

BIB121 - HERMENEUTICS: How to Read and Interpret the Bible

ALSOM

ORIENTING INFORMATION ...

The study of hermeneutics is the study of proper principles to be used when interpreting the Bible.

It comes from the Greek word “hermeneuo”, meaning to explain, to interpret.

Luke used this word to explain what Jesus did with the two disciples on resurrection Sunday afternoon on the road to Emmaus: “*26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?*” *27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he **explained** to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (Luke 24:26-27) “explained” = “hermeneuo”*

Jesus corrected the mis-readings of the Old Testament that prevented the two disciples, and later the Apostles, from correctly understanding the O.T.

The 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension Jesus spent teaching the Apostles proper hermeneutics - correct principles of interpretation - so that they would now read the Old Testament correctly.

To correctly interpret and understand the Bible you must recognize your need for outside help.

The idea that all of the Bible should be equally clear to all of God’s people all of the time is a modern notion that is simply wrong.

This idea has caused great damage to the body of Christ through many misinterpretations, wrong doctrines, rebellions, and disillusionment.

Some parts of the Bible are more complex, obscure, and harder to understand than other parts.

God chose the languages and cultures to which, and through which, he communicated his truth.

Readers from every other language, culture, and time have to work hard to penetrate the language, culture, and worldview of God’s original revelation if we are to fully and correctly understand God’s Word.

When we discover new data on the cultures within which God spoke, we gain new insight on the meaning of his Word.

When we discover new data on God’s creation – our bodies, weather, astronomy – about which God spoke, we gain new insight on the meaning of his Word.

The basic information one must know about God – unique, holy, creator, redeemer, eternal – can be gathered from the surface of God’s Word.

But, God is not shallow, superficial, or simple, and neither are his Word or his actions in creation and redemption.

There is far more depth and truth about God – his nature, his Word, and his works – than can be known simply.

This requires study that is deep and never ending, study of God’s Word, history, cultures, creation, in every discipline known.

This can only be done in community, depending on the labor of people with the particular skills needed to mine the depths of God’s revelation in Scripture and Nature, Word and Works, and the history and cultures within which his Word was written.

The single most important thing Jesus did after his resurrection was to teach his disciples how to understand the Scriptures and the kingdom of God.

AGAIN: Christ apparently spent most of his time re-orienting their principles of interpretation, those concepts, ideas, and understandings that determined how they interpreted the Scriptures when they read them.

Luke 24:26-27 “26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*”
What was the reaction of these two disciples on the Emmaus Road? A profound spiritual awakening as they received a correct understanding of Scripture.

Peter warned his readers that poorly trained teachers were twisting some of Paul’s writings because they did not know how to correctly interpret them.

2 Peter 3:15-17 “15 Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

Now, if letters (epistles), ...

- one of the easiest kinds of literature to understand,
- letters written in the same language, time, and culture of those first readers to whom Peter is writing,
- often contained passages needing careful interpretation by trained teachers before those readers could understand it, how much greater is our need for such help and training today when we read ...
 - those kinds of literature in Scripture which are far more difficult than letters,
 - from thousands of years ago,
 - written from within cultures, languages, and worldviews vastly different than our own.

“But, to understand the Bible, isn’t it enough just to pray and let the Spirit reveal the meaning?” NO.

Even within the New Testament church, among Spirit-filled people, there was serious misunderstanding regarding the gospel and how to interpret and understand Christ and the Old Testament.

In Acts 15 we see New Testament Jewish believers, Spirit-filled and taught by Apostles, disagreeing over how Gentile believers can become Jesus-followers, part of God’s renewed People.

Some said they must be circumcised, follow the Law, others said “No,” that it was by grace through faith.

The Apostles and elders, guided by Jesus’ post-resurrection teaching on how to understand Scripture, said it was by grace through faith for everyone.

Knowing how to correctly interpret the Word of Truth is essential if we are to understand it properly and preach or teach it correctly.

- Being a Christian alone is not enough.
- Being Spirit-filled alone is not enough.
- Being utterly sincere, and praying about a passage, are both essential and good, but that alone is not enough.
- We must receive the teaching of the Teachers of the Church, the great teachers through the ages, and the best scholars today.
- Where they disagree, we must weigh and sift ...
 - how many and which scholars agree or disagree on a passage?
 - what is their life and doctrine?
 - what do the very best study helps say?
- We MUST LEARN HOW to correctly interpret and understand God’s Word – He will hold us accountable.

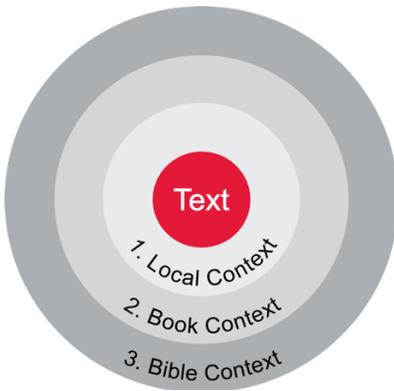
“We cannot know what a text means until we know how it means.” - Bruce Waltke

As we read a Bible passage, there is a series of questions we must ask to determine **HOW IT MEANS**. We must read the passage (what principles of interpretation must we use):

1. Is this Old or New Testament?
2. What kind of literature is this?
 - a. Narrative? b. Law? c. Poetry? d. Prophecy?
3. Is this describing an historical event?
 - a. Is it using declarative, “literal” language?
 - b. Is it using figurative language (simile, metaphor, symbols, etc.)?
4. Is this a prayer or praise or lament or meditation?
5. How is it structured to point us to its meaning: Chiasms? Repetitions? Parallelisms?
6. etc., ... Many other techniques might have been used in this passage. *I need to discover them!*

BASIC RULES OF CONTEXT

*We must check the **CONTEXT** every time. ALL of these Circles of Literary Context ...*



1. Paragraph, Pericope, Chapter (*in the local context of the surrounding verses / paragraphs / story*)

2. Historical-Cultural Context and Literary Genre (*the context of this book of the Bible: what’s it all about; what is the genre*)

3. Canonical – The Whole Canon (*In the context of what the whole Bible teaches*)



The owner placed a sign at the parking lot entrance of a nice bar and grill. What does this mean to you?

What does it really mean (*what did the author mean and what did the original recipients know it to mean*)

It is in Great Britain, where football is soccer, coaches are buses, and soccer fans on buses to & from games are rowdy and prone to fights.

Unless you are familiar with the cultural, historical, literary **CONTEXT** of a biblical passage or book, you will NOT correctly read, interpret, or understand it.

This is why God’s gift of TEACHERS - the scholars of the Church - are essential to knowing how to correctly read, interpret, and understand the Bible. We access these gifts of God through their writing and teaching: good study Bibles, commentaries, articles, monographs, lectures, etc.

Three Rules of Book Context ...

The Theme of the Book

Let the book’s theme or purpose guide you to interpret your text.

The Outline and Main Parts

Relate your text to the outline of the book and its main parts.

Parallel Passages in the Same Book

Interpret your text in light of passages in the same book that address the same subject.

All understood according to the Genre of the book.

Three Steps to Finding Canonical Context: what is said about this text's subject ..

1. By the same author, in a different book of the Bible
2. In the same testament, by a different author
3. By a different author, in the other testament

Example of # 1: Same author, different book: Ephesians 2:11-18 - There is only one renewed people of God and they are those who are "in Christ" by grace through faith. Paul speaks on this elsewhere in the N.T. ...

(Eph 2:19-22, 3:1-13, 4:17;

Gal 3:7-9, 15-18, 26-29, 5:12, 6:12-16;

Rom 2:28-29, 3:21-31, 4:11-13, 9:6-8, 10:11-13;

Phil 3:2-4, 4:21; 2 Cor 5:17-19; 1 Ths 2:13-16)

Example of # 2: Same Testament, different author: God changing the nature, economy, and participants of His Vineyard ...

Jesus: Matt 21:33f – Parable of The Tenants

Hebrews – The permanent passing of the Old Covenant, and the permanent supremacy of the New Covenant

CRITICALLY IMPORTANT HERMENEUTICAL CUES and CLUES WE MUST KNOW

Cues and Clues - literary techniques / conventions - that tell you how to read and understand a passage.

FIRST, Some Rules of Literalistic versus Figurative Language: Being Alert for Literary Techniques

1. IF the genre of the book and the immediate local context is ...
 - a. Plain prose narrative, or
 - b. Plain declarative letter (epistle),
 - c. With no poetic, symbolic, or figurative speech,

THEN, look for the straightforward (plainest) meaning of that passage ...

 - a. As the original author and audience would have understood it,
 - b. Within their literary, historical, cultural context,
 - c. Within the theological intent of the book.
2. Having looked for the straightforward meaning as just described,
 - a. IF that "plain, literal" message does not make sense,
 - b. THEN look more closely for the CUES and CLUES, the literary techniques that the original authors and recipients would have used and immediately recognized, such as, figurative speech: allusions, symbols, metaphors, similes, types, and so on.
3. Look for a clue or key in the genre and context.
 - a. Genre tells you what kind of literature you are looking at, how to approach it, how to read it, what to expect, and how to interpret it.
 - b. Genre and context (immediate & of the book) tells you whether to look first for literal language, or look first for figurative language.
 - c. If the book or passage is high prose, poetry, or apocalyptic, then do NOT look for literal language first. Expect figurative and symbolic language, and theological content.

4. Be alert for several kinds of “cues” or signs that you are dealing with non-literal language. These literary techniques are clues that you are dealing with theological rather than chronological or “literal” content. **Knowing the following biblical literary techniques is ESSENTIAL to understanding the Bible correctly. This study examines these throughout Scripture: ...**
- Context
 - Figurative language
 - Dischronology
 - Accommodation
 - Phenomenological language
 - Anthropomorphic language
 - Other literary conventions associated with narrative ... narrative patterning, structure, chiasms, etc.
 - GENRE

BASIC EXAMPLES of Comparative Figurative Language to Watch For: ...

1. Similes - “His spear shaft was like a weaver’s rod” (1 Samuel 17:7).
2. Metaphors - “The Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24).
3. Anthropomorphisms - “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16).
4. Personification - “Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice?” (Proverbs 8:1).

Figurative language is a literary convention TELLING you “Do NOT take this literally (literalistically)!”

I. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

The Bible is permeated with figurative language – figures of speech, words and phrases that use an image, a picture, to make a point or communicate a truth.

Simile, metaphor, symbols, parables, phenomenological language, accommodation, and so forth, are NOT meant to be taken “literalistically” (that is, do NOT take such language at face value ... it is symbolic).

They are explicitly meant to be understood “literarily” as a literary convention commonly used in literature. Figurative language appears in all kinds of biblical literature – narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, etc.

“Literalistic” – means reading something as if the word, words, phrases, or passage *MUST* be taken at simplistic face value (“plain” meaning).

“Literalistic” reading collapses all time and distance between us and the original authors and readers of Scripture. It ignores the vast differences in culture, language, and worldview.

Most people who say we must read the Bible “literally” really mean “literalistically.” They just don’t know they mean that.

“Literalistic” reading often refuses to accept the differences in literary genre, figures of speech, and so forth.

“Literalistic” reading claims that all people, regardless of training, can simply read all Scripture at face value and interpret it via common sense and the Spirit’s leading. *That is a disaster waiting to happen.*

SEVERAL KINDS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE - Apocalyptic, Numeric, Hyperbolic

1. APOCALPYTIC Figurative Language

What is called “collapsing universe” language is often used to signify catastrophic judgment from God, the fall of nations, and the end of epochs.

The destruction of Babylon in 539 B.C. “the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light” (Isa 13:10).

The destruction of Edom in 586 B.C.

“All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall...”
(Isa 34:4)

The destruction of Egypt in 587 B.C.

“When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord GOD” (Ezek 32:7).

God brought catastrophic judgment on Babylon, Edom, and Egypt, and other nations also. Nations fell. Epochs changed. **BUT, no stars fell, etc. The collapsing universe language was NOT literalistic!**

*The language used to describe each “day of the Lord” was **apocalyptic, but metaphorical, not literalistic.***

Jesus also used this kind of language to prophesy Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD (Matt 24, Mk 13, Lk 21).

Matthew 24:29 “Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’”

Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, Christ was vindicated as Son of Man, and the epoch clearly changed: the Old Covenant was clearly gone forever, and the New Covenant People established as God’s People forever.

Apocalyptic figurative language permeates the apocalyptic portions of books like Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Revelation. Such language is EXPLICITLY TELLING us, “Do NOT read this literalistically! READ IT FIGURATIVELY, SYMBOLICALLY!”

2. NUMERIC Figurative Language

Numbers are often used symbolically in Scripture. Your first thought when seeing a number should be that it might well be symbolic and not literalistic. Sometimes it will be both. Genre determines the likelihood.

Three – divine perfection; related to God.

Four – whole, whole earth (known to writer); cosmic completeness.

Six – incomplete; human; human effort.

Seven – fullness, completion, perfection. (ANE temple building)

Eight – a new beginning, new order; resurrection.

Ten – many; multiples mean many more; all.

Twelve – fullness of God’s people; unity in diversity.

Thousand – very many; a very long / complete time.

Other ancient people used many of these same numbers in similar or identical ways.

The use of numbers as symbols was not a brand new supernatural revelation from God.

Rather, the author used a literary convention that the Hebrews and surrounding cultures already shared.

In the ANE, seven was considered a number of perfection and luck, and was also associated with the number of days in a week. **It was also the length of time often taken to build a temple in ANE stories.**

The multiples of symbolic numbers are also used symbolically in Scripture.

12 – fullness of God’s People; unity in diversity;

10 – many; multiples of ten (100, 1000) mean many more or ALL.

12 x 12 = 144 x 1,000 = 144,000.

The author is making a theological point: This means *the absolute totality of God’s People, with none lost.*

That is, no genuine child of God will be forgotten, deserted.

(Note: Not only were numbers often used figuratively, but **the Hebrews did NOT intend the same kind of numeric precision that we expect today, in our industrial, financial, scientific age.**

Psalm 90

- 1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
- 2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- 3 You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men."
- 4 For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.
- 5 You sweep men away in the sleep of death;
they are like the new grass of the morning-
- 6 though in the morning it springs up new,
by evening it is dry and withered.

This is a simile, a word-picture, a picturesque way of saying something, of making a point.

2 Peter 3

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the phrase "a thousand years" is a picturesque way of saying "a very long time." It was NEVER meant to be a literal, precise 1,000 years.

And, here "a day" means "a short time."

In other words, the POINT is that God looks at time completely differently than humans.

The biblical authors – Moses and Peter in this case – are using the phrase to describe "a very long time" in a colorful way in order to make their point more memorable.

The biblical writers often used similes, metaphors, and symbols to help readers remember the real point.

They constantly used these kinds of techniques in poetic passages and apocalyptic passages, but they also used them in narratives (historical accounts), gospels, and epistles (N. T. letters).

The Bible is NOT equating a thousand years with a day.

The Bible is NOT meaning a thousand years "literally."

How can we know if a number is literal or figurative? Context, context, context. Genre, subgenre, argument, context.

Revelation 20

1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

*The number "1,000" or the phrase "a thousand years" is a figure of speech meaning a very large amount or very long time. It is symbolic, and should be read "literarily," and **NOT** read literalistically.*

Highly stylized numbers, quantities, or measurements, using symbolically perfect numbers or dimensions, with highly symmetrical language, should also alert the reader to theological rather than literal content.

This is the case with Ezekiel's description of the perfect final Temple and city (Ezekiel 40-48).

The account is packed with all of the literary conventions mentioned above.

This is NOT a description of a literal physically rebuilt Jewish temple, but of the spiritual house of God, the Church, and the New Heavens and New Earth.

Other ancient people used many of these same numbers in similar ways.

In the ANE, seven was considered a number of perfection and luck, and was also associated with the number of days in a week. It was also the length of time often taken to build a temple.

Emperors Hadrian and Commodus minted coins with their images having seven stars above them, symbolizing dominion over the whole / complete world.

Most biblical speakers or authors, including Jesus, often used figurative language to illustrate a truth or make a theological point.

AN EXAMPLE of NUMERIC FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: THE GENEALOGIES IN GENESIS (5 and 11)

Ancient genealogies were written with very different standards and goals from modern genealogies.

Even when actual historical individuals were being listed, generations were often skipped, and only persons viewed as significant were listed.

Symbolic names were often used, as were symbolic numbers.

The goals were often to exalt a person or nation’s ancestors as mightier than humans today, and to establish a right to rule by virtue of descent from these ancestors and perhaps from a god or gods.

GENEALOGIES IN GENESIS (5 and 11)

Sometimes we can determine what was going on in a particular genealogy, what the author was doing and what his goal was.

Sometimes we CANNOT determine exactly what was going on in a particular genealogy beyond some general ideas.

Even as late as the New Testament in the genealogies of Jesus we have examples of ancient genealogical practices and goals that we CAN understand, and some that we CANNOT fully understand.

Ancient writers manipulated genealogies however necessary to get across the theological or other truth they wanted to communicate. This was a common, accepted, understood practice.

GENEALOGY OF JESUS IN MATTHEW 1:1-16

Gematria of David

4 + 6 + 4 = 14
 ד ו ד Dawid

The numeric values for the Hebrew letters of David’s name add up to 14. Therefore, one of the primary associations of the number 14 in the minds of Jews was “David.”

TO CLEARLY UNDERSTAND THIS TRUTH ABOUT NUMERIC FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE and BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES, FIRST EXAMINE THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS IN MATTHEW AND LUKE ...

From the beginning of his gospel, Matthew emphasizes that JESUS WAS THE SON OF DAVID.

**GENEALOGY OF JESUS
 MATTHEW 1:1-16**

<p>1st 14</p> <p>1 Chr 1:34, 2:1-15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abraham ✓ 2. Isaac ✓ 3. Jacob ✓ 4. Judah ✓ 5. Perez ✓ 6. Hezron ✓ 7. Ram ✓ 8. Aminadab ✓ 9. Hahshon ✓ 10. Salmon ✓ 11. Boaz ✓ 12. Obed ✓ 13. Jesse ✓ 14. David ✓ 	<p>2nd 14</p> <p>1 Chr 3:10-16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solomon ✓ 2. Rehoboam ✓ 3. Abijah ✓ 4. Asa ✓ 5. Jehoshaphat ✓ 6. Joram ✓ Ahabziah ✓ Josiah ✓ Amazriah ✓ 7. Uzziah ✓ 8. Jotham ✓ 9. Ahaz ✓ 10. Hezekiah ✓ 11. Manasseh ✓ 12. Amnon ✓ 13. Josiah ✓ 14. Jeconiah ✓ <p>4 names deleted</p>	<p>3rd 14</p> <p>1 Chr 3:17-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shealtiel ✓ 2. Zerubbabel ✓ 3. Abiud ✓ 4. Eliakim ✓ 5. Azor ✓ 6. Zadok ✓ 7. Akim ✓ 8. Eliud ✓ 9. Eleazar ✓ 10. Matthan ✓ 11. Jacob ✓ 12. Joseph ✓ 13. Jesus ✓ 14. Christ ✓ <p>TOTAL: 42</p>	<p>1 Chr 3:17-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedaiah ✓ Hananiah ✓ Shecaniah ✓ Nezariah ✓ Elioenia ✓
--	--	--	---

MATTHEW MANIPULATES JESUS' GENEALOGY TO GET 3 GROUPS OF 14.

14 = David. The Hebrew Gematria of David. In writing his Gospel of Fulfillment to Jewish Christians, Matthew begins by shouting "DAVID, DAVID, DAVID!" That is, Jesus is the promised Son of David, the Messiah!

LUKE on the other hand, writing to Greeks / Romans / Gentile citizens of the Empire (as well as to Jews), about Jesus as Savior of the world, takes an entirely different approach to the genealogy of Jesus.

GENEALOGY OF JESUS LUKE 3:23-38

1. Jesus	12. Esli	23. Neri	34. Simeon	45. Obed	56. Abraham	67. Noah
2. Joseph	13. Naggi	24. Melki	35. Judah	46. Boaz	57. Terah	68. Lamech
3. Heli	14. Maath	25. Addi	36. Joseph	47. Salmon	58. Nahor	69. Methuselah
4. Matthat	15. Mattahias	26. Cosam	37. Jonam	48. Nahshon	59. Serug	70. Enoch
5. Levi	16. Semein	27. Elamadam	38. Eliakim	49. Amminadab	60. Reu	71. Jared
6. Melki	17. Josech	28. Er	39. Melea	50. Ram	61. Peleg	72. Mahalaleel
7. Jannai	18. Joda	29. Joshua	40. Menna	51. Hezron	62. Eber	73. Cainan
8. Joseph	19. Joanan	30. Eliezar	41. Mattatha	52. Perez	63. Shelah	74. Enos
9. Mattahias	20. Rhesa	31. Jorim	42. Nathan	53. Judah	64. Cainan	75. Seth
10. Amos	21. Zerubbabel	32. Matthat	43. David	54. Jacob	65. Arphaxad	76. Adam
11. Nahum	22. Shealtiel	33. Levi	44. Jesse	55. Isaac	66. Shem	77. God

TOTAL: 77

77 Generations listed – Jesus is the perfect, complete human. Ultimate, Quintessential, Archetype.

JESUS ACTS FOR ALL HUMANITY, REPRESENTS ALL HUMANITY. Lives, dies, rises again for the nations. Fulfills all the Jewish prophecies, especially relating to Yahweh's call to the nations, concern for the poor, alien, and women.

