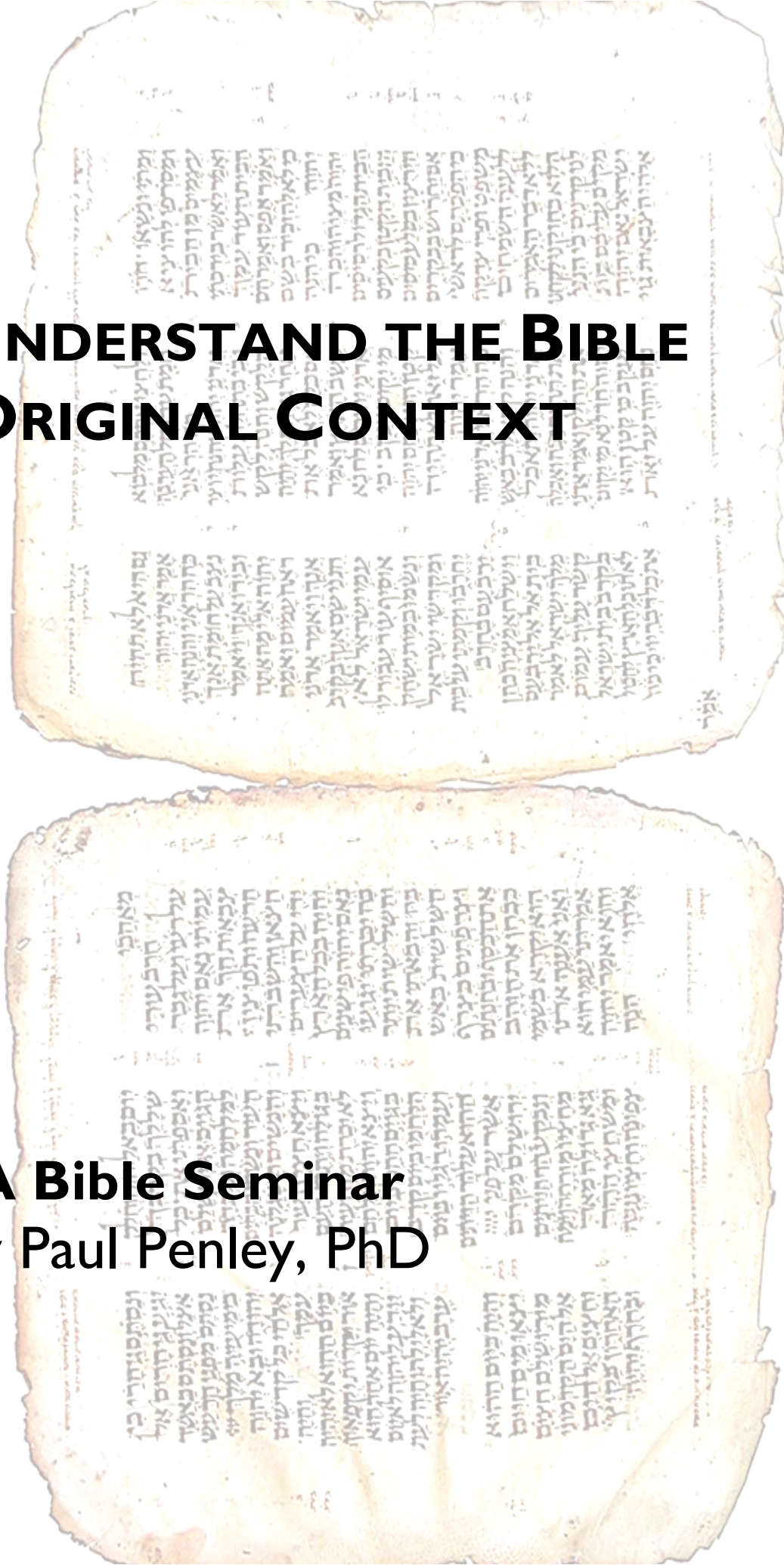


ἤν και ἀφθαρσίαν διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου! 11 εἰς ὃ ἐτέθην  
ὡ κήρυξ και ἀπόστολος και διδάσκαλος! 12 δι' ἣν  
τίαν και ταῦτα πάσχω· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐπαισχύνομαι, οἶδα  
ρ ὃ πεπίστευκα και πέπεισμαι ὅτι δυνατός ἐστιν τὴν  
ραθήκην μου φυλάξει εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν! 13 ὑπο-  
πίσει ἔχε ὑγιαίνοντων λόγων ὧν παρ' ἐμοῦ ἤκουσας  
πίστει και ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ! 14 τὴν  
λήν παραθήκην φύλαξον διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ  
οικοῦντος ἐν ἡμῖν.  
15 Οἶδας τοῦτο, ὅτι ἀπεστράφησάν με πάντες οἱ ἐν  
'Ἀσίᾳ, ὧν ἐστιν Φύγιος και Ἐρμογένης." 16 δῶν  
εὐσεὶ ὁ κύριος τῷ Ὀνησίμορῳ, ὅτι πολλὰ κίς με

τῷ στρατολογήσαντι ἀρέσῃ. 5 ἐάν δὲ και ἀθλή τις, οὐ  
στεφανοῦται ἐάν μὴ νομίμως ἀθλήσῃ. 6 τὸν κοπιῶντα  
γεωργὸν δεῖ πρώτον τῶν καρπῶν ἰταλαμβάνειν. 7 νόει  
ὃ λέγω· δῶσει γάρ σοι ὁ κύριος ὅτι ἐπιτελεῖς ἐν πάνσιν.  
8 Μνημόνευε Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ὁ παθησάντα και περ-  
παθόντα ὑπὸ κροτάφοις και ὑπὸ δένδρον, ὃ ἐκ  
ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ, κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου, 9 ἐν ᾧ  
κακοπαθῶ μέχρι δεσμῶν και βασανιστῶν, ἀλλὰ ὁ λόγος  
τοῦ θεοῦ οὐ δέδετα! 10 διὰ τοῦτο πάντα ὑπομένω διὰ  
τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς, ἵνα και αὐτοὶ σωθῶσι τύχῳ τῆς  
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἐπιεικῶν. 11 πιστός ὁ  
λόγος.  
"εἰ γάρ συναπεθάνομεν και συνήσομεν."

## A Bible Seminar by Paul Penley, PhD

# How to Understand the Bible in its Original Context



# Are We Using the Bible Correctly?

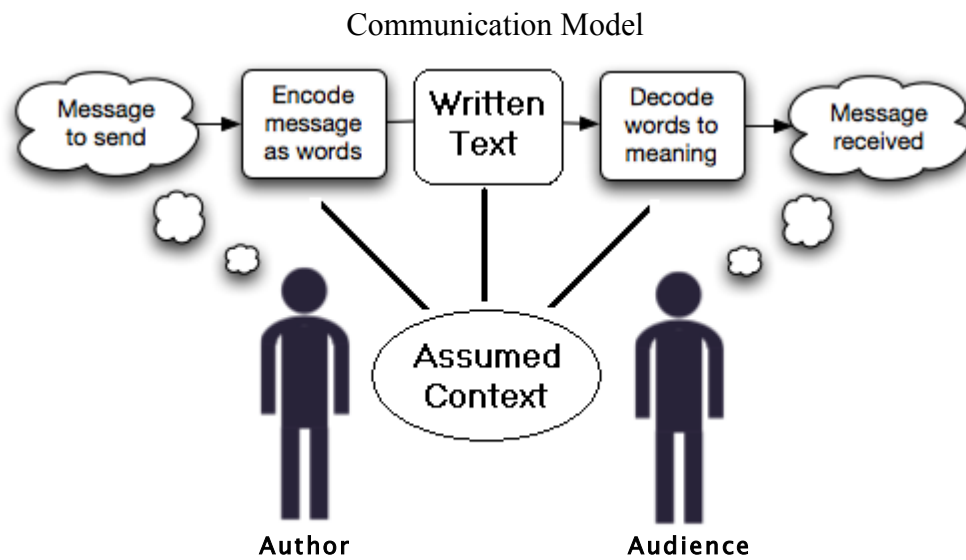
Philippians 4:13.

Jeremiah 29:11.

**Basic Question:** What causes people to misinterpret the Bible?

## How Communication Works

1. Words don't have meaning. People do.
2. Relevance Theory: What is the Assumed Context of the communication?



**Critical Question:** Where are we in this process of communication?

What are you looking for in the Bible?

	Common	Corrected
<b>Goal:</b>		
<b>Method:</b>		
<b>Assumption:</b>		

*Bible not written to us but FOR US - Rom 15:4*

## HOW DO YOU HANDLE THE BIBLE PROPERLY?

Question #1 What does the Bible want to do to people who read it?

i. What purpose does Paul attach to the “holy Scriptures” in 2 Timothy 3:14-17?

