

UNDERSTANDING THE ONE STORY OF SCRIPTURE

Week 1 – How Am I Reading the Bible?

September 8, 2026

We're going to continue to observe how passages in the Hebrew Scriptures connect to NT passages. Were you aware that Genesis 22 finds fulfillment throughout the Bible and ultimate fulfillment in Revelation 22? We're going to grasp the flow of the books. How and why does Genesis flow into Exodus? For what purpose? God has a plan and a purpose.

The Bible is a history book, a supernatural history book. The Bible records real earthly events. We have the names of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob...and their years of life on earth. We know the reigning years of ancient kings. And, we know from Scripture when Jesus was born, and approximately when He died, and on which Feasts of Israel He died and rose again. Scripture emphasizes that God actively directs human history. The Bible blends historical narratives with divine intervention, miracles, and fulfilled prophecies originating from God rather than human intervention!

Jesus quoted Deut. 8:3 when He told Satan...who was testing Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus adamantly stated, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God* (Matt. 4:4)

God's WORD...His communicating to us...needs to be our focus...not our preconceived notions. God communicates to us in Scripture what He so desires for us to know...and in so doing...to know God personally!

The Hebrew Scriptures/the OT is not laid out in strict chronological order. The Torah and historical books: Genesis to Deuteronomy followed by Joshua to Esther are chronological.

Poetry & Wisdom – Job to Song of Solomon overlap with the historical books.

The Prophets – Isaiah to Malachi overlap with the historical books.

How many of you have ever had difficulty understanding a one-story message in Scripture? Here's a question you might not have thought to ask. "How am I reading the Bible?"

There was a young boy in India who was told about Jesus. He placed His trust in Jesus as His Savior....

This young boy was given a Bible – he was given the NT.

He DEVoured that Bible! This young boy, as a brand-new believer in Jesus, read the Bible correctly!!!

The first verse in the NT, *This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.*

This boy OBSERVED the first verse in the book of Matthew... “What I’m reading is telling me about Jesus who had family in the past. He was related to specific people.”

Then this boy ASKED QUESTIONS, “Who is David?” “Who is Abraham?” “How can Jesus be the Son of both?”

This boy continued to OBSERVE, “Jesus has a title, the Messiah.”

More QUESTIONS, “What does Messiah mean?”

More QUESTIONS, “When did Jesus live? Where did He live? Was the Messiah an important title? Why?”

More OBSERVATIONS, “Jesus must have been important as He begins the first book of the Bible.” “But, this book of Matthew seems to be a continuation of another part of the Bible. I need to find out!”

2

While this young boy OBSERVED what he read, he realized much! He ran to the couple who gave him the Bible...thanked them for it, and asked them, “Where is PART A?”

“How are we reading the Bible?” Are we reading the Bible literally? The boy in India was reading the NT literally. He wasn’t attempting to find symbolic meanings. Reading the NT literally caused him to realize that something had led up to what he was reading and he wanted to understand the backdrop. Were you aware that Genesis is the backdrop for Revelation?

Are we reading the Bible literally which means...what the plain sense of the words mean? Are we observing what God is communicating in the text? Are we asking questions? Are we looking for answers – in Scripture? OR, are we bringing preconceived ideas we have about the Bible into our understanding of the text...’cause, after all, we might be thinking, the Bible is so difficult to understand!! Are we then giving our preconceived ideas more importance than God’s word? Jesus, while praying to God the Father prior to His crucifixion, said, ...*Your word is truth* (John 17:17).

“How should we be reading the Bible?” We need to read the Bible literally – understanding the plain sense of the words. This is the “Golden Rule of Biblical Interpretation (hermeneutics)”: When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.” Read words with their normal, everyday meaning.

Look at the CONTEXT – what comes before and after the verse you are reading. Before and after – includes the context of the entire Bible. And, as the Bible has a one story that flows, absorbing the context surrounding a verse or a passage is NOT difficult.

Please don’t search for a deeper meaning of the Scripture you’re reading. I will assure you that if you find what you think is a deeper meaning for a specific verse/passage – someone

else, who is looking for a deeper meaning for the same verse/passage – will find a different meaning than what you have found.

Take note of who is speaking to whom. Is God speaking to Israel or to the nations or to an individual? About what is God speaking?

Ask re: the text you're reading, "What led up to this?" What's the backdrop? Genesis has a backdrop!!!! "WOAH, there's something before Genesis?"...you might be asking? YES! Eternity past!!!! AND, Genesis looks forward to Revelation 22 and eternity future!!

In our study of Scripture, we need to OBSERVE the text and ASK QUESTIONS questions about what you're observing. I've stopped asking people, "What do you think that verse means?" Sharing our opinions equates to conveying what it means to us – individually. What a passage from the Bible means to you personally, most likely means something different to what it means to the person you're sitting alongside, and from the person opposite you. So, what are we left with? We're NOT left with the true meaning of the text – of what GOD has intended it to mean.