Luke's gospel emphasizes Jesus as the authentic / perfect human, Son of God, Son of Man. Jesus came to be the Savior of the WORLD (Gentiles, not just the Jews).

GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

Matthew 1

1. Abraham ✓	1. Solomon	1. Shealtiel ✓
2. Isaac ✓	2. Rehoboam	2. Zerubbabel ✓
3. Jacob ✓	3. Abijah	3. Abiud
4. Judah ✓	4. Asa	4. Eliakim
5. Perez ✓	5. Jehoshaphat	5. Azor
6. Hezron ✓	6. Joram	6. Zadok
7. Ram ✓	7. Uzziah	7. Akim
8. Amminadab ✓	8. Jotham	8. Eliud
9. Hahshon ✓	9. Ahaz	9. Eleazar
10. Salmon ✓	10. Hezekiah	10. Matthan
11. Boaz ✓	11. Manasseh	11. Jacob
12. Obed ✓	12. Amon	12. Joseph ✓
13. Jesse ✓	13. Josiah	13. Jesus
14. David ✓	14. Jeconiah	14. Christ

Luke 3

1. Jesus	12. Neri	23. Simeon	45. Obed ✓	56. Abraham ✓	67. Noah
2. Joseph ✓	13. Melki	35. Judah	46. Boaz ✓	57. Terah	68. Lamech
3. Heli ✓	14. Addi	36. Joseph	47. Salmon ✓	58. Nahor	69. Methuselah
4. Matthat	15. Cosam	37. Jonam	48. Nahshon ✓	59. Serug	70. Enoch
5. Levi	16. Semein	27. Elamadam	38. Eliakim	49. Amminadab ✓	60. Reu
6. Melki	17. Josech	28. Er	39. Melea	50. Ram ✓	61. Peleg
7. Jannai	18. Joda	29. Joshua	40. Menna	51. Hezron ✓	62. Eber
8. Joseph	19. Joanan	30. Eliezar	41. Mattatha	52. Perez ✓	63. Shelah
9. Mattahias	20. Rhesa	31. Jorim	42. Nathan	53. Judah ✓	64. Cainan
10. Amos	21. Zerubbabel ✓	32. Matthat	43. David ✓	54. Jacob ✓	65. Arphaxad
11. Nahum	22. Shealtiel ✓	33. Levi	44. Jesse ✓	55. Isaac ✓	66. Shem

✓: aligns with Matt 1 genealogy

TOTAL: 77

By modern standards the genealogies of Jesus do NOT agree. Using ancient standards we can see much more clearly what Matthew was doing. We can see a little more clearly what Luke was doing. Ancient genealogies were written with very different standards and goals from modern genealogies. *Ancient writers manipulated genealogies however necessary to get across the theological truth they wanted to communicate.*

THE GENEALOGIES OF GENESIS 5 and 11

GENESIS 5		
Genealogy of Hebrew Patriarchs		
BEFORE the Flood		
	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth
1. Adam	130	800
2. Seth	105	807
3. Enosh	90	815
4. Kenan	70	840
5. Mahalalel	65	830
6. Jared	162	800
7. Enoch	65	300
8. Methuselah	187	782
9. Lamech	182	595
10. Noah	500	[450]

The genealogies of the Hebrew Patriarchs in Genesis 5 and 11 were written over 1,000 years before Jesus' genealogy, and are far more difficult to understand.

...

Using the hermeneutical principles we have already learned we quickly see numerous clues for understanding the genealogies.

STATISTICAL IMPOSSIBILITIES ...

First, note that there are a total of 10 names. 10 = many; the whole; ALL.

Out of 20 numbers, 15 end in 5 or 0 ... Multiples of 5. 5 = The Torah (Law. Pentateuch.)

Would any genealogy of that many numbers have 15 of those numbers ending in 5 or 0?

The chances against that happening by chance are astronomical.

We already know that numbers were far more often used figuratively / symbolically than with literalistic precision. This was an intentional, accepted practice.

FURTHERMORE ...

GENESIS 5: HEBREW PATRIARCHS

	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth
1. Adam	130	800
2. Seth	105	807
3. Enosh	90	815
4. Kenan	70	840
5. Mahalalel	65	830
6. Jared	162	800
7. Enoch	65	300
8. Methuselah	187	782
9. Lamech	182	595
10. Noah	500	[450]

HOW MANY numbers were left? 5 numbers were left !!
If you subtract 7 (a highly important symbolic number)
from the remaining 5 numbers that do NOT end in 5, they
all yield 5 or 0!!

The odds against that happening by chance are, again,
astronomical!!

It is CLEAR that you CANNOT read this genealogy in a
straightforward or literalistic manner.

It was intentionally written in a way that TOLD the readers / hearers several theological truths!

It is a highly stylized, symbolic genealogy making these theological points: ...

1. This list traces Israel's pre-flood human ancestry in MULTIPLES OF 5 ... THE TORAH / PENTATEUCH...
2. These men lived all the years they were supposed to live ... FACTORS OF 10 ... THE WHOLE.
3. These patriarchs were people of The Book / The Law, formed and kept by the Law, men who lived a full, complete, life, ALL the years they were supposed to live, men of honor and fame.

GENESIS 5		
Genealogy of Hebrew Patriarchs BEFORE the Flood		
	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth
1. Adam	130	800
2. Seth	105	807
3. Enosh	90	815
4. Kenan	70	840
5. Mahalalel	65	830
6. Jared	162	800
7. Enoch	65	300
8. Methuselah	187	782
9. Lamech	182	595
10. Noah	500	[450]

GENESIS 11		
Genealogy of Hebrew Patriarchs AFTER the Flood		
	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth
1. Shem	100	500
2. Arpachshad	35	403
3. Shelah	30	403
4. Eber	34	430
5. Peleg	30	209
6. Reu	32	207
7. Serug	30	200
8. Nahor	29	119
9. Terah	70	[135]
10. Abram	[100]	[75]

GENESIS 5 GENEALOGY – BEFORE THE FLOOD ... compared to ...

GENESIS 11 GENEALOGY – AFTER THE FLOOD. Again we see ...

1. Numbers used in a symbolic / stylistic way.
2. Special numbers (5-Torah, 7-Perfection, 10-complete) used for the Patriarchs.
3. Numbers greater before the Flood, gradually break down into REALISTIC numbers after the Flood.
4. Numeric pattern (5, 10, multiples) begins to break down as well.

SCHOLARS HAVE LONG NOTED SIMILAR PATTERNS IN OTHER ANCIENT GENEALOGIES ...

Large numbers, long ages, symbolic numbers, stylistic use of numbers.

Archaeologists have found artistic literary renderings of genealogies for other ANE nations near Israel with names and ages manipulated in similar ways to make philosophical, theological points.

THE SUMERIAN KINGS LIST IS THE BEST EXAMPLE ...

Sumerian King Lists BEFORE the Flood

King	W-B 444	W-B 62	'60 ² Times X' Formula	
Alulim	28,800	67,200*	60 ² X 8	*
Alalgar	36,000	72,000	60 ² X 10	60 ² X 20
Enmenluanna	43,200	21,600	60 ² X 12	60 ² X 6
Enmengalanna	28,800	—	60 ² X 8	—
...kidunnu	—	72,000	—	60 ² X 20
...alimma	—	21,600	—	60 ² X 6
Dumuzi	36,000	28,800	60 ² X 10	60 ² X 8
Ensipazianna	28,800	36,000	60 ² X 8	60 ² X 20
Enmenduranna	21,000*	72,000	*	60 ² X 20
Ubartutu	18,600*	28,000	*	60 ² X 8
Ziusudra	—	36,000	—	60 ² X 10

The Sumerians used a sexagesimal number system: base 60 numbering system. 60 WAS A VERY SPECIAL NUMBER to the Sumerians, invested with important SYMBOLIC meaning.

The ages of the ancient Sumerian Kings are given in base 60, meaning these were VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE.

NOTE: there are 10 kings before the Flood.

The reigns of all the Kings ends in a ROUND HUNDRED (00).

The reigns are the product of 60 squared, multiplied by some variable.

SO, the numbers are telling us these are VERY SPECIAL, exalted men, superior to men of today.

The Sumerian author(s) are using numbers in a STYLISTIC manner to LEGITIMIZE the Sumerian rulers.

Sumerian King List AFTER the Flood

King	Reign (Years)	'60 Times X' Formula	King	Reign (Years)	'60 Times X' Formula
Ga . . . ur	1200	60 X 20	En-men-barage-si	900	60 X 15
Nidaba	960	60 X 16	Aka	629	—
Bu.an . . .	840	60 X 14	Mes-kiag-gasher	324	—
Kalibum	960	60 X 16	En-me-kar	420	60 X 7
Qaluumum	840	60 X 14	Lugalbanda	1200	60 X 20
Zuqapiq	900	60 X 15	Dumuzi	100	—
Atab	600	60 X 10	Gilgamesh	126	—
Masha	840	60 X 14	Ur-Nungal	30	—
Arwi'um	720	60 X 12	Utul-kalamma	15	—
Etana	1560	60 X 15	Labah . . .	9	—
Balih	400	—	En-nun-dara-Anna	8	—
En-me-nunna	660	60 X 11	Mes . . . he	36	—
Melam-Kishi	900	60 X 15	Melam-Anna	6	—
Bar-sal-nunna	1200	60 X 20	Lugal-ki-tun	36	—
Samug	140	—	Mes-Anne-pada	80	—
Tizkar	305	—	Mes-kiag-Nanna	36	—
Ilku'	900	60 X 15	Elulu	25	—
Ilta-sadum	1200	60 X 20	Balulu	36	—

NOTE: After the Flood, the length of reign is far shorter.

Nevertheless, INITIALLY it is still a product of 60 times a variable.

The first 10 are all proper multiples of 60 and are generally longer.

The second third of the list begins to break down.

THE LAST THIRD OF THE LIST is most recent in time, the pattern is abandoned, and the reigns look REALISTIC.

The Sumerian writer used numbers in a stylistic manner to indicate the Sumerian Kings were special people qualified in a special way to rule Sumer.

GENESIS 5: HEBREW PATRIARCHS BEFORE THE FLOOD

	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth
1. Adam	130	800
2. Seth	105	807
3. Enosh	90	815
4. Kenan	70	840
5. Mahalalel	65	830
6. Jared	162	800
7. Enoch	65	300
8. Methuselah	187	782
9. Lamech	182	595
10. Noah	500	[450]

SUMERIAN KING Lists BEFORE THE FLOOD

King	W-B 444	W-B 62	'60 ² Times X' Formula	
Alulim	28,800	67,200*	60 ² X 8	*
Alagar	36,000	72,000	60 ² X 10	60 ² X 20
Enmenluanna	43,200	21,600	60 ² X 12	60 ² X 6
Enmengalanna	28,800	—	60 ² X 8	—
...kidunnu	—	72,000	—	60 ² X 20
...alimma	—	21,600	—	60 ² X 6
Dumuzi	36,000	28,800	60 ² X 10	60 ² X 8
Ensipazianna	28,800	36,000	60 ² X 8	60 ² X 10
Enmenduranna	21,000*	72,000	*	60 ² X 20
Ubartutu	18,600*	28,000	*	60 ² X 8
Ziusudra	—	36,000	—	60 ² X 10

GENESIS 11: HEBREW PATRIARCHS AFTER THE FLOOD

	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth
1. Shem	100	500
2. Arpachshad	35	403
3. Shelah	30	403
4. Eber	34	430
5. Peleg	30	209
6. Reu	32	207
7. Serug	30	200
8. Nahor	29	119
9. Terah	70	[135]
10. Abram	[100]	[75]

[]: from Gen 9:29, 11:32, 21:5, 25:7

SUMERIAN KING List AFTER THE FLOOD

King	Reign (Years)	'60 Times X' Formula			
Ga . . . ur	1200	60 X 20	En-men-barage-si	900	60 X 15
Nidaba	960	60 X 16	Aka	629	—
Bu.an . . .	840	60 X 14	Mes-kiag-gasher	324	—
Kalibum	960	60 X 16	En-me-kar	420	60 X 7
Qaliumum	840	60 X 14	Lugalbanda	1200	60 X 20
Zuqapiq	900	60 X 15	Dumunzi	100	—
Atab	600	60 X 10	Gilgamesh	126	—
Masha	840	60 X 14	Ur-Nungal	30	—
Anwum	720	60 X 12	Utul-kamma	15	—
Etana	1560	60 X 15	Labah . . .	9	—
Balih	400	—	En-nun-dara-Anna	8	—
En-me-nunna	660	60 X 11	Mes . . . he	36	—
Melam-Kishi	900	60 X 15	Melam-Anna	6	—
Bar-sal-nunna	1200	60 X 20	Lugal-ki-tun	36	—
Samug	140	—	Mes-Anne-pada	80	—
Tizkar	305	—	Mes-kiag-Nanna	36	—
Ilku'	900	60 X 15	Elulu	25	—
Ilta-sadum	1200	60 X 20	Balulu	36	—

From W-B 444 Document. " — " does not fit formula.

WE SEE THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS IN THE GENESIS 5 and 11 GENEALOGIES.

- Numbers used in a symbolic / stylistic way.
- Special numbers (5-Torah, 7-Perfection, 10-complete, all) used for the Patriarchs.
- Special numbers (60-Special / essential; 100's-many, etc.) used for Sumerian Kings.
- Numbers greater before the Flood, gradually break down into REALISTIC numbers after the Flood.
- The SEVENTH in each list have similar stories attached ...
 - ENOCH – walked with God. God took him to heaven.
 - Enoch Lived 365 years –Days in solar year.
 - This associates Enoch with the SUN.
 - ENMENDURANA – was close to the gods. The gods took him to the heavens.
 - En-men-dur-ana's city Sippar was associated with the worship of the Sun-god UTU,
 - Also called Shamash.
- GENEALOGIES IN GENESIS (5 and 11)**
- The numbers used in the Patriarchal genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are clearly symbolic, figurative numbers used stylistically. This is universally accepted among evangelical / Pentecostal OT scholars.
- The genealogies are designed to communicate that the line of the Hebrews is ancient, going back to God. The Hebrew Patriarchs were (largely) godly men blessed by God. They and their descendants are people of The Torah, the Law of God. God has been faithful to keep His promises and preserve His People, the Hebrews.
- We do not know what else they might be saying, but the genealogies should **NOT** be read as simply seriatim lists of people or as their precise ages.

GENEALOGIES IN GENESIS (5 and 11)

The numbers used in the Patriarchal genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are clearly symbolic, figurative numbers used stylistically.

The genealogies were designed to communicate that the line of the Hebrews is ancient, going back to God. That the Hebrew Patriarchs were (largely) godly men blessed by God. That they and their descendants are people of The Torah, the Law of God. God has been faithful to keep His promises and preserve His People, the Hebrews.

We do not know what else they might be saying, but the genealogies should NOT be read as simply seriatim lists of people or as their precisely literal ages. The hermeneutical cue of Figurative Numbers intentionally tells us this.

There may well have been literal men scattered back through the millennia who correspond to the men named in the genealogies. That is a matter of opinion and a position of faith.

Regardless, the NARRATIVE that is INTENTIONALLY told in this way should be received as the inspired THEOLOGICAL TELLING of Israel's and humanity's ancestry, and the NAMES should be received as the CHARACTERS whom God wants us to consider and meditate upon as representative ANCESTORS of our race.

THIS IS TRUE OF ALL OF GENESIS 1-11. Some characters named in these stories may indeed correspond to real people, and the stories may creatively describe real events in ways meant to emphasize theological TRUTH. REGARDLESS of the precise historicity of a name or story, the THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS conveyed by the stories themselves are *inspired* and *intended* to be received as THE EXISTENTIAL "THEOLOGICAL REALITY" OF OUR RACE ...

HUMANITY IS A FALLEN, SINFUL RACE, SINNERS IN NEED OF A REDEEMING SAVIOR,
TO TRANSFORM OUR BEINGS AND RESTORE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR CREATOR GOD, and
YAHWEH (ultimately JESUS) IS THE CREATOR and REDEEMER, the One True and Living God.

3. HYPERBOLIC Figurative Language ...

Hyperbolic - from hyper (beyond) + ballo (throw) - "To throw beyond" – expansive, larger-than-real-life language used to emphasize the importance of something. *Exaggerated*, extreme. *Hyperbole*.

Examples:

1. The wisest man who ever lived.
2. Gouge out your eye, cut off your hand.
3. The whole world could not contain the books.
4. They have turned the world upside down.

We sometimes recognize it easily in Scripture, but sometimes we must read carefully to see that this is hyperbolic figurative language.

EXAMPLE: HYPERBOLIC FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE and NARRATIVE PATTERNING

GENESIS 6-9 – THE FLOOD ...

NOTE: NARRATIVE PATTERNING – when a narrative or story uses parts of a previous biblical narrative as a pattern. The author may use the plot, events, figurative language, character names, etc. used in the earlier story. The author is ALLUDING to the earlier story, telling you to read and understand the earlier story if you want to read and understand this present narrative. *Narrative Patterning is a widely used technique in biblical narratives.* The key points in narrative patterning are *theological*, not geographic, not scientific.

GENESIS 6-9 – THE FLOOD ...

(Always remember: The Bible was never intended to confirm, or conform to, the science of any age, including our own times. The Bible is God's story of redemption. The authors wrote using the culture, worldviews, literary techniques of their own times, their imaginations fired by the Holy Spirit to tell God's story of redemption in creative, artistic ways that were filled with meaning to the original ancient readers / hearers. We MUST read these scriptures with ANCIENT EYES, hear them with ANCIENT EARS.)

Sound hermeneutical principles show that the key points in the Flood narrative are *theological*, not geographic, not scientific. There are many things to consider. Here are a few.

I. There are Mesopotamian flood stories which predate the biblical flood story.

A. Epic of Gilgamesh. (2,150 BC) Utnapishtim is warned that a god plans to destroy all humanity and is told to build a ship to save himself, his family, friends, and cattle.

There is geological evidence of more than one large flood in Mesopotamia in the time frames relevant to all of these stories (2,500 – 2,000 BC). (*Genuine scientific evidence, not pseudo-science.*)

There may well have been a flood or floods in the ANE, the memory of which was preserved in the oral traditions of the people until written down.

There are numerous variations in those stories, but they include a good man chosen by the gods, who builds a boat, saves animals, and repopulates the land.

There are many similarities between the biblical account and the other ANE flood stories.

Once again, Moses is clearly interacting with these stories, giving God's true theological account of the Flood.

There are flood stories in numerous cultures. This is not surprising since ancient humans always settled near rivers, which sooner or later always flooded. A fundamental difference in the Mesopotamian stories and the biblical flood:

- The other ANE stories usually have the gods angry because humans have grown so numerous and are making so much noise that the gods can't sleep. So they try to destroy humanity with a flood.
- In the Bible, God was pleased that humans multiplied, but not that they sinned, committed violence against the earth, and against one another. God judged sin, not to destroy humanity, but to save humanity from sin (through the remnant).

II. All the major themes of the Flood Story are theological. (Narrative Patterning)

- A. Judgment is universal – “whole” earth, “all” flesh, repeatedly.
- B. A Remnant is saved – only a righteous remnant will be saved.
- C. Reversal of Creation – the earth is de-created. It is returned to watery chaos as the waters above are reunited with the waters below and all dry land is covered. Life is blotted out.
- D. The Cause is Overwhelming Human Sin (6:5) – Man has violently destroyed the earth, so God will destroy man (6:11,13).
- E. NEW CREATION – *God's ultimate goal!* (**NOTE the Narrative Patterning ... Gen 7-9 alludes to Gen 1-2**).
 1. God sends a wind to push back the waters and uncover dry land (1:2, 8:1).
 2. God tells Noah and animals to leave the ark and “be fruitful and multiply” (1:17,28; 8:17, 9:1).
 3. God gives commandments regarding what he may eat (1:29-30, 2:16-17, 9:3).
 4. Noah plants a vineyard (garden) just as God had planted (2:8, 9:20).
 5. Adam and Noah are uniquely associated with the image of God, a phrase found **only** in 1:26-28 and 9:6.
 6. Both Adam and Noah walk with God (3:8, 9:6).
 7. Both Adam (who names) and Noah (who saves) rule the animals (2:19, 7:15).

All of this portrays Noah as a Second Adam and the flood as bringing a New Creation. This is clearly the author's intent.
- F. New Covenant – God makes an everlasting covenant with His creation and with Noah, promising never again to destroy all flesh with a flood (9:16).