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ii. How does the purpose of the Bible limit the way we can use it? \_\_\_\_\_

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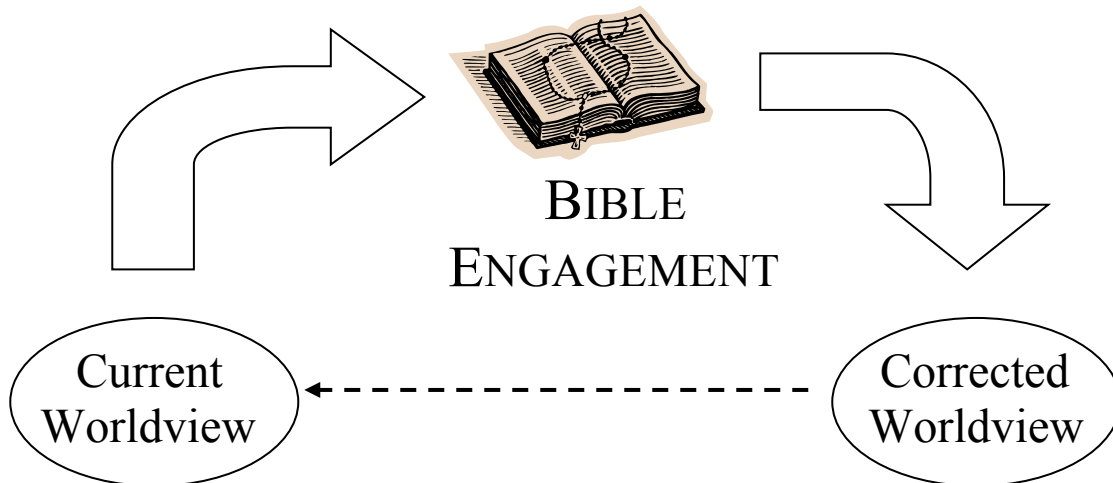
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- Truth can be found outside the Bible.

iii. How can the Bible change the way someone lives life?

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Question #2 How do I figure out what the Bible means?

Meaning –

Application –

i. How many **meanings** does each passage of Scripture have? \_\_\_\_\_

ii. How many **applications** does each passage of Scripture have? \_\_\_\_\_

iii. What is **our goal** when trying to figure out what the Bible means?

A \_\_\_\_\_  
I \_\_\_\_\_  
M \_\_\_\_\_

iv. Why do we often miss the author's intended meaning?

Presuppositions –

*Example:* Revelation 3:14-16

v. How do I overcome my presuppositions and accomplish the goal of understanding the Author's Intended Meaning?

Historical Context – Historical circumstances at the time when a book is written.

- Examples: Author's situation, Reader's situation, Date of Writing, Geography

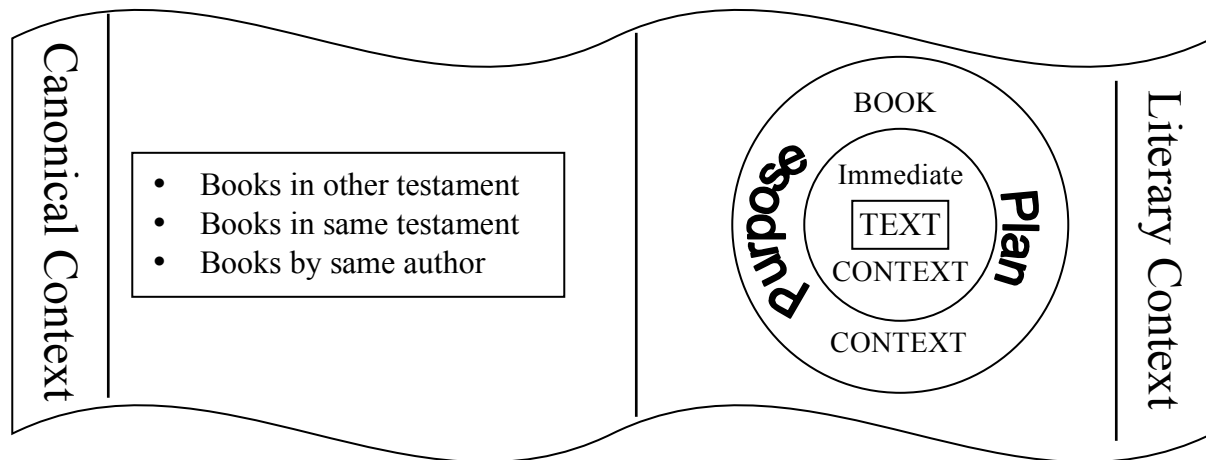
Literary Context – The organizational framework of a book that connects all the parts into a sensible whole.

- Examples: Purpose of Book, Plan (or outline) of Book, Immediate Context, Genre

## LITERARY CONTEXT #1: PURPOSE AND PLAN OF A BIBLE BOOK

**Literary Context** – The organizational framework of a book that connects all the parts into a sensible whole.

Authors do things with words. The book as a whole has a purpose, i.e. illocutionary force. So to determine the meaning of individual paragraphs and verses, we must fit them into the specific \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of each book.



### Question #1 What is the purpose and plan of a book?

Purpose. \_\_\_\_\_.

- The purpose of the book answers the \_\_\_\_\_ question. \_\_\_\_\_ was this book written?

Plan. \_\_\_\_\_.

- The plan of a book answers the \_\_\_\_\_ question. \_\_\_\_\_ does the writer accomplish the purpose?

### Question #2 How can I find the purpose and plan of a book?

Figuring out the Purpose.

1. Sometimes the purpose is clearly stated as in John 20:30-31.
2. When the purpose of a book is not stated in that book, it can be derived from \_\_\_\_\_ over and over very closely.
3. Often it is more convenient to look up the book's purpose in Bible study materials such as Bible dictionaries or commentaries.

## Figuring out the Plan.

1. The plan of a book is best viewed in \_\_\_\_\_ form. Given enough time, the outline can be discovered through an inductive process of personal study.
2. The outline of a book can also be found in Bible study materials.
  - Book of Acts and a structural giveaway in Acts 1:8

### **Question #3** Why is the purpose and plan of a book so important?

Purpose. Knowing the purpose of a book makes the meaning of individual passages clearer because the \_\_\_\_\_ the overall purpose of a book.

Plan. An author's \_\_\_\_\_ is reflected in the structural plan of a book. How one verse relates to the flow of thought in a book does help to determine what the author was thinking.

*Conclusion.* Comparing passages of scripture to the purpose and plan of a book will prevent us from reading the Bible for our purposes and finding what we think should be there rather than what the author thought he was communicating.

### Robertson McQuilkin on "**Why we might misunderstand the Bible**"

“Some people do not understand the bible because they do not believe it is true, or at least, they do not believe that all parts of it are true. Others do not understand it because they are unwilling to obey it. Still others misunderstand the communication because they are unwilling to work hard at searching out the meaning.”

“The right attitude or approach to the Bible is not all that is necessary for understanding its meaning. Do a good attitude and a commitment to hard work alone enable a person to build a beautiful piece of furniture? No, for there is a right way and wrong way to build. Furthermore, certain skills must be developed before a person, though using the right method, can build properly. So it is with understanding the Bible. One must not only have the right attitude and approach; he must also use good methods and develop skill in their use.”

— *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, 15-16

## INTERPRETING VERSES IN LIGHT OF THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

1. QUESTION: Does Ecclesiastes deny that humans will experience life after death? Explain how the purpose of the book helps to interpret this passage.

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20. “For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for everything is temporary and meaningless. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.”

Purpose of Ecclesiastes. He intended to show *by what he could observe* from a human perspective the inability of all human effort (1:12-6:9) and human wisdom (6:10-11:6) to provide lasting significance to life “under the sun” in order to drive readers to fear God (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13) and enjoy his good gifts of working and feasting in this temporary life (2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9).

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2. QUESTION: Does John want the churches that received his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> letters to take care of traveling teachers or not?

2 John 10-11 “If someone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don’t invite him into your house or encourage him in any way. Anyone who encourages him becomes a partner in his evil work.”

3 John 5 “Dear friend, you are doing a good work for God when you take care of the traveling teachers who are passing through, even though they are strangers to you.”

Purpose of 2 John. He is warning the church about false teachers who are traveling from church to church denying that Jesus is God incarnate.

Purpose of 3 John. He is rebuking a dominating elder who refuses to give hospitality to any strangers who come to teach.

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## INTERPRETING VERSES IN LIGHT OF THE PLAN OF A BIBLE BOOK

### OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

- I. The Calling of the Church (chaps. 1-3)
  - A. Introduction (1:1-2)
  - B. Praise for God's planned spiritual blessings (1:3-14)
    - 1. The provision of spiritual blessings (1:3)
    - 2. The basis of spiritual blessings (1:4-14)
  - C. Prayer for wisdom and revelation (1:15-23)
    - 1. Commendation (1:15)
    - 2. Supplication (1:16-23)
  - D. New position individually (2:1-10)
    - 1. The old condition: dead to God (2:1-3)
    - 2. The new position: alive in God (2:4-10)
  - E. New position corporately (2:11-22)
    - 1. Statement of the inclusion of Gentiles with God's Jewish People (2:11-13)
    - 2. Explanation of the inclusion of Gentiles with God's Jewish People (2:14-18)
    - 3. Consequence of the inclusion of Gentiles with God's Jewish People (2:19-22)
  - F. The mystery of the inclusion of Gentiles in Christ's Church (3:1-13)
    - 1. The mystery of Christ enables the inclusion of the Gentiles (3:1-6)
    - 3. The ministry to the Gentiles and the building of the church (3:7-12)
    - 4. The injunction based on his important ministry(3:13)
  - G. Prayer for strengthened love (3:14-21)
- II. The Conduct of the Church (chaps. 4-6)
  - A. Walking in unity with other believers (4:1-16)
    - 1. The basis of unity (4:1-6)
    - 2. The preservation of unity (4:7-16)
  - B. Walking in holiness in relationships with other believers (4:17-32)
    - 1. The old ignorant way of living taught by the sinful world around us (4:17-19)
    - 2. The transition from the old ignorant way of living to Christ's new way (4:20-24)
    - 3. The new holy way to live that Christ teaches us (4:25-32)
  - C. Walking in love in relationships with other believers (5:1-6)
    - 1. The positive: to love others (5:1-2)
    - 2. The negative: to abstain from evil (5:3-6)
  - D. Walking in light and with wisdom (5:7-20)
    - 1. Do not become involved with evildoers and their works (5:7-14)
    - 3. Be wise in the way you live (5:15-20)
  - E. Walking Wisely in Everyday Relationships (5:21-6:9)
  - F. Standing Strong in spiritual warfare (6:10-20)
  - G. Conclusion (6:21-24)

#### 3 Questions

1. Who does the "you" refer to in Eph 2:19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens"? Look up at the outline. \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the "mystery" in God's plan for the church that Christ made possible (3:1-6)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Based on Paul's message in 2:11-3:21, what issue was destroying the unity that Paul encourages in 4:1-6? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How many major Roman numeral sections are there? What does their order tell us about Paul's pastoral approach to solving problems in the church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## INTERPRETATION PRACTICE: PURPOSE AND PLAN OF A BIBLE BOOK

QUESTION #1: How does the purpose of these two different letters help in solving their (apparently) contradictory statements? Explain.

