

# Biblical Rules of Interpretation

2 page introduction by Ela

The following gives **SOUND** principles for Scriptural interpretation in **3** groups:  
**2** pages, 22 pages and 112 pages.

My earthly father said: *“I don’t chew my cabbage twice!”*

My Heavenly Father states the same below:

**Psa. 33:9** For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

**Mal. 3:6** “For I am Yahuah, **I do not change.**”

**Psa. 89:34** “My covenant I will **not break**, **Nor alter the word** that has gone **out of My lips.**”

**Heb. 13:8** Yahushuah the Messiah is **the same** yesterday, today, and **forever**.

**Prov. 16:20** He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever **trusts in God**, happy is he.

**Ecc. 3:14** I know that whatever Elohim does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it.

**There are NO Buts!!! or What About!!!**

**No one**, not Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and especially Paul (where most of false doctrine comes from by twisting his words) or any of the Old or New Testament writers **can ever** change, *alter*, one word that is a direct quotes from our Heavenly Father or our Saviour, (Psalm 89:34) nor *one jot or one tittle from the law* (Torah of Yah). Matt 5:17

**Deut. 12:28** “Do what is good and right in the sight of Yahuah.  
<sup>32</sup> **You shall not add to it nor take away from it.**”

God said it!

I believe it!

That settles it!

Will you have a special trust in the *spoken* Word of God?

(Yes I will!)

(No I won't.)

## Scriptures ONLY

Let's read **Isaiah 8:20** it's the **most important** text for Sound Doctrine.

**Isa. 8:20** To the **law**<sup>8451</sup> (Strong's <sup>8451</sup>, *Torah*, the first five books of the Bible, God's instruction manual for *Eternal Life*) and to the **testimony**<sup>8584</sup> (The rest of the Scriptures that testify to the Torah) if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is **NO LIGHT** (no truth) in them. (The absence of light = Darkness = Satanic doctrine.)

**All Eternal Life doctrine must come from the law, Torah**, the first five books of the Scriptures which are supported, amplified, and defined within the **testimonies** from the remainder the Old Testament or else *there is no light in it*.

### All studies must follow **Christ's** example.

**Luke 24:27** **And beginning at Moses** (Always start at Genesis and the rest of the first 5 books of Moses, using "*The Law of First Precedence*") and all the prophets, (The rest of the Old Testament) He (*Christ*) expounded to them in **all the Scriptures** (This confirms that all of the Scriptures are to be used) the things concerning **himself**. (One subject)

Christ used **one subject** and **every text** in all **Scriptures** and came to **one conclusion**. It is very important to note that Christ used **only the Old Testament to prove sound doctrine**.

When confronted with the Satan, **Christ gave us an example of how we are to answer Scriptural questions; we must follow His example** with:

**"It is written"** scripture dictated by God or **"Thus says God"** quotes (**in red**).

**The Bible** is to be understood as **literal** unless coercive **evidence suggested otherwise**, e.g., obvious poetic constructions, allegorical passages, literary figures of speech, prophetic symbols, and typological structures.

Biblical truths can and should be **explained in simple language** that all people can understand.

One saying of the Saviour must **not** be made **to destroy another**. We are to search its pages, **not** for proof to sustain **our opinions**, but in order to know **what God says**.

**The Golden Rule of Hermeneutics:**

**“If the plain sense, makes common sense, seek no other sense.”**

## **Some Basic Rules of Interpretation**

22 pages by

<http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page502.html>

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## THE GOLDEN RULE OF INTERPRETATION

SINCE the Scriptures are **God-breathed** and are **very specific**, there is only one way for us to arrive at the purpose which the Holy Spirit had in mind in giving His message. **God said what He meant and meant exactly what He said.** In order to understand the Scriptures, we must know the use of language: the grammar, the specific meaning of words, and the fundamental laws of speech—especially the principles which are characteristic of the Scriptures. Since the space is limited for this discussion, let us look only at the most important and fundamental rules of hermeneutics, the most basic—and indeed the all-inclusive one—of which is the Golden Rule of Interpretation.

Christ gave the Golden Rule of conduct which is "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). This is a basic criterion in one's relation to his fellow-men. The Golden Rule of Interpretation is just as fundamental in the field of the interpretation of language as our God's precept is in the realm of ethics and conduct.

Origen, a great Christian scholar who lived during the latter part of the second and the first part of the third century of the Christian Era, came under the influence of Greek philosophy in the form of Neoplatonism. He adopted some of the so-called principles of this philosophic system and evolved what has become known as the allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures. According to this theory there is a spiritual meaning of the Bible in addition to that which is plain and obvious. Origen accepted the literal interpretation of the Word but claimed that in addition to it there was this hidden, spiritual meaning. Everything to him was therefore allegorical. He read into the Scriptures this so-called spiritual meaning and built up a mystical system of theology. This method of interpreting the Word wrought havoc in the early church and started what is known as "spiritualizing the Scriptures." Its baneful effects have been felt throughout the centuries. The Christian world has never entirely freed itself from the tentacles of this heathen, subjective approach to God's holy, infallible Word.