NARRATIVE PATTERNING – the literary convention of using themes, events, people from previous stories as models or patterns in this story. *Narrative patterning is seen throughout items A - F above.*

This is a very carefully written story to explain God's requirements for obedience, His judgment on sin, and His saving of a remnant in promise and hope.

Despite man's repeated disobedience, idolatry, rebellion, and sin, God remains faithful to His original intention in creation. He will bring His purposes to pass!

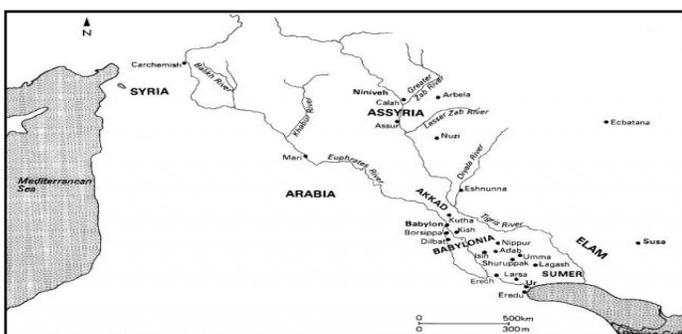
(The presence of other ANE flood stories, The pervasive theological themes, The Narrative Patterning, and also ...)

III. The use of "universal" language was a common ANE practice. *(A form of Hyperbolic language)*

- A. Genesis 41:54,56 – "famine was in all the lands" ... "famine was over all the face of the earth" (better translations say "lands" and "the land") – Really only Egypt and immediately surrounding area.
The same wording is used in the flood account at 6:9, 7:3-4, 8:9 and elsewhere.
- B. Deuteronomy 2:25 – "...I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven." – This is meant to refer to the immediately surrounding tribes / ANE people-groups.
This is Figurative language, a figure of speech meaning "all the lands and peoples around us, known to us." "OUR 'whole' earth."
- C. Zechariah 5:6 – "all the earth" – Really referring to Palestine
- D. Acts 2:5 – "devout men from every nation under heaven" – Really meaning Jews from several lands.
- E. Many more examples could be cited.
- F. Such "universal" language was sometimes intentional hyperbole, and other times referred to the known world (which they thought was indeed the whole world). *Sometimes it was intentional hyperbole about their known world.*

IV. The language itself does not say "whole earth" and does not require the "whole earth."

- A. The words "eretz" and "adamah" are not the word for "whole earth."
"Eretz" – land; as in land of Israel, land of Egypt, this particular geographical region (6:17, 7:4,10,17-19).
- B. "Adamah" – ground; or "earth" as in the soil of the earth.
- C. "Tebel" is the word for the whole expanse of the earth, or the earth as a whole. The entire planet.
The word "tebel" is never used in this entire story of the Flood.



Chiasm - A literary structure designed to point to reader to the author's key meaning(s).

THE CHIASM in the STORY of NOAH'S FLOOD ...

A Noah (6:10a)	A' Noah (9:19)
B Shem, Ham and Japheth (6:10b)	B' Shem, Ham, Japheth (9:18b)
C Ark to be built (6:14-16)	C' Ark (9:18a)
D Flood announced (6:17)	D' No flood in future (9:11-17)
E Covenant with Noah (6:18-20)	E' Covenant with all flesh (9:8-10)
F Food in the Ark (6:21)	F' Food outside the ark (9:1-4)
G Command to enter the Ark (7:1-3)	G' Command to leave the ark (8:15-17)
H 7 days waiting for flood (7:4-5)	H 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:12-13)
I 7 days waiting for flood (7:7-10)	I' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:10-11)
J Entry to ark (7:11-15)	J' Raven and dove leave ark (8:7-9)
K Yahweh shuts Noah in (7:16)	K' Noah opens window of ark (8:6b)
L 40 days flood (7:17a)	L' 40 days (end of) (8:6a)
M Waters increase (7:17b-18)	M' Waters abate (8:6)
N Mountains covered (7:18-20)	N' Mountain tops become visible (8:4-5)
O 150 days waters prevail (7:21-24)	O' ..150 days waters abate (8:3)
P God Remembers Noah (8:1)	

The symmetrical arrangement shows various subthemes in the story of Noah.

The "hinge" verse in this chiasm is 8:1 - God remembered Noah.

The primary teaching of Noah's story is meant to be the **Faithful Character of God** ...

- God has been faithful to his nature to bless and not curse.
- God has been faithful to his covenant with humanity.
- God remembered and saved Noah and his family.
- The faithful character of God.

THE CHIASM in the STORY of NOAH'S FLOOD

A Noah (6:10a)
 B Shem, Ham and Japheth (6:10b)
 C Ark to be built (6:14-16)
 D Flood announced (6:17)
E Covenant with Noah (6:18-20)
 F Food in the Ark (6:21)
 G Command to enter the Ark (7:1-3)
 H 7 days waiting for flood (7:4-5)
 I 7 days waiting for flood (7:7-10)
J Entry to ark (7:11-15)
 K Yahweh shuts Noah in (7:16)
 L 40 days flood (7:17a)
M Waters increase (7:17b-18)
 N Mountains covered (7:18-20)
 O 150 days waters prevail (7:21-24)
P God Remembers Noah (8:1)
 O' 150 days waters abate (8:3)
 N' Mountain tops become visible (8:4-5)
M' Waters abate (8:6)
 L' 40 days (end of) (8:6a)
 K' Noah opens window of ark (8:6b)
J' Raven and dove leave ark (8:7-9)
 I' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:10-11)
 H' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:12-13)
 G' Command to leave the ark (8:15-17)
 F' Food outside the ark (9:1-4)
E' Covenant with all flesh (9:8-10)
 D' No flood in future (9:11-17)
 C' Ark (9:18a)
 B' Shem, Ham, Japheth (9:18b)
A' Noah (9:19)

THE NOAH'S FLOOD CHIASM

The chiasm focuses on God's faithfulness to Noah, His righteous remnant in the earth. God remembers Noah and rescues Noah.

The chiasm itself (the whole account) is filled with Narrative Patterning and Figurative language: numeric, universal, hyperbolic, symbolic, and written within the ANE cosmology – "the fountains of the deep were broken up."

Written in the ANE narrative genre of Epic, everything points to this being a theological explanation of a real event.

THE BIBLICAL TEXT ITSELF PERMITS THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS FOR THE FLOOD'S EXTENT...

1. Global. The most extreme position. Based on a literalistic reading, which is not the best reading of the text. Careful analysis of all factors internal to the story, **and** what we know from the natural world, make this option logistically and scientifically impossible. The logistical/practical/scientific problems are insurmountable.
2. Known world. A massive flood of the world known to the ANE, but not including unknown continents, etc. (i.e., not global). Second most extreme position, with some of the same problems attending a global flood.

3. Regional. A huge flood affecting much of Mesopotamia (Tigris-Euphrates Valley) in a manner similar to the biblical and ANE accounts. This would satisfy all of the linguistic, theological, historical, and geological factors related to the biblical account.
4. Local. A large flood wiped out several towns along the rivers. Could probably satisfy the aspects described in Option 3, but would have been a periodic occurrence, and should not have made such a profound impact on the various ANE cultures for 1,000 years.

Considering the actual text of Scripture first - carefully and correctly interpreted using proper hermeneutics - and everything else involved secondarily, Option 3 is the best understanding of the historical event behind the story of Noah and the Great Flood: ...

The theological explanation of ...

- a. God's judgment on wickedness,
- b. His faithfulness to His righteous remnant, and
- c. His faithfulness to His plan to bless, redeem, and restore humanity and creation,
- d. Is the true explanation for the massive flood.

That is the point of the story. That is what the language itself, and the literary techniques, say very clearly. Throughout Scripture, God uses both spiritual and natural events and processes to reward and to punish humanity.

We know from archaeological, geological, and now even genetic evidence that there was NOT a famine over the actual "whole" earth during this period.

In the same way we know that "all the nations under heaven" have never feared the Hebrew people. Most nations / people groups of the earth never even knew the Hebrews existed.

In the same way we know from archaeological, geological, and now even genetic evidence that there has never been a global flood, a flood over the actual "whole" earth, and definitely not 6,000 years ago.

And, the Bible never says there was.

The point of these O.T. narratives is always THEOLOGICAL, and never simply chronological, historical, or scientific. This is how they were written and intended, and this is how they must be read and received.

This is always the story of God's great redemptive mission, intentionally told creatively, artistically, literarily.

II. DISCHRONOLOGY –

Dischronology is placing events, situations, or speeches out of their original chronological sequence.

When biblical authors did this it was intentional, to illustrate something or to make a theological point. Whenever you see dischronology, you know that the author is reporting creatively.

He does **not** intend you to read this as a straightforward chronological narrative.

The writer is intentionally writing to teach theological truths.

He is NOT claiming that things happened in exactly this way physically, or in exactly this order.

The inspired author is telling you that some or most of the whole story will be figurative.

DISCHRONOLOGY – Genesis 10, 11

Genesis 10 – the Table of the Nations

Genesis 11 – the Tower of Babel, the birth of the Nations

God inspired Moses to reverse these portions in order to associate the Nations with Noachian blessing and hope, rather than with a curse alone!

The narrative is not strictly chronological, nor is it straightforward history.

It portrays historical processes creatively, through a theological lens, in order to make theological points.

DISCHRONOLOGY - The Prophets - There are many examples. Here is one ...

If Jeremiah's oracles had been written down in the chronological order in which they were originally given, it would look approximately like this, reading left to right:

Ch 1:1-7:15	Ch 26	Ch 7:16-20:18	Ch 25	Ch 46-51
Ch 36:1-8	Ch 45	Ch 36:9-32	Ch 35	Ch 21-24
Ch 27-31	Ch 34:1-7	Ch 37:1-10	Ch 34:8-22	
Ch 37:11-38:13	Ch 39:15-18	Ch 32-33	Ch 38:14-39:14	
Ch 52:1-30	Ch 40-44	Ch 52:31-34		

Instead, Jeremiah and his scribe, Baruch, recorded the prophetic oracles of Jeremiah grouped together in a manner that made various theological points.

DISCHRONOLOGY – The Gospels - There are many examples in the gospels. Here are a few ...

- Jesus first preaching at Nazareth – Matt 13.53-58, Mark 6:1f, Luke 4:16f,
- Picking grain on the Sabbath – Matt 12.1f, Mark 2.23f, Luke 6.1f
- Sermon on the Mount / Plain – Matt 5-7, Mark has parts in 3, 4, and 9, Luke 6 with parts in 11, 12, 13, 14, 16.
- *Many more examples, all of which are re-arranged to make a series of theological points.*

III. ACCOMMODATION

In the Incarnation, God revealed himself and his truth to the people of Christ's day in a way they could understand and relate to. God the Son accommodated his self-revelation to that Jewish context.

In the same way, when inspiring Scripture, God revealed himself and his truth to the biblical authors **within their historical, cultural, conceptual context**, allowing them to express this revelation using their own concepts and literary conventions. This is the critically important hermeneutical principal of **Accommodation**.

God preserved their expression from error when that expression is understood in that context.

For all appearances, Jesus was a human being just like them, a holy man of God, but a person that friends and enemies alike had no clue was actually God incarnate.

God the Son came into their historical, cultural, conceptual context, expressing God's revelation in such an incarnational manner that His closest disciples were stunned when Christ did something like raise someone from the dead, or still the winds and waves, or walk upon the sea.

God always accommodated his revelation. He did this in the Old Testament as well, using the worldview, culture, and language of the ancient Hebrews, who saw the world as did all of the other people groups of the Ancient Near East (ANE).

This includes the way the ANE people viewed their bodies, the earth, the climate, the cosmos.

The ancient Hebrews thought their bowels, their internal organs, produced their emotions. The kidneys ("reins") were the origin of their deepest emotions and affections. God accommodated their ANE concept of physiology and psychology.

God did not correct any part of their "science" – not physiology, meteorology, biology, or cosmology – and very little of their politics, societal concepts, etc.

They thought the sky was a hard dome (“raqia” – firmament /canopy). The sun, moon, and stars were let out of their gates or windows at night and ran a fixed course across the skydome. God also opened the windows of heaven for the winds and rain.

God accommodated their ANE concepts of cosmology and meteorology. His Word was given incarnationally into their cultural, historical context.

The sky was blue because there was water above the skydome. Above that was God’s heaven. The earth was a flat disk or square, with the great mountain “pillars of heaven” supporting the skydome around the edges. The earth was fixed, and everything else moved – it was a geocentric universe (earth-centered).

They did not understand the intermediate processes of the natural world (such as weather systems, gestation, planetary movements, tectonic plates, etc.) *and God never revealed this to them.*

God was concerned with redemption & salvation history, NOT with science or perfect chronological history.

God accommodated His revelation to their worldview.

God was making theological points, not “scientific” points (astronomy, geology, meteorology, biology).

God’s revelation of Himself was always “incarnational” – capable of being understood within the minds or worldview of those people in the time and place where He revealed Himself.

God’s Truth – the Spiritual / Theological Message – was carried within the Cultural Envelope that the People could recognize and receive.

Without the principle of Accommodation in God’s progressive revelation, and unless we accept and use that principle in hermeneutics, we are faced with a Bible with errors.

A strictly literalistic, plain sense reading will quickly produce “meaning” that is in error, self-contradictory.

We MUST understand and accept the Principle of Accommodation.

We must read the ancient text with ancient eyes, an ancient mindset, an ancient belief system about how creation, the cosmos, our bodies, all of life, is structured and how it functions.

God revealed theological truth about Himself, humanity, sin, and redemption using these ancient concepts of the Hebrews and the first Christians. He did NOT use our modern concepts.

(Figurative Language, Hyperbolic Language, Narrative Patterning, Accommodation, ...)

IV. PHENOMENOLOGICAL Language

Describing an event or situation as the phenomenon is perceived by the senses. (Related to Accommodation)

The earth is immovable, the sun rises and sets, the stars move, emotions are produced in your intestines and internal organs, etc.

Psalm 93:1 - “...the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.”

Ecclesiastes 1:5 - “The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.”

Lamentations 2:11 - “Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; ...”

V. ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE

Anthropos – human, man. Morphe – form

Ascribing human form, feelings, attributes, or actions to something not human, such as **God, who is spirit.**

God accommodated himself and his revelation to humans by allowing us to describe him – his being and his doing – in ways to which we can relate, human ways.

When you see anthropomorphic language being used you are alerted that a theological point is being made rather than a literalistic statement.

Anthropomorphic Language – language about God or his actions that compare God to the form of humanity, or describe his thoughts, feelings, or actions in ways that enable humans to relate to them or understand them.

Exodus 7:5 And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.

Psalms 33:6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

Genesis 1 – God said, God saw, God called, God worked (*only during the day*), God rested, etc.

This anthropomorphic language tells us God is accommodating his revelation in ways to which humans of that culture can relate.

Israel can relate to a “day” as a period of time.

Furthermore, since Israel works during daylight and ceases at night, so does God.

Accommodation, anthropomorphic, and phenomenological language, among other things, means the authors often ignore direct causes or intermediate processes for the effects we see in the natural world, and attribute direct unmediated cause to God himself. God “made” lightning and rain, God “shook” the earth.

The ancient Hebrews knew how you made babies, but were ignorant of the precise cellular mechanism. So, God “formed” us in our mother’s womb. The long-term process was a mystery.

They knew that soil, water, and sunlight were necessary for crops to germinate and grow, but they attributed all of this directly to God, who was indeed the ultimate source and power.

Ancient people, even through the New Testament times and for 1,500 years afterward, were ignorant of the processes which God had placed in His creation.

They were ignorant of the intermediate processes that were the direct causes of earthquakes, storms, lightning, fertilization, fertility, the movement of sun, moon, stars and so forth.

They thought that God directly, immediately, without any intermediate processes caused all of these things to happen.

They thought God was not just the ultimate cause who, at His sovereign will could intervene in the processes. He was also and always the immediate direct cause of these phenomenon.

There was no process, long-term or short, involved.

They knew nothing about the sudden movement of tectonic plates along a fault line causing an earthquake, nothing about high and low pressure systems and arctic jet streams and isobars and barometric pressure.

They knew nothing about physics and calculus and astrophysics, about light years, and the rotation of the earth on its axis, or its revolution around the Sun.

They knew nothing about the true functions of human organs and systems, about cellular division or DNA.

And God was perfectly fine with that! [God was revealing his nature and his redemptive plan!](#)

VI. OTHER LITERARY DEVICES

Chiasm – a literary structure or pattern using intersection, repetition, and parallelism to emphasize, compare, or contrast events, people, or ideas. Example: A B C D C’ B’ A’

Identifying a chiasm is a powerful tool for identifying the author’s intent: He intentionally structured his writing to emphasize, compare, or contrast events, people, or ideas for a reason.

One form of chiasm emphasizes the innermost concept or event, as follows: A B C D C’ B’ A’.

Chiasms or chiastic patterns are found in many kinds of ancient literature, including the Bible.

They are found throughout Scripture, not just in the Psalms.

THE CHIASM in the STORY OF SOLOMON – 1 Kings chapters 1 - 12

- A1 – Prophet gives the kingdom to Solomon
- B2 – Solomon’s kingdom established
- C3 – Solomon’s wisdom fruitful – humility, dependence, justice
- D4 – Solomon blessed by God – Wisdom, God, creation
- E5 – Preparations to build the Temple
- F6 – Builds the Temple – 7 years
- G - 7:1-12 – “It took Solomon 13 years however, to complete the construction of his palace.”
- F’7 – Furnishes the Temple
- E’8 – Temple finished, dedicated, in use
- D’9 – Solomon blessed but warned – Slavery, Pharaoh’s daughter
- C’10 – Solomon’s wisdom fails – pride, selfishness, majesty, affluence
- B’11 – Solomon’s kingdom disestablished – foreign wives, idolatry, rebellion
- A’12 – Prophet takes the kingdom from Solomon (Rehoboam) – Israel splits

Notice how A corresponds to A’, B to B’, C to C’, etc.
 The hinge is G - 7:1-12 ... this is the primary point of the entire story. Solomon had already been corrupted by pride: He spent far more time on his palaces than on God’s Temple.

GENRE - The most basic factor in reading a text correctly.

THE PRIMARY KEY TO CORRECT INTERPRETATION !!

Genre – Kind, Class, Category. The kind of literature I’m reading. The category of this book or passage.

Genre is the base, the foundation, the starting point, from which all interpretation builds.

Genre is God telling me HOW to read this book or passage.

God inspired the genre BEFORE He inspired the words. They are inextricably linked.

If you refuse to accept God’s chosen genre and you read the words another way, you are denying inspiration, and destroying God’s Word.

God used many different kinds or forms of literature in the Bible.

Every genre used in the Bible is a genre that was common in the surrounding cultures of that day.

People reading a biblical book, or hearing it read, would have known *HOW* to read it or hear it.

God and the human authors expected the original readers and listeners to see what KIND (genre) of literature they were hearing or reading, and to therefore know what to expect from that Word, and what NOT to expect from that Word. **God expects the reader and hearer to respect and receive his inspired genre; to understand.**

“When the Bible employs a literary method, it asks to be approached as (that kind of) literature and not as something else.” Leland Ryken

He led the human writers to choose various “genres” in which to write His divine Word to humanity.

Each kind of literature has its own frame of reference, ground rules, strategy, and purpose.

The broadest Old Testament categories of literary genres are ...

O.T. – Narrative, Law, Wisdom, Poetry, Prophecy, Apocalyptic

- Narrative – Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, etc.
- Law – Leviticus, Deuteronomy
- Wisdom – Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job
- Poetry – Psalms, many other places
- Prophecy – Jeremiah, Isaiah, Malachi, ...
- Apocalyptic – some parts of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, other prophets, ...

Every genre has different literary conventions, and MUST be read differently, according to its own rules.

NOTE: A book of the Bible may fall in one genre as a whole book, but will often have passages embedded within it that are a different genre entirely!

Example: Cosmogony embedded in Narrative (Genesis),
Poetry embedded in Epistle,
Apocalyptic embedded in Gospel, etc.

GENRE – COSMOGONY (GENESIS 1)

Combining these hermeneutical principles and literary conventions ... Genre, Accommodation, Anthropomorphic Language, Figurative Language, Phenomenological Language, ANE Cosmology, etc., ... We get a proper reading and interpretation of Genesis 1.

COSMOGONY – a story of origins or creation. All ANE cultures had their own cosmogonies, or stories of creation.

COSMOLOGY – the conceptual framework of how the earth / the universe / the cosmos functions, exists, is structured.

Remember the ANE Cosmology of the ancient Hebrews ...

They thought the sky was a hard dome (“raqia” – firmament/canopy). The sun, moon, and stars were let out of their gates or windows at night, and ran a fixed course across the skydome. God also opened the windows of heaven for the winds and rain.

The sky was blue because there was water above the skydome. Above that was God’s heaven. The earth was a flat disk or square, with the great mountain “pillars of heaven” supporting the skydome around the edges. The earth was fixed, and everything else moved – a geocentric universe.

