential that the youth minister be a person who worships God in the Spirit, and spends times listening to the God who speaks, and convicts him or her. It is also that same Spirit who creates a God purpose driven future for us to follow, and he creates works for us to fulfil for him [Eph. 2:8 – 10].

What we are really concluding here is that the student of scripture needs to put the authority of the OT in its place being subject to the hermeneutical standards that Christ and his apostles applied to interpretation of its meaning. The NT is the Christian youth ministers' primary source for all blue print information for interpretation the what God wants for his church today, as this is informed by the guideline blue prints found in the NT of what authentic work of God's Spirit should look like in the light of the canon and authority of the NT documents. Moreover, the work and revelation of the purpose and character of God in the OT is valid in the context it is found, and should be understood in its original life situation as well. However, the revelation of his saving purpose is also progressive in terms of its unfolding, and when Christ comes in person the complete light of God's character and saving purposes are revealed, so it is important to understand the climactic revelation of God in Christ, and to see how his OT revelation progressively increases the degree of human spiritual understanding about God's saving plan. The final complete picture helps us to understand the steps taken to reach that complete stage. Therefore, each step leading to the goal is as important as the goal itself in understanding a complete picture of God. That is as far as it is possible for us to understand it until Christ comes again. In heaven we will always keep on finding new wonders in God which will ever help us to grow in love and wonder in the family of God's reciprocal love.

## **Reflection Exercises**

[1] Use the four keys and meditate on the above discussion.

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[2] Share your journaling with a friend and record each others insights below.

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## **The canon of Scripture**

Canonicity has to do with the ascription of authenticity that the church universal has assigned to OT and NT documents. We cannot Go into too many details at this point, but to note some important observations about the reliability of NT scriptures particularly. Should the student wish to seek out a good text to read then “The Books and the Parchments” by professor F.F. Bruce is the best in this writer’s view.

Establishing the early authentic nature of the NT documents right back to the time of the apostles helps to completely assure their authenticity and authority. Obviously no other Christian writing of

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later years, to the present day, has the authority of these documents, but rather all teachings, ideas, and so called Spirit derived revelations since must be tested against the canonical NT documents. So establishing canonicity is vital.

In terms of the NT Documents this writer would mention the following about the authenticity of the gospels and Acts:

[A] Matthew was probably written at first in the Aramaic dialect by the apostle Matthew who out of the apostles was a qualified scribe as he was a Levite. He possibly wrote down Jesus' teachings in or near the times of utterance. This writer would consider this proto Matthean corpus to have been in circulation within a short time after the resurrection and Pentecost. The very Jewish nature of Matthew's material, clearly targeted toward Jews, makes this very likely. Proto Mathew published his work under the authority of Jesus and the apostles around AD 31-34.

The Hellenised Greek version was probably translated more or less word for word from the Aramaic proto Mathew.

[B] Mark is thought to have been based on the preaching of the apostle Peter. John Mark the companion of Peter was authorised by the apostle to give this digest of his teachings. We may date this material as belonging to 50 – 62 AD. Its' authenticity is guaranteed by the apostolic accreditation.

[C] Luke who wrote both Luke and Acts was the close companion of Paul. He knew the apostles as he had spent 2 years in Judea whilst Paul was there. He would have met most of the eyewitnesses he speaks of in Luke 1:1-4. He also was a companion with Mark, the writer of that gospel, during Peter and Paul's imprisonment there in AD 60 -62. So both Luke and Acts are guaranteed by the authority of Paul, Peter, and the primitive church in Judea. The gospel was probably written in AD56 and the Acts in AD62.

[D] John's gospel was written between AD 60 – 90 along with the epistles and the Revelation. Early church tradition says it was the Apostle by that name who wrote these, and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. In fact Ireneaus of Lyon's confirms this on the basis of hearing it said by Polycarp of Smyrna who was a disciple of the apostle John.

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[E] The Pauline epistles for the most part are all to be dated from AD 49 – 62. The book of Acts clearly demonstrates that Paul visited the places which the epistles refer to. Paul was granted the same apostolic authority as the apostles.

[F] Jude's epistle was probably written by Jesus' brother Jude in the 50s or 60s.

[G] James was a leader in the Jerusalem church, and was probably the author of the Epistle by that name. This was also written somewhere between the 40s – 60s.

[H] The best candidate for Hebrews is probably Appolos. The strong Pauline flavour to his material, and a demonstrable Lukan flavour would establish his canonical credentials. He may have written in the 50s or 60s.

[I] The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle of Peter although significantly different in style of writing and composition seem to be by the same author. They can be placed in the 60s.