James 2:24 So you see, we are made right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

Galatians 2:16 And yet we Jewish Christians know that we become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be accepted by God because of our faith in Christ—and not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be saved by obeying the law.

Purpose of James. At a time when believers were fighting among each other and the rich were not helping the poor in the midst of economic persecution and oppression, James writes to rebuke the churches for their fake faith that is not leading them to pull together and help one another as true believers in Christ would. So he gives a great amount of clear ways that they could be demonstrating their faith through actions

Purpose of Galatians. Paul is disproving the Jewish idea that a person had to be circumcised and follow other Old Covenant laws in order to be accepted by God. He argues that trusting and following Jesus is the only way for God to accept you since you cannot be good enough on your own.

ANSWER: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

QUESTION #2: How does the preceding chapter of Joshua turn Achan's sin in Joshua 7 into a rebuke against Israel's assumption of whom God favors and spares in judgment?

ANSWER: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LITERARY CONTEXT #2: IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

Do we ever find completely unrelated sentences strung together?

I heard an interesting story on the news the other night. The quarterback faded back to pass. Carbon buildup was keeping the carburetor from functioning properly. The two-inch steaks were burned on the outside but raw on the inside. Ten-foot-high snow drifts blocked the road. The grass needed mowing. The elevator raced to the top of the one-hundred-story building in less than a minute. The audience boos the poor performance. – Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Biblical Interpretation*, 160.

Literature can be broken into parts but the parts are all related to the whole. That whole and the other related parts are called the context...

Context –

Question #1 What is the immediate context of a Bible passage?

The immediate context refers to the relationship of a passage to the material \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ it.

- Textbook refers to it as “surrounding context.”

Question #2 Why is it important to pay attention to the immediate context?

Context \_\_\_\_\_. Communication always occurs inside a specific context. Paying attention to the immediate context lets you connect an individual passage to the author’s flow of thought and current theme, and therefore determine the particular meaning of individual statements and expressions. So knowing the immediate context of any one statement or paragraph is critical for understanding what a biblical author is communicating.

So let’s examine a few specific examples:

### 1. **Philippians 4:13**

- What is the topic of Paul’s discussion in Philippians 4:10-12? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- So what particular “things” was Paul referring to when he said, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 2. **Isaiah 57:18-19**

- Whom does God say that He will revive in Isaiah 57:15? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- So who do the following words of comfort apply to in Isaiah 57:18-19, “I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. ‘Peace, peace to those far and near,’ Says the LORD”? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 3. **Romans 8:28**

- What topic is under discussion in the preceding context of Romans 8:18-27? Note the language of suffering, persevering, waiting, and weakness. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- So does God’s promise to work all things out for good mean we should experience a trouble-free life? If not, what does it mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Who does God make this promise to? \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. **Psalms 37:4**

- What requirement is given in Psalm 37:4 in order for God to “give you the desires of your heart”? \_\_\_\_\_
- What other requirement is given in Psalm 37:5 that must be met before God “will do” what you desire? \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. **2 Timothy 2:22**

- Based on the context of the passage, what kind of “desires” does Paul condemn in his words “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”? Focus on verses like 2 Timothy 2:14, 16, 23-26 in your answer. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Isaiah 58:5

- What information from the context can explain why God is angry at Israel for humbling themselves in fasting and prayer? Provide references from Isaiah 58 in your answer.

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## 7. 1 Corinthians 13

- Read 1 Corinthians 12-14. Why does Paul include a section on the characteristics and supreme value of love in between chapters 12 and 14? Is he talking about marriage (as is often the occasion for reading this chapter) or can you describe another specific situation in Corinth that Paul is addressing in the immediate context that requires a grand dose of love to overcome the conflict and division? What is that situation?

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## 8. 2 Chronicles 7:14

- If one considers who the phrase “my people” refers to in the preceding context, then to whom does God’s promise to “heal the land” apply? How does that affect our use of that verse in revival preaching? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Pros and Cons of verse recitation and topical teaching.** How can I stop myself from taking verses out of context when I share them with others? \_\_\_\_\_

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## SALVATION HISTORY IN THE BIBLE

### Act 1      **God's Creation & Human Corruption**

- Scene 1      Creation of Humanity
- Scene 2      Corruption of Humanity

### Act 2      **Growth of Ethnic Israel**

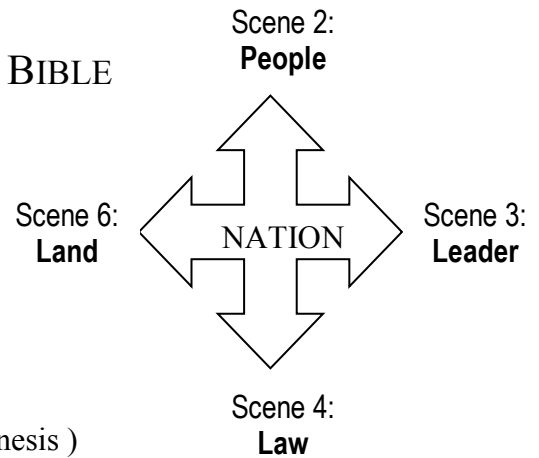
- Scene 1      Promise of Blessing Given to the Patriarchs (Genesis )
- Scene 2      12 Tribes of Israel multiply as slaves in Egypt for 4 Generations
- Scene 3      God uses Moses to lead his people out of Egypt
- Scene 4      Israel receives the Law with the Tabernacle and Sacrificial System
- Scene 5      People of Israel wander in the desert because of their sin
- Scene 6      Israel conquers part of Palestine and struggle to settle in the land during the period of the Judges
- Scene 7      Samuel ends the period of the Judges and starts the united kingdom of Israel with Saul as the first king
- Scene 8      David and Solomon reign over Israel at its height of power and build the Temple

### Act 3      **Decline of Ethnic Israel**

- Scene 1      Israel is divided into 2 kingdoms of Northern Israel and Judah in the South
- Scene 2      The Assyrians conquer northern Israel and send the people into exile
- Scene 3      The Babylonians conquer Judah and send the people into exile
- Scene 4      After 70 years of exile the Persians allow the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple
- Scene 5      The Jews experience relative freedom under the Persians, great persecution under the Seleucid Greek empire, and then liberation until the Romans invade

### Act 4      **Church: New Israel**

- Scene 1      The life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus starts a new spiritual community (a new Israel) called the Church and thus fulfills the Old Testament prophets' vision of a restored nation of righteous people who know God
- Scene 2      The apostles build the new covenant community called the Church all around the world, and the old covenant with its Temple, priesthood, and sacrifices is stopped forever when the Romans invade and destroy it in 70 AD.



# Salvation History: The Historical Context of the Bible

God's Creation & Human Corruption

Growth of Ethnic Israel

Decline of Ethnic Israel

Church: New Israel

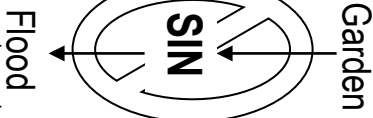
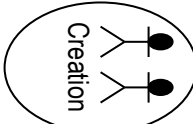
Act 1

Act 2

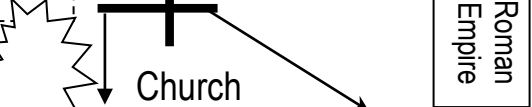
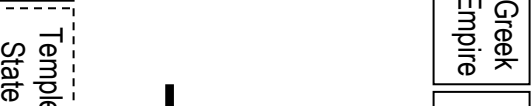
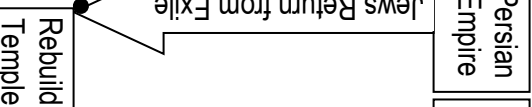
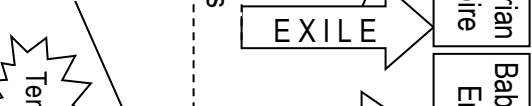
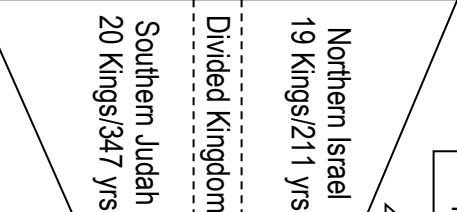
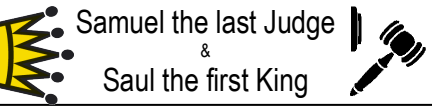
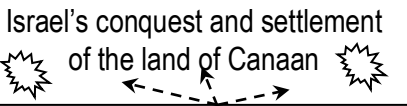
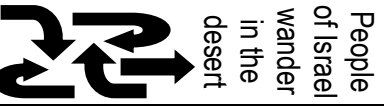
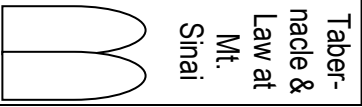
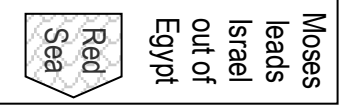
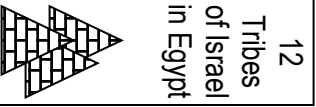
Act 3