God accommodated their ANE concepts of cosmology and meteorology. His Word was given incarnationally into their cultural, historical context.

COSMOLOGY - understanding of how the universe is structured and how it functions.

The ANE had a pre-scientific cosmology defined by the religions, the stories, the culture, and the normal phenomenological observations of their world.

This was true regarding human physiology and biology ...

Internal organs – the bowels, heart, kidneys, liver – were the seat of the emotions, and often of the mind and will.

The ancient Hebrews shared the ANE understanding of the human body. Such as, your “reins” or kidneys were the source of your deepest emotions and affections.

This was true regarding meteorology and geology ...

God directly, in an unmediated manner, caused weather of all kinds, and earthquakes.

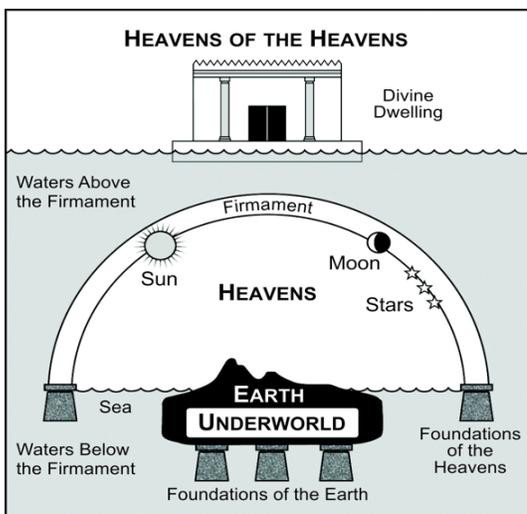
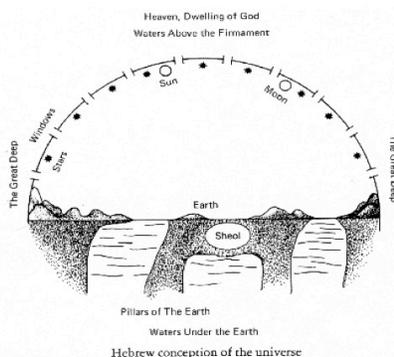
Psalm 135 - “6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths. 7 He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.”

Isaiah 29:6 - “...the LORD Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire.”

It was true regarding Cosmology per se, the structure of the physical universe. This is what the ANE people, including Israel believed ...

- The sun rose and the stars moved.
- The earth was fixed and never moved.

- The sun, moon, and stars moved around the earth – a geocentric universe.
- The earth was flat, with edges and four corners (or a flat disk).
- The earth rested above the abyssal waters on pillars.
- The sky was a firmament, a dome, a solid thing that God had stretched out as a vault over all the earth. (“raqia”)



WE SEE THIS IN GENESIS 1, and throughout the Old Testament ...

Psalm 104 - “2 The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent 3 and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. ... 5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.”

Gen 7:11 - “...on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.”

Deut 33:13 - “May the LORD bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below,”

1 Sam 2:8 - “For the foundations of the earth are the LORD’s; on them he has set the world.”

Psalm 75:3 - “When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.”

Job 26:1 - “The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke.”

Psalm 19 - “4 In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. 5 It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. 6 It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.”



Judges 5 - “20 From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.”

Throughout His dealings with humanity, including His revelation of His Word and His Son, God has NOT been concerned with correcting our misunderstandings of how the physical world works.

God’s agenda is far bigger than that.

He always accommodated Himself to us, and still does.

GENRE - Cosmogony

GENESIS 1 ... Everything about Genesis 1 indicates that it is a *theological* explanation of creation.

1. Stylized Structure and Symmetry in Genesis 1

First Trio			Second Trio		
Day	Creative Acts/Aspects	Form/Sphere	Day	Creative Acts/Aspects	Fill-and-Rule/Functionary
1	1	Light	4	1	Lights (sun, moon, stars)
2	1/2	Dome (sea, sky)	5	1/2	Inhabitants (fish, birds)
3	2	Dry Land Vegetation	6	2	Land animals Humans in God's image
Movement: Static			Movement: Increasing freedom, from a set course, to a range, to Humanity's unlimited access.		
Progress: From heaven to earth (Days 1-3)			Progress: From heaven to earth (Days 4-6)		
Seventh Day – unique, unending; God enters his rest in his good and ordered cosmic temple, to sustain his creation, enter into relationship with humanity, host them, bless them, and receive their worship.					

HERE WE SEE A SERIES OF NUMBERED EVENTS, a highly structured, symmetrical story of what Israel's God did. In this story there are ...

- THREE namings – “and God called”
- THREE “created” / bara – to design and bring order
- SEVEN reports – “and God made”
- SEVEN evaluations – “it was good”
- SEVEN other uses of verbs for “made” with pre- or suffix
- TEN announcements – “and God said”
- TEN “according to their kind”
- TEN total uses of all verbs for “made”

There are numerous multiples of 7 ...

- a. The first verse has 7 words, the second 14, and 2:1-3 uses 35 words to describe the seventh day...
 - 7 (perfect, complete, GOD) X 5 (Torah) = Sabbath, the perfect day, given to God and Torah
- b. “God” occurs 35 times, “heaven” and “earth” 21 each. This does not exhaust the many repetitions, relationships, and symmetries.

There is **dischronology** both within Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 – 3, and between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 – 3.

These narratives do describe the historical truth that God created, but they describe this in creative ways to teach theological truths about God and creation, rather than as unadorned straightforward history.

The character of God, His redemptive mission, His love and intentions for humanity, these are the what the creation story is about.

It is about the truth that God created, and why He created, but NOT how or when He created.

Genesis 1 is about GOD and the MEANING of creation, NOT about a precise “scientific” account that describes in chronological order or time frames how or when God created.

The Genesis 1 account is packed the hermeneutical cues of figurative numeric language, highly symmetrical stylized numbers, accommodation, anthropomorphisms, dischronology, high prose (poesy), interaction with pagan creation stories in order to refute them, and other indicators that *this is a theological account of creation, not a straightforward chronological literalistic story of creation.*

After the Exodus, God gave Israel through Moses a divinely inspired, true cosmogony from their God, using the genre and cosmology of the ANE.

This story of creation has no relation to, nothing to do with, the science of our age or any other age. It is completely unconcerned with, and devoid of any references to or any relationship with, any of the concerns of modern scientific theories of origins.

It was the [true theology of creation](#) to counter the pagan myths surrounding Israel, to exalt Yahweh their God, to set them apart as God's unique People, and to form the foundation for God's redemptive history.

GENESIS 2 ...

The Genesis 2 account is very different from the Genesis 1 account.

The vocabularies, structures, and writing styles are very different.

Example: In Genesis 2 fruit bearing trees (shrubs) are not created until after Man is created. There was no one to tend them. *After man, the gardener, is created to tend them, then such plants can be created.*

Both accounts reflect the ANE worldview: an idyllic life, a garden paradise, eventual violence, etc.

Both chapters 1 & 2 emphasize man as the apex of God's creation, the creature for whom God cares and has provided all of this creation.

Woman is seen as man's equal, complementary. This was revolutionary.

GENESIS 3-5 – THE FALL ...

Humanity has sinned – willfully rebelled against the will and character of God.

Sin brought spiritual death – loss of the vision of God, or separation from God's unmediated Presence.

Humanity is fallen, separated from God's Presence, in a downward spiral of increasing sin, rebellion, violence, oppression, and death.

Though God judges and punishes sin, His fundamental posture and message is hope – repentance, redemption, restoration, blessing.

This is the clear [theological message](#) in these chapters, regardless of how they are read.

God has always been about His passion and plan for redeeming humanity, and working within their cultural understandings to do so. *Incarnational revelation is a foundational principle of God's plan.*

God accommodated his revelation to the culture and worldview of his people. He did NOT reveal to them modern understandings of humanity, sociology, government, or science: Physiology, biology, meteorology, geology, cosmology, and so on.

[If you try to force your modern worldview and definitions on to Bible cultures and words, you WILL create insoluble "errors" in God's Word.](#)

That is what atheists do when attacking God's Word!

Please don't help the atheists! Do NOT interpret literalistically!

GENRE – NARRATIVE

Narratives are stories. It is better to use the word "narrative" because some people associate the word "story" with both non-fiction and fiction.

Their purpose is to show God at work in creation and humanity, illustrate some truths about God and life, and bring God glory.

Narratives have plots and characters, but [God is always the main character and the real hero.](#)

All bible narratives and plots are part of the much bigger overall narrative and plot of the whole Bible.

Bible narratives tell us about things that happened.

[Over 40% of the Old Testament is narrative.](#)

The following books are largely or entirely narrative: Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Jonah and Haggai.

In the New Testament, much of the 4 gospels are narrative, and most of Acts is narrative.

Narrative is the single most common type of literature in the Bible.

Furthermore, Exodus, Numbers, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Job contain large narrative portions.

Paul's epistles often contain small portions of narrative.

THERE ARE THREE LEVELS OF OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE THAT MUST ALWAYS BE HELD TOGETHER ...

Every story is really being told on three levels. These levels relate to each other and have key aspects.

1. **The top level is the universal plan that God is working out in His creation.** *(This is the metanarrative (Big Story) of all of Scripture.) These are the primary categories of the Big Story ...*
 - a. Creation
 - b. Humanity's Fall
 - c. The power and universality of Sin
 - d. The need for Redemption
 - e. Christ's Incarnation and Sacrifice
 - f. The New Creation – Risen Christ / The Church / New Heavens & New Earth

(The Metanarrative also relates to the Canonical Context – it flows from O.T. through N.T.)
2. **The middle level centers on Israel.** *(This is the story of Israel, the O.T.) These are the primary categories of the Middle Level ...*
 - a. Abraham's call and Promised Seed
 - b. Abraham's lineage through the Patriarchs
 - c. Israel's enslavement in Egypt
 - d. God's deliverance – out of Egypt, Conquest of Canaan
 - e. David's call, dynasty, and Promised Son
 - f. Israel's increasing sins and disloyalty
 - g. God's patience, protection, and pleading with Israel
 - h. The destruction of Israel and then Judah
 - i. The restoration of the Remnant after the Exile
3. **The bottom level consists of the scores of individual stories that make up the other two levels.** *These are examples of the individual stories ...*
 - a. Joseph's being sold into slavery, then to Egypt
 - b. Naomi, Ruth, and their Redemption by Boaz
 - c. David's adultery with Bathsheba
 - d. The building and dedication of the Temple
 - e. The birth narratives of Jesus; stories in the gospels
 - f. Peter preaching at Cornelius' house
 - g. Saul's conversion on the Damascus Road

Every individual (OT) narrative (bottom level) ...

... is a part of Israel's narrative (middle level) ...

... which is a part of the Ultimate Narrative of God's creation and His redemption of creation (top level).

This Ultimate (Universal) Narrative goes beyond the Old Testament into and through the New Testament.

You cannot correctly understand an individual story (Joseph, Ruth, etc.) until you understand its place in the other two levels. You cannot understand Israel's Story (Middle Level) until you understand its place in the Big Story (Top Level).

The Bible is one continuous story.

The Ultimate (Universal) Narrative of God's Creation *and* His redeeming of all creation goes beyond the Old Testament, into and through the New Testament all the way to New Creation.

This Great Story runs from the beginning of Creation, through the Fall, through all of God's salvation history, Christ's Redeeming Sacrifice, His resurrection as the beginning of the New Creation, all of history after that until Christ's Second Coming, & New Heavens and New Earth ... the Consummation of the New Creation.

What Narratives Are NOT ...

1. **Old Testament narratives are NOT just stories about people.**
 - a. They have a theological purpose.
 - b. They are stories about what GOD did – God is the hero of these stories.
 - c. There are characters, plots, scenes, a climax, etc., but God is behind and within it all.
2. **Old Testament narratives are NOT allegories or stories filled with hidden meaning.**
 - a. They do not always tell us everything – how or why a person (or even God) did a thing.
 - b. If God chose not to reveal something, not to give us all of the details, *it is wrong to create fanciful explanations that read INTO the text something that is not there.*
Whenever you misinterpret Scripture, and tell God's People that it means something it does not mean, you are lying about God, you are claiming God said something that He never said, you are putting your words in God's mouth, you are creating a lie and claiming that God said this!
3. **Old Testament narratives do NOT always teach directly.**
 - a. They often teach indirectly by illustrating through real people and events how a truth taught elsewhere in the Bible affected real life.
 - b. They often teach implicitly what is elsewhere taught explicitly in the Bible.
 - c. We can often identify past actions or attitudes from our own lives in the stories we are reading and learn valuable lessons (without equating ourselves or our circumstances with theirs).
 - d. *If you are a Christian, the Old Testament is your spiritual history.* (Galatians 3:29)

Galatians 3:26-29 - "26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**"

4. **Each individual story (or episode w/in a narrative) does not necessarily have a "moral" all its own.**
 - a. You cannot interpret each individual scene, story, or episode alone – you MUST interpret it by seeing it through the overall narrative in which it is embedded.
 - b. There is an OVERALL theme, point, or movement to the larger narrative, and the smaller stories or episodes within it are usually structured to make that larger point.
5. **As with some other genres, we must pay close attention to what is said at the beginning of a story, in the middle of the story, and at the end of the story.**
 - a. The beginning usually forecasts the theme or flow of the story.
 - b. The middle is often an important focus or turning point in the plot of the story.
 - c. The end is often where we find the ultimate resolution, and implicit reason for the story.

LET'S READ SOME BIBLE STORIES CORRECTLY using the hermeneutical principles we've learned thus far ...

1. The Story of Joseph – Genesis 37, 39-50

2. The Book of Ruth

WE MUST ALWAYS ASK Some Questions and by reading the stories answer those questions ...

1. Who are the heroes (protagonists)? (*Remember: All human heroes have faults; only God is the hero*)
2. Who are the villains (antagonists)? (*These are normally human, but may be a situation / event*)
3. Who are the foils (comparison characters)?
4. What are some scenes / episodes / individual stories?
5. What is the primary moral / point?
6. Are there some sub-points?
7. How do the Three Levels connect?

The Individual Stories

Abraham Joseph Moses Giving of The Law Ruth Samson Samuel David Solomon
The Prophets The Kings (Also Chronicles) Elijah Elisha Isaiah Ezekiel Daniel ...

The Story of Israel ...The Old Testament

The Universal Story of Redemption ...

From Creation, throughout the O.T., always pointing toward JESUS CHRIST, the NEW CREATION

GENRE of NARRATIVE - THE STORY OF RUTH – Ruth 1 – 4

Ruth is narrative / story. It is true, but is very carefully, skillfully written in the genre or form of a short story. Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz are the central human characters, each portraying different aspects of the central themes.

We must ask the required questions ...

1. Who is the hero (who are the heroes)?

Because this is a very carefully crafted piece of literature – a short story – two of the main characters are described in very glowing, “heroic” terms.

Naomi – clearly has faults ... bitterness, lack of faith, etc.

Ruth – no fault is described, so that Ruth can become the personification of HESED, covenant loving-kindness and faithfulness. A worthy mother in Israel, and great-grandmother of a king.

Boaz – no fault is described, so that Boaz can personify HESED and REDEMPTION as the kinsman-redeemer a worthy ancestor of a king.

Carefully reading the story reveals that YAHWEH (the LORD) is the true hero – it is God’s initiative that provides the blessings ... food, home, redemption, etc.

Because Ruth and Boaz are so purposefully described as role models who portray Yahweh’s character, it is easy to miss God’s central role. HE is our Lord and Redeemer, HE is the Hero of the Story!

The LORD is seen saving the lives of his people by direct intervention twice:

1:6 – “...the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, ...”

4:13 – “...The LORD enabled her (Ruth) to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.”

Here, the narrative explicitly states that God did something.

The rest of the time this is merely implied.

As we read or hear the story, we are expected to see that God is moving behind the scenes to arrange help and blessing. It is a story of God’s maintaining covenant faithfulness through hidden providence.

By miraculous intervention and unseen providence, God is the hero of the story. He provides for his people.

2. If Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz are the protagonists, who are the antagonists?

There are no real human antagonists.

In some ways, famine and death are antagonists. They cause the loss of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Kilion. They cause Naomi to be emptied and become bitter.

3. Who are the foils (the comparison characters)?

Orpah – Naomi’s other daughter-in-law, who returns to her family, their gods, and to Moab. Her actions *highlight the exact opposite* attitudes and actions in Ruth.

The Unnamed Kinsman – he refuses to redeem because he is afraid of losing his name, lands, and descendants prestige. His actions *highlight the exact opposite attitudes and actions* in Boaz.

The foils (comparison characters) make some particular thing about the heroes shine even brighter by *contrast*.

CONTRAST is an important technique to look for – the writer is making a special point when he or she uses *contrast*. When you see *contrast* used, God is saying “Think about this!”

Contrast is used many times in the story of Ruth:

1. Famine and plenty.
2. Bethlehem and the rest of the nation in the time of the Judges. (the faithful remnant)
3. Empty and full.
4. Barren (childless) and fertile (a child).
5. Widowed and a husband.
6. Outsider (Moabite) and Insider (family member).
7. Old and Rich (Boaz) or Young and Poor (Ruth).
8. Bitter and Pleasant (Naomi).
9. The living and the dead.
10. Loving-Kindness (covenant faithfulness) and unfaithfulness.
11. Abandonment and God’s Unseen Providence.

4. What are some scenes / episodes / individual stories?

Looking for this reveals the great care taken by the author to structure his or her story with great art and symmetry.

1:1-5 – Introduction: Naomi Emptied (71 Hebrew words)

4:13-17 – Conclusion: Naomi Filled (71 Hebrew words)

4:18-22 – Epilogue: *Genealogy of David*

The main body consists of four major episodes in four chapters.

The opening line of each episode signals its primary concern.

The closing line facilitates transition to the next episode.

ALWAYS REMEMBER that the entire Bible had NO chapter or verse divisions when originally written.

Scholars and scribes added chapter and verse divisions 2,000 years later, in the Middle Ages.

Sometimes they did a great job following the INHERENT LITERARY STRUCTURE of the text. This is the case with the Book of Ruth. Sometimes they did not.

Some printers later printed each verse of Scripture as if it were its own sentence or paragraph via indentation, etc. This led millions of believers to pluck verses out of context as if they were stand-alone truths. This did great damage to biblical understanding.

After the Introduction (1:1-5), the story is structured as follows ...

I. Naomi Returns from Moab (1:6-22)

A. Ruth Clings to Naomi (1:6-18)

1:6 “When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there.”

B. Ruth and Naomi Return to Bethlehem (1:19-22)

1:22 “So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.”

The opening line of each episode signals its primary concern:

1:6 – the opening line telegraphs the primary concern of this episode: the return to Bethlehem.

The closing line of the episode is a Janus, looking back by summarizing what has just been covered and looking forward to the next episode, facilitating the transition to the next episode.

1:22 – episode one is summarized and episode two is telegraphed.

Episode Two (or scene two) is about the barley harvest, it’s implications and associated events.

In every episode (scene / chapter) you can also see development of themes, characters, and the Movement of the story ... relationally, spiritually, geographically, ... THIS IS ALL INTENTIONAL, CAREFULLY CRAFTED.

II. Ruth and Boaz Meet In The Harvest Field (Chapter 2)

A. Ruth Begins Work (2:1-7)

2:1 - “Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.”

(“As it turned out” ... “Ruth happened to go” ... “chanced upon a chance” - GOD’S PROVIDENCE)

B. Boaz Shows Kindness to Ruth (2:8-16)

C. Ruth Returns to Naomi (2:17-23)

2:23 - “So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.”

You can easily see the functioning of the opening line and closing line.

Throughout Episode Two you can see the development of the themes of providence, covenant lovingkindness and faithfulness, the outsider gradually being brought in, etc.

You can also see the development of the characters ... Boaz, Ruth, Naomi.

III. Naomi Sends Ruth to the Threshing Floor (Chapter 3)

A. Naomi Instructs Ruth (3:1-5)

3:1 - “One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?”

B. Boaz Pledges to Secure Redemption (3:6-15)

C. Ruth Returns to Naomi (3:16-18) (*shawl bulging with wheat!*)

3:18 - “Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.””

IV. Boaz Arranges to Fulfill His Pledge (Chapter 4)

A. Boaz Confronts the Unnamed Kinsman (4:1-8)

4:1 - “Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, “Come over here, my friend, and sit down.” So he went over and sat down.”

B. Boaz Buys Naomi’s Property and Announces His Marriage to Ruth (4:9-12)

4:12 - “Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

MOVEMENT – A Very Important Clue For Correctly Reading and Understanding Narrative

With narrative, always watch for any kind of movement in the story.

Movement a literary technique that is a sign from the author, making a point.

How does the action move in Ruth?

Where do the characters move from and move to – geographically, relationally, spiritually, economically, etc.?

1. Naomi –

- From Israel to Moab to Bethlehem;
- From married with children, to widowed and alone, to filled again;
- From landed, to landless, to redeemed.
- From ... etc.