All that may be said to conclude this is to emphasize the need to treat the NT documents as of the highest authority as the inspired Word of God.

## **Reflection Exercises**

[1] Use the four keys and reflect on what you have read – record spontaneous thoughts, pictures and ideas.

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[2] Share your journaling with a friend and record each others insights below.

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## **Wisdom Literature.**

The fundamental nature of wisdom literature is its nature of giving good advice, and practical suggestions for living on all levels. It has much of the poetic structure associated with Hebrew poetic structures, and it should be interpreted in the light of its practical nature for giving good advice for living.

It makes use of refined metaphor and simile. Its' images are to be treated with care in interpretation in a similar fashion to the care that must be taken with reading too much into the images of the parables. The analogous nature of much of its material must be understood in the light of its culture and time of writing. Misapplication must be carefully avoided when applying to the life situations of

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modern life. Understanding the original reader's culture and background will do much to guard against misapplication by the student.

Often the development of the flow of the reasoning of the wisdom literature must be understood in the development found in the book and passages under consideration.

The most common Wisdom books in the OT are Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.

## **Reflection Exercises**

[1] Use the four keys and ponder on what you have just read.

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[2] Reflect with a friend your journaling and record each others insights below.

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## **General overview of Exegesis principles for the advanced student**

1.0 Survey the historical context in general

1.1 Read the entire document through in English in one sitting

1.2 Check your observations against the secondary literature

2.0 Confirm the limits of the passage

3.0 Become thoroughly acquainted with your paragraph/pericope

3.1 Make a provisional translation into English

3.2 Make a provisional list of exegetical difficulties

3.3 Read the paragraph through in several translations

3.3.1 Secure at least 7 translations

3.3.2 Determine which of these represent different takes on difficulties in exegesis

3.3.3 Mark differences in translations of your text.



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3.3.4 Try to determine whether the differences are text critical, grammatical or lexicographical

4.0 Analyse sentence structures and syntactical relationships.

4.1 Make a sentence flow in the way which seems most natural to its context and matter.

4.2 Make a sentence diagram.

5.0 Establish the best reading for the text.

6.0 Analyse the grammar.

7.0 Analyse significant words.

8.0 Research historical-cultural background.

All of these points as found in “A handbook for students and pastors NT Exegesis” by Gordon Fee [pages 8-16 – see on bibliography].

## **Culture and Hermeneutics**

[A] The cultural backgrounds of the various writers, and audiences in the Bible vary greatly; When an interpreter seeks to understand the meaning of scripture he or she must carefully seek to study the cultural backgrounds of the writer and audience. How do these backgrounds affect the content of the passage under consideration? How do your own cultural preconceptions influence your interpretation of a passage? How does the audience you are seeking to exposit the text to culturally affect the way you will explain its’ meaning to them as relevant in their cultural context?

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[B] How are the various translations you are consulting of the text exhibiting a sub-cultural bias in the way they have framed the text?

[C] What are the central universal principles which can be extracted from the text? How are these principles applied in the original cultural context? How are they applied in your cultural context? How are they applicable in informing the new present audiences' cultural context?

[E] Generally speaking it may be said that God is above culture. He is not the culture itself in terms of the various cultures that he has revealed himself to. Hence he is universal, and above the cultural stream of life, although in the OT he became incarnate on animal skins in his words. And in the NT he becomes incarnate in the God man Jesus who is born into a Jewish culture. This same Jesus is nevertheless a Saviour to all mankind, and his Spirit works in all people in all cultures giving respect to all that is good in each and bringing people in those cultures to a mature state in which they view themselves in the New Kingdom of God culture which accepts all cultures and nations as equal without prejudice.

We may therefore say that culture is largely in need of disentanglement from what is universal in God's self revelation. We need to understand that God is above every culture, and that we need to be clear about what is culturally affected in our interpretation of scripture.

## **Conclusions**

Biblical interpretation is a complex field, but it is also profoundly simple. It is complex if you want to consider it in all of its literary genre's, and cultural contexts, and psychological world views etc. It is simple because primarily God has communicated the way to salvation in one name "Jesus".

Jesus made his teachings so easy to remember and understand by the use of simple every day stories and sayings and actions of healing love. He spoke to simple men and women, mostly without education, and mostly without wealth or a hope for a long and peaceful earthly existence. In the time that I have focussed on Biblical studies I have always been drawn to the simplicity of it all. But of course theology and interpretation also deal with a divine unfathomable God – so it is not surprising that many intriguing questions are addressed in exegesis and hermeneutics, and how it applies to humanity!