The only antidote to this vicious method of handling the Bible is the principle called the Golden Rule of Interpretation: When the plain, obvious sense of Scripture makes common sense we are to seek no other sense. We are to stop there and are not to read subjectively into the record something that is foreign to the context. The Word of God is spiritual and does not need our "doctoring" it in order to make it more so. If one man can read into a given context his own ideas and claim that such is the significance of the passage, another can do the same thing and can read into the record his

conception of its meaning. Whenever we adopt the spiritualizing method, we open the floodgates to every type of speculation, suggestion, and theorizing. We must not therefore go beyond the plain, literal meaning of the Scriptures unless the facts of the context indicate a deeper, hidden, or symbolic meaning. When therefore such evidence is lacking, one must positively accept the literal meaning of the text. On the other hand, if there is absolute proof that the language is, for instance, symbolic, then we are to interpret the given passage in the light of all the evidence, not only of the immediate connection, but in the light of that which is found in parallel cases—if there be such.

But suppose the plain, literal meaning does not make common sense. In that event we may be assured that, since the Scriptures do not make nonsense, a figurative or metaphorical sense is intended. Then we are to interpret such a passage in the light of the usage found in parallel cases.

Almost every word in all languages has not only a literal, primary, original meaning but has derived connotations. For instance, in English there are listed as high as twenty-six meanings for a single word. This fact may be seen by a glance at an unabridged dictionary. Whenever the literal sense of a given word does not fit in with the facts of the connection, we are to select that definition which is in perfect accord and agreement with them. But in every instance, let me emphasize, we are to take the primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning if possible.

An abridged statement of this most important rule is: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual literal meaning, unless the facts of the context indicate clearly otherwise." This rule assumes that all truth harmonizes and that there are no discrepancies between accurate statements of facts. But for those who wish the maxim stated in its unabridged form, I give it in the following words:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise." If anyone follows this criterion, in the spirit and letter of the principle, he can never go wrong. On the other hand, if he fails to follow it, he can never be right. (May I suggest that the reader memorize and master this rule in order that he may be governed thereby in all his study of the Word?) This principle is true, not only as it applies to the Bible, but also to any written document or oral conversation regarding any subject.

## **LAW OF FIRST MENTION**

"The law of first mention" is another most important principle involved in the Scriptures. What is meant by it is that the first mention of any fundamental word or institution usually presents the general conception of the subject and its use throughout Scriptures.

As an illustration of this law, I need only to call attention to the sacrifices that were

required by God from Cain and Abel. The very fundamental teaching concerning atonement for sin, with all its implications, is found in these sacrifices, as recorded in Genesis 4. Once more, the promise and the covenant which God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) constitute the bold outline of all that is involved in the divine plan which runs through the Scriptures. It becomes therefore of paramount importance that one study words, doctrines, and institutions in their original, initial mention.

## **INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION**

As we have just seen in our study of the Golden Rule of Interpretation, we must seek diligently, by the application of this standard, to ascertain the exact thought of the speaker or writer whose message is studied. When this is learned, we can determine whether or not there is involved in the discussion some fundamental principle. If there is such set forth in the given case, we are at liberty to apply it to a similar situation; but, before we do, we must be certain that there is an analogy justifying such an application. It is at this crucial point that many mistakes are made. All too often efforts are made to see a spiritual lesson in a given scripture and, without due consideration, to apply it to another case which only apparently is analogous.

If we are certain that we have discovered the fundamental, underlying principle in a given case, we are warranted in applying it to a like situation under similar circumstances; for one of the basic tenets of true science is that "like causes under like conditions produce like results." My caution to everyone is that he be certain to discover the exact thought of the writer and that he be absolutely sure in making an application of the principle discovered to a similar situation. Such a procedure is legitimate and proper.

## **LAW OF DOUBLE REFERENCE**

There is what is known among Bible students as "the law of double reference or manifold fulfillment of prophecy." We find many applications of this principle.

The prophets constantly spoke of a local or current event, and, without giving any intimation of a change of scenery, began to describe a more remote and a greater one, which by far transcended the situation which gave rise to the prediction. This principle might be illustrated by a stereopticon which gives the dissolving effect. One picture is thrown upon the screen. Presently it begins to fade and at the same time the dim outline of another begins to appear. By the time the first has faded, the second is in full view. The prophets often blended a prediction relating to the first coming of Christ with one foretelling the second advent. In such presentations the entire Christian Dispensation is passed over.