Act 4

1 2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 1 2



Abraham, Isaac, Jacob



## Bible Books

Genesis 1-11

Genesis 12-50

Exodus 1-6

Exodus 7-18

Exodus 19-34  
Leviticus, Numbers 1-9

Numbers 10-36  
Deuteronomy

Joshua, Judges, Ruth

1 Samuel  
1 Chronicles 10

2 Samuel – 1 Kings 11, 1 Chron 11  
– 2 Chron 9, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs,  
½ of Proverbs and Psalms

1 Kings 12-2 Kings 24,  
2 Chronicles 10 –36,  
½ of Proverbs and Psalms,

**Chronological Order :**  
Jonah, Amos, Hosea,  
Isaiah, Micah,

Nahum, Habakkuk,  
Zephaniah, Joel, Jeremiah,  
Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah

Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai,  
Zechariah, Malachi, Esther

Book of Daniel  
completed

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Acts, All NT Epistles, Revelation

Assyrian  
Empire

Babylonian  
Empire

Persian  
Empire

Greek  
Empire

Roman  
Empire

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT #1: PEOPLE AND TIME OF THE BOOK

The books in the Bible were written by *specific* \_\_\_\_\_ to *specific* \_\_\_\_\_ at *specific* \_\_\_\_\_. Their world is different than our world. They had different \_\_\_\_\_, different \_\_\_\_\_, a different \_\_\_\_\_, and a different \_\_\_\_\_. So if our goal is to understand the author’s intended meaning (AIM), then we must learn about their world and how much different it is from ours.

To understand their world—that is, their historical context, we will analyze 7 areas to guide us carefully back into the world of the author and the first readers.

<b>7 Steps in Historical Analysis</b>	
<u>Category:</u>	<u>What it includes:</u>
1. Author’s Situation	<i>Relationship to Readers, Current Status</i>
2. Reader’s Situation	<i>Relationship to Author, Current Status</i>
3. Time Period	<i>Date, Contemporary Events</i>
4. Physical Setting	<i>Geographic location, Natural or man-made surroundings, Animal and plant life</i>
5. Political Conditions	<i>Government, Economics, Warfare</i>
6. Cultural Setting	<i>Customary, Agricultural, and Religious Practices</i>
7. Local History	<i>Past Events</i>

To begin learning this 7-step process, we will start by exploring how the first three steps can guide us back into the ancient world of the people and time of each Bible book.

## **1. Author’s situation**

*Relationship to Readers, Current Status*

### **Philippians**

- From where does Paul write his epistle to the Philippians? Look up Phil 1:12-14.

What new depth to Paul’s expressed joy (1:4, 18; 2:2, 17, 18; 3:1; 4:1) and contentment (4:11-13) is discovered by considering the author’s situation?

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## Psalm 51

- At what time does the subscript of Psalm 51 place king David's writing of the Psalm? So what great sins does Nathan the Prophet mention for which David now seeks God's forgiveness? \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2. Reader's situation

*Relationship to Author, Current Status*

### Jewish Christians: Hebrews 10:32-39

- When the author of Hebrews encourages his readers not to "shrink back" (10:39), to what might the readers be tempted to turn back to and participate in again? Use the *Purpose of Each Bible Book* chart. \_\_\_\_\_

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### Freedom to Sin: 2 Peter

- What kind of teaching were the first readers of 2 Peter facing? Use the *Purpose of Each Bible Book* chart. \_\_\_\_\_

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- What two great acts of God in the history of the world does Peter point out in 2 Peter 3:5-6? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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- Who has been punished by God in the past according to 2 Peter 2:4-10 and why is Peter reminding his audience of this fact? \_\_\_\_\_

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### 3. Time period

*Date, Contemporary Events*

#### **Deuteronomy 28: A Promise that the Prophets Preached**

- Who announced all of the deadly consequences for Israel’s disobedience of God’s law listed in Deuteronomy 28:15-68? Read the introduction in Deut 27:11.

\_\_\_\_\_

- What is the ultimate consequence for Israel if they continue to disobey God according to Deut 28:63-64? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- If this promise of destruction and exile in Deuteronomy was given before any prophet ever warned Israel that God would send foreign armies to destroy her and scatter her people, then where do you think those prophets got the idea that God was going to punish Israel in that way? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Luke 21: Destruction of the Temple**

- What is the question from the disciples that Jesus is answering in Luke 21:5-36? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- How did Jesus predict that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed? Read Luke 21:20-24. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- How much time does Jesus say will pass before “all these things take place”? Read Luke 21:32. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- If Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple were given around 30 AD then when should have the city and Temple been destroyed according to Jesus?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Since Roman armies destroyed the city and Temple in 70 AD, do you think Jesus was right? \_\_\_\_\_

“Generation” = 40 years

# INTERPRETATION PRACTICE: PEOPLE AND TIME OF THE BOOK

## 1. Author's situation

*Relationship to Readers, Current Status*

### 1 Peter

- In 1 Peter 5:13 Peter locates himself in Babylon—which is a symbolic name for Jerusalem. What persecution had Peter seen in Jerusalem that motivated him to address Christian suffering throughout the Roman Empire (e.g. 1 Peter 4:1, 12-13)? Read Acts 5:40-42; 12:1-4. \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2. Reader's situation

*Relationship to Author, Current Status*

### Israel in Exile: Samuel-Kings

- Where are the Israelite readers of Samuel-Kings living? Use the *Purpose of Each Bible Book* chart. \_\_\_\_\_

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- What should the Israelite readers in exile learn from the stories about the kingdom of Israel in Samuel-Kings? Read 2 Kings 17:7-23 for specific errors to avoid.

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## 3. Time period

*Date, Contemporary Events*

### Hebrews: Destruction of the Old (First) Covenant

- What does Hebrews say is about to happen to the first covenant (Temple, priesthood in Jerusalem, sacrifices, etc.) now that Jesus has introduced the new covenant? Read how Hebrews 8:13 describes that first covenant. \_\_\_\_\_

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- If the letter to the Hebrews was written around 60 AD, what event was the author writing about when he said the first covenant was “near destruction”? \_\_\_\_\_

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## HISTORICAL CONTEXT #2: CULTURAL AND PHYSICAL SETTING

### 4. Physical Setting

*Geographic location, Natural or man-made surroundings, Animal and plant life*

#### Judges 4-5: God Uses Geography

*Question:* How did it actually happen that “At Barak’s advance, the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army” (Judges 4:15a)?

1. Who is oppressing Israel? And where is the army commander stationed? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. The battle occurred in the Jezreel Valley and near *what* river? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the name and characteristics of the soil in the Jezreel Valley? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How did the Kishon River help defeat the chariots? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- How did the stars fight against Sisera’s army?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Laodicea: Revelation 3:15-16

- How does knowing the geographical setting of Laodicea help us understand what Jesus is saying to the church of that city with his words “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!”? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- How is this passage sometimes understood? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **5. Political conditions**

*Government, Economics, Warfare*

### **Philippi: Acts 16:11-40 & Philippians 3:20**

- **Political Conditions:** Philippi was an official Roman colony filled with Roman citizens who had special privileges above all other non-citizens. Paul was a Roman citizen who had those privileges like the right to a trial before punishment.
- So why were the officials in Philippi alarmed in Acts 16:37-39? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Why does Paul’s statement “our citizenship is in heaven” have an especially poignant meaning for the Philippian readers? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **6. Cultural Setting**

*Customary, Agricultural and Religious Practices*

### **Grass: Psalm 129:6 & Isaiah 37:27**

- Why is grass growing on the roof? What does the short life of the grass communicate about the enemies of Israel mentioned generally in Ps 129:6 and specifically as Assyria in Isaiah 37:27? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **7. Local History**

*Past Events*

### **Sardis: Revelation 3:1-3**

- What pretentious event occurred in the recent history of Sardis that lies behind Jesus’ rebuke (“you have a name that you are alive but you are dead”)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- How does Jesus’ warning about “waking up” or else he “will come like a thief” best communicate the warning to repent for the Christians at Sardis?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## INTERPRETATION PRACTICE: CULTURAL AND PHYSICAL SETTING

### Last 4 Steps in Historical Analysis

	<u>Category:</u>	<u>What it includes:</u>
4.	Physical Setting	<i>Geographic location, Natural or man-made surroundings, Animal and plant life</i>
5.	Political Conditions	<i>Government, Economics, Warfare</i>
6.	Social Setting	<i>Customary, Agricultural, and Religious Practices</i>
7.	Local History	<i>Past Events</i>

### 4. Physical Setting

*Geographic location, Natural or man-made surroundings, Animal and plant life*

#### Dead Sea: Ezekiel 47:1-12

**Geography:** To the east of Jerusalem across the wilderness and hills of Judea lies the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea received its name because the extremely high level of minerals and chemicals in the water do not allow it to support an abundance of sea creatures. The minerals have built up because there is no outlet where water can flow from the Dead Sea.

- How does Ezekiel’s vision of a river that gives life to the Dead Sea communicate the amazing life-giving power of God’s presence symbolized by the temple (possibly translated “house”) in Ezekiel 47? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Political conditions

*Government, Economics, Warfare*

#### Pergamum: Revelation 2:12, 16

**Political Conditions:** The Roman governor over all of Asia Minor ruled from the city of Pergamum. That governor had the *ius gladii*—a Latin phrase which means “power of the sword.” The power of the sword meant that the Roman governor was in complete control and could judge or reward whomever he chose.

