

How should I understand the Bible?

By [Zin Yi](#)

The Bible is filled with many fascinating historical accounts. To the cursory reader, its pages may seem to be filled with illustrations of the sure perils of unethical behavior, or the blessings which accompany obedience. Although the saints of God gladly confess the infallibility of the Scriptures in all subject matters with which it deals, the central message of the Scriptures relates to God's plan of redeeming, through the actual, finished, vicarious atoning work of the Lord Jesus, the elect amidst fallen mankind.

This our first principle is readily validated by Isaiah 55:11 which declares, "*...my word... shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and...prosper.*" [*Emphasis added] What is that which God's Word "shall accomplish"? In chapter 45:23 we read, "*...the word...shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow...*" [* Emphasis added] God teaches us here that His Word has a specific purpose, and that is to exalt Christ as the King of Kings, in that "every knee," those both of the just and the unjust, shall bow. That is, His Word will unfailingly accomplish the salvation of the elect, and, as the two-edged Sword of the Spirit, condemn the wicked. On this point, Christ teaches, "*...His commandment is life everlasting*" (John 12:50). The prophet Ezekiel also confirms the quickening power of the word of God in Ezekiel 33:15: "*If the wicked...walk in the statutes of life...he shall surely live...not die.*" Most clear, however, is the statement of John 20:31: "*But these are written...that believing ye might have life through his name*" (see also Proverbs 4:20-22). Is this merely referring to the contents of the gospel of John when, under inspiration, he states, "But these are written"? Verse 30 clarifies the issue: "*...many other signs did Jesus...which are not written in this book.*" "This book" can only mean the whole Bible, as we find the expression "this book" four times in Revelation 22:18-19, which effectively seals closed the Bible; terminating any possibility of continuing revelation from God to man. This important truth establishes for us a crucial aspect of the nature of God's Word - that which is recorded in the Bible (no matter how a passage may appear to be unrelated to some aspect of the gospel of salvation) is precisely, in both its content and form, that which God has intended for His own infinite purposes, and is that which God the Spirit will utilize to pierce sin-cursed sinners; to the "*dividing asunder... of the joints and marrow,*" whether unto salvation or condemnation. Tying all of this with 2 Tim. 3:16-17 teaches us that "All Scripture" [* Emphasis added] is given to teach us something about the marvelous plan of salvation God has provided those who were on their way to eternal damnation. After all, Christ, as the embodiment of the "Word" of God, the Gospel Incarnate, came to be "the light of men" - that is, to be the way of salvation for His elect.

The second principle in comparing Scripture with itself is that the Bible itself must be our guide as we prayerfully approach the Scriptures. It must be its own commentary, its own dictionary. For example, one could never apply certain characteristics which a secular writing ascribed to an animal to those which appear in the Bible. The reverent student must allow the Bible, rather than the world around him, or any patterns found therein, to define the manner in which an idea, a phrase, or a symbol is being used of God. When David, for example, confesses that "The Lord is my shepherd," could we immediately assume, in this

the 20th century of high-power and high-income careers, the intent of his statement to mean that God occupies a somewhat humble station in the hierarchy of vocational order? This cannot be so. Instead, the reference emphasizes the wonderful, spiritual truth that eternal God, like a shepherd, seeks (Luke. 15:4-7), delivers (2 Corinthians 1:10), and feeds (Isaiah 40:11) His own children: "...I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd... will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out...I will feed them in a good pasture..." (Ezekiel 34:11, 14). In fact, the New Testament clarifies this reference when we are met with Christ's own declaration, "*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine*" (John 10:14). Not only is He the Good Shepherd, but He is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) among shepherds ("King of Kings, Lord of Lords"), Who "careth" for His flock.

The third principle we must keep in mind as we study the scriptures is that God never contradicts Himself, and therefore, it follows that His word is all-together cohesive, all-together harmonious. Thus, any understanding we have about a particular word, passage, or doctrine must be consistent with the rest of the Scriptures. The entirety of the Scriptures bear live witness to the truthfulness of a conclusion. The battle between the doctrine of natural man's spiritual death and that of "free will" rages on for the very reason that those proponents of man's power to participate in the salvation miracle cling desperately to the varied, individual passages of the Holy Writ which seem to imply an innate ability in the fallen creature to please God. Nevertheless, the Scriptures as a whole will not allow for any strain of a "gospel" of synergism - that of the works of fallen man operating in conjunction with the operation of the sovereign grace of God. For that matter, any and all creature-invented, carnally-motivated falsehoods which are not in agreement with the awesome, singular truth that is the Bible - no matter how "rationally" defended - must be utterly discounted. A simple case in point: isolating John 14:15, 21, 24 and 1 John 2:3-5; 3:9, one would, from the truths of those passages alone, have to conclude that upon salvation, the new Christian must be able to keep all the commandments of God perfectly. He simply will be unable to sin. This faulty and therefore dangerous understanding, however, would then render the many examples of true believers in the Bible as those of utter reprobates - those who never were saved, after all, including the apostle Paul himself. But it is in fact through Paul's personal struggles with his post-regenerational dual-nature that God teaches, all Christians throughout the ages, the inevitable, humbling reality of sanctification being a process, rather than an event; that until the glorification of the bodies of that last great day, even true believers will sin, often battling with "sin which doth so easily beset," for the flesh that is not redeemed continues to lust after sin: "*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind...*" (Romans 7:23). Thus, we now see that it is in his spirit essence that the believer will perfectly "keep His commandments." This conclusion we can trust, for it does no violence to the teachings of the Holy Writ, but rather harmonizes perfectly with the unbreakable integrity of the whole Bible.

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Good Message Foundation / 1072 S. De Anza Blvd #532 / San Jose, CA 95129 USA

Phone:+1(408)741-0219 / FAX: +1(775)305-3953

Info@GoodMessage.org / www.GoodMessage.org

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