One must master this rule if one is to understand the messages of the prophets.

## **LAW OF RECURRENCE**

A principle which obtains throughout the prophetic word is that which is known by Bible students as "the law of recurrence." According to the meaning of this phrase, after the prophets made a statement relative to something in the future, they often gave a fuller discussion covering the same ground but laying the emphasis in a different place. The second presentation is but supplemental to the first. It therefore clarifies the picture.

As an illustration of this principle, may I note Genesis 1 and 2? In chapter 1 we have a synopsis of the work of the six days of reconstruction. In chapter 2, however, the Holy Spirit gives a second discussion, especially regarding the creation of man. The first account relative to this miracle is found in 1: 26-31. In 2:7-25 is a second and a fuller description together with a record of his residence in the Garden of Eden. These two accounts are not to be explained upon the basis advanced by the destructive critics—that they came from two sources and are therefore contradictory—but upon the sound, fundamental principle of the law of recurrence.

Another illustration of this important law is found in the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39, which foretells the invasion of Palestine by the nations constituting the great northeastern confederacy. (For the full discussion of this most important and timely theme, see the volume *When Gog's Armies Meet the Almighty*.) In chapter 38 the prophet gives the full description of this stupendous world-changing event. In it he presents the general outline of the incidents that will at that time take place. In chapter 39 he simply covers the same ground speaking of the identical affairs but laying emphasis on different things. One must recognize that this duplicate account, given according to the principle of the law of recurrence, is but a second view of the one prediction.

John, in Revelation 17, 18, and 19, follows this same law. In chapter 16 he gives the outline of events as they occur during the second half of the Tribulation. When we reach the end of chapter 16, we are at the very close of that period; but in chapter 17 he goes back to the beginning of this second half of it and speaks of the overthrow of Babylon the harlot. The facts of this chapter show that this interpretation is correct. Chapter 18 speaks of the literal city of Babylon, which is destroyed at the end of the Tribulation. In chapter 19 we read of the marriage supper of the Lamb and Christ's coming all the way to earth at the conclusion of the Tribulation. Thus, when John pens these three chapters, after having given the outline of the second half of the Tribulation in chapter 16, he is simply following the law of recurrence.

This is a most important law, which finds many applications throughout the Scriptures. The Bible student should master this principle to the extent that he can recognize an application of it whenever he comes across it.

## **COMPARING SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE**

God gave His Word as He wanted us to have it, and as He wanted us to study and teach it. An investigation of the Scriptures shows that He only gave any portion of it as there was a demand for the enunciation of some new principle or the reiteration and the augmentation of one that He had already revealed. A study of the life of God shows

that He often repeated Himself. We are told that circumstances alter cases. After all, people's experiences are more or less of a certain definite type. These and other facts show why it was necessary for God to repeat certain doctrines in sending messages to various people or groups of individuals. The biblical writers, meeting a local and a similar situation, were forced to repeat many things.

For instance, almost all the books of the New Testament either discuss, refer to, or at least hint at, the great fundamental teaching of regeneration of the soul by the Spirit of God. It was necessary for each writer in meeting the situation before him to refer to this fundamental spiritual phenomenon. To one person or group it was necessary to discuss a certain phase of the doctrine; to another the same writer presented a different aspect of the same teaching. On one occasion, he stated it more fully than he did at another time. What is true of regeneration is also correct of the various teachings of the Word of God.

In view of these facts, we can see how it was that the inspired writers discussed the same subject. If a person is wishing to understand thoroughly any one topic of the Scriptures, it becomes necessary for him to study what each writer has said on the subject. He must, as far as it is possible, get all the facts which called forth the explanation. Moreover he must study it in the light of the facts of its context. When he has thus examined the various passages bearing upon a given question and has gleaned from each reference what is said, he can put all the information together and thus have a complete picture. It is therefore necessary for everyone to compare scripture with scripture. In following this principle he must be absolutely certain that he views each passage in its proper perspective. When he does so, he will see that one account usually supplements another.

## **EXAMINING QUOTATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF BOTH CONTEXTS**

In the New Testament we see many quotations taken from the Old. Whenever we find in the New such a quotation—if we are not familiar with the passage—we should immediately turn to the chapter from which it was taken. Then we should study the entire connection and be certain that we get the drift of thought of the original writer. Speaking figuratively, we must see the quotation in the original setting. When we have done this, we are to study the context of the New Testament in which this quotation is found. Frequently the application will throw light upon the passage in its original connection and vice versa.