2. Ruth –

- From Moab to Bethlehem;
- From *outsider* to *insider* (pagan to covenant member);
- From widowed to married;
- From landless, destitute, to redeemed and blessed;
- From barren to fruitful (Obed);
- From ...

As the main protagonist, Ruth's movement is critically meaningful !!

MOVEMENT ... What is the movement of the characters in **status**: from origin to end state?

- Naomi – Israelite, full, pleasant; empty, bitter, full, pleasant; Restoration.
- Ruth – Moabite (gentile), full, Israelite, empty, faithful, full; Redemption.
- Boaz – Israelite, prominent man, kinsman-redeemer, from Bethlehem; Remnant (Redeemer from Remnant).

REPETITION / KEY WORDS - Another literary technique revealing authorial intent / meaning ...

Are there key words or concepts often repeated? Repetition? YES.

- Kindness** – hesed – loving-kindness, covenant faithfulness. This word is repeated 1:8, 2:20, 3:10, key points in the story. It is continually displayed throughout the story!
This is the faithful kindness God shows to his children in covenant with him.
This is the covenant faithfulness God's children are to show to God and to one another!
- Redeem** – redemption – to buy back something lost or sold. Some form of this word is repeated 23 times!
This is a story of redemption – for Naomi, Ruth, and ultimately for Israel (through David, Yahweh, and ultimately Messiah).
- God's Sovereignty** – God is portrayed as sovereignly in control of this world's affairs.
He sometimes intervenes directly (1:6, 4:13), and is always moving behind the scenes, even when undetected.
We are meant to see that God's working is both continuous and hidden. ...
1:16-17 – Ruth stays with Naomi
1:20-22 – God has been working behind the scenes even in 1) Naomi's affliction, and now clearly (to us) in 2) that they arrive home as the barley harvest begins!
2:3 – “as it turned out” Ruth went into Boaz's field. She “chanced a chance” – so improbable it had to be GOD! Divine providence cannot be detected until AFTER the fact, when meditating in retrospect.
3:2,9 – Boaz is both eligible and able to both redeem and to marry.
- Bethlehem is an exceptional town** – it is the home of godly people, keeping covenant, life-giving, redeeming. Everyone but Ruth and Orpah are from Bethlehem. As such, even when bitter, Naomi submits to God's will.
1:1 – Israel was very ungodly during the time of the Judges.
2:11-12, 3:10,13 – Boaz speaks and acts in godly ways.
2:4, 4:11-12, 4:14 – people, elders, and women are godly.
- God has always been about including the gentiles** – Rahab (Boaz), Ruth, Obed, Jesse, David, ... Jesus.
1:4,15,22, 2:2,6,10 – Moab, Moabite, foreigner, etc., repeatedly emphasized

What is the primary point / moral / teaching of the story of Ruth?

God is always sovereignly showing covenant loving kindness to his people, always acting to redeem them.

What are some secondary points / morals / teaching of the story?

God moves continuously in hidden ways – providence.

God moves supernaturally when he chooses – intervention.

God expects his people to show covenant love and faithfulness to HIM and to EACH OTHER.

In the Story of Ruth, How do the Three Levels connect? THE CONTACT POINTS ?!

3. The bottom level individual stories ... consists of the hundreds of individual stories that make up the other two levels.

- Joseph's being sold into slavery, then to Egypt
- [Naomi, Ruth, and their Redemption by Boaz](#)
- Gideon's doubting God and testing Him with the fleece
- We can ONLY understand the real point / intent / meaning of the individual stories by seeing where they truly connect with Israel's story, and with the overall Big Story of the whole Bible.

2. The middle level centers on Israel:

- Abraham's call and Promised Seed
- Abraham's lineage through the Patriarchs
- Israel's enslavement in Egypt
- God's deliverance – out of Egypt, Conquest of Canaan
- [David's call, dynasty, and Promised Son \(NOTE: David's genealogy in the epilogue of Ruth\)](#)
- Israel's increasing sins and disloyalty
- God's patience, protection, and pleading with Israel
- The destruction of Israel and then Judah
- The restoration of the Remnant after the Exile

1. The top level is the universal plan that God is working out in His creation. (*This is the meta-narrative of all of Scripture.*)

- Creation
- Humanity's Fall
- The power and universality of Sin
- [The need for Redemption](#)
- [Christ's Incarnation and Sacrifice](#)
- The New Creation – Christ / Church / New Heavens & New Earth

THEREFORE, based on what Jesus said on the Emmaus Road when he explained (hermeneuo-ed) the O.T. to his disciples, AND based on all of the hermeneutical principles / clues we have learned, the story of Ruth is seen to be about God's faithfulness to his covenant (even when it is by hidden providence) as seen in his sending Boaz, Obed, David, and ultimately David's promised Greater Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the lost outsider, bring them in to the People of God, and bring his People to an ultimate place of blessing - New Creation.

In biblical narratives, as in other genres (prophecy, gospel, epistle, etc.), some facts or truths are implied but not explicitly stated.

"Implied" does NOT mean "hidden." The writer was not hiding anything. He was intentionally leaving something unsaid that *anyone properly reading the text must inevitably see*.

God led narrative writers to do this because it is sometimes necessary for various reasons, AND because the human mind delights in creativity and discovery.

A fact, doctrine, or truth that the passage clearly intends to imply can be just as valid and important as a truth that is explicitly stated.

You must correctly discover what the author DOES intend to imply and does NOT intend to imply.

If a book or story is set in a larger context, you must know something about that larger context in order to understand the story.

Every biblical passage occurs in a larger context:

- a paragraph;
- a story, teaching, or explanation;
- the whole book;
- the historical period;
- before or after Christ; OT or NT;
- the whole Bible.

In Ruth there are many examples of facts or truths being implied – never explicitly stated but of necessity true. The writer intentionally tells us these things even though he never comes right out and says them explicitly. ...

1. Ruth converted from Moabite religion to worship Yahweh, God of Israel.

- a. Ruth 1:16-17 “16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.””

2. Boaz was a righteous Israelite who kept the Mosaic Law even though many other Israelites did not.

- a. 2:3-13 – It is clear from the way Boaz speaks that he sees himself as under the authority of the LORD. He shows covenant lovingkindness and faithfulness. He keeps the law of gleaning.
- b. 2:22 – Not all Israelites were being faithful to the Law.
- c. 3:10-12 – Boaz shows covenant lovingkindness and faithfulness. He keeps the law of redemption (Lev 25:23-24).
- d. All of the other actions of Boaz TELL us by implication that he was a righteous Israelite who kept the letter and the spirit of the Law – he maintained hesed toward God and man, living in redeeming love.

3. This story is part of the background for the ancestry of King David, and therefore of Jesus Christ.

- a. 4:17 “The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.” *AND, this is REPEATED, emphasizing its importance even more ...*
- b. 4:22 “Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.
- c. Other genealogical lists in the Bible tell us that this David is King David, the great Israelite king (and ancestor of Jesus Christ).
- d. Placing David's name last twice, placing the genealogy at the very end of the story, with all the story teaches of the high character of Boaz and Ruth, clearly TELLS us by implication it is about GOD, covenant, redemption, AND DAVID!!

YAHWEH HAS KEPT COVENANT WITH ISRAEL, SHOWING HIS PEOPLE LOVINGKINDNESS AND FAITHFULNESS, BY SENDING DAVID TO REDEEM THEM, AND ESTABLISH THE NATION.

4. Bethlehem was an extraordinary town during the time of the Judges because of its citizen's faithfulness.

- a. The Book of Judges describes Israel during that time as being dominated by idolatry, violence, chaos, immorality, division, and oppression by outside forces.
- b. Ruth 1:1 – the story is set during this period.
- c. All the characters except Orpah and Ruth are from Bethlehem, including Naomi.
Naomi eventually submits to God's will, even during her season of bitterness.
- d. 2:4, 4:11-12, 4:14 – examples of godly behavior.
- e. The community's attitude toward Ruth was extraordinary.

f. It is constantly, clearly implied that in Israel's darkest night, Bethlehem was shining like a star.

If you are looking for ANYTHING in this narrative that gives you principles for success in marriage or getting ahead in life or things like that, you will find NOTHING like that in here.

You have missed the whole point, the moral, the God-inspired teaching of the story: GOD shows covenant faithfulness and redeems his people!

You CANNOT bring your cultural pre-understandings TO the text and read them INTO the text.

You are predisposed to think in certain ways, to have certain tastes and interests, and you seek to FORCE God's Word to say what you want, and to address YOUR needs and interests.

You must come to God and his Word on HIS terms. This story is NOT about YOU!! It IS about GOD!!

You might try to find another moral for the story, or many small morals in the numerous individual episodes of the story.

- a. "If your in-laws are connected, stick with them."
- b. "All poverty, trial, or sickness is Satan trying to destroy you."
- c. "God wants you to marry a rich old man."
- d. "God wants you to marry a beautiful young woman."
- e. "God always rewards hard work with wealth."

Do you see how all of these "morals" are self-centered and like our culture, instead of God-centered and like our God? Such reading and thinking and preaching is Selfish! Carnal! Petty! Childish! UNGODLY!!!

Having read the bottom level of the story, ...

- **What is the middle level?**
 - God's dealing with Israel – This is how God included gentiles in David's lineage, the redeemer-king he was going to send them three generations after Boaz and Ruth.
 - Israel must receive David, the shepherd-king God has sent them.
- **What is the top level of the story?**
 - God will keep his promise to Abraham & David, he will send a shepherd-redeemer to redeem for himself a people from among all nations & reign over them forever.
 - God in Christ has redeemed us from sins' slavery.
 - God will be faithful in covenant love, and so must we!

The Ultimate Story ... Creation Redeemed through Jesus Christ, who is the New Creation

Israel's Story ...

Individual Story ...

We can only interpret and understand an Individual Story (Joseph, Ruth, ...)

By first understanding Israel's Story ...

By first understanding The Ultimate Story of Jesus Christ.

GENRE – THE LAW

God's Covenant with Abraham was an Unconditional Promise.

God's Covenant with Israel in the Land was a Conditional Covenant: the Law of Moses.

The Law of Moses was put into effect to demonstrate Israel's (humanity's) utter inability to keep covenant faithfulness and obedience.

The Law leads all humanity to place faith in God's One perfect human, Israelite, seed of Abraham and Son of David, covenant-keeper, sacrifice, and mediator, **Jesus Christ**. He fulfilled the Law.

Both God's Unconditional Promise to Abraham AND God's Conditional Covenant with Israel-in-the-Land (Mosaic Law) were covenants of grace and faith, that neither Abraham nor Israel could earn or deserve.

The sacrifices of blood were given because God knew Israel could never keep the Law.

Through and In Jesus Christ came the New Testament Fulfillment – The Law of Love

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (*Matthew 22:37–40*).

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (*Romans 13:8–10*).

THREE TYPES of Old Testament Laws

1. Ceremonial laws—worship, sacrifices, priests.
2. Civil laws—food, farming, penalties, slavery, marriage, war, courts
3. Moral laws—right and wrong

There are many OT Laws that we have only recently correctly understood thanks to the many archaeological discoveries of the past 100-200 years.

The science of archaeology, and the study of extra-biblical information has enabled us to better understand the Bible.

FOUR MAJOR COLLECTIONS of Old Testament Laws

1. The Covenant Code – Exod 20:22-23:33.
2. The Deuteronomic Code – Deut 12-26.
3. The Holiness Code – Lev 17-26.
4. The Priestly Code – Exod 25-32, 34:29, Lev 16, parts of Numbers.

TWO OVERALL CATEGORIES of Old Testament Laws

1. APODICTIC LAW – Laws that directly command Israel to do or do not. They are generally applicable, telling Israel the kinds of things they must do or must not do to fulfill their covenant with God.

Apodictic Laws usually occurred in series: “A Legal Series.”

The Ten Commandments is one example (Exd 20).

The Law merely sets forth examples or samples of what should be done. For example ...

Lev 19:9-14 9 " 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.”

13 " 'Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.

14 " 'Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.”

Consider these questions regarding these sample Apodictic Laws:

1. Does this mean that if you only raised figs or olives or goats, you were completely exempt from this gleaning law?
2. Does this mean that you could still abuse people with other kinds of physical challenges or weaknesses?

The Law was meant as a general guide, not a detailed description. It is more like a Constitution than like all the federal / state statutes.

SO, beware of interpreting Scripture in a narrowly literalistic way!

Obviously, the law is not complete or comprehensive.

It is just as much a sin to do – or fail to do – unnamed things of the same kind as it is the named things.

2. CASUISTIC LAW

Case-by-case law; or case law.

This law is conditional – it only applies when your situation fits the case it is describing.

NONE of the case law is renewed in the New Covenant.

We can still learn things about God and his plans for redemption.

Deut 15:12-17 –

- a. Cancelling debts every 7 years. Always being generous
- b. Freeing slaves every 7 years
- c. The first and the best is for worshipping God

Casuistic Law (case law) is usually organized in topical groups.

In the Covenant Book in Exodus ...

- a. Servants – Exd 21:2-11.
- b. Bodily injuries – 21:18-32.
- c. Property losses – 22:1-15.

Legal Instruction: There are two long instruction subgenres.

- a. Priestly instruction – instructs priests in professional ritual matters. Lev 6-7, 21.
- b. Ritual lay instruction – instructs laypeople about how to perform rituals properly. Lev 1-5.

GENRE - THE ANE GENRE OF LAW – (Here we have 2 Genres in the Ancient Near East ...)

The Law of Moses is modeled on other laws / covenants in these TWO Genres ...

1. ***Ancient law codes and on***
2. ***Ancient suzerainty covenants.***

The Old Testament Law was a Covenant between Israel and Yahweh, her God. It was a binding contract or treaty between Israel, the vassal / servant, and Yahweh her Lord.

In ancient cultures an all-powerful suzerain (overlord) would generously covenant with a weaker, dependent vassal (servant). The covenant stipulated obligations on both parties – protection and provision for obedience, judgment for disobedience.

The Law of Moses was written around 1440 B.C. (depending on the date of the Exodus).

There were other ANE law codes before this. ...

1. ANE LAW CODES



1. **The Laws of Eshnunna** – an Akkadian law code from around 2,000-1,800 B.C.

2. **The Law Code of Hammurabi** – a Babylonian king, from around 1,772 B.C.



Note several things about these codes:

1. Class distinctions are built into them.
 - a. Only fines are exacted for the deaths of slaves or commoners;
 - b. The death penalty is only required for killing another male member of the nobility.
2. Gender distinctions are built into them:
 - a. Male nobles are only executed for killing other male members of the nobility;
 - b. If a nobleman kills a noblewoman, the perpetrator's daughter is killed, not the perpetrator himself.

The Mosaic Law represents a great advance over previous laws in all surrounding cultures.

1. The prohibition against murder is absolute, not class or gender based. Exodus 20:13
2. Accidental homicides are not punishable by death. Exodus 21:12
3. The compensation for injury to slaves is far more advanced. Exodus 21:26-27
4. The treatment of family members is far advanced. Deut 24:16

God inspired Moses' choice to use a genre common in the ANE, but the content and theological meaning with which Moses filled his (God's) Law was radically different from all other ANE law codes.

Virtually all of the strange apodictic laws were given "to forbid the Israelites from engaging in the fertility cult practices of the surrounding Canaanites."

The Canaanites believed in "sympathetic magic." ...

- If you did certain things you could influence nature and gods to do what you wanted.
- They thought that boiling a baby goat in its mother's milk would magically insure the continued fertility of the herd.

- They thought that mixing seeds in planting was like “inter-marrying” them, magically insuring fertility and abundant harvest. *They “manipulated” spirits and natural forces.*

The commands in the Torah AGAINST such things (and similar laws) were designed to keep Israel from pagan practices, from drifting into syncretism and idolatry.

Only knowing ANE culture and literature reveals this. Archaeological discoveries of ANE law codes enabled us to understand the reasons for the strange prohibitions in the Torah.

Israel was familiar with the ANE literary genre of law codes.

God inspired his authors to write the OT Law in this literary form for this reason.

Another genre important to understanding the OT Law is the ANE Suzerainty Treaty (or Covenant).

The law codes in the OT Law were given within the overall context of a Suzerainty Treaty.

2. ANE SUZERAINTY TREATY - The second genre in which the Torah is written.

A covenant or treaty between a powerful overlord / suzerain, and a weaker kingdom (vassal).

It spelled out the historical background, the relationship, responsibilities, rewards, and punishments.

God gave the OT Law in this format because Israel was familiar with this genre.



The Aleppo Covenant between the Hittites (suzerain) and Aleppo (vassal), circa 1,300 BC.

Format of the Suzerainty Treaty (and Deuteronomy)

1. Preamble – identifies the Suzerain and vassal (Deut 1:1-5)
2. Historical prologue – reviews the good deeds already done by the Suzerain for the vassal (Deut 1:6-4:43). (The terms “shepherd” was sometimes used to describe ANE kings / overlords.)
3. Stipulations – obligations of loyalty, obedience, and service laid upon the vassal by the Suzerain for the duration of the covenant (Deut 4:44-26:19)
4. Witnesses – the gods of the of Suzerain and the vassal were called upon to witness the treaty (Deut 30:19, 31:19; 32)
5. Blessings and cursings – laid upon the vassal for keeping or breaking the treaty (Deut 27-28) *(Important!)*
6. Sacrificial meal and periodic covenant renewal (Deut 31:10-12)

God’s Law, God’s Treaty or Contract with Israel was an ANE suzerainty treaty. Israel was the subject vassal nation, and Yahweh was the Sovereign Overlord, the True Shepherd King of Israel.

To correctly read and understand the Law, you must understand its genre, and the ANE cultures surrounding Israel.

(Deuteronomy, Exodus 20-24, Joshua 24 and other parts of the Pentateuch are written in this literary form.)

This was not a letter, not a narrative, not poetry, even though snippets of those and other forms might be found within it.

When God wanted to give Israel the Law, he did so in a literary form with which they were familiar – the ANE suzerainty covenant or treaty.

GENRE – POETRY

Parallelism in Hebrew Poetry

Five Types of Parallelism ...

1. Synonyms in parallel lines (Psalm 1:1; 19:1, 2, and 3)
2. Synonyms in parallel lines in reverse order (Psalm 51:1, 3) - Chiasms
3. Contrast in parallel lines (Psalm 1:6; 11:5) - Thesis/antithesis
4. Comparison in parallel lines (Psalm 103:13)
5. Completion in parallel lines (Psalm 23:5; 106:1) - Synthetic parallelism or step parallelism

Psalms of Lament and Thanksgiving

Lament—Cry to God Before He Helps (Psalm 54)

1. A cry to God for help (verses 1–2)
2. A description of the problem (verse 3)
3. A statement of confidence (verse 4)
4. A prayer for God to act (verse 5)
5. A vow to praise God (verses 6–7)

Thanksgiving to God After He Helps (Psalm 30)

1. A shout of thanksgiving (verses 1–3)
2. A description of the past problem (verses 6–7)
3. A report of answered prayer (verses 8–10)
4. A lesson learned (verses 4–5)
5. A vow to continue thanking God (verses 11–12)

NOTE: It is entirely proper to sometimes pray prayers of lament or sing songs of lament: How long O Lord? Why am I or my loved ones still suffering, still struggling? Why is this happening to me?

The teaching that says we should never say anything negative, never make lament, etc., is completely unbiblical. **That teaching is a heresy that we should reject.** Even in the N.T. we see people crying out to God, wondering why they are still suffering, etc. It is an honest and healthy way to pray, as long as we ultimately express our trust that God will somehow, someday deliver us (even if it is when we see his face).

GENRE - WISDOM LITERATURE

JOB, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON

1. Job - a long narrative piece of literature containing numerous sub-categories like disputation speeches, poetry, hymns, complaint, poetic soliloquy, etc.
2. Proverbs - a collection of sayings (succinct expressions that are normally true) using poetry, parallelism, comparison, description, prescription, etc., covering many subjects of life.
3. Ecclesiastes - a unique book of “personal reflection” using poetry, parallelism, instruction, comparison, etc.
4. Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) – a collection of love songs or poems extolling the glory and joy of love and married sexuality.

Job is completely unique in ancient and biblical literature.

Proverbs is almost always conditional, covering many subjects.

Ecclesiastes is often cynical.

Song of Songs is unique in the Bible. It uses many ancient and Hebrew metaphors, similes, and figures of speech for the human body and many aspects and actions of sexual love. It is NOT an allegory or type of Christ and the Church. Not at all!

Wisdom literature presents various perspectives, and should therefore be read canonically, in the context of the whole book and the whole Bible.

PROVERBS - Rules for Interpretation

Rule 1: Interpret a proverb by its form.

Rule 2: Limit the meaning of the proverb to the topic the writer intended.

Rule 3: Remember that proverbs are general principles, NOT promises.

Rule 4: Interpret proverbs in the context of the whole book of Proverbs.

A proverb is "a concise, memorable statement of something **generally** true, learned over extended human experience."

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of these sayings written by different wise men and collected into one book.

For example:

Proverbs 14:23 "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty."

This is NOT an absolute truth or promise for all times and places, regardless of circumstances.