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But let us start off where we began. God sent his Son into the World because of Love for the lost. He sent him to rescue us. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul speaks of human knowledge and our lack of a clear understanding of many questions which now seem like looking into a “dark glass” with misty images, but the one thing which he says we can hold on to securely to the day we die, and to embrace for all eternity is God’s agape self giving love found in the face of Jesus; shining brightly for all to behold who receive his Spirit and the Spirit’s passion to reveal Father and Son [2 Cor. 4:1-5].

So let us not go off track seeking an ivory tower in which we hide away to muse on infinite scholarly puzzles that strain at a gnat and swallow a camel! Rather let us seek Father Son and Holy Spirit. But do not seek to ascend to heaven in a mad attempt of self effort, do not seek to go to the place of the dead to seek Jesus, but rather listen to the Apostle Paul’s advice “The word is near you, in your hearts and in your minds, and this is the word we preach” [Rom. 10:5 – 9]. Yes God is right there with us, just open up to him in trust, and confidence, and ask him to fill your soul with his presence making a shrine for his indwelling by His Spirit in our inner most selves!

In Jesus name Amen!

## **Reflection Exercises**

[1] Use the four keys and seek spontaneous Rhema and vision concerning the above.

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[2] Share your journaling with a friend and record each others insights below.

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## **Chapter 7 Case study Whole Brain Meditation on Genesis 1 and 2**

I have chosen as my demonstration of my whole brain revelation based Meditation Genesis chapter 1. I want to involve you in the process I follow. Remember this is not a method, but an openness of our spirit's to God's Spirit to listen to what God wants to say to us about a Scripture passage. So here we go.

I start off praying in tongues quietly in my spirit just whispering the words and sounds, and I open my heart to see Jesus and receive Rhema and Vision. I have the text of Genesis 1 and 2 open on my lap. "Lord what do you want to say to me?"

"Andrew I want my people to know how to hear my voice. I want them to discover the riches of my words. I want them to know me and trust me, and to listen to me. I want to give them richness, beauty for ashes, and joy instead of sorrow. I want them to learn how to use their whole minds, their whole hearts, and their whole souls. I want them to be excited about their friendship with me because I am excited about mine with them. Listen to me my people – hear my voice – learn to discern deeper riches as my servant Andrew shares his and my heart with you. It is my heart to want you to sell everything and to dig for the treasure in my field."

"Lord show me how to proceed with this meditation on Genesis please?"

I sense that the Lord wants me to read the chapters in several translations, and to note down what sticks out. For me I usually underline words and sentences in my bible. That does it for me. For you - you may want to note down words, phrases or verse references. Once I have read the chapters through I come with questions for the Lord.

### **1. A Structural Question – Structural Analysis**

"A big question I have Lord, is why does the first creation story in chapter 1 have the creation of man at the end of the creation week? And in the second chapter man is made first and then the rest of creation happens afterwards?"

The Spontaneous thoughts come to my mind that this is because of the way that ancient writers structured their material. Just as in modern times we write our stories with an introduction, then a

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main body and finally with a conclusion; so the ancient writer Moses had a structure, known as a Chiastic structure where the conclusion of what God was saying through him comes in the middle of the story. I journaled it in this way:

The chiastic structure of Gen. 1 & 2. In Gen. 1 Man is the last to be made after the creation of universe. In Gen. 2 Man is the first to be made before all creatures etc. At the middle of the chiastic structure is the axial truth that Man is the pinnacle of God's creation as he is made in his image. The middle of a chiasm always records the central truth. This shows that God made man as of first and last importance in his creation. He is made in God's image, and this also points to the truth that the one true God-man Jesus Christ is the first and the last.

God makes Universe Gen. 2

God makes universe Gen 1

God makes man last & first

Gen. 1&2

[= Christ 1<sup>st</sup> and last [Rev.1:8]

God makes everything else 1<sup>st</sup>

God makes Animals, births plants

**This structural Rhema leads to the Lord giving me a deeper insight into what this passage means in the light of the New Covenant through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

## **2. Hence I Understand the Old in the light of the New Covenant!**

Lord praise you for this it opens such a marvellous insight into this story. Thank you that you made me, everyone very special in your creative love and plan. Thank you that all of the human race – those who believe in your name – are summed up and saved by you Son Jesus Christ who is the beginning and the end the prime source of all creation and salvation. Amen!

### **3. What did this mean to the original Readers? Form Critical Approach searching for meaning to original audience.**

“Lord what did the days of creation mean to the original readers?”