Often we observe that a passage is applied in a certain way to something in the New Testament; and, when we examine all the facts, we see that the thing to which it is referred by the New Testament writer does not fill out the complete picture set forth in the Old Testament connection. In this event we must conclude that the thing to which it is applied in the New Testament is but a partial and an incomplete fulfillment of the original prediction and that God in His own good time will fulfill the passage to the very letter.

As an illustration of this principle, I may call attention to such passages as Isaiah 13

and 14 and Jeremiah 50 and 51. These chapters give predictions concerning Babylon and its being destroyed. When we look at the history of that city, we see that it was never overthrown in the manner or to the extent as set forth in these prophecies. We do know from ancient history that it gradually declined in power and finally sank beneath the historical horizon. It was never destroyed as was foretold. We who believe the Word of God must conclude that Babylon will yet be rebuilt and demolished just as foretold by these men of God. This is confirmed by Revelation 18. I could give numerous examples of this principle, but these suffice. Let us therefore be careful in studying quotations that we examine both contexts and arrive at the definite, specific idea of the inspired writer.

## **HEBREW POETRY**

Thought-rhyme was the fundamental idea of Hebrew poetry. No effort was made at meter, verse, and rhyme as we have in modern poetry. What is Hebrew parallelism? The answer is this: Two statements are made relative to a given matter, one of which is made by the selection of certain words. This or a similar idea is repeated by the choice of different terms. The second, therefore, is supplemental to the first and becomes a comment upon it. Sometimes one of the statements is in literal language, whereas the other is more pictorial and graphic; but each supplements the other.

Upon this simple basis all Hebrew poetry was built. Contrasts were expressed as we see in the Book of Proverbs, which is pure poetry. Frequently three parallel statements, each supplementing the others, were employed. These fundamental conceptions were worked out by the poets and came to involve an entire composition such as one of the psalms. One must however understand this fundamental conception in order to comprehend the poetical books of the Scriptures.

## **SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE**

All peoples, both ancient and modern, have symbols. The Hebrews had theirs. Those appearing in the Scriptures however are of divine origin. In fact, the Tabernacle and the Temple, with all of their ceremonial services, were typical or symbolic of the realities which we have in Christ. That they had such a significance is set forth clearly in the New Testament. The Book of Hebrews especially interprets the spiritual significance of the ritualism of the Old Testament.

As one examines the types and shadows of the Scriptures, one must be extremely careful not to read into the sacred text something that is not there. A person will do well if he takes as symbolic and typical only those things that are thus recognized by the inspired writers.

Untold damage has been done from time to time by overly zealous people in their attempts to see a typical or a symbolic meaning in certain persons or things in the Scriptures. The safest rule by which to be guided on this point may be stated thus: Recognize only those things as typical or symbolic which are thus designated in the

Scriptures, and never give to any passage a typical meaning unless the Scriptures so indicate. To illustrate the point let us look at an example or two. Joseph, we are often told, is a type of Christ. Isaac's taking Rebekah as his bride is also a type of Christ's taking His bride, the church. What inspired writer gives any intimation to this effect? I have never seen anything in the Scriptures to warrant these positions. I admit that there are striking similarities in the cases; but analogies are not equivalent to a "thus saith God." We do well, therefore, to have scriptural authority for whatever we say. One can, by allowing his imagination to run wild, see that a certain person or thing in the Old Testament is typical of something in the New. Another person, looking at the same thing, will see a different signification. Thus there are untold possibilities of speculation and error, which are dangerous whenever there is not a "thus saith God " for a given position.

God has chosen certain things as symbols. For instance, beasts, as we learn from Daniel 7, are employed as emblems of world kingdoms. Whenever, therefore, a beast is thus used in the Scriptures and the facts of the context show that it has this metaphorical sense, one must understand that it signifies a civil government. God never mixes His symbols. Again, a pure, chaste virgin is used as a symbol of the true church. A harlot represents a false ecclesiasticism. God has interpreted these symbols. Man should not attach any signification to them other than that which was given by Him.

I might further illustrate this principle by calling attention to God supper. The loaf represents the body of Christ, whereas the fruit of the vine is symbolic of His blood. Whenever we see these emblems, we know their significance and do not attempt to read into them any idea other than that which God gave them. Whenever we come to a symbol, we must therefore seek the divine interpretation of the same and never deviate from that meaning.

## **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

The languages of all peoples seem to have begun largely with figures of speech—at least primitive writing indicates this position. It is by comparison that we appreciate and understand things. Thus figures have remained in our language and adorn it greatly. In fact, it is most difficult for us to speak without using some figures of speech. The Bible is no exception. One must therefore know the common figures of speech and how they are used in order to understand what the biblical writers meant.