Sometimes even our own limited experience seems to contradict a proverb.

Proverbs 13:4 "The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied."

We must remember:

1. The proverb teaches a general or probable truth. It is still usually subject to the wise man's experience, particular situations, etc. The proverb does not deal with every possible situation or with exceptions.
2. We cannot place modern, Western meanings into the proverb: Here, the original thought would have been of a small dwelling, enough food to live on, and a happy family.
3. The reality of our fallen world must factor into all interpretations: all things are not equal in all times and places (soil, climate, economy, society, rulers, opportunities, etc.).
4. The proverb must be interpreted in the context of the whole passage, the whole book, and the whole Bible. What do other proverbs say about this topic? What does the whole Bible say?

An example of taking a passage out of context: (This has been misused to teach heresy that hurt many people)...

Proverbs 6:2 "...if you have been trapped by what you said,
ensnared by the words of your mouth,"

Some people use this as a proof text for the supposed metaphysical power of words to create good or bad reality to come into being. That is, "Don't speak something negative, it might come to pass!"

THAT IS A HERETICAL OCCULT TEACHING. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THIS PROVERB TO MEAN THAT!

Merely reading the passage in its immediate context shows that interpretation to be completely in error.

This is a warning against "co-signing" for someone's debt!

Proverbs 6 - Warnings Against Folly

- 1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor,
if you have struck hands in pledge for another,
- 2 if you have been trapped by what you said,
ensnared by the words of your mouth,
- 3 then do this, my son, to free yourself,
since you have fallen into your neighbor's hands:
Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor!
- 4 Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids.

5 Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,
like a bird from the snare of the fowler.

REMEMBER

1. Proverbs are NOT promises or legal guarantees. You cannot “stand on” or “claim” a proverb as if it is a “promise” from God or a declaration from God that is always and invariably true. *Neither Judaism nor Christianity has ever taught otherwise, and neither has the Pentecostal movement!*
2. Proverbs are wise sayings which are usually true in most circumstances. They usually are not absolute truth.
3. Proverbs are poetic - they are filled with figurative language.
4. Proverbs are written to be memorable, not to be theoretically/theologically accurate in every circumstance.
5. Proverbs are not written to justify a selfish, materialistic, or greedy life - JUST THE OPPOSITE!!!
6. Proverbs were meant to be intensely practical.
7. Proverbs were written in an ancient culture, and must usually be “translated” for application in modern cultures, or they will lose their true meaning.
8. Wrongly used, Proverbs can justify a crass, selfish, materialistic lifestyle.
9. Wrongly used, Proverbs can cause tremendous misunderstanding of God, blame of others, or self-condemnation.
10. Proverbs must be read as a collection, comparing each proverb to the teaching of the rest of the book, the rest of wisdom literature, and the rest of Scripture.

Five FORMS of Proverbs

1. Synonymous lines in a proverb (same thought in parallel lines)
 - Line 1: My son, keep your father’s commands
 - Line 2: and do not forsake your mother’s teaching (Proverbs 6:20).
2. Antithetical lines in a proverb (contrast in parallel lines)
 - Line 1: Better a man whose walk is blameless
 - Line 2: than a fool whose lips are perverse (Proverbs 19:1)
3. Comparison in parallel lines
 - Line 1: Like one who seizes a dog by the ears
 - Line 2: is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own (Proverbs 26:17).
4. Completion in parallel lines
 - Truth: A generous man will himself be blessed,
 - Reason: for he shares his food with the poor (Proverbs 22:9).
5. Group in parallel lines
 - Proverbs 30:18–19

JOB - The Structure of Job

Prologue (Job 1 to 2)

1. Job’s lament over his trials (Job 3)
2. Talks between Job and his three friends (Job 4 to 27)
3. Wisdom: its location, value, and meaning (Job 28)
4. Job’s claim that he is innocent (Job 29 to 31)
5. Elihu’s four speeches to defend God (Job 32 to 37)
6. God answers Job (Job 38:1 to 42:6)

Epilogue: Job is restored (Job 42:7–17)

CONCLUSION Whatever *your* final conclusion from Job, you must then examine that in the light of the other Wisdom books, the whole Bible, and especially later revelation (books written after Job, all the way through Revelation).

THE CORRECT CONCLUSION ...

The book of Job tells us that sometimes God's people suffer for reasons known only to God. We CANNOT accuse God when this happens, but in our pain and confusion we must seek his face, acknowledge his goodness AND his justice, and wait expectantly for our vindication, in this life or the next. AND, like Job's friends, we CANNOT accuse anyone of sin, bad confession, or lack of faith. That is ungodly. Sometimes suffering does indeed have a purpose, and God may or may not choose to reveal his purpose, or relieve our suffering.

ECCLESIASTES - The Teacher

1. "Qoheleth" - (Hebrew) the Teacher
2. "Qahal" - (Hebrew) the assembly, the congregation
3. "Ecclesia" (Greek) the assembly (translates "qahal")
4. "Ecclesiastes" - (Greek) the Teacher

STRUCTURE

The author structured this book very carefully.

It roughly divides in half, framed by the narrator's opening and his closing.

Everything between is said by Qoheleth - The Teacher.

>>> **The foundational word or concept is "hebel."** <<<

Hebel means "vapor," and stands for that which is empty or hollow, temporary or passing, meaningless.

Hebel stands for the two fundamental divisions of the book:

1. Everything Is Ephemeral and Unreliable - Hebel as unsubstantial, fleeting, lacking in permanence.

What is good?

2. Everything is Elusive - Hebel as situations for which we can find no answer, they are enigmatic, illusory, intellectually futile. *How can we know (anything)?*

There are 111 verses from 1:1 - 6:9, and the same after that.

111 is three times the numerical value of hebel (37 is the numeric value of hebel).

6:9 is the hinge, 6:10 is the midpoint.

There are 222 verses in the entire book, or 6 times the numerical value of *hebel*. (6 is the number of imperfection.)

There are 1,491 words in 1:1 - 6:9a, and 1,491 words in 6:10 - 12:14.

THREE MAJOR THEMES of ECCLESIASTES ...

The most fundamental teaching of Ecclesiastes is that all of life is meaningless (hebel - a vapor, empty, futile, vain) unless it is rightly related to God. *Life is worthwhile only when based on God and His Word. [Seek true wisdom, fear God, enjoy life now!](#)*

All of Qoheleth's teaching / observations are done from the viewpoint of "*if this is all there is*" - life without God or eternal reward or punishment. The despair of rationalistic empiricism.

1. Everything is Hebel - vapor, empty, fleeting, futile, vain.
2. Fear God - discussions of ethics (wisdom) begin with this phrase, over against the naturalistic "under the sun."
3. Enjoy life now - enjoy life despite its hebel; "Enjoy life now" teaching draws both sections to a close.

GENRE – PROPHECY

THE PROPHETS – Enforcing the Covenant in Israel

THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

The prophetic books can be difficult to correctly interpret and understand if you misunderstand two things:

1. The God-intended FUNCTION of prophecy – what God intended prophets and prophecy to do; it's reason for being.
2. The God-inspired FORM of prophecy – the manner in which it was delivered: context, language, word-pictures, figures of speech, metaphors, poetry, and so forth.

1. First Problem – Prophecy is NOT Primarily Foretelling

Most people misunderstand the meaning of the word “prophecy.”

They think it primarily means “foretelling” the future, especially the coming of Jesus or the end of the age.

That is wrong.

Less than 5% specifically describes the New Testament age.

Less than 2% of Old Testament prophecy is messianic.

Less than 1% refers to events still to come (the end of the age).

The prophets did foretell the future, but it was almost always the immediate future of Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations, and NOT our future.

2. Second Problem – Prophetic Books are Collections of Spoken “Forthtelling” Oracles from Specific Historic Contexts

The primary function of the prophets was “forthtelling” – they spoke for God to their contemporaries, as God's ambassadors to enforce the covenant.

This fact of prophecy as “spoken” words or oracles (prophecies, warnings, promises) that were later written down accounts for most of our difficulty.

There were hundreds of prophets in Israel's history, but only a few are mentioned:

- those mentioned in the narrative books have a lot of their historical context and actions mentioned, but not much of their spoken prophecies;
- those whose oracles / prophecies were written in the prophetic books have very little of their context and history mentioned.

For example, Elijah and Elisha in Kings and Chronicles were very important prophetic messengers, but we know more about their context and lives and very little about most of their prophecies.

What we DO know about their prophecies is placed very specifically in the context of their time and place in Israel's history.

For some prophets we have a combination of prophecy and history:

- Gad (1 Sam 22, 2 Sam 24, etc.);
- Nathan (2 Sam 7, 12, 1 Kings 1, etc.);
- Huldah (2 Kings 22);
- Jonah; Daniel.

However, in the prophetic books themselves we hear FROM God through the prophets, but we hear very little about the prophets themselves and their historical context.

THEREFORE, we have difficulty in seeing clearly how the prophecy relates very directly to the immediate past, the present, and the near future of Israel and surrounding nations.

Furthermore, no prophetic book was given as one long continuous prophecy.

They are collections of different oracles ...

- given at different times and places, sometimes years apart;
- sometimes written down in non-chronological order,
- often with no clue in the text as to when one oracle ends and another begins,
- usually without indicating their specific historical setting,
- and usually written in poetry.

That is why it is often difficult to sit down and read a prophetic book all the way through as if they were one long continuous prophecy ... they were not originally given that way, and not intended to be read that way.

The Jews knew this, and Jesus and his disciples knew this.

3. Third Problem – Misunderstanding Historical Distance

The original audiences understood the language, culture, and message of the prophets much better than us. They were intimately involved in the very situation the prophets were addressing. This was God's word TO them.

We must pay very close attention and work hard, using all of our study helps, to correctly understand God's word FOR us through the prophets. *For us, the prophets primarily testify to the faithful character of God.*

We are from 2,400 to 3,500 years distant from the prophets and their prophecies.

We are widely separated by our radically different cultures, worldviews, thought patterns, and languages.

Therefore, it is often hard for us to correctly interpret and clearly understand what they are referring to and why.

THE FUNCTION OF PROPHECY

1. The Prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.

The Law was God's covenant treaty with his servant nation, Israel.

The Law was mediated (given) through Moses.

God sent the Prophets to subsequent generations to remind Israel (and Judah) of the Law's requirements, and of the punishments and rewards for breaking or keeping the Law.

The Prophets mediated God's word to God's people.

They were God's ambassadors and spokespersons for the covenant.

The Prophets prophesied in the context of the Law – they warned God's people by reminding them of the Covenant to which they had agreed.

The Covenant (Law) listed the blessings for obedience – Leviticus 1-13, Deuteronomy 4:32-40, 28:1-14.

These are corporate blessings, to Israel/Judah in the Land, that can be grouped in six general categories:

- Life, Health, Prosperity, Agricultural Abundance, Respect, and Safety.

The Covenant (Law) listed the punishments for disobedience – Leviticus 26:14-39, Deuteronomy 4:15-28, 28:15 - 32:42.

These are corporate punishments (curses) can be grouped in 10 categories: death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, destruction, defeat, deportation, destitution, and disgrace.

God gave an oracle to Amos prophesying corporate (not individual) blessing for faithfulness using metaphors for life, agricultural abundance, health, prosperity, respect, and safety.

Amos 9:11-15

11 "In that day I will restore David's fallen tent.

I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins,
and build it as it used to be,

- 12 so that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations that bear my name,"
declares the LORD, who will do these things.
- 13 "The days are coming," declares the LORD,
"when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman
and the planter by the one treading grapes.
New wine will drip from the mountains
and flow from all the hills. (*notice the metaphors; not literal*)
- 14 I will bring back my exiled people Israel;
they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
they will make gardens and eat their fruit.
- 15 I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted
from the land I have given them,"
says the LORD your God."

(notice the metaphor of Israel being planted like a vine)

The Prophets prophesied in the context of the Old Covenant, using the Law's categories of blessing and punishment.

They were Yahweh's (the Suzerain or Great King) messengers (ambassadors) to Israel (the vassal nation), reminding Israel of the Treaty Covenant terms to which they had agreed, and warning them of coming punishment for breaking covenant.

In the ANE, if a vassal state violated treaty with the Suzerain (Overlord / Shepherd King), the Suzerain would send ambassadors to the vassal state, they would read the covenant violations, read the promised covenant punishments, and warn the vassal people to repent, begin keeping covenant as they promised they would so that the Suzerain could bless them. Otherwise, judgment was coming.

This was what Yahweh sent his prophets to do: warn Israel to repent, return, or the judgments in their Law Treaty (Torah) would be executed on them: disease, defeat, destruction, death, deportation.

God announced punishment through Hosea in the Law's categories of destruction and deportation in these two examples ...

Hosea 8:14 "Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; Judah has fortified many towns.

But I will send fire upon their cities that will consume their fortresses."

Hosea 9:3 "They will not remain in *the LORD's land*; Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria." (*Note: whose land is it? It is YAHWEH's land. Israel's promise to the LAND is conditional.*)

The prophecies are often metaphorical, sometimes literal.

They are always corporate, never individual.

Blessings and curses do NOT guarantee prosperity or lack to any individual.

Most of the prophecies from about 800 – 600 B.C. are warnings of curses, because Israel and Judah were increasingly turning away from God.

Assyria destroyed Israel in 732 B.C., and Babylon captured Judah in 587-586 B.C.

After that, prophecies are primarily blessings, because after punishment has been given for covenant breaking, and repentance ensues, God returns to his primary goal of showing mercy.

2. The Prophets' message was not their own, but God's.

Exodus 3:1f – God calls Moses. Other prophets also state their call from God: Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1, Ezekiel 1, Hosea 1, Amos 7:14, Jonah 1.

The Hebrew word for prophet – *nabi* – comes from the Semitic word meaning "to call" – *nabu*.

The Prophets repeatedly emphasize that God called them, and that it is God's word and not their own.

Jeremiah 27 – The Prophet repeatedly emphasizes this word of punishment is from God. Jeremiah knew how unpopular this message was.

The Prophets were ambassadors from God's heavenly court delivering the decision of Israel's Divine King – blessing for Israel's faithfulness to the Covenant, curses for unfaithfulness.

The Prophets delivered popular and unpopular messages, to every kind of audience – common, corporate, individual, royal (Hosea 1:4), priests (Hosea 4:4), everyone.

3. The Prophets' word was not original.

The Prophets' do NOT have a new and original word from God. ***This is NOT completely new revelation.*** They are delivering what God has already said in his Covenant, the Law of Moses.

Consider Hosea 4, where the prophet announces God's judgment for breaking the Law – murder, adultery, lying, etc., etc., are listed.

Not all of the commandments are listed, but the hearers *would have been thinking of all the ways they had broken the Law.* The Law is not cited verbatim but is restated in clear and arresting ways.

Even the Messianic prophecies are not original.

God had promised the seed of woman, the seed of Abraham, and a prophet like Moses, in the Pentateuch.

Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Deuteronomy 18:18 “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.”

The detail about Messiah we find in prophets like Isaiah 42, 49, 50, 53 is new, but the concept of Messiah was already revealed in the Law.

IN SUMMARY,

Recognize the problems in understanding prophecy:

1. First Problem – Prophecy is NOT Primarily Foretelling
2. Second Problem – Prophetic Books are Collections of Spoken “Forthtelling” Oracles from Specific Historic Contexts
3. Third Problem – Misunderstanding Historical Distance: The prophets were speaking to Israel, not us.

Recognize the Function of Prophecy:

1. The Prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.
2. The Prophets' message was not their own, but God's.
3. The Prophets' word was unoriginal: They were restating the Covenant in an arresting way.

REMEMBER THE STATISTICS:

Less than 5% specifically describes the New Testament age.

Less than 2% of Old Testament prophecy is messianic.

Less than 1% refers to events still to come (the end of the age).

The prophets did foretell the future, but it was almost always the immediate future of Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations, and NOT our future.

Deuteronomy 4:25-31 – God promised Israel that if they continue to break covenant, their nation will be destroyed and they will be deported into exile, but that he would bring them back to the Land.

That happened for Judah with Babylon. They returned under Ezra and Nehemiah, and prophecy ceased as they waited for Messiah. The prophecies of return to the Land were fulfilled before the N.T.

JESUS and THE APOSTLES HAVE HAVE ESTABLISHED THE WAY WE MUST INTERPRET THE O.T.

The same Holy Spirit who inspired the O.T. writers also inspired the N.T. writers and was able to show them where a secondary or fuller sense of fulfillment was intended in reference to Christ and the Church. FURTHERMORE, as God's Son and Messiah, Jesus Christ knew the true meaning of the entire O.T., including the fuller sense of any passage.

SO, the N.T. writers wrote not only under [the inspiration of the Holy Spirit](#), but [with the direct instruction of Jesus Christ](#) regarding ... - the correct understanding of all Scripture, and - the correct principles for interpreting all Scripture.

For three years before his Passion and resurrection, he taught his disciples.

For forty days between his resurrection and ascension, he taught his disciples, opening their minds to understand the Scripture.

Some examples of N.T. writers finding a fuller meaning in an O.T. text include ...

1. [Matthew 1:22-23](#) "22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us.""
[Isaiah 7:14](#) "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."
2. [Matthew 2:15](#) "where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."
[Hosea 11:1](#) "1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." *(As he had been taught by Jesus, Matthew saw Christ as the [One True Jew, True Israel, who never failed.](#))*
(Note the contrast between Jesus and Israel: 11:2 "But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images.")
3. [Matthew 2:17-18](#) "17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: 18 "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."
[Jeremiah 31:15](#) - This chapter is a prophecy of restoration and return from exile in Babylon. But, it includes promises of a restoration far more complete, idyllic, and perfected than Judah ever experienced. Most of the natural blessings promised in Jeremiah 31, and the spiritual resurrection and recreation were still missing in Jesus' day.
[Devout Jews were still looking for their "spiritual" return, the forgiveness of sins, in Jesus' day.](#)
Jesus and God's renewed People "in Christ" were the fulfillment of all these prophecies.

Principles for Interpreting Prophetic "Foretelling"

We must remember several general characteristics of biblical prophecy. ...

1. **First, the OT prophets understood that history has two major periods - the present age and the age to come - even though their writings did not always make clear distinctions between the two.**
Most OT prophecies refer to the present age, even when referring to the distant future. When referring to the "[age to come](#)" the prophets usually used introductory phrases as "in the latter days," "in those days," the "days are coming," and so forth.

[Isaiah 2:2](#) "[In the last days](#) the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it."

[Jeremiah 23:5](#) "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."

2. **The OT prophets have a telescopic view of the future.**

They sometimes saw a series of future events as if they immediately succeeded each other, when there was really a lot of time intervening between the events.

Isaiah 9:6-7 "6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."

Isaiah wrote as if the birth and reign of David's son would all occur in one lifetime.

The NT sees Christ's first coming as the inbreaking of the Age to Come, and the beginning of the last days of this present age.

From our perspective, a long time passes between Christ's first coming and his second coming.

Like many OT prophets, Isaiah telescopes these events into one group of immediately succeeding events. SO, when interpreting the foretelling aspects of OT prophecy, we must examine each oracle very carefully to be sure where it applies - Christ first advent and the present age, or Christ's second advent and the Age to Come.

3. An OT prophecy may have more than one fulfillment, one near the prophet's lifetime, one long past it.

In 2 Samuel 7:12-16 God promised David that his son Solomon would succeed him as king.

This was fulfilled in 1 Kings 1-2.

BUT, Hebrews 1:5 also applies 2 Samuel 7:14 to Jesus, not just as Son of David but also as Son of God.

2 Samuel 7:14 "I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men."

Hebrews 1:5 "For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son; today I have become your Father? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?"

4. New Testament teaching associates all prophetic fulfillments with some aspect of Christ's first or second comings.

That means we should be very careful in suggesting that any contemporary event "fulfills biblical prophecy" unless we can also show that it also implies the imminent return of Jesus.

5. Many OT prophecies are conditional, not absolute. Their fulfillment depends on two things:

a. The sovereignty of God (his freedom to do or not do as he pleases), and

b. The status of relationship between the people and God (their rebellion or repentance).

Jeremiah 18:7-10 "7 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, 8 and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. 9 And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, 10 and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it."

In Jeremiah's day, God intended blessing for Jerusalem, but their rebellion required judgment.

In Jonah's day, God intended judgment for Nineveh, but their repentance brought blessing instead.

God's sovereignty and the decision of the people may bring about a different result than God's prophets originally predicted.

The Many Ways of Fulfillment

OT prophecy can be fulfilled in more than one way.

1. **Historical Fulfillment** - Prophecies are sometimes fulfilled in a seemingly literal way, by historic events.

Examples:

a. Elisha predicted that Samaria would have inexpensive food by the next day despite the Syrian siege. 2 Kings 7:1-2, 19:20f.

b. A prophet predicted that Josiah would desecrate the altar at Bethel, and 300 years later he did. 1 Kings 13, 2 Kings 23.

