

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 11
Three-Step Bible Study Procedure

I. Observation: what is the content of the passage?

- A. Read material carefully; identify key words and info that answers the who, what, when, where, why and how questions.
- B. Identify key thought of passage: Divide into paragraphs and make outline of the passage;
- C. Write down an "ignorance list": questions about the passage for which you desire to find answers;

II. Interpretation: what was the author's intended meaning?

- A. Identify genre of passage (e.g. poetry, historical narrative, command, promise, local correction, etc.);
- B. Identify figures of speech (hyperbole, anthropomorphism, apocalyptic imagery, poetic parallelism, etc.);
- C. Look up unfamiliar words in the passage, using lexicons and cross-referencing tools;
- D. How does the thought of the passage fit in and interact with the context of the immediate discussion, that of the book in which it is found, and that of the whole Bible?

III. Application: Ask appropriate questions about respective types of passages. For example:

A. About promises, ask:

- 1) To whom was the promise originally made?
- 2) What did the promise mean in its original context?
- 3) Are there stated or implied conditions attached to the promise?
- 4) Does it apply to parties (e.g. "me"?) beyond the original recipient(s)?
- 5) If so, am I realizing this promise in my experience?
- 6) Can I think of (write them down) examples from scripture, or the lives of myself or others, which are examples of God's fulfilling this promise to others (or me)?
- 7) Under what foreseeable circumstance or test in my life will I particularly need to remember this promise and count upon it?

B. About passages describing a duty (a command or instruction), ask:

- 1) Is this passage really presenting a duty (prescriptive) or is it merely descriptive of what someone did without necessarily endorsing it?
- 2) To whom does this duty apply? Is it for me? Biblically, how can I know?
- 3) What was God's underlying concern in stating this command? (How is it to be obeyed in the spirit of it as well as the letter?)
- 4) What character trait would be exhibited in the consistent performance of this duty? Do I need work in this area? How can I develop this in my character?
- 5) How did Jesus fulfill this duty in His life?
- 6) Am I violating this duty in any way? If so, what specifically has prevented obedience (e.g. ignorance, a blind spot, negligence, stubbornness)?
- 7) What specific resolution should I make to bring my life into conformity with it?

C. About passages that reveal God's character, disposition, or priorities, ask:

- 1) What is God revealing about His mind and heart in this passage?
- 2) In what way does this differ from my previous perceptions or opinions about God?
- 3) What examples in scripture, Christian biography, or my own experience, demonstrate this characteristic in God's nature?
- 4) How does my own character need to be changed to resemble God's in this respect?

D. About Bible characters, ask:

- 1) Is this person commended in scripture?
- 2) For what is this person commended?
- 3) Is he or she commended specifically for the behavior exhibited in this passage?
- 4) Did this character make some blunder from which I can learn?
- 5) If so, what lessons can I learn?
- 6) What can I learn about life and God from God's overall dealings in his or her life?
- 7) What particular virtue does this person exemplify, that might inspire me to emulate?

E. About prophetic predictions, ask:

- 1) What is predicted here?
- 2) Has this been fulfilled in history subsequent to the prediction being given?
- 3) Does the New Testament indicate that the fulfillment is spiritual?
- 4) If so, does the spiritual fulfillment exhaust the sense in which fulfillment is to be expected?
- 5) Is this an instance of a prophecy that was conditional, and which will not be fulfilled because of a failure to meet the conditions?

IV. Other Considerations

A. Promises:

"But the anointing you have received of him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things...you shall abide in him." (I John 2:27)

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God...and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith..." (James 1:5)

"Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things." (II Timothy 2:7)

B. Prayers (from Psalm 119):

"Blessed are you, O Lord! Teach me your statutes." (v. 12)

"Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from your law." (v. 18)

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end." (v. 33)

"Give me understanding and I shall keep your law, indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart." (v. 34)