The fact that a figurative expression occurs in a given passage is no warrant for one's taking its meaning and forcing it upon another passage unless the facts of the given context show that the same figure was used in a like manner. To be more specific, let me call attention to the expression found in Ephesians regarding Christ's "having cleansed it [church] by the washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:26). This statement is figurative language. We must not force this metaphorical sense upon another passage, which might in some way resemble this one passage, unless the facts of the latter context permit such an interpretation.

Let us always bear in mind that figurative language, though ornate and beautiful, stands for definite realities. It is therefore necessary for one to understand the figure and see the reality signified in order to comprehend the message wherever such usage is employed.

## **OBSCURE PASSAGES MUST BE INTERPRETED IN THE LIGHT OF PLAIN ONES**

Whenever anyone sees that a passage is capable of more than one interpretation—viewed in the light of all the facts of the connection—he must select that translation or explanation which accords with plain statements found in other portions of the Word when rightly interpreted. As an illustration of this principle, I may call attention to Psalm 45:6. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ..." In the original text of this statement there are only four words. Nevertheless, they can be rendered grammatically to make four or five translations. By supplying different words, the number of renderings can be multiplied. This thing has been done by certain ones who have been unwilling to accept the plain meaning. But our one concern is, What did the psalmist have in mind when he by the Spirit of God used these words? One must study the entire psalm in order to see the proper connection; then he must compare all the facts discovered with statements found in other places which are capable of only one interpretation.

It is of utmost importance that one observe this rule. The assumption lying underneath it is that all truth harmonizes. Whenever there are any seeming discrepancies, the trouble lies with our non-comprehension of the data, or lack of the facts.

## **STUDYING THE EXACT GRAMMAR**

In the English language there are eight parts of speech. These, taken together, constitute language. Each of them has a definite, specific use and relation to other parts of speech. It becomes absolutely necessary, if one is to arrive at the exact meaning of a word, that he know grammar, since each part of speech has a definite purpose and since words likewise have accurate definitions. One therefore must, if he is to arrive at the exact idea which the Holy Spirit had in mind, have an adequate knowledge of grammar and the meaning of words.

By conservative scholars, the grammatico-historical principle of interpretation is the only one upon which a person can afford to rely. What is meant by this term? A person must acquire, if possible the historical data concerning any statement in order to see it in its proper perspective. He must, therefore, know the writer, the one to whom a

document was sent, for what purpose it was written, and under what conditions in order to evaluate properly the message. He must also know the grammar thoroughly and the significance of language. With such definite information in hand, one can, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, understand, as a rule, the message. I therefore accept the correctness of this method of exegesis.

## **THE MEANINGS OF WORDS**

The student should have a good English dictionary at hand when he studies the Scriptures—unless he has an adequate idea of the vocabulary that is used in the Bible. If a person will only look in an unabridged dictionary of the English language, he will see that some words have many meanings or shades of ideas. This statement being true, one must know these various definitions in order to comprehend rightly the exact meaning of a given passage.

Though I am speaking simply from the English point of view, all Greek and Hebrew students know that the same principles apply with reference to the original text.

Whenever a word does have a number of meanings, we must select that one which will accord with all the facts of a given context, and which will not clash with any other plain statement of truth.

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BIBLICAL AND PRESENT-DAY TERMINOLOGY**

Our English dictionaries give the current meaning of words as they are employed now by the best speakers and writers. They also give colloquial usages. The Bible employs a certain definite usage that was current when the Scriptures were given. Words sometimes now have a meaning entirely different from what they had when our translation was made or when spoken originally. For instance, a prophet was simply a spokesman from God who delivered a message to the people. Sometimes he discussed things past; on other occasions, matters regarding things present in his day; and often those things lying in the future. At the present time, the word, "prophetic," as we have already noticed, is largely used with reference to future things. There are many changes that have taken place in our language. This fact demands that we compare scripture with scripture in order to see the usage to which a term was applied then. We must not therefore read back into the Scriptures definitions of words as they are being used today; because, as stated, practices have been introduced and changes have been made which have definitely determined present-day usage. We cannot therefore afford to read back into the Scriptures ideas and definitions of words as employed today unless we see from all the facts that the current meaning is in conformity with the biblical usage.

The Revised Version puts the original meaning of the Word of God in our current vernacular. It is a most excellent translation and presents the message of the original

text more nearly accurately than former official versions. For this reason I always insist on everyone's using the Revised Version (ASV 1901).

## HOW TO INTERPRET PROPHECY

THE word, *prophecy*, literally means "to speak in behalf of" another. This meaning is derived from the original Greek. It has the same significance in the Hebrew. This fact is seen in the statement, "And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" (Exod. 7:1). The fundamental idea of the word, whether in Hebrew or in Greek, is that the one who does the speaking is a representative of another.