- c. Isaiah predicted a forerunner would prepare Messiah's way, and John the Baptist did. Isaiah 40:3-5, Luke 3:3-6.
 - d. Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and this was fulfilled in 70 AD. Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 19:41-44.
2. **Frustrated or Suspended Fulfillment** - Some prophetic books lead readers through a series of surprising, incomplete fulfillments that really point to a fulfillment beyond the book's own historical perspective. (Isaiah, Amos)
3. **Historical-Figurative Fulfillment** - Some prophecies are fulfilled in unique, less-than-literal ways.

Example:

a. Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

Zechariah 13 7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty."

"Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.

8 In the whole land," declares the LORD,

"two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it.

9 This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold.

They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.' "

Matthew 26:31 "Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"

In the original passage, God judged the shepherd for his own sins, and two-thirds of Israel was killed. Jesus and the NT clearly did not view a literal historic fulfillment as necessary for the prophecy to be fulfilled, for ...

- a. Jesus was without sin,
- b. Eight (2/3) of the disciples were not killed,
- c. and the remaining 4 disciples blessed.

Christ stated that the prophecy was adequately fulfilled in a figurative sense.

Therefore, a precise "literal" fulfillment is NOT always intended or necessary.

4. **Historic-Spiritual Fulfillment** - Some OT prophecies were and are fulfilled by historic events, but in a spiritual manner rather than a literal manner.

Example:

a. David's Fallen Tent

Amos 9:11-12 11 "In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, 12 so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the LORD, who will do these things."

Acts 15:14-18 "14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. 15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: 16" 'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, 17 that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' 18 that have been known for ages."

Amos had prophesied the restoration of David's monarchy and its political rule over Edom and other nations. The original context implies nothing other than a historical-literal fulfillment.

HOWEVER, in the Jerusalem Council, James declares that the ultimate real fulfillment of Amos 9 is the inclusion of the gentiles in God's people through faith in Jesus Christ. A historical-SPIRITUAL fulfillment. James declares that the rule and reign predicted by Amos has been fulfilled by Christ's spiritual rule over gentile Christians in the church.

James, the Apostles, and the entire Jerusalem Council - *made up almost exclusively of Jewish Christians - declared Amos' prophecy to be fully fulfilled in a historical-spiritual manner, through Christ's reign as David's Son over the gentiles who were now God's people, the Church.*

b. **Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant** was not fulfilled by the end of the OT period. **There was no historical-literal fulfillment. Instead, the NT writers considered it fulfilled by the death of Christ and through the Church. This is another historical-spiritual fulfillment.**

Jeremiah 31

31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Hebrews 8:7-13 "7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

11 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear." (see also Hebrews 10:15-17)

1 Corinthians 11:25 "In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

5. Unexpected Historic Fulfillment - Some prophecies are fulfilled historically, but their fulfillment involves a surprising historic event.

Example:

a. The Suffering Messiah. Isaiah 52-53, Mark 8:27-33, Isaiah 9, 11.

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy historically, but in a surprising way not expected by most. The Jews were expecting the conquering Messiah of Isaiah 9 and 11.

NOTE: A small minority of Christians wonder how NT writers can interpret OT prophecies as fulfilled in non-"literal" ways.

Such people misunderstand the nature of God's plan of the ages, the mystery revealed in Jesus Christ: that God would have ONE PEOPLE, Jew and gentile, children of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ, who alone is the True Seed, True Son, True Israel.

The NT writers viewed Jesus Christ and the followers of Jesus, both Jewish and Gentile, as the prophesied renewal of Israel and the fulfillment of Israel's God-given mission in history.

6. **Unfulfilled Prophecies** - Some OT prophecy regarding Christ's Second Coming and the Age to Come remain unfulfilled.

Example:

Isaiah 2:4 - nations have not given up warfare.

Isaiah 11:1-6 - this figurative description of the coming age awaits fulfillment.

7. **A Final Benefit from Reading the Prophets**

The prophets remind us that God requires BOTH Orthodoxy AND Orthopraxy.

Orthodoxy is right doctrine or belief.

Orthopraxy is right practice or behavior.

TRUE faith, TRUE belief has ALWAYS included righteous living in our covenantal relationship with God.

A change heart produces a changed life - not perfection, but direction.

Jesus, John the Baptist, and the apostles all preached repentance, and that people should prove their repentance by their deeds.

Ephesians 2:8-10 "8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

James 2:14 "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?"

"The prophets can serve constantly as reminders to us of God's determination to enforce his covenant."

They remind us to examine ourselves to see if we are truly born from above, truly in covenant with God through Christ, following Jesus.

Jesus has already lived the one perfect life, and the Father sees us through the Son.

Nevertheless, we bear his Name, and will be disciplined if we break covenant with him.

His Word and Holy Spirit, directly and through His Pastors and His People, will enforce His covenant with us.

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT WELL

THE PRINCIPLE of FULFILLMENT

The key hermeneutical principle of Fulfillment is Essential to Reading the N.T. Well ...

Luke 24:26-27 "26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

Jesus and the Apostles wrote the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and in the People he was redeeming from every nation (people-group).

They viewed God's plan and people as flowing in continuity from Old Testament Israel, into Jesus Christ, where God's People were resurrected, renewed, recreated, restored.

They used many concepts and phrases to illustrate this...

Romans 4:13 "It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith."

Paul reinterprets the "land" promise, and makes Abraham the heir not of the "land", but of the world!

The Promised Land was a new Eden (paradise, flowing with milk and honey) into which God placed his new father (Abraham) of the new humanity (Israel).

But that Land was only a TYPE, pointing forward to the WORLD.

Ultimately, pointing forward to the New Earth, Paradise Recreated.

- a. Jesus is Abraham's One True Seed. Galatians 3:15.
- b. Jesus is David's prophesied Son. Matthew 1, Acts 2, Isaiah 11, Jeremiah 23.
- c. The Church, made up of believing Jews and gentiles, is God's one true people. Ephesians 1-2, Galatians 3, Romans 4.

The Jewish and gentile NT writers consistently call the church the "ekklesia," the precise word used by the Jewish translators of the OT into Greek (the Septuagint) to describe Israel as a congregation or spiritual community.

This is a settled fact in church history.

The Lord Jesus Christ, his Apostles, and the other writers of the New Testament give us the divinely revealed interpretation of the entire Old Testament.

Theirs is the AUTHORITATIVE interpretation and method, and all other interpretation and methods MUST accord and agree with it.

CONTINUATION and FULFILLMENT LANGUAGE - The Apostles continually use language and terms that referred to God's people in the O.T. to now refer to the followers of Jesus in the N.T.: Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus Christ, the Church.

James 1:1 "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings."

1 Peter 1:1-5 "1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. ..."

"twelve tribes" - This has to mean one of two things ... a) Jewish Christians; or, b) all Christians.

"elect" - God's chosen people in Christ, as Israel was God's chosen people in the Old Covenant.

"strangers" - exiles, as Israel was in exile in Babylon.

1 Peter 1:1-5 "3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."

The OT hope of an inheritance in the Land has become for all Christians the Living Hope of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the New Creation.

The New Creation (Christ risen in His physical body of glory) is holy, redeemed, victorious over all sin, decay, and death, held in heaven until He comes again.

He will transform our bodies and the old creation into a new heaven and a new earth. This is the final eternal inheritance for the People of God, the inheritance toward which all earthly types were pointing.

Wherever you see the word "assembly" or "church" in the NT, it is "ekklesia", the word used for the congregation of Israel in the OT.

Many words which **were** applied to Israel are **now** applied to the Church: *saints, holy ones, chosen people, holy nation, kingdom of priests, people of God, assembly of God, synagogue, etc., etc.*

THIS SAME PRINCIPLE IS TRUE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT'S APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE!

In the Apocalypse - the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ - whenever the names and phrases formerly applied to ethnic Israel in the Old Covenant are used, they now apply to the Church.

GENRE – GOSPEL ... Apologetic Biography

1. The gospels are not strictly historical narrative.
2. The gospels are Apologetic Biography – the biography of a person, written to set the record straight, and explain his life in a positive way.
3. Each gospel writer arranged his material with a theological theme or themes in mind. They wrote to make specific points and tell the story in a specific way.
4. Each author re-arranged historical events, the teachings of Jesus, in order to highlight specific themes.
5. All the gospels are very carefully structured stories, flowing directly out of OT themes.

Four Portraits of Christ

1. Matthew—the promised King (lion). Jesus is the promised Messiah, reconstituting Israel in and around himself. He is the Son of David, and True Israel follows Jesus.
2. Mark—the suffering Servant (ox). Jesus is leading his renewed people on exodus out of sin and bondage.
3. Luke—the perfect Man (man). Jesus is the authentic human, the True Man, who walks in the Spirit bringing good news to the outcast, the poor, the women.
4. John—the Divine One (eagle). Jesus is the True Light, the source of all Life and giver of the Spirit for all the world.

Jesus Fulfills the Old Covenant

The Gospel writers make many allusions to the OT and to Israel in the life of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed as the fulfillment of all OT types, promises, prophecies, hopes, and trajectories.

Jesus is the embodiment of Israel:

- a. He is called out of Egypt,
- b. He is called God's Son in Israel's place,
- c. He passes through baptism, into the wilderness,
- d. He is tempted for 40 days, but without failure or sin,
- e. He is David's True Son,
- f. He reconstitutes Israel, beginning with the 12,
- g. He perfectly keeps covenant in the Land, offers the perfect sacrifice, as the perfect priest and king, the True Israel.
- h. Jesus makes an exodus out of death on our behalf and leads us on exodus out of sin. All that happened to Israel in Egypt, exodus, the wilderness, and Promised Land, was typological, pointing forward to Christ and the Church.

Luke 9:31 "They spoke about his departure (exodus), which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem."

In **Matthew's gospel**, we see an example of a repeated phrase that is interpreted by comparing its use by the same author in the same book. *We have already studied this principle: Same author, same book.*

Matt 11:16 "To what can I compare this **generation**? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:"

Matt 12:39 "He answered, "A wicked and adulterous **generation** asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

Matt 12:41 "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this **generation** and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here." (*type-antitype*)

Matt 12:42 "The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this **generation** and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here."

Matthew 23:35-57 "35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the

temple and the altar. **36** *Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.* **37** “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”

Matt 24:33-34 “Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. **34** Truly I tell you **this generation** will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”

[Consistency in interpretation demands that since the phrase “this generation” *always* referred to the generation of Jews listening to, and rejecting, Jesus Christ in all the other passages, it must mean that in this last passage. Everything Jesus was referring to in Matt 24:3-35 would occur during the lifetime of the generation hearing him.](#)

“The interpretation that most clearly accounts for all of the facts in a passage, WITHOUT having to engage in special pleading, verbal gymnastics, explaining things away, or inserting things into the passage, is most likely the correct interpretation.”

GENRE – ACTS ... Apologetic Ethnography

1. Acts is historical narrative, but it is not simply historical narrative.
2. Acts is Apologetic Ethnography – the story of a People, written to set the record straight, and explain who they are, where they came from, and what they’re all about in a positive way.
3. Acts is Part 2 of a Two Volume work: Luke-Acts. It explains the continuation and growth of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and of the People he recreated.
4. Luke carefully crafted his narrative to explain the expansion of the God’s recreated People in the power of the Spirit beyond Judea, Samaria, into the Gentile world.

The formative and [definitive](#) description of the Day of Pentecost is an example of God using, and Luke describing, powerful [symbolic actions](#) and [imagery](#) to help explain the origin of this People.

1. [Pentecost](#) – celebrating the [giving of the Law](#) and the firstfruits of the [harvest](#). The New Covenant Spirit is poured out, marking Jesus’ followers as the New Covenant people, writing the Law on their hearts by the Spirit, and the promise of a great [harvest](#). (fulfilling Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.)
2. [Wind](#) – The OT ruach or breath of God, bringing the One New Creation People into being, breathing spiritual life and power into them.
3. [Fire](#) – the glory of God descending as in the dedication of the OT Temple, now [marking God’s People as the final eschatological living temple of God](#), the place where his special Presence dwells.
4. [Speaking in Tongues and Praising God](#) – prophetic speech that always marked the coming of the Spirit in power upon God’s men and women, whereby they proclaim God’s word, his call to repentance, and redemption.
5. [Water Baptism](#) – as did Jewish proselytes before them, and Jesus as their example, testifying to the beginning of their exodus (through the sea) out of sin’s bondage, toward their Promised New Earth (new-heavens-and-new-earth).
6. [The Lord’s Supper](#) – in “the breaking of bread” the obeys Jesus in celebrating his fulfillment of Passover, fulfillment of the Old Covenant, and replacing it with the New.
7. The great majority of [the Jews and their leaders continue to reject Jesus as Messiah](#), and persecute those Jews and Gentiles who follow Jesus, [all as Jesus predicted would happen](#).

Meta-Structure - the uppermost overarching structure for the Book of Acts

The top-most all-encompassing structure of Acts is the expansion of the gospel and the church to the ends of the earth.

Luke intentionally structured ACTS in this way to emphasize the Promise-Fulfillment Theme that permeates both volumes (Luke-Acts):

- Jesus and the Church fulfill all of the OT promises God made to Israel-Abraham-David.
- Jesus was the only authentic, perfectly faithful, covenant keeping, Seed of Woman, Seed of Abraham, Son of David, the only True Israelite, and therefore was IN HIMSELF True Israel.
- God was faithful to his promises he made to faithful Israel, for he was faithful to raise Jesus from the dead
- God was faithful to his promises to Abraham by raising Jesus and through the Gentile mission to make Abraham's descendants a countless multitude.
- God was faithful to David by raising Jesus from the dead and seating him on David's throne forever.
- God was faithful to his promises to restore Israel by reconstituting / renewing / restoring Israel IN and THROUGH JESUS: In Jesus those who repent and believe the Gospel are raised with Christ, reborn through the Holy Spirit, marked by the Spirit with the Law on their hearts, and marked by the Spirit with the covenant sign of "spiritual" circumcision of the heart, marked as God's final temple on the Earth by the Spirit's Presence in power.
- **Luke structures ACTS in Six Panels (or Sections) of MOVEMENT, showing all of these fulfillments as Jesus through the Spirit accomplishes these things from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the nations throughout the Earth.**

1. The Good News Begins in JERUSALEM ...

- a. ACTS 1:1 – 6:7 - The gospel moves from the Aramaic speaking Jerusalem / Judean Jews to the Hellenistic Greek-speaking Jews.
- b. TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 6:7 *"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."*

2. The Good News Spreads to Judea and Samaria ...

- a. ACTS 6:8 – 9:31 – The Hellenistic Jews become increasingly receptive, and some begin to move into a few leadership roles, and begin to lead the story in this Section (under the authority of the Apostles and Apostolic doctrine)
- b. TRANSITIONAL VERSE – ACTS 9:31 *"Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers."*

3. The Good News Spreads to the Gentiles

- a. ACTS 9:32 – 12:24 – Luke begins and ends this Panel with two Peter stories, emphasizing the continuing foundational role of the 12 Apostles, and *ensuring the acceptance of Gentiles into Restored Israel (the followers of Jesus).*
- b. TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 12:23-24 *"Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to spread and flourish."*

4. The Good News Spreads to Asia ..

- a. ACTS 12:25 – 16:5 ... There are several critically important pivotal matters in this Panel.
- b. TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 16:5 *"So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."*

5. The Good News Spreads to Europe ...

- a. ACTS 16:6 – 19:20 ... Paul's second and third missionary journeys.
- b. TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 19:20 *"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."*

6. The Good New (and Paul) Reaches ROME ...

- a. ACTS 19:21 – 28:30 ... The story of how Paul got to Rome, going through a series of trials similar to those of Jesus (again fulfilling what Jesus said would happen to his People).

- b. TRANSITIONAL VERSE: ACTS 28:30-31 “ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ **He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!**”

To the end of ACTS the Word of God and Gospel of Jesus is being preached and taught with boldness and without hindrance, *moving* ever more deeply into all the nations of the Earth.

Luke used similar structures and symbols in both his gospel and in Acts. They are meant to be read together. *They are inspired, intentional directives as to Luke’s intended meaning and how the books must be read and interpreted. The symbols, structure, repetitions, fulfillment motif, and so on serve as the divinely revealed hermeneutical principles TELLING us how to read Acts.*

GENRE - LETTER / EPISTLE - A Common Form in NT Times

- The epistle, or letter, is the most common kind of New Testament literature.
- God inspired his authors to choose this genre, *common in their culture and understood by them*, to communicate a lot of truth.
- There are many examples of this genre from the ANE and Roman Empire.
- The NT epistles include Paul’s to churches and individuals, John’s three, Peter’s general epistles, and Hebrews (though this is a written sermon).

Letters / epistles in the Roman Empire had the following format ...

Opening ...

Author (with identifying remarks), to
 Recipient (with identifying remarks),
 Greetings (appropriate salutation).
 Health Wish (optional)
 Thanksgiving (for something; optional).

Body of the Letter ...

Varied content, information, questions, instructions, etc.
 Could contain any kind of language/ genre – didactic, figurative, stories, narrative, poetry, apocalyptic imagery, etc.

Closing ...

Greetings from friends (optional),
 Farewell expressions (optional),
 Benediction / Blessing (optional),
 Date (optional).

An example of a letter discovered by archaeologists: The Letter of Apion to his father Epimachos ...

“Apion to Epimachos, his father and lord, very many greetings. **Before all else I pray that you are well and that you may prosper in continual health**, together with my sister and her daughter and my brother. I give thanks to the lord Serapis, because when I was endangered at sea, he rescued me immediately. When I arrived at Misenum, ... Therefore, I request you, my lord father, write me ... Salute Kaption ... and my siblings ... I pray that you are well.” *(Many other such letters could be cited as examples.)*

NOTE: The multitude of such letters reveal that phrases like “**I pray that you are well and that you may prosper in continual health**” are standard (stock) opening greetings for letters of that era. So, when we see that opening in 1 John, we know that John is simply using a common letter format. John is NOT teaching us

that God wants us to “prosper” financially in the sense of continually gaining more money and more possessions. **Once again, knowing good hermeneutical principles keeps us from teaching error, and claiming God said something that God never said.**

GENRE - APOCALYPTIC - Guidelines for Interpretation

1. Look for a meaning in the context.
2. Look for a meaning in the history/culture of the writer.
3. Look for a meaning in previous apocalyptic literature.
4. Look for a parallel in the great events of the salvation story.
5. Daniel (parts), Ezekiel, Zechariah, the Olivet Discourse, Revelation.

APOCALYPTIC Literature

Apocalyptic writing flourished mainly from about 200 BC - 200 AD.

There were numerous Jewish apocalypses (also books that had a lot of apocalyptic in them), such as ...

- 1 & 2 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, (from 200 BC - 100 AD), and others.

There were other Christian apocalyptic writings, such as ...

- a. The Shepherd of Hermas (early 100's AD),
- b. The Apocalypse of Peter (150-200 AD),
- c. The Apocalypse of Paul, (300's AD),
- d. ... etc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE ...

Apocalyptic uses images, pictures, fantastic descriptions that are wild and bizarre. *It is the imagery of fantasy used to describe history, events, people, and things in picturesque ways.*

The images, numbers, and so forth are SYMBOLIC - they have rich meanings deeper than a mere natural description could evoke.

The language is meant to be **EVOCATIVE**, and **THEOLOGICAL** - we are supposed to use our imaginations to grasp the theological truth the author is getting at.

It is a serious error to interpret these images literalistically, or to impose new / modern meanings on them. They must be interpreted as the ORIGINAL author and recipients understood them.

They cannot mean NOW what they never meant THEN.

If an apocalypse referred only to a time 2,000 years after it was written, then it would have been of no value or meaning to the original author and the original recipients.

THE APOCALYPSE - Revelation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Literary Genre (type of literature):

- Apocalyptic - 1:1
- Prophecy - 1:3
- Epistle - 1:4

Author: John on Patmos (apostle or elder)

Date: ca. 95 AD (a minority of scholars say 69-70)

Recipients: Persecuted Christians in Asia Minor (Turkey)

Subject: The Gospel and Victory of Jesus Christ the King

SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION of the APOCALYPSE (REVELATION) ...

1. Historicist - applies to all of history / ages of the Church. No longer believed by many. No reason to view it this way.
2. Futurist - Chapters 4-22 apply to the future. *This is full of problems:*
 - a. Whose future? When? Why?
 - b. First readers could not have understood it.
 - c. Only the final generation would find any meaning in the book.
 - d. *There is no legitimate reason to view it in a Futurist way.*
3. Idealist - whole book is symbolic encouragement for the church of all time to persevere in our struggle, because Christ has died, risen, and shall ultimately be victorious.
 - a. This is clearly the case in ONE sense.
 - b. We must interpret the book this way in APPLICATION to the Church's life through history.
4. Preterist - the book applies to the first century churches to which it was addressed, and has been fulfilled: Rome has fallen, the Church endured victoriously.
5. ECLECTIC - Historicist regarding Chapters 1-3.
 Preterist regarding Chapters 4-18 (AND partly Idealist regarding Chapters 4-22).
 Futurist regarding Chapters 20-22 (mostly).