- When Jesus claims to be the one with the sword, what would that mean to the Christians who lived in Pergamum? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Cultural Setting

### *Customary, Agricultural and Religious Practices*

#### **Pergamum (continued): Revelation 2:17 and the “white stone”**

**Social Recognition:** The city of Pergamum is built on an acropolis rising 1300 feet above the surrounding Caicus River valley. The hill was made of dark gray andesite—a type of rock related to the granite family and formed by volcanic activity. Among the dark gray rock of which many of the city’s structures were made white marble pillars, plaques, and temples stood out. For example, in the gymnasium a white marble plaque recorded community members who had accomplished great feats and were to be honored.

**Folk Religion:** In the Asclepium (an ancient hospital combining medical and supernatural treatments) at the base of the Pergamum acropolis, sick patients were treated using cold and hot water baths, using information they discovered in dreams, using offerings and amulets that accessed divine power, etc. The use of amulets reflected a popular folk religious practice where secret names (e.g. names of a god or gods) were inscribed on small objects with the belief that the name could be used to access the power of that god or those gods in times of trouble. That power could be used in many situations, e.g. to pass through the checkpoints on the way to paradise after death or to solve problems in life or to receive healing.

**Judicial Process:** In some Roman courts judges and juries would cast their vote or signify their decision after a hearing by placing either a plain white stone or a plain black stone in a pouch. The white stone represented innocence and the black stone represented a guilty verdict.

- If the word for “stone” in Rev 2:17 specifically refers to a “small pebble or river stone,” which one of the three possible sources (listed above) for the historical background of the “white stone” best matches its description in Rev 2:17? Make an argument for the most relevant background using details from the text and from the information provided above. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Edge of His Cloak: Matthew 9:20-22 and 14:36

**Social and Religious Background Information.** Based on Malachi 4:2, the Jews expected the Messiah to have healing power in the edges of his clothes where Numbers 15 instructs Jews to attach tassels. According to the custom of first century Israel, a Rabbi like Jesus would wear a prayer shawl that had blue tassels hanging on its four corners.

- How does that historical context explain the actions of people trying to be healed in Matthew 14:36 and 9:20-22? What did their actions demonstrate that they believed?

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## 7. Local History

*Past Events*

### Corinth: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

**Local History.** Using the *IVP Bible Background Commentary on the New Testament*, look up 1 Cor 9:24-27 and find what event was consistently held at Corinth every two years during this period in the city's history. Then answer the following questions about the relevance of that historical event to Paul's metaphors in this passage.

- What was the official name of the bi-annual event and the treasured prize awarded to victors? \_\_\_\_\_
- What metaphors does Paul use in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 to describe his commitment to sharing the Gospel? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Why is that metaphor relevant to his audience in Corinth and what would they know firsthand about the significance of Paul's comparison between this event and their Christian commitment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# GENRE ANALYSIS

- What are the 7 major genres found in the Bible?
- Why is it important to understand how each genre works?

## Narrative Genre

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KEY CHARACTERISTIC: Thematic writings.

Narrative sections of the Scripture are most basically stories that teach a \_\_\_\_\_ . Isolating the theme of the story often allows the biblical interpreter to discover its theological lesson. In a number of cases multiple stories in the same book are selected because of a common theme. Themes can be discerned by \_\_\_\_\_ .

- Genesis 12-50 revolves around the “\_\_\_\_\_” \_\_\_\_\_ introduced in Genesis 12:1-3. How does this explain the purpose behind the stories of barren women in Genesis 16:1-18:15 and 21:1-7?
- Judges 3-21 revolves around the “sin-deliverance” cycle introduced in Judges 2:11-23. How should that affect the way we read stories about assassination and family murders? (Cf. Judges 21:25)
- Which Gospel emphasizes Jesus’ role as a social reformer who calls Israel back to the practice of God’s compassion for the poor and ostracized? Cite specific stories in this Gospel that do not appear in the other three Gospels.

### Difficulty in Interpretation

**Historical Facts or an Example to Follow?** The biblical interpreter will often be faced with the question of whether or not certain practices or events recorded in Scripture are \_\_\_\_\_ by God or just \_\_\_\_\_ . The basic rule used to determine if a practice or idea in a story is approved by God is to check it against the whole teaching of Scripture. Usually a \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible will resolve the issue.

## Poetry Genre

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KEY CHARACTERISTIC: Figurative Language

\_\_\_\_\_ – An expressed comparison between two items using “like,” “as,” or “such as”.

- Isaiah 55:10-11; Job 12:25

\_\_\_\_\_ – An implied comparison between two items is represented by another.

- Fox = Herod Antipas (Luke 13:32)
- Grass = \_\_\_\_\_ (Isaiah 40:7-8)

*NOTE:* Similes and metaphors have one point of comparison. If we find multiple points of comparison, we will misunderstand the author’s intended meaning (AIM).

\_\_\_\_\_ – A conscious exaggeration or overstatement.

- Judges 7:12; Psalm 6:6
- Matthew 5:29; Acts 2:5

### Difficulty in Interpretation

**Symbolic or Face Value?** The biblical interpreter faces the daunting task at certain places in poetic sections where a statement must be labeled as either \_\_\_\_\_. Certain passages may or may not teach truths about God depending on your evaluation of poetic forms.

## Wisdom Genre

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KEY CHARACTERISTIC: Sayings that foster wisdom not a static set of instructions.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Generalized observation about life that usually holds true but does have exceptions. They come in numerous forms (“blessed” sayings, “better” sayings)

\_\_\_\_\_ : Perplexing statements that test the skill of those who attempt to solve it.

- Proverbs 1:6; 26:4-5

### Difficulty in Interpretation

**Clear Promise or General Observation?** Mixed into Hebrew wisdom literature are \_\_\_\_\_ central to Israel’s faith and general observations about life. Therefore, the biblical interpreter has to make tough choices about how to understand wisdom writings. The best standard to use when differentiating between clear promises and general observations is \_\_\_\_\_. If it is a repeated promise or truth taught elsewhere, it should be taken as a promise to believe always.

INTERPRETATION PRACTICE  
*Narrative, Poetry, and Wisdom*

**1. Theme of Daniel 1:1-20**

THEME: Does thematic repetition (a common phrase or word that is repeated throughout the story) or similar phrases at the beginning and ending of the story (technically called “inclusion”) highlight the theme of the story? If so, what is the theme? \_\_\_\_\_

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THEOLOGICAL LESSON: Summarize the theological lesson using the theme(s) of the story. What does the story teach about God or about living correctly under God? \_\_\_\_\_

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PURPOSE OF THE BOOK: How does the theological lesson support the purpose of the book? Use the *Purpose of Each Book in the Bible* chart. \_\_\_\_\_

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**2. Figurative Language in Psalm 1**

What simile does Psalm 1:3 use for those who delight in the Lord? What is the point of similarity between the two things being compared? \_\_\_\_\_

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What simile does Psalm 1:4 use for the wicked? What is the point of similarity between the two things being compared? \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. Figurative language in Matthew 5:29-30**

What type of figurative language does Jesus use to describe how dangerous sin can be? \_\_\_\_\_

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**4. Wise saying in Proverbs 22:6**

Is Proverbs 22:6 a promise from God that always holds true or a general observation of life? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Law Genre

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KEY CHARACTERISTIC: Purpose of Israel's Laws

PURPOSE:

**Lex Talionis:** How is the legal rationale of “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life” a form of justice and not primitive brutality (Exodus 21:23-25)?

### Difficulty in Interpretation

**Obedience to Old Covenant Laws?** What do Old Covenant instructions mean for New Covenant Christians? Since Jesus introduced the \_\_\_\_\_ and founded its new ethic upon his words and example, we no longer are responsible to order our lives by the covenant agreement between God and ancient Israel. However, the intent of the Torah to create a compassionate and just community that stands out in a pagan world of oppression and injustice can still give us a trajectory to follow. So Christians should seek to first understand what a law was \_\_\_\_\_ to accomplish this purpose in ancient Israel and then seek to develop a \_\_\_\_\_ way to accomplish the same purpose in the Christian community. Of course, many sacrificial and purity laws can only be imitated through trusting in Christ's finished work.

## Prophecy Genre

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KEY CHARACTERISTIC: Prophecy is usually principled preaching.

**Preaching or Predictions?** Most prophecy is a passionate reminder from God about how the people are failing to \_\_\_\_\_. Particularly, the warnings in Leviticus \_\_\_\_\_ and Deuteronomy \_\_\_\_\_ that contain a description of the consequences for certain actions are repeated and applied by numerous prophets. So the main message of most prophetic books was directly intended to show the ancient audience how they were ignoring God's ways, not how the future would unfold.

## Epistolary Genre

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KEY CHARACTERISTIC: Letters for specific situations

Each epistle was written to a specific \_\_\_\_\_ to address a specific \_\_\_\_\_(s). That audience was facing certain problems and the author intended to give God's advice on the matter. So discovering the historical occasion(s) for each letter will help to understand the contents within the appropriate context. Two basic resources exist for understanding the occasion that caused the epistles to be written.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_: Writings outside of the Bible and in other New Testament books (e.g. Acts) can provide the occasion.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_: Information from the letter itself can reveal the historical occasion that caused the letter to be written.

### Difficulty in Interpretation

**Cultural or Transcultural?** Certain teachings within the epistles as well as other genres are only \_\_\_\_\_ of enduring principles. The good biblical interpreter must identify instructions that are \_\_\_\_\_ of Divine truth to a specific culture and therefore \_\_\_\_\_.

The distinction between the two can be labeled *cultural* and *transcultural* teachings. Transcultural represents the way of living that every culture should reflect. In other words, it is \_\_\_\_\_. To make a wise decision on these matters requires an extensive understanding of the historical context of the letter and the whole counsel of Scripture.

# How does the Bible direct my life?

Remember the purpose of the Bible is to shape you into a godly person. So if it fails to change your life, it fails completely.

