



CAPITOL COMMISSION

How To Study The Bible- Part II?

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Summary to date:

Why study the Bible?

Because it best answers the questions:

Where did I come?

Why am I here?

Why is there such discord and evil in the world?

Is there a solution and/or resolution to this mess?

Last week we began an exploration of How to Study the Bible and considered a number of the rules: labeled Hermeneutics. We also gave attention to the Apostle Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "... correctly handle the word of truth..." and interacted as to possibilities. (Hopefully, the handout you received will prove beneficial in the days ahead.)

This week we consider some of the obvious tools to assist one in Bible Study beginning with The Bible.

Which Bible?

Is there more than one?

The word "Bible" is from the Greek biblion, meaning book. There is an accepted book for the Hebrew, for the Roman Catholic, for the Orthodox (of many stripes), and for the Protestant religious communities.

Each of these "Bibles" contains what the respective group considers "canonical", that is accepted according to a rule or standard (the meaning of the word: Canon)

The variations among the canons are significant.

How each canon was determined is beyond the scope of this study, but worthy of consideration as one progresses.

The Hebrew bible contains the smallest number of books 39 (using the Protestant Christian numbering), the Protestant Bible contains 66, the Roman Catholic Bible contains 77 and one of the branches of Orthodoxy (the Oriental) the largest number at 85.

We will consider the versions of the Bible flowing out of the reformation containing the 66 books of the Old and New Testament.

The presence of many versions is not a recent phenomenon. With the advent of Gutenberg's printing press, it wasn't long before multiple versions appeared on the historical scene!

(Many of the books contained in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox versions are valuable for insight and understanding of the cultural period in which they were written, but are not considered "inspired" by God within the Protestant tradition. During the course of the study we will have many occasions to interact over some of them).

Which Version?

We are blessed today with such a wide variety of translations naturally varying from best to less than the best. For those attending the study, a handout will be provided as a guide to discriminate between the versions. The handout will illustrate the various translational rationales behind the particular versions.

As mentioned in last week's study we will proceed on the "faith" assumption that the Bible **IS** the word of God, written

Study Bibles

Today, we are able to obtain versions of the Bible called Study Bibles. These are very helpful. But the individual

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engaged in study needs to recognize they are written from a particular theological perspective.

But, it would be my suggestion that when engaged in personal Bible study the individual first embarks on the study with a “text only” edition. This forces the student to consider the text with the support of the other tools we will consider

As we discussed last week, we are seeking to determine:

- 1) **What does the text say?**
- 2) **What does the text mean, and**
- 3) **Is it applicable today?**

The Study Bible through its notes will seek to tell you what it means from the perspective of the Study Bible author.

The study bibles have much scholarship behind them, such that the beginner in Bible study is reluctant to question what “the notes” say.

But, all scholars have a personal bias which often governs what they see in the text so the beginner is better served doing their initial study from a text only edition. When your personal study is initially concluded, it is wise to check one’s personal work against not only one study Bible version, but, if possible, against a couple of them.

Additional Tools

1. Bible Dictionary

Here we learn what the words meant in their cultural settings along with other helpful insights into the time of the writings.

2. Bible Atlas

This is a tool which enables us to grasp just what the geography was during the period of history when the text was penned. Recognizing the Bible

encompasses a significant period of history, this tool is valuable in aiding us to bring our thinking into that time frame.

3. Bible Encyclopedia

This tool is exceedingly helpful as it addresses many topics contained in scripture, such as what was Corban? What was the Sanhedrin? Who were the Zealots, the Essenes, etc.? What is the significance of Pella, Babylonia, Assyria, and a multitude of other issues helpful to proper biblical understanding? All of it has been written on a level for the average individual.

4. Bible handbook

This is a very handy tool. It takes one through the Bible, book by book covering in a brief manner much of the information we have already considered. It too is generally written from a particular bias, hence the wisdom in acquiring a number of handbooks. For those attending the study a number of recommendations will be offered with a corresponding rationale in selection. But, as a recommendation the volume written by Henrietta Mears entitled **What The Bible Is All About** is without peer.

5. Bible Concordance

An **exhaustive** concordance, since this volume will list every instance of every word in the Bible.

Summary

These tools will fill out an adequate quiver for one embarking on personal bible Study.