The great majority of evangelical / Pentecostal scholars today interpret the Apocalypse (Revelation) in this Eclectic manner.

THEMES OF REVELATION are ANNOUNCED EARLY IN THE BOOK ...

1. SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

You have already suffered, some have compromised, but you are about to suffer much more. SUFFERING!
 1:1 - "soon" - the author says the things written in most of this book are going to begin very soon.

The "last days" began in the life of Jesus and continue until his Second Coming. The poured-out Spirit is a primary sign that the end of the age has begun (Acts 2:16-18). *This is a key truth explicitly taught in Scripture!*

We have no way of knowing when the "very last days" are occurring.

1 John 2:18 "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour."

1:3 - "the time is near" - this book is largely about what is about to happen to these churches in the late 90's AD, NOT about the far distant future.

The only portion that is about the far distant future are the portions about the Second Coming.

2. FAITHFUL ENDURANCE DURING SUFFERING

John writes to warn and encourage the churches - they must be faithful even unto death.

1:5 - "faithful witness" - Jesus our example, was a martyr (marturios - witness).

"firstborn from the dead" - he was killed but rose again, so do not fear death as final; you will live with Christ.

"ruler of the kings of the earth" - it may look like Caesar and the petty kings are in charge, but it is really Jesus Christ who is ALREADY RULING from heaven.

Since all of this is true, you MUST ENDURE!

3. CHRIST ALREADY REIGNS, AND WE REIGN WITH HIM.

"loves us" - no matter what happens, we must not doubt the love of Christ our God.

"has freed us" - we HAVE BEEN FREED from the guilt and power of sin.

"has made us" - equally past tense; just as we have been freed from our sin, even so God HAS MADE US a nation of kingdom and priests. (*Royal priesthood ... terms applied to Israel in the OT, now belong to the Church.*)

That is, we too already reign in a very real sense, even in the midst of persecution and suffering.

John reiterates this in 1:9 ...

1:9 - “companion in” - John identifies with his churches because he too is suffering persecution.

“the suffering” - the inevitable result of truly serving Jesus in a God-hating, Christ-rejecting culture.

“kingdom” - In Christ we already reign even though we suffer;

“patient endurance” - the correct response to suffering for our devotion to Christ.

As was common in ancient letter forms, John telegraphs most of the letter’s main subjects by mentioning them in the prologue / greeting.

John writes this book to SEVEN real churches in cities in Asia Minor (Turkey), to warn and encourage them.

These are real churches really having the specific problems addressed, but they are also representative of the COMPLETE church in Asia Minor and the Roman Empire.

The churches are being pressured to compromise with the idolatrous, immoral, greedy religious, social, economic systems of the Roman Empire.

A much greater persecution is about to come upon them to force their cooperation, which would mean betraying Christ.

This persecution DID break out, and continued intermittently, with varying intensity in different places and times, for over 200 years.

The Revelation is NOT a book of confusing speculations about catastrophic events that would occur 2,000 years after John wrote it.

It is a book written to specific Christians in a specific place and specific time facing a specific set of problems. John wrote to warn and encourage the Christians in the 7 churches, Asia Minor, and the Roman Empire in 95 AD, that great persecution was coming, but they must not compromise.

They must endure to the end, for this is a spiritual war, Christ has won the victory, Christ reigns and we reign with him, even if we die. *The OT theme of Holy War is prominent throughout Revelation.*

In dying we enter God’s presence in heaven to worship with the saints around God’s throne.

The period of persecution and tribulation will be a little long (symbolized by 3.5 years) but will not last forever.

A great part of the warfare is recognizing the deceit of Satan, and the Truth of Christ. No matter how much wealth, power, and pleasure the Empire offers, it is a LIE! However poor, weak, or suffering Christ’s Kingdom looks in the natural, it is the WAY OF TRUTH!

Rome is going to be destroyed, and Jesus Christ will someday return to judge the living and the dead, create the new heavens and new earth, and we will live in his presence forever.

A note on the suffering of the church in Smyrna ...

The person and work of Jesus the Messiah was, and is, Israel’s last chance.

By the end of the first century, Judaism was largely solidified in its rejection of Jesus and the Christians.

Jesus had predicted this ...

Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

“people” - laos; normally used to describe Israel as God’s People. In other words, God will now have a new People, made up of followers of Jesus both Jewish and Gentile from every nation.

Revelation 2:9 “I know your afflictions and your poverty, yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan.”

Christ through John is describing ethnic Jews who reject him, Jesus, as Messiah, and still try to follow the Law and the Old Testament as an acceptable covenant. **God no longer accepts this.**

Guidelines for Reading: Hermeneutical principles that enable correct interpretation ...

1. Remember the primary genre is APOCALYPTIC ... filled with imagery and symbolism that is **NOT to be interpreted in a literalistic way.**

2. Remember the historical context ... Roman Empire, emperor cult in Asia Minor, myth of Nero redivivus, persecution, of Christians, etc.
3. Remember the theological context ... the New Testament as fulfillment of the Old, the Church as the continuation of Israel, Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of all Old Testament promises and prophecies - Seed of Woman, Seed of Abraham, Son of David, Lamb of God (Passover, etc.), the theme of Holy War (not Canaanites against Israel for the Land, but the pagans (Rome) against the Church for the Earth, etc.).
4. Remember the Old Testament connections ...
 - a. 278 out of 404 verses contain OT references;
 - b. Most frequent: Psalms, Daniel, Zechariah, Genesis, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel.
5. Remember the book is NOT strictly chronological - the principle of RECAPITULATION is critical.
 - a. Recapitulation - repeating a previous incident, scene, truth, vision, or story for some reason.
 - b. Reasons include another point of view or perspective, further explanation, more detail, fulfillment, etc.
 - c. Several of John's visions are recapitulations of a previous vision from another point of view, or to provide a fuller explanation of what is happening.

SYMBOLS / IMAGES

Some are explained by John, some are not.

Some are found in the OT, and still have a similar meaning, but other OT images have had their description or application changed by John.

Some are drawn from the cultures and myths of the pagan world.

IT IS A SERIOUS ERROR TO IMPOSE OUR OWN MEANINGS ON THESE SYMBOLS!

That would be the same thing as twisting God's words, arrogantly insisting that God meant something he NEVER meant.

God inspired the choice of genre – Apocalyptic.

God is **telling** us how to approach the book: Looking first for symbols and figures of speech, and NOT for literalistic, plain descriptions. ***God is telling us to read the book as a book primarily of symbols, telling theological truth.***

God also inspired John to explicitly tell us that this is a book of signs and symbols, and it should be interpreted that way.

Revelation 1:1 "The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, **2** who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

"made it known" - ἐσήμανεν / σημεῖον – signified; revealed in signs or symbols. ***John explicitly says the following message from Christ is in SYMBOLS / SIGNS!***

EXAMPLES of SYMBOLS and SIGNS ...

John interprets some of the symbols. ...

1. The heavenly being is Jesus Christ.

Rev 1:17-19 **17** When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. **18** I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

2. The stars are the Messengers, the lampstands are the churches.

:19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. **20** The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

3. The dragon is Satan.
12:9 The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.
4. The woman, the great prostitute, is Rome.
17:9 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.
17:18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."
5. Other images are "stock" images - metaphors with standard meanings to John and his readers. Everyone had heard these standard images before.
 - a. A beast coming out of the sea represented a (usually evil) empire, in this case the Roman Empire.
 - b. An earthquake represented divine judgment.
 - c. The four horsemen represented the great evils or tragedies which humans had to endure, usually because of human fallenness and sin (oppression / violence).
 - d. *Stock images can represent realities as they reoccur throughout human / Christian history.*
6. Visions are meant to be viewed as wholes, without pressing their individual details. The details were often there to make the whole picture more vivid, or to emphasize the main point of the vision as a whole.
7. Once an image has been defined by John or by PROPER study, hold on to that image, and work from there to understand other images.
Example: The two witnesses in 11:3f are the powerfully witnessing, suffering, martyred church of Jesus Christ - we have already been told what the lampstands are ... the churches! (Jesus sent them out two by two; in the mouth of two or three witnesses; though we die, yet shall we live, etc.)
8. Some images are fluid - the Lion of Judah becomes a Lamb!!
9. The woman in Chapter 12 is a positive image - either of Israel/Mary, or of the Church.
 BUT, the woman in Chapter 17 is a negative image - a prostitute / harlot, an image of Rome in particular, and of the religious-economic-political systems of this world in general.
10. **NUMBERS are symbolic!** They are NOT meant to be taken "literally" but *literarily*. This is normally true throughout Scripture, and especially true in apocalyptic literature.

SYMBOLS / TYPES / ALLUSIONS to watch for:

1. The Tabernacle/Temple - described in Exodus 25-40, 1 Kings 5-7, 2 Chronicles 2-4) were copies of God's heavenly throne room (Hebrews 8:5-6, 9:1-14).
Revelation contains many allusions to the Temple: 3:12, 7:15, 11:19, 14:15,17, 15:5-16:1, 16:17, 21:22.

Elements within the Temple (note the allusions to the OT Temple and to OT prophetic visions of heaven):

2. The Lamps - 1:12, 4:5.
 3. The Living Creatures like Cherubim - 4:6-9.
 4. Incense and Prayer - 5:8.
 5. Songs of praise like the OT Levitical choirs - 4:8, 11, 5:9-13, 1 Chron 16.
 6. A Sacrifice - 5:6,9.
 7. The Ark of the Covenant - 11:19.
 8. The Altar - 11:1.
 9. The Outer Court - 11:2.
- ... And so forth.

Since creation is God's temple and reflects some of his glory (Isaiah 6:3), God's Throne Room is the theological, spiritual heart of the universe.

From here God - Father, Son, Spirit - actively rules creation and the kings and kingdoms of humankind.

Here we see true worship continually in progress, which is the pattern and partner of our worship on earth: *Prayer, praise, communion (altar/Lamb), baptism (basin), preaching-teaching (scroll), etc.*

NOTE:

Chapter 4-5 is one unified vision of the worship that continually occurs in heaven, and has been occurring at least as early as the Ascension of Christ over 62 years before John writes.

Everything through Chapter 19 (or perhaps even through 20:6) refers primarily to the struggle John's churches face against the idolatrous, economic, political power of Imperial Rome.

CHAPTER 4 ...

4:1 - In a vision, God invites John into the throne room

4:2 - Immediately we see God rules the universe - he is on his throne (*symbol of rule, authority*)

4:3 - He dwells in light, precious beyond calculation, and in eternal covenant with his creation (rainbow)

4:4 - Twenty-four glorious beings reign with him - the angelic representatives-elders of God's People through history ([Figurative Numbers: 12 patriarchs/tribes, 12 apostles - Jews-and-Christians – "All Israel"](#))

4:5 - Rumbings, lightnings, thunders - divine declarations, often of judgment, come from Almighty God, and are final. The Seven-fold Spirit of God - perfect light and holiness.

4:6 - *the perfectly pure Sea of Glass - the basin of washing in the Temple, the basin of baptism in the churches. You Purify yourself before you approach God's Throne, later we see, through the blood of the Lamb.*

4:6-8 - angelic beings resembling a representative spectrum of God's created order continually worship this God! Drawing on Ezekiel 1 and 10, and Isaiah 6, John describes the exalted beings who worship God, and who represent all of God's creation in worship.

4:9-11 - the angelic elders of God's people join the exalted beings in worshipping God as all-holy creator.

[God's People are reminded - part of our life we are **already** living in heaven!](#) Mysterious but true! (Eph 2, Heb 12). God's people and God's creation follow the lead of their angelic representatives in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

5:1 - The Scroll - God's complete (7 seals) redemptive history, God's perfect Word, God's covenants, or plan.

5:2-4 - **There is no revelation, understanding, insight, or meaning UNTIL GOD'S WORD IS HEARD!!**

5:5 - *Jesus Christ and his gospel are the KEY to all of history and all of God's Word. It was ALWAYS all about Jesus! Everything is understood through Christ!*

5:6 - **THE KEY - Christ has conquered and reigns because of his perfect redemptive sacrificial death. The Lamb is Key!! He is perfect in power (horns), perfect in wisdom (eyes), perfect in prophetic vision through the prophetic Holy Spirit he has sent into his Church throughout the earth.**

5:7-10 - Glorious celebration explodes as the LAMB takes / fulfills / opens God's Plan for Humankind.

The prayer / intercession / worship / songs of the redeemed ascend as incense before God and the Lamb.

God's Renewed Redeemed People from every nation had always been God's Plan, and is already being accomplished.

This is his holy ecclesia / assembly of holy ones / congregation gathered for worship from all of history.

5:11-12 - *A vast multitude (multiples of 10-1000) of angels John was unable to number ascribe the kind of worship to the LAMB (Jesus) that only Almighty God receives.*

5:13-14 - Worship progressively extends from the Exalted Living Creatures, out through the 24 Angelic Elders, out through the numberless angelic multitude, out *through all of God's creation.*

The Father and the Lamb receive ALL worship of ALL creation and created beings FOREVER AND EVER.

[The glory of God and of the Lamb is grounded in their ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY!](#)

[Humanity is not even in the innermost circle of worship!](#)

[SO, a visit to the worship of God in his heavenly throne room prepares us for the battle, and for God's absolute power to defeat our enemies. An ancient practice: Behold the King, then go forth to battle.](#)

STRUCTURE FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE BOOK

John's visions in Revelation are NOT meant to be understood as being written down, or coming to pass, chronologically!

The visions / seals / trumpets / bowls / judgments are repetitions / recapitulations of the **same** symbolic history and the **same** judgments from God, *each culminating in the Second Coming.*

They are described in different ways, from different perspectives, to highlight different things, and to ensure that the churches understand Christ's victory is as good as accomplished - literally!

AND AGAIN, this is visionary / apocalyptic / symbolical, and by definition the details cannot be made to mesh in a "modern" way. The visions are not identical in detail. The visions present different perspectives of the same events.

All of the 7 cycles run parallel, all covering the same period: a symbolic history of the Messianic War (the interadvental period, *specifically for John's churches*).

A history of Christ's victory through his suffering churches between his First and Second Advents.

Later cycles increasingly concentrate on the most intense phases of the conflict, and on the Second Coming. There are some variations which could legitimately be made in where to divide these cycles / repetitions, or what to include in each one.

BUT, the only way to make sense of the visions is to see them in this way, as synchronous recapitulations of the same events. (Describing the same things or same periods of time more than once)

In other words, John receives and shares seven visions of the same war: The victory of the Lamb and his followers over the beast of Rome.

GOD'S JUDGMENT DESCRIBED in 7 WAYS ...

1. 6:1 - 8:1 - Seven Seals
2. 8:2 - 11:19 - Seven Trumpets
3. 12:1-14:20 - Symbolic Figures: Israel-Mary-Church, Christ's incarnation, resurrection, ascension, persecution of God's People, preservation, victory over dragon-satan-Rome, harvest and vintage.
(Book's center!)
4. 15:1-16:21 - Seven Bowls
5. 17:1 - 19:10 - Judgment of Babylon (Rome)
6. 19:11-21 - White Horse Judgment
7. 20:1 - 21:8 - White Throne Judgment
8. 21:9-22:5 - New Jerusalem, New Creation (Heavens and Earth), (Note: 4-cosmos, 8-perfected cosmos).

SEVEN-FOLD (COMPLETE) WOES ...

(A Synchronous Recapitulation / Repetition of Woes)

(EXAMPLE: Same event is being described in 6:1-2, 8:7, 16:2, etc.)

		<u>Seals</u>	<u>Trumpets</u>	<u>Bowls</u>
Four Catastrophes:	1	6:1-2	8:7	16:2
	2	6:3-4	8:8-9	16:3
	3	6:5-6	8:10-11	16:4-7
	4	6:7-8	8:12	16:8-9
Woes Intensify	5	6:9-11	8:13-9:12	16:10
	6	6:12-17	9:13-21	16:12-16
	(Interlude	7:1-8	10:1-11	(11:1-3)
The End	7	8:1	11:15	16:17-21, 17 - 18

THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY SIMILARITIES AND CONGRUENCES IN THESE 7 JUDGMENTS or 7 CYCLES FOR THEM TO BE DESCRIBING DIFFERENT EVENTS or PERIODS OF TIME.

The conclusion of each of the 7 series is CLEARLY CLIMATIC!

John is describing the Messianic War, ...

- the Holy War between the dragon and Christ (through Michael the Archangel),
- between the Bride and the Harlot,
- between the followers of the Lamb and the earth-dwelling followers of the Beast,
- between the false prophets-religions and the true prophets / the Church,
- between the Beastly Roman Empire and the Kingdom of God,
- *all of this as it will specifically play out in the life of John's churches and the Roman Empire.*

Christ's Present Rule on Earth And in Heaven ...

- Christ has not ruled like a dictator who allows no choices.
 - He permits rebellion. He permits suffering.
 - One day He will rule with an iron scepter and judge all who have rebelled.
- God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom are at war.
 - God allows Satan some authority over the earth.
 - But in the end, God defeats and vanquishes Satan.
- Sometimes God acts as a king and brings justice.
 - God punishes sin deservedly,
 - But God also shows mercy and offers redemption.

A FINAL HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLE - ALREADY-and-NOT-YET

- Blossoming apple tree is beginning fruit creation, but not yet bearing
- Baby is human, but not a fully grown human
- Caterpillar is not yet a butterfly
- **God's Kingdom has ALREADY COME, but it is not yet FULLY COME. It is not yet consummated. That will happen at Christ's Second Coming.**
- D-Day Invasion guarantees ultimate victory, but more battles must be fought
- We are not yet the Church Triumphant. **We are the Church Militant.**
- Christus Victor. Christ is Victor.

IN THIS ALREADY-NOT YET TIME, THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS GUIDE US IN KNOWING TRUTH ...

"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13).

NOTE: These promises are made to the Apostles AS A GROUP! IN COMMUNITY! NOT TO THEM AS INDIVIDUALS!

The pronouns – you, you, you – are all plural.

The Holy Spirit gives us pastor-teachers, and scholar-teachers, to help us understand God's Word.

Remember these key elements of Hermeneutics ...

- Genre
- Accommodation
- Phenomenological language
- Anthropomorphic language
- Figurative language – metaphors, numbers, symbols

- Fulfillment language
- Narrative patterning
- Repetition, symmetry, parallelism
- Chiasms

GENESIS and REVELATION - SUPERNATURAL BOOKENDS OF THE BIBLE

Creation of the heavens and earth (Gen. 1-2)

Creation of the new heavens and earth (Gen. 21-22).

The first Adam reigning on earth (1:26).

The last Adam reigning in glory (21:5).

Night and seas created (1:5, 10).

No more night; no more sea (21:1, 25).

A bride brought to Adam (2:18-25).

The Bride prepared for Christ (19:7ff.)

A tree of life in Eden (2:9; 3:22).

A tree of life in the new creation (22:2).

Satan utters the first lie (3:1).

Nothing that makes a lie enters the city (21:27).

Death and a curse (3:14, 17-19).

No more curse; no more death or tears (22:3).

Conflict between Christ and Satan (3:15).

Satan's final doom (20:10).

Man driven from God's face (3:23; 4:16).

Men see His face in glory (22:4).

APPENDIX

NOTE: The overwhelming majority of the NT was written by very well educated men:

1. 28% - Luke the Physician, a scientist of his day, an excellent researcher, thinker, and highly skilled writer using excellent Greek, deeply familiar with the OT.
2. 24% - Paul the Apostle, one of the best educated Jews in the Roman Empire.
3. 20% - John the Apostle, who continued his education throughout his life as can be seen in the language and structure of Revelation, his final book, *the most intricately crafted and complex book in the Bible, far superior to any other Jewish or Christian book ever written in the genre of apocalyptic.*
4. 14% - Matthew, who was a Jew and a tax collector, a man with an excellent understanding of economics, math, tax law, organization, and the Old Testament.
5. 04% - Author of Hebrews, has the most consistently refined Greek oratorical styling in the NT, and a comprehensive understanding of the OT.

While all of the NT writers would have had an excellent education in the Scriptures because of synagogue school education, their time with Jesus, and continued study with each other, **God chose 5 men with outstanding education for their day to write approximately 90% of the New Testament.** We should value education, particularly education in biblical / theological studies, very highly! **GOD DID!**

AS A PASTOR or TEACHER IN CHRIST'S CHURCH, GOD EXPECTS YOU TO ALWAYS BE STUDYING and LEARNING FROM THE BEST SCHOLARS OF YOUR FELLOWSHIP AND OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.

THOSE WHO ARE PASTORS and TEACHERS WILL RECEIVE A STRICTER JUDGMENT BY GOD THAN WILL OTHER BELIEVERS (Book of James).

ALWAYS BE GROWING IN GRACE and in the KNOWLEDGE of the TRUTH, DILIGENT TO SHOW YOURSELF AN APPROVED WORKMAN, CORRECTLY HANDLING THE WORD OF GOD.