Romans 6:17-18 and Ephesians 4:20-24 teach us:

- The truth will \_\_\_\_\_.
- If your life is not different, you do not \_\_\_\_\_ the truth.

There's a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.  
– *Morpheus, Matrix*

## Classic 3-step Approach to Life Application

1. **Basic Meaning of the Passage.** State what it meant to the original readers in 1-2 sentences.

**Philippians 2:5-11.** The attitude of Christ expressed in His condescension to human existence is described in detail as an extreme act of humility with an equally amazing reward of exaltation, and the Philippian Christians are commanded to have the same attitude.

**Philippians 3:7-11.** *Passage's Basic Message:* Knowing Christ is the best experience of the Apostle Paul's entire life and everything else is worthless when compared to it. To know Him, however, involves exercising faith and sharing in both His power and His pain until heaven.

2. **Modern Significance of the Passage.** State the truth(s), the promise(s), the principle(s), and/or the command(s) that needs to be known today.

**Philippians 2:5-11.** *Command:* Christ's attitude of humility should be every Christian's attitude.

**Philippians 3:7-11.** *Principle:* Knowing Jesus involves going through pain on earth.

3. **Specific Implementation.** Describe the contemporary situation where the passage can be applied and give specific steps for its life application.

**Philippians 2:5-11.** People often chase after recognition for who they are and what they can do, but only a few are trying to find ways to serve others without being praised for it. So to implement the command from Philippians 2:5-11, I could pick out one person whom I normally think is "lower" than me or just not that interesting and strike up a conversation with them one time during this next week.

**Philippians 3:7-11.** How would you apply the principle above?

## Contextualization Model for Life Application

The contextualization model of life application aims to engage seriously the historical context of scripture and the cultural context of the reader when deciphering directions for life from the text.

- **Perspective Shift:** Do not ask, “What was the author saying?” but rather, “What was the author doing?”
- What is “cultural hermeneutics” and how can it help us decipher directions for life from the text of scripture?

### Contextualization Model

- I. What is the biblical author or character in the story doing?
  - A. What cultural norm is being challenged or borrowed by the biblical author?
  - B. How does the Bible direct its ancient readers to take on that cultural norm?
- II. How can we similarly imitate what the biblical author or character is doing?
  - A. What cultural norm could we similarly challenge or borrow?
  - B. Which entities (media, people, companies, etc.) in your culture represent those values?
  - C. What *specific and feasible action* could we do today to take on a contemporary cultural norm?

*Contextualization Exercise:* Suffering in 1 Peter 4:1-2, 12-19

## BIBLE INTERPRETATION EXAMPLE: MATTHEW 18

### **Contemporary Cultural Context:**

### **Literary Context:**

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK:

PLAN OF THE BOOK:

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 18:21-35:

### **Historical Context:**

- Matt 18:21-22
- Matt 18:23
- Matt 18:24-25
- Matt 18:28

### APPLICATION

**Culture of Mercy. Culture of Patience.**



**Question #1** How can I make sure to keep verses in their literary and historical contexts so that I do not make up the wrong meaning?

Whenever you share a verse of the Bible with someone, first say one sentence that describes the context of the verse.

**Question #2** How can I keep verses in their literary and historical contexts during my daily study of Scripture when I don't have time to go through all the steps?

1. Study one book at a time from the beginning to the end.
2. On the first day look up the information on the author, readers, and time period of the book.
  - a. If the author and readers of the book are known, you can find them in the *Purpose of Each Book in the Bible* chart.
  - b. To figure out the time period, you can use the picture of *Salvation History* to see where your book fits into the historical context of Bible history.
3. Write down the purpose of the book on a note card and keep it in the book you are studying. You can find it in the *Purpose of Each Book in the Bible* chart.

**Question #3** How can I interpret the Bible correctly without becoming a jerk?

1. Humility – “I could be wrong.”
2. Openness – “You could be right.”
3. Criticizability – “I am willing to be corrected.”
4. Generosity – “I am fair and gracious in my critiques.”

# Biblical Interpretation: The Full Process

## I. Historical Analysis

- A. AUTHOR'S SITUATION: Relationship to Readers, Current Status
- B. READER'S SITUATION: Relationship to Author, Current Status
- C. TIME PERIOD: Date, Contemporary Events
- D. PHYSICAL SETTING: Geography, man-made surroundings, animal & plant life
- E. POLITICAL CONDITIONS: Government, Economics, Warfare
- F. CULTURAL SETTING: Customary, Agricultural and Religious Practices
- G. LOCAL HISTORY: Past Events that Affect the Present Writings

## II. Literary Analysis



- A. LITERARY CONTEXT ANALYSIS
  - 1. *Purpose of the Book*: Determine the author's reason(s) for writing.
  - 2. *Plan of the Book*: Create an outline of the entire book.
  - 3. *Immediate Context*: Look at the verses before and after the passage.
- B. GENRE ANALYSIS: Employ study techniques appropriate to a passage's genre (Narrative, Poetry, Wisdom, Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Parable, Epistles)
- C. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: Gain insight by comparing the book or passage to other (especially non-canonical) books or passages of similar genre, purpose, and content.
- D. SYNTACTICAL ANALYSIS: Create a syntactical layout showing the structural development of teaching sections in the Bible. (Disclaimer: Only for Epistles and Didactic/Explanatory Material found in other genres)
- E. GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS: Note the significance of grammatical details in the passage.
- F. LEXICAL ANALYSIS: Do a word study on important words in the passage.
- G. RHETORICAL ANALYSIS: Decipher the meaning of rhetorical devices and strategies in the passage and/or book.

## III. Theological Analysis

- A. ANALOGY OF FAITH: Locate similar teaching or contexts throughout the Bible that illumine, modify, or qualify the meaning of the passage.
- B. CONTRIBUTION TO THEOLOGY: Note the important contribution of the passage to your overall understanding of God and His ways.
- C. APPLICATION TO LIFE: Contextualize the passage's meaning to your place and time

## The Purpose of Each Book in the Bible

CONTENTS: The description of each book contains basic information about the author (if known), the audience (if known), and their historical context. A brief statement is given about the content of the book and then the purpose of the book is always introduced by the three words “*in order to*.” The purpose statement that follows the words “*in order to*” will let you know what the smaller parts of the book are trying to do as a whole. Knowing why the parts are there helps in knowing what they mean.

### OLD TESTAMENT

**Genesis.** Moses recorded these orally preserved, ancient Middle Eastern traditions about the beginning of the world, the beginning of sin, and the beginning of God’s plan to save people from their sin *in order to* show how God stayed faithful against all odds to his promise to bless and restore a sinful world to God’s original design through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Exodus.** Moses recorded Israel’s suffering in Egypt, the miracles that God performed during Israel’s escape from Egypt, and the laws and requirements for the tabernacle received at Mt. Sinai *in order to* motivate the Israelites before they enter the promised land to obey the God that had mightily saved them as he promised (Gen 15:12-16).

**Leviticus.** Moses recorded these laws about the priests, about the sacrifices, and about the holiness of the people *in order to* show the people and priests of Israel how to “be holy as the Lord is holy” and thus to reflect the Lord’s special and perfect character to one another and all the surrounding nations.

**Numbers.** Moses recorded the number of Israelites and how many of them failed to have faith in God while they were wandering in the desert *in order to* provide a bad example of one generation of sinful Israelites that all future generations should strive not to imitate in their unbelief and disobedience.

**Deuteronomy.** Using Moses’s recorded speeches given near the end of his life at the Jordan river about God’s faithfulness to lead Israel out of Egypt and up to their new homeland and about God’s laws and consequences for disobedience, Joshua wrote this “book of the law” *in order to* motivate God’s people not to reject God’s values and commandments once they enter the land and settle down in their new homes.

**Joshua.** Apart from a few editorial comments added later to the book of Joshua (like his death), Joshua recorded the great battles during the conquest of the land, the division of the land, and reminders of the covenant between God and Israel *in order to* demonstrate how the success or failure of God’s promise to provide Israel with a national homeland depended upon their obedience.

**Judges.** An unknown author around the time of David and Solomon when Israel was one great United Kingdom recorded the desperate struggles that the tribes of Israel faced between the time of Joshua’s leadership and Samuel’s leadership. These historical records of Israel’s sin, their oppression, God’s compassionate redemption through judges, and Israel’s return to sin were recorded *in order to* discourage disobedience to God by showing the deadly consequences of “doing what is right in your own eyes” instead of in God’s eyes.

**Ruth.** During David's reign he had recorded the story of his grandmother, Ruth, and her relentless loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi and to Israel's God *in order to* demonstrate that God still had faithful followers during the dark and disobedient period of the Judges.

**1 & 2 Samuel.** As these two books show how Israel turned into a united kingdom first under a bad king named Saul and then under a great king named David, the author demonstrates that the success or the destruction of the kingdom of Israel is determined by their obedience or disobedience to God. The author recorded these historical events *in order to* convince his Jewish readers in exile (who were living in Babylon after the Babylonians destroyed Israel and took most of the people into captivity) that disobeying God and serving other gods have deadly consequences.

**1 & 2 Kings.** As these two books show how the great united kingdom of Israel that king Solomon inherited from David split apart and was eventually destroyed by invasions from the Assyrians and Babylonians, the unknown author demonstrates that this destruction was caused by kings who decided to disobey God and worship idols. Like 1 & 2 Samuel, the author recorded these historical events *in order to* convince his Jewish readers in exile (who were living in Babylon after the Babylonians destroyed Israel and took most of the people into captivity) that disobeying God and serving other gods have deadly consequences.