The content of the message is not implied in the word. It might relate to something in the past, in the present, or in the future. The facts of each context indicate the thought and its application. In the Hebrew Bible the historical portion beginning with Joshua and running through II Kings is designated as the "former prophets." Those books which we usually term "prophets" are called the "latter prophets." Thus in these names is preserved the original significance of the word, prophet. This thought is also seen in I Corinthians 14. Prophecy in this chapter refers to teaching—one's teaching another. It does not imply that the one speaking is talking of the future. In fact, in this chapter the one who is doing the prophesying is building up the church in the faith, which thought would imply a full, rounded ministry dealing with things past, present, and future. This conclusion is confirmed by the regular practice of the apostolic writers who in their epistles discuss things past, present, and future. Let us therefore keep this original meaning of the word in mind as we study the Scriptures.

In the present day, however, since we see so very many signs and events which point most definitely to the conclusion of the age, we use the word, prophecy, largely to refer to things future. One aspect of prophecy, the predictive element, today has become the dominant one in use and is so understood by the popular mind. Let us, however, always study the context of any given case in order that we might understand exactly what the original speaker or writer had in mind.

## FULFILLED PROPHECY

AS HAS just been noted, the inspired writers who recorded the history of Israel in such books as Samuel and Kings were really prophets, in that they narrated things past. There is, however, buried in the historical sections, here and there, an utterance which at the time when spoken related to things future, but which has long since been fulfilled. If we are to obtain an accurate and exact knowledge of how to interpret

prophecy, we would do well to examine such predictions in their original settings and then to study them in the light of the historical events which brought them to realization. Furthermore, in those books which we now call "the prophets," there are many predictions, especially those that relate to certain countries and their destinies, which have been fulfilled. In order to see how they were accomplished, one must resort to secular history for the exact picture in its historical unfolding. For example, a visit to old Memphis and No-amon (Luxor) in Egypt will show how literally and exactly were fulfilled the predictions made by men of God centuries before their materialization. Another excellent illustration of this point is Tyre on the Syrian coast. I could multiply these instances many times, speaking from experiences which I have had in visiting these ancient sites. On this point, there is no study that will strengthen the faith and clarify many issues more than the study of fulfilled prophecy. The small volume entitled *Fulfilled Prophecy* ([pdf file download from Google Books](#)) (similar version) by John Urquhart discusses many prophecies that have been fulfilled, as one sees in this volume, exactly as spoken. Let us remember the slogan: "God fulfills prophecy as written and not as interpreted by the speculations of men."

WHENEVER anyone reads a document, he must take into consideration that there are figures of speech which must be interpreted according to the origin of the comparison and its historical development together with the facts of the immediate context. Figures adorn language, but they always, in serious speech, have a definite meaning. The one who wishes to understand literature must know the various figures and how to interpret them, because each stands for a reality.

We must also recognize that in the Scriptures there are parables, symbols, allegories, etc. It is highly important that one understand what a parable is. Etymologically, the word means "that which is laid down beside another." That which is known is mentally thrown down beside the unknown, and by a comparison the quantity sought is ascertained. Always a speaker who uses a parable picks some fact or event which is well-known and uses it as an illustration in order to elucidate the unknown factor.

In this connection let me call attention to the fact that very frequently we hear people speak of "the parable of the rich man and Lazarus" (Luke 16). The Scriptures do not call this story a parable. Christ simply stated that "there was a certain rich man"; and that there was a "certain beggar named Lazarus." He did not intimate that He was speaking a parable. There is nothing in the context to suggest such an idea. If He had been speaking of an historical fact, He could not have chosen words to convey His meaning more definitely than those which He used on this occasion. We are sure to make a mistake if we call this a parable or anything else a parable unless a clear statement is made to that effect, or unless there are other indications which prove positively that such is the case.

*Parable* in the Hebrew generally has a different signification. Here it means a proverb. In fact, the Book of Proverbs is called in the Hebrew "The Parables of Solomon." A parable is a short, concise statement consisting of two or more poetic lines, which construction we call "Hebrew Parallelism." The second line is supplemental to the first and proves to be a comment upon it.

We must, therefore, in view of the facts just mentioned, know whether the word under consideration is used in the Old Testament sense or in that of the New.

SYMBOLS likewise appear in the prophetic word. Usually they are found in predictive prophecy. Whenever they are used, one must not impose upon the language a meaning of his own choice. They must be interpreted by the author or writer who uses them. We have illustrations of them today. For instance, the secret lodges have various symbols to which they attach an arbitrary meaning. This significance may be the natural one, but it is given upon the authority of the one making the selection.