In our desire to understand GOD's WORD, we are going to approach Scripture desiring to understand what GOD, as the ultimate author, intended to communicate! Bible scholars entitle this "Authorial Intent." God's intent! During Jesus' ministry, the people MARVELED at His teaching. They realized He was speaking with AUTHORITY. Many during Jesus' ministry came to faith in Him as the Messiah for Whom they were waiting!

Hugely, massively crucial...grab hold of the Holy Spirit. We are told in Isa. 11:2 – the 7-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit - *the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.* The Holy Spirit

3

gives us understanding of God's Word! Ask the Holy Spirit for understanding. What a powerful way to communicate more with the Holy Spirit!

We desire to sharpen our Bible literacy. Bible literacy is the ability to read and understand the Bible – the 66 books! It is much more than just knowing a few famous stories. It means knowing the one story of the Bible from start to finish – to understand God's purpose, plan, and heart! More simply and pointedly stated, the definition of Bible literacy – knowing what the Bible means!

Gen. 1:1 - *In the beginning God* PERIOD! There's no explanation for God. GOD IS!! The Holy Spirit gave me the understanding and the faith to believe God IS – PERIOD! And, the adventure began – and it continues!

Let's ask questions...

Gen. 1:1a – *In the beginning...* the beginning of what? *In the beginning God....* What do we know about God? Our ETERNAL God has NO beginning and NO end. Our God is ETERNAL! He is before creation! He is the Creator. He is ABOVE time and space. SO – what “beginning” is this?

Gen. 1:1 - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

This “beginning” in Genesis 1 tells us that God created within time and space. It appears that God, Who is above time and space, created time and space and the heavens and the earth simultaneously. That's heavy!

What came before Genesis 1:1? Eternity past!!! GOD!!!!

Does Scripture mention eternity past...before the creation of the heavens and the earth? The answer is “Yes!” But, stay tuned!

This might be the most detailed...in the Hebrew, Gen. 1:1 reads, *Bereshit bara Elohim – in beginning God created.*

Elohim bara. *Elohim* is “God” in the plural; “*bara*” is “created” in the singular!! A plural noun and a singular verb! That's grammatically incorrect! BUT NOT WITH GOD!!! God is a plurality – a unified plurality – THREE IN ONE! How do we know that *Elohim bara* is speaking of the Trinity? Are you ready for vv. 2-3?

Gen. 1:2-3 – *And the Spirit of God was hovering* (in the Hebrew...a vibrant shaking-full of energy and life) *over the face of the waters.* ³ *Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.*

Who is being introduced to us at the very outset of Scripture? The Trinity! We read of God the Father, the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit, and then God SPOKE – the Word of God! Who is the Word? Jesus, God the Son. John 1:1 – *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Jesus is God, God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity! The whole entire divine essence of God – ALL Who He is belongs equally to each of the three Persons: Father, Holy Spirit, and the Word, Jesus!

God created mankind in innocence...not perfect because God alone is perfect (Gen. 1 & 2)... and we know that man sinned (Gen. 3). Mankind was made in the image of God with intellect,

emotions, and a will. God has intellect (God is ALL KNOWING); emotions (grieving over man's sin; God so LOVED the world); a will – Isa. 41:10 - ***I will strengthen you, I will help***

4

you, I will uphold you; Isa. 46:4 - I will sustain you and I will carry you. And, cross reference. (I Thess. 5:18; I Peter 2:15). ***I will carry out My purpose, My plan.*** God gave man freedom of choice; God didn't program man (Gen. 1:26). God desired man's genuine love.

God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion (man was given the responsibility to serve, nurture, and rule on behalf of God (Gen. 1:28 NIV)...over every living thing that moves on the earth!!! RULE NOW? NO! Stay tuned!

Gen. 1:9, 18, 24 - AND, it was GOOD. Gen. 1:31 - ...it was VERY GOOD (Gen. 1:31)!

Gen. 2:1-2 - God completed His work. *Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work...and He rested on the seventh day...*

Gen. 2:4-25 – These verses fill in the details of man's creation on day six...including God's planting of the garden of Eden...and God's directive to the man...*Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.* What did the man know about death?

Gen. 2:18 – God said, *It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*

Gen. 2:25 – *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*

Gen. 3:1 – Now the serpent..."Now" does not indicate a specific point in time. "Now" is a literary bridge to introduce a new scene, a new character, or a dramatic shift in the narrative! ***WHAT HAPPENED? ...The serpent....*** "The" is distinctive,,not any serpent.... ...To be continued....

Q&A

QUESTIONS

Introduce yourselves.

How are you reading the Bible?

Have you ever considered that the entire Bible is one story?

Has the Bible seemed fragmented to you?

What was new to you from Genesis 1:1 to Gen. 2:25?

Why did God create the heavens and the earth? Why did God create man?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Reread Week 1's handout with Bible references.

Re: the Bible references in the handout, jot down observations and ask questions.

Pray about sharing what you've learned in this first lesson with someone.

Read Week 2's handout when you receive it.