The following spontaneous thoughts come to mind:

- For ex Israelite Slaves they know the Egyptian god Ra in not the creator of the world as the Egyptians believed. The sun and moon and stars made on fourth day.
- Creation was the work of one God with a plural name
- That nothing else was made by any other sort of god that the many Egyptians mythical deities implied
- That God loves and values man and woman together as being made in his image.
- That God created rest
- That God is to be worshipped as the only God
- That he values us and loves us personally

### **4. Why did Moses write these stories in the way he did? Redaction Criticism**

The following spontaneous thoughts come to me:

- God wanted Moses to let the Israelites who had been slaves to demons and false unreal gods where they really came from and to whom they really belonged as a special possession – the great God YHWH
- That God wants me to be clear about Whom I belong to? Where I came from? And where I am going to in the new Eden restored after the second coming.

## **5. What type of Literature is it? Genre**

The thoughts come to me that the words are very rigid and formulaic in the description of the 6 day creation. It feels restrictive to me. The Lord emphasises to me that this is because he wants to make the point really clear to me that he made the world and every aspect of it, none of it was due to chance – there is to be no debate about any of it being random, but designed.

## **6. Lord what have I Read into the text which is wrong? Eisegesis**

“To often Andrew you have flirted with the idea that my words should be taken either too literally or too poetically. Learn to accept all the truth that I created and made everything for a purpose, and that there was true beauty and poetry in all that I made. I did not just make everything to be functional, but I did so as an artist and a poet. So my words through Moses are both literal and poetic learn to read them in both these ways.”

## **7. Lord what does this verse really say? Exegesis – reading out of the text what it says, not reading into it what it does not say.**

Genesis 1:26 literally says that God’s [plural] made man in his [singular – that is God’s] image.

## **8. What does this verse mean Lord? Hermeneutics**

The spontaneous thoughts come as follows:

- That God is both plural and singular – he is three and yet one – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit [Matt. 28:19]
- That they are singular in their plans, purposes and love
- That they are unchanging and faithful and reliable
- That they love the people made to be in their image



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- That the family teaches parents and children about what God's family – the Trinity – is like, and that we belong to it as well.

## 9. How does this Apply to my life today? Homiletics

These thoughts come to me spontaneously through flow:

- You are my beloved son Andrew
- You belong to my family forever – I promise I will pull you through every temptation and difficulty
- You are mine and I am yours I just want to hang out with you – we don't need to always have much to say to each other learn to appreciate just being with me as I love being with you and your family.

"Praise you Lord Jesus you are my everything – just when I feel at the end of my strength you are there for me – for you are my strength. Just when I feel I can do no more you fill me with your infinite presence and power to say "look at this in the light of my infinite self – see I am endless and so you will live in endless creative zestful flow with me for all infinity as I share all of my love and resources with you and all other people who belong to my family!"

Amen! And again I say it "Amen!"

Hence I have given you a brief outline by flow just as it flowed to me. I did not plan this session or how I wrote it down it just all come by revelation and spontaneous flow. Because we live by flow as Christians we need to allow our whole minds to be involved in receiving revelation knowledge, and by understanding some of the questions and ideas behind biblical interpretation we can ask God to give us his insights by flow to the eyes and ears of our hearts. Teach us how to grow in this Lord – Amen.

"Andrew this all comes by practice. The more my people learn to dig deep in my word with questions they have the more I will teach them. The more they learn to listen carefully to my word and understand some of the tools and ideas they can use the more I will teach them as they learn to

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seek the deeper treasure which always enriches and agrees with treasures they found on the surface with their thin rakes. Dig deeper into my word my people for it is living Rhema to you!"

I hope the reader has benefited by learning how whole brain meditation looks when we seek revelation knowledge from God. And as we go further into the Pentateuch a little later I pray that you will learn how to use Revelation based whole brained hermeneutical meditation.

## **Journaling**

[1] In groups of three choose a Bible passage and use what you have learnt above to unlock the deep treasure God has for you. "Lord what do you want to say to me?" Record your insights below as you ask some of the questions modelled for you above.

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[2] Finish this session by praising God together for what he has revealed to you.

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## Whole Brain Revelation Based Exercises for Graduate Students

It is now your turn to utilise the whole brain revelation approaches to getting God's interpretation of Scripture for you at this time. Use the questions as above utilising the four keys to hear God whilst you meditate on each of the 12 passages to be pondered upon. Record your insights in your meditation journal.

1. What do you want to say to me from this passage Lord?
2. What do you want to highlight for special attention?
3. Why did Moses write this story in the way he did?
4. What sort of literature is it?
5. What does it say?
6. What does it mean?
7. How does it apply?
8. What did it mean to the original readers?
9. What does it mean today?
10. How can I interpret it in the light of the New Covenant?
11. What sort of structure did Moses use when writing this story?