God chose such symbols as suited His purpose. Whenever He uses one, we must let Him interpret it, telling us what He means. For instance, Christ instituted the supper before His betrayal. He selected the loaf and the fruit of the vine and said that He attached a symbolic significance to them; namely, that the loaf typifies His body and the fruit of the vine, His blood. No matter where a person sees this supper observed, he knows that these elements have the significance which Christ gave them. Once again, we may note the symbolic significance of a beast. God has interpreted its meaning. A glance at Daniel 7:17 shows that a beast, when thus used, signifies a civil government. Since God has attached a definite idea to this symbol, we must not give it any other meaning. To do so is mere speculation. Such a procedure is not interpretation.

We also see a few allegories in the Scripture. The principal one is that of the Song of Solomon. The chief actors in this case are the lover and the maiden upon whom he bestows his affection. It is quite evident that this poem was used to convey a deeper significance than simply the telling of a love story. Though love and marriage are placed on the highest possible plane in the Scriptures, to lower the song to this level is to fall short of that which is demanded by the facts of the poem. It is therefore recognized by interpreters as being an allegory. Since there is a parallel significance which is reflected in the development of the story, we might call the real meaning of the allegory the undertone, which can be recognized by the trained ear. Asserted elsewhere, this allegory sets forth the relationship existing between King Messiah and Israel. Again we have another allegory in Galatians 4. There Paul speaks of Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. The former of these corresponds to Hagar, the symbol of the old covenant, whereas the latter represents Sarah who signifies the new. In interpreting an allegory one must be very careful not to read into it his own ideas.

All that has been said in regard to the interpretation of fulfilled prophecy is but an enlargement upon the Golden Rule of Interpretation, which was discussed under "The Laws of Interpretation." A failure to observe this rule and to follow the suggestions that have just been made with reference to special types of literature in the Scriptures means to arrive at the wrong conclusion in interpreting the message.

## **UNFULFILLED PROPHECY**

A study of the messages of the prophets of the Old Testament, as well as those of the New, shows very clearly that the major portion of these predictions await fulfillment. How are we to interpret them in order that we might not make any false deductions? The fact that a similarity between the mere wording of a prediction and some event or description of it may be discovered is no justification for our hastily arriving at the conclusion that said occurrence is the fulfillment of the prediction. There are many coincidences in life. There must be positive proof at hand before we are justified in saying that such and such an event is the fulfillment of a given prophecy.

We should bear in mind that "no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:20,21). No scripture is of private interpretation. No one has a monopoly on expounding the Word of God. I am perfectly aware of the fact that there are those who claim that they alone have the key to the Bible and that no one else can rightly and correctly interpret what God has said. Such claims are spurious. Again, let me repeat that no one individual or group of persons has a monopoly, on explaining the Word of life. Let us, therefore, beware of any one who makes such grandiose claims.

A STUDY of Matthew 2 will show that all predictive prophecy falls into four classes. If one will only master these types and the underlying principles involved in each, one will be able to classify any passage of Scripture which has prophetic import.

## **THE LITERAL SIGNIFICATION**

When Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem inquiring as to where the King of the Jews was born in order that they might worship Him. They reported that they had seen His star in the East. Naturally they went to King Herod who was the reigning sovereign at that time and asked him where the Christ child was. Of course, this reprobate had no spiritual discernment. Their message troubled him greatly, together with all who were in Jerusalem. He, therefore, gathered the scribes together in order to inquire of them where, according to the prophets, the Messiah was to be born. Their reply was, "In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written through the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: For out of thee shall come forth a governor, Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel" (Matt. 2:5,6).

There were two Bethlehems in Palestine in the days of Christ. One was about three miles from Nazareth in Galilee; the other, about five miles south of Jerusalem in Judæa. In rationalistic circles, certain ones have argued that Christ of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem of Galilee—without giving any proof whatsoever for their opinion. Sir William Ramsey's book, *Was Christ born in Bethlehem?*, has settled that question once and for all—for those who want truth and are willing to accept facts.

According to Micah, who uttered the original prediction, the Messiah was to be born in the literal city of Bethlehem in the land of Judah. The scribes, who were thoroughly acquainted with the utterances of the prophets as well as with the law, interpreted this

passage literally. That they were correct in thus understanding the literal import of the language is evident from Matthew's quoting their interpretation in an approving manner and making it coincide with his statement that Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judæa (Matt. 2:1). The wise men understood this prophecy literally and went their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The star which they had seen in the East appeared going before them and stood over the place where the Babe was. Thus all the facts show that this prophecy had a literal fulfillment.

Of course, a prophecy like this one, which is to be interpreted literally, might have figures of speech in it, as this one does; but we must make the same allowance for metaphorical language here as we do in any other type of literature. According to this prediction, there arises out of Bethlehem this one who is to be the governor, and who is called the "shepherd of my people Israel." In this last statement we see a figure of speech, a metaphor. A shepherd is one who cares for literal sheep, protecting them and leading them to green pastures and still waters. What the shepherd does for his flock, this one of whom the prophecy speaks is to do for Israel, God's flock. A close study of this passage shows that this prophecy is to be taken literally—at its face value. At the same time we make allowance for any figurative expression, interpreting each as the facts of the context and the use of such language demand. This prophecy is purely of the literal class. In fact, it is the type of the great mass of prophecies.