**1 & 2 Chronicles.** As these two books recount Israel's history recorded in 1 Samuel 31-2 Kings 25 they focus on the activity at the Temple and the activity of the Priests and Levites *in order to* demonstrate that the success or the failure of a king is determined by their obedience or disobedience to God's specific laws about purity, priestly sacrifices, and Temple worship. The author wanted to motivate the Jews who had returned from exile under the Persians to follow carefully God's instructions for life, holiness, and worship.

**Ezra.** Ezra recorded how Cyrus the Persian ruler allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel, but he also describes the moral and religious reforms that he had to enforce because the people were already breaking God's laws again. The book of Ezra was written *in order to* recount God's faithfulness to his chosen people while demonstrating that the Jews had not learned to be faithful to God even after 70 years of exile.

**Nehemiah.** Nehemiah wrote this first-person narrative about the reconstruction of Jerusalem's walls and the moral and religious reforms that were instituted in conjunction with Ezra *in order to* demonstrate how God faithfully comes to the aid of those who depend on him but obedience to God's instructions are a requirement for His blessings.

**Esther.** The book of Esther is an epic story about a Jewish woman named Esther and her cousin Mordecai who stop a Persian plot to slaughter every Jew in the Empire which was recorded *in order to* explain the origins of the Jewish Feast of Purim and to recount God's gracious intervention that prevented the genocide of the Jews.

**Job.** An unknown author of wisdom literature (possibly Solomon) wrote this dialogue between Job and his companions about the reason for Job's senseless suffering. The opening dialogue between Satan and God and the closing dialogue between God and Job demonstrate that Job's senseless suffering on earth does have a greater purpose in God's grand plan even though human beings are not able to figure it out. Therefore, the book was written *in order to* promote faith among human beings who cannot grasp the grand and cosmic plans of the Creator.

**Psalms.** Half of this collection of songs was composed by David while others were written by the sons of Korah, Asaph, Solomon, Moses, Heman, and Ethan. These songs were designed to be sung with instruments at many different Temple celebrations and were composed for worship *in order to* motivate the singers to recognize God in all things as the King, Shepherd, Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Lord.

**Proverbs.** Solomon wrote the majority of the Proverbs, but men in Judah's royal court did compile material from other contributors that is included at the end of the book. Proverbs includes an array of stylized maxims and passages that were written *in order to* direct people towards wise living through practical advice and a commitment to God's values such as diligence, kindness, education, preparation, discipline, etc.—all types of qualities that fit into the category of wisdom.

**Ecclesiastes.** Solomon wrote down his reflections on life (probably late in his life) from a human perspective and concluded from what he could observe with human eyes and intellect that all human effort (1:12-6:9) and human wisdom (6:10-11:6) ultimately failed to provide any real or lasting significance to one's life "under the sun" *in order to* drive people to trust in God alone for their significance and direction (11:7-12:14).

**Song of Songs.** Solomon wrote this beautiful poem to describe how wonderful and exciting love can be between a husband and wife *in order to* encourage people to enjoy the physical and emotional aspects of the marriage relationship that God has wonderfully created for a man and a woman to experience.

**Isaiah.** During the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah while the northern kingdom of Israel slowly collapsed due to Assyrian invasions and while Judah nearly fell to the same fate, Isaiah declared judgment on Judah, Israel, and the surrounding nations because of their wickedness. However, he also described the blessings and hope of restoration after judgment that all who align themselves with God properly would experience. His prophetic message was recorded *in order to* point out the dangerous consequences of disobeying God and encourage the disobedient to repent and live out God's values with faith and hope in His promises.

**Jeremiah.** Baruch (and later editors) compiled Jeremiah's prophecies which predicted the coming judgment on the people of Jerusalem during the time when Assyria and Egypt threatened to invade and during the fulfillment of his prophecies when Babylon successfully conquered the southern kingdom of Judah and destroyed the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. His prophecies were somber and were spoken *in order to* motivate the Jews to return to obeying God's ways instead of excusing their sin because they thought God would protect them on account of their status as the chosen people and their possession of the Temple. Even though the Jews continued to reject his message and actually persecuted and imprisoned him, he did find hope in the new covenant community that God would one day institute.

**Lamentations.** Jeremiah recorded these five acrostic poems that have 22 lines each starting with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet *in order to* express his sadness over the destruction of Jerusalem and all of the visible signs of God's presence on earth even though he had hope that this punishment would purify the people from their sins.

**Ezekiel.** Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry with messages on the sinfulness of Judah and the massive judgment that was going to come upon it but changed his message after Jerusalem's destruction in 586 B.C. to promises of spiritual renewal. His prophecies of judgment are filled with object lessons and spiritual metaphors whereas his prophecies of restoration are mostly symbolic visions that use powerful imagery to depict a re-creation of Israel with a new covenant and new spiritual life. His prophetic messages were spoken *in order to* demonstrate that God's blessings and judgments are all designed to help people come to know that he is the Lord.

**Daniel.** The first six chapters in the book of Daniel (probably written down by a Jewish member of the royal court in the Persian Empire) provide a chronological record of Daniel's experience in the Babylonian exile *in order to* demonstrate how faith in God gave them special favor and protection under the Babylonian and Persian kings. However, Daniel 7:1-12:13 switches to a first-person account of Daniel's visions (possibly added centuries later around 163 B.C. when the Jews were in a war with a Seleucid ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes IV who defiled their Temple) and does not keep them in chronological order. These visions of the Persian Empire taking over the Babylonian Empire, the Greek Empire taking over the Persian Empire, and finally the Saints fighting for a kingdom against Antiochus Epiphanes were recorded *in order to* demonstrate God's providence in international affairs and to reinforce the hope of an everlasting kingdom to come.

**Hosea.** Hosea's marriage to a woman named Gomer who left him to become a prostitute served as a living example of God's relationship with Israel who had prostituted herself spiritually by serving other gods and partnering with nations who served other gods. Using this picture of Israel's adultery and God's devotion and unconditional love for her, Hosea rebuked the northern kingdom of Israel and threatened judgment *in order to* motivate her repentance and return to the merciful God who was loyally committed to caring for her.

**Joel.** Joel interprets a recent plague of locusts as a sign of divine judgment and predicts that the surrounding nations such as Egypt, Assyria, or possibly Babylon will likewise invade Judah and carry out a great time of judgment commonly referred to as a "Day of the Lord" in the book. He presents this gloomy picture of the coming "Day of the Lord" *in order to* motivate a change of heart and life that lead God to restore Judah and bless her people in fresh ways.

**Amos.** Amos, a shepherd and farmer from the south, prophesied against the northern kingdom of Israel during a time of great prosperity where many Israelites had become wealthy through trade but had also begun to take advantage of the poor and mistreat them in violation of God's law. So Amos describes their corruption in detail and their coming doom and judgment *in order to* motivate the rich and powerful Israelites to have compassion on the poorer common people and to create a fair and just society where the poor are free from oppression just like God's law mandates.

**Obadiah.** Obadiah prophesied a short but harsh critique against the people of Edom (descendants of Esau who lived southeast of Israel) who mistreated the Israelites by rejoicing over their suffering, stealing from them, imprisoning them, and killing them during Babylon's invasion of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem. His prediction of Edom's coming destruction was recorded *in order to* show the Israelites that God is just and faithful. He is just because he punishes the sins of the nations just as he has punished them for their sins, and he is faithful because he will one day restore his faithful followers in the gathering of a new Israel.

**Jonah.** The book of Jonah stands out from the other prophets as a narrative instead of a collection of prophetic sayings and visions. In the narrative Jonah attempts to disobey God's command to go to the capital of the Assyrian Empire, Nineveh, to warn them of coming divine judgment. Being an Israelite, Jonah hates the Assyrian people and sails away from Nineveh so that they will not have a chance to repent and escape God's judgment. However, God uses a big fish to redirect Jonah to Nineveh, the Ninevites do repent, and God does kindly retract his judgment—which angers Jonah. The narrative is recorded for an Israelite audience that believed God existed to take care of them only *in order to* demonstrate the grace and compassion that God gives to all nations.

**Micah.** Prophesying alongside Isaiah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Micah graphically describes the sins of Judah and her coming destruction while providing a hopeful picture of a pure remnant of Israelites who direct the nations to faithfully serve and worship God. Both the positive and negative messages of Micah are recorded *in order to* change the hearts and actions of the people in Judah.

**Nahum.** Nahum (a contemporary of Zephaniah) announced that the Assyrians and particularly their capital city of Nineveh fall victim to a great siege because of excessive pride, idolatry, brutality, and oppression. The announcement of Nineveh's coming destruction at the hands of the Babylonians was recorded *in order to* demonstrate God's just standard that he requires all nations to meet or face the consequences.

**Habakkuk.** Habakkuk's prophecy answers the question of how God's holy standards can endure human evils by promising that God does eventually punish those who do evil. This prophetic answer to the question specifically focused on when God will send the Babylonians to punish the sins of Judah was recorded *in order to* assure those who were living by God's holy standards that God is in control even though his justice operates by a different standard of time than our standard of time might operate.

**Zephaniah.** Zephaniah encourages individual people in Judah to humble themselves and obey the Lord in light of the coming national judgment, and he communicates that God intends to judge Judah and every nation in the world so that he can produce a purified, righteous remnant whom he can gather together as his people. Both the promises of judgment and of restoration are recorded *in order to* motivate faithfulness to God's covenant.

**Haggai.** Haggai's short message rebuked the Israelites who returned from exile under the new Persian Empire because they spent all their time and resources on building their own estates rather than reconstructing the Temple and making offerings for sins. God does promise to return eventually in the full power of his presence to the earth and cause a massive shake-up among the nations. This promise of his renewed and powerful presence on earth as well as the promise of better working and farming conditions were recorded *in order to* motivate the returning Israelites to put God first in their lives by building his House before they build their own houses.