Now using these questions reflect on the next twelve exercises recoding your insights:

1. Zechariah 3
2. Daniel 2 & 7
3. Isaiah 52 & 53
4. John 14 – 17
5. Jonah
6. Galatians
7. Ephesians

8. Revelation 1 – 5
9. Matthew 25
10. Mark 13
11. Luke 1 – 2
12. Acts 1 & 2 & 16

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## **My Top 11**

If I were asked to give the top 10 books which have affected the way I exegete and interpret the bible the most, then I would have to make it 11. So I have. It is not to say that these are the only examples of books which have had profound impact on my approach to scripture but they have helped me in my journey to recapturing what seems to be an authentic evangelical approach to bible interpretation. They seem to have helped me the most in working through the three classical questions that all students must ask when studying the bible: "what does it say?", "what does it mean?", "how does it apply?".

Bockmuehl Klaus, "Listening to the God who speaks", Helmers & Howard, USA, 1990. ISBN:0-939443-18-X

Comment: Excellent for the way it defines the process of Spirit led hermeneutics and homiletics.

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Bruce F.F. "The books and the parchments", Pickering & Inglis, UK, 1984. ISBN:

0 7208 0572 4

Comment: An important guide to the canon of Scripture, and the way this effects biblical interpretation by extension.

Deere Jack, Dr., "Surprised by the power of the Spirit", Kingsway Publications, USA, 1993. ISBN: 0 85476 494 1 [See also "Surprised by the voice of God"]

Comment: Deere is one of the outstanding examples of applying the tools of scholarship in a Spirit led approach to Bible interpretation. His fresh approach to applying the Word of God to today is framed by the best form of narrative theology known to me.

Fee Gordon, "Paul, the Spirit and the people of God", Hodder & Stoughton, UK, 1997. ISBN: 0 340 69425 4

Comment: A truly landmark book on interpreting Paul's correspondence in the light of eschatological salvation in the light of the Holy Spirit's ministry.

Goldsworthy Graeme, "Gospel and kingdom a Christian interpretation of the old testament", Paternoster press, UK, 1998. ISBN: 0-85364-608-2

Comment: This book will completely reshape the way that you interpret the OT in the light of Christ!

Kendall R. T. "Once saved, always saved", Paternoster press, UK, 1997. ISBN: 0-85364-796-8

Comment: Kendall did not set out to right a book on biblical interpretation here, much like the other writers in this section, but what he does is set out a complete basis for understanding biblical soteriology in the light of the gospel of eternal security. This book is paradigm shifting in its implications for biblical interpretation of Calvinism and Arminianism.

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Louth Andrew [Editor] "Early Christian writings, the apostolic fathers", Penguin books, UK, 1987. ISBN: [unknown]

Comment: Surely an important place to start a search for biblical interpretation outside of the bible is to consider how the earliest church father's approached it. I have found this form of study very useful in understanding how the very disciples of the apostles looked at NT and OT scripture.

Louth Andrew [Editor], Eusebius the history of the church", Penguin books, UK, 1989. ISBN: [unknown].

Comment: Some may ask "why choose Eusebius?" Well although he was the first great church historian of the first 3 and a bit centuries of the church, he also made extensive reference to earlier writers, their beliefs and backgrounds and how these related to the so called "received apostolic faith." Eusebius preserves what might be termed the key tenets of early Christian belief. This has always helped me to understand from Eusebius, a secondary source, many of the great debates and challenges which tried to frustrate the Kingdom of God's progress.

Nee Watchman, "The normal Christian life", Kingsway Publications, UK, 1997. ISBN: 0 85476 112 8

Comment: "What Nee calls 'normal' seems to capture the flavour of primitive Christianity in such a way that it challenges the student to review many of his or her basic assumptions about the heart of the Christian soul. Once again it is paradigm shifting in scope when considering biblical interpretation.

Seamands David, "Healing Grace, find real freedom now", Scripture Press, UK, 1990. ISBN: 0 946515 81 6

Comment: Seamands hits the nail right on the head in his interpretation and application concerning grace. You will never find a book that is better in my view.

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Strobel Lee, "Inside the mind of unchurched Harry and Mary", Zondervan Publishing House, USA, 1993. ISBN: 0-310-37561-4

Comment: my love of ministry to unchurched youth, children and their families found a new high of affirmation on reading this book. It gives many insights into the secular mind, and therefore informs the application process of scripture to this most important category of audience.

## **Important books to aid further in interpretation**

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May our Lord Jesus Christ bless us in all ways so that we may grow in faith, knowledge and confidence in our eternal triune Godhead.