**Zechariah.** Zechariah provides a number of mysterious symbolic visions about Jerusalem, the Temple, and God's representatives on earth *in order to* motivate the Israelites who returned from exile to rebuild the Temple and expect God to do something great in that place—which he eventually did through the Messiah.

**Malachi.** Malachi provides prophetic answers to the following questions: How have you loved us? (1:2-5), How have we shown contempt for your name? (1:6-2:9), Why do we profane the covenant? (2:10-16), How have we wearied him? (2:17-3:6), What have we said against you? (3:13-4:3). The book of Malachi records the specific answers to these questions that generally inform the wicked about the certainty of their judgment while affirming that God will love and bless his people as they turn to him in faith and obedience *in order to* motivate the proper respect for the Lord that one should demonstrate in word and action.

## NEW TESTAMENT

**Matthew.** Matthew (also called Levi) described how Jesus was the promised Messiah that his Jewish audience had been expecting on account of the promises in the prophets *in order to* convince them that his teaching should be treated as authoritative directions from God.

**Mark.** John Mark, writing with the help of Simon Peter, described how Jesus' actions proved him to be the Son of God who is starting a new spiritual community founded on the 12 disciples and in whom is the forgiveness of sin on account of his divine authority and suffering. Mark compiled his stories about Jesus *in order to* promote faith among his (probably Roman) readers needed to enter into this new spiritual community by repenting and believing the good news.

**Luke.** Luke describes how Jesus came as the Savior promised to Israel as well as the judge who promised to punish Israel and her corrupt religious leadership for rejecting Him. Luke wrote to a Gentile audience *in order to* demonstrate how Jesus had created a new people of God whose members were determined by their relationship to the new leader, Jesus, and not by their ethnicity or conformity to Jewish customs.

**John.** John describes Jesus' life and ministry in unique philosophical language that his audience in western Asia Minor could better understand. He wanted to communicate that Jesus was the Son of God who had come to provide a way for the entire world to experience an eternal and extraordinary life *in order to* motivate his Hellenistic audience to believe in Jesus and experience this new life.

**Acts.** Luke, the author, recorded how the new people of God that Jesus started expanded first in Jerusalem, then throughout Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the Roman Empire on account of the missionary efforts of the apostles and particularly the apostle Paul *in order to* show how God continued to work out his plan of salvation in human history even while enemies opposed the spread of the gospel.

**Romans.** Paul wrote from near Corinth to Roman Christians whom he had never met because the Jews and Gentiles in the churches there were fighting among each other over whom God favored more and what was required to be a full member of Christ's church. Paul explains the universal sinfulness of all people, the equality of every person who enters God's people through faith in Jesus, the freedom from having to keep the Old Covenant law with its customs of circumcision, festivals, and dietary laws, and the important role that the Jews played in producing the Savior of the world. This deep theological teaching rooted in the Old Testament scriptures which is followed by specific recommendations about how the Romans should act was written *in order to* promote humility and respect among the Jewish and Gentile Christians by recognizing their unique roles in God's plan of salvation while uniting them through their common identity as sinners who were saved by grace through faith in Jesus. Paul needed a united Roman Church to support his missionary trip to Spain.

**1 Corinthians.** Paul wrote the Christians in Corinth to provide solutions to problems that they were having with church groups competing against one another, immoral people not being corrected, marriage practices, interacting with the non-believing community, and maintaining order in their church services. Paul wrote this letter like most of the others *in order to* help the church members get along with each other.

**2 Corinthians.** Paul wrote his second letter to the Christians in Corinth *in order to* defend against attacks that local leaders and traveling teachers were making against the validity of Paul's ministry so that the Corinthian believers would be able to know what real imitation of Christ's ministry really looks like.



**Galatians.** Paul wrote the churches in the region of Galatia to disprove the Jewish idea that a person had to be circumcised and follow other Old Covenant laws if he wanted to be accepted by God *in order to* teach that trusting and following Jesus is the only way for God to accept you since you cannot be good enough on your own.

**Ephesians.** While he was in prison, Paul wrote the believers in Ephesus to explain how Jesus had fulfilled God's eternal plan of removing the barrier of the Old Covenant Law that divided Jews and Gentiles so that all people could be united in a new spiritual community formed by God's grace and through personal faith. Paul had to demonstrate also that the removal of the requirement to obey the Law did not remove the Christian's pursuit of a holy and wise lifestyle that imitated the forgiveness, integrity, kindness, and humility of Jesus. This letter was sent to Ephesus *in order to* get the Jews to accept the Gentiles and to get them both to live by the example of Jesus Christ instead of the sinful world all around them.

**Philippians.** While Paul was in prison, he wrote his good friends in Philippi who had helped him often *in order to* unite them together as his joyful partners committed to advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Colossians.** While Paul was in prison, he wrote to the Christians at Colossae about the superiority and sufficiency of Christ and argued that kindness, humility, forgiveness, and patience are the true marks of a person who has identified himself with Christ *in order to* correct the strange teaching there that required strict fasting, the observance of special days, and the worship of angels and did not acknowledge the sufficiency of Christ's atonement or his fully divine nature.

**1 & 2 Thessalonians.** Paul wrote both letters to the believers at Thessalonica in the same year *in order to* describe his heartfelt concern and sacrificial ministry to them, to encourage their growth in Christian character, and to correct their misunderstanding about the coming of Christ on the Day of the Lord.

**1 Timothy.** After years of ministry Paul wrote to a young pastor named Timothy who was leading the church at Ephesus *in order to* help him respond to false teachers and to advise him on how to organize church worship services and appoint good church leaders.

**2 Timothy.** In this last letter of Paul's life written from a Roman prison cell while facing death, Paul sends more personal advice to Timothy *in order to* encourage Timothy to endure all opposition as a faithful witness of Jesus and to strategically pass along his understanding of the Gospel and the Old Testament to men who will teach others, while identifying and avoiding selfish men who only want to argue and to take advantage of people.

**Titus.** At the same time he wrote 1 Timothy, Paul wrote to Titus who had been assigned the role of pastor on the island of Crete and needed to get the church there in order. So Paul compiled his thoughts about church leadership and his warnings and responses to the incorrect teaching that was circulating on Crete. The letter was sent to Titus *in order to* help him identify good leaders, to help him respond to the good and bad teaching there, and to give specific advice for each group of people who participated in the church.

**Philemon.** Paul wrote this brief letter to a man named Philemon who was a part of the church in Colossae. Philemon's slave Onesimus had run away from Philemon but became a Christian after meeting Paul in Rome, and Paul had instructed him to do the right thing and return home to his master. Paul wrote this letter *in order to* explain why Philemon should kindly receive Onesimus back as a brother in Christ instead of punishing him.

**Hebrews.** An unknown author (possibly Barnabas and/or Paul) writes to a group of Jewish Christians who are being heavily persecuted for their faith in Jesus *in order to* encourage and to teach them why they should not turn back to their old Jewish ways of going to the Temple in Jerusalem so that a human priest can make sacrifices for their sins. To accomplish this task he shows that Jesus is the only great priest that they need, he provided the only necessary sacrifice for their sins, and God's true dwelling is in heaven not Jerusalem.

**James.** At a time when believers were fighting among each other and the rich were not helping the poor in the midst of economic persecution and oppression, James writes *in order to* rebuke the churches for their fake faith that is not leading them to pull together and help one another as true believers in Christ would. So he gives a great amount of clear ways that they could be demonstrating their faith through actions.

**1 Peter.** Peter wrote to Christians who were discouraged and somewhat bitter because of the persecution that they were facing. He reminded them of the privileges that they have in their relationship with Christ and the commitment to holiness in all circumstances that they made at conversion *in order to* motivate his readers to stand firm in their commitment to Christ even though they faced all kinds of suffering.

**2 Peter.** Peter wrote this letter *in order to* encourage Christians throughout the eastern Roman Empire to continue growing in godly character and to watch out for deceptive people who are teaching that God is not in control of the world and that there is no judgment to come or afterlife when one dies.

**1 John.** John the apostle wrote down all of these basic truths about how to tell if you really do have a right relationship with God and are teaching the true gospel *in order to* help the churches (probably in western Asia Minor) know the difference between false teaching and the true teaching about Jesus Christ and the difference between false believers who were misleading people and true believers who knew the truth and were led by the Spirit of God.

**2 John.** John wrote this brief letter *in order to* warn the church about false teachers who are traveling from church to church denying that Jesus was God in human flesh.

**3 John.** John wrote this brief letter *in order to* rebuke a dominating elder who refuses to give hospitality to any strangers who come to teach.

**Jude.** Jude, the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus, was primarily concerned with a dangerous group of people that was teaching Christians to live sinful lives and not to believe in a coming judgment after death (the same group of false teachers condemned in 2 Peter). So he wrote this brief letter *in order to* describe who they were, how dangerous they were, and how the believers should respond to them.

**Revelation.** The book of Revelation is a compilation of symbolic visions that John recorded and sent to seven churches in Western Asia Minor where he spent many years ministering and to whom are written seven separate edicts in Revelation 2-3. These symbolic visions that John has when an angel takes him up to heaven (Rev 4-5) are organized around the opening of seven seals (Rev 6-7), the sound of seven trumpets (Rev 8-11), the pouring out of seven bowls (Rev 15-16), and the destruction of a symbolic city called Babylon (Rev 17-18). John himself tells us the general timeframe for these events by starting and ending his book with the comments "these things must soon take place" and "the time is near." Overall, John recorded his visions on the island of Patmos *in order to* encourage a group of believers who were also going through a deadly time of persecution to persevere in the faith because Jesus was in control and would ultimately punish the unfaithful and reward his servants in the end.