## **THE LITERAL SIGNIFICANCE PLUS A TYPICAL MEANING**

THE second type of prophecy appears in Matthew 2:15 in the following words: "Out of Egypt did I call my son." This sentence is taken from Hosea 11:1. Whenever we read a passage in the New Testament, quoted from the Old, the first thing to do is to turn back to the original passage and study the quotation in the light of the facts of the original context. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. The more *the prophets* called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them. They shall not return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be their king, because they refused to return *to me*. And the sword shall fall upon their cities, and shall consume their bars, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels. And my people are bent on backsliding from me: though they call them to *him that is on high*, none at all will exalt *him*" (Hosea 11:1-7).

From this quotation it is beyond dispute that the words, "out of Egypt did I call my son," refer to Israel—the twelve tribes—whom God brought out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. (For the full record of this historical account, see the first fifteen chapters of Exodus.)

Nevertheless, this statement is applied to the coming of Christ with His mother and Joseph out of Egypt. The occasion of their being in that country is recorded in the account as given by Matthew. Herod planned the destruction of the baby Christ. An

angel, therefore, warned Joseph to flee to Egypt with the child and his mother and to remain there until he should receive instructions to return to Palestine. He, therefore, did as the angel commanded him and remained there until the death of Herod "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by God through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son."

As we have seen, the original statement referred to the children of Israel in the literal land of Egypt and of their coming out of that country into Canaan, the Holy Land. Although it had this original signification, Matthew by the Spirit applied the prediction to Christ, His residence in Egypt, and His coming out of it into Palestine. Was the meaning which Matthew gives latent in the sentence as it was spoken by the prophet? Hosea lived about the middle of the eighth century before Christ. In making the statement which is the subject of this investigation, he looked backward across seven centuries to the time when Israel came out of Egypt. The statement, therefore, was an historical fact and was so interpreted by the prophet's audience and readers, then as well as now. There can be no misunderstanding about this position; nevertheless, Matthew places an interpretation upon this utterance which no one of us today probably would have recognized if the inspired apostle had not pointed out this hidden meaning. Was Matthew arbitrary in his handling of this passage, or were there fundamental reasons justifying his interpretation and his applying it to Christ? These are fundamental questions that demand attention.

The answer is in the word, *son*, as it occurs in Exodus 4:22,23, and parallel passages. God instructed Moses to speak to Pharaoh, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son, my first-born: and I have said unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go: behold, I will slay thy son, thy first-born." God was speaking of the nation of Israel as His son, His first-born. This people indeed was God's son, His first-born, in a peculiar sense. This fact becomes evident if we remember that, when Abraham and Sarah were past the age of parenthood, God performed a biological miracle upon their bodies, which made possible the birth of Isaac. Thus Isaac was in a special sense God's first-born just as he was the first-born of Abraham and Sarah. The children of Israel are thought of as being in the loins of Isaac, just as Levi is spoken of as being in the loins of Abraham in the following quotation: "And, so to say, through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him" (Heb. 7:9,10). This mode of thought laid the foundation for the conception of the solidarity of the Hebrew race and of their being God's first-born. As stated, they were God's son, His first-born, in that He performed a biological miracle which made possible the birth of Isaac. From this point of view, Isaac and his birth are thought of as being typical of Christ, who was and is God's Son, in the highest sense of the term. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God ... and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:1,2,14). Christ is again spoken of as God's Son in this high sense in Hebrews 1:1-4: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his Son*, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power,

when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

In view of the fact that Isaac was miraculously begotten and of the further fact that our God's entrance into the world was a stupendous miracle, one can readily see how Isaac and the children of Israel are typical of the Messiah. This signification finds expression in Hosea's statement which Matthew quotes. Matthew by inspiration knew these facts and was led unerringly by the Spirit to interpret this prediction as referring to our God's departure out of Egypt.

In the case of Israel and in that of Christ, we see that Egypt was literal, that both the children of Israel and Christ were literal, that they were in Egypt, and that they literally came out of it into Canaan. There was thus a literal basis in both occurrences. Everything about both of these instances was literal; but the application which Matthew made of Hosea's statement shows that, while it was literal, there was a typical signification included in it. The inspired apostle has called our attention to this secondary significance. This second type of prophecy, therefore, includes those predictions which have both a literal meaning and a typical import.

## **THE LITERAL MEANING PLUS AN APPLICATION**

THE third passage quoted in Matthew 2 is found in verse 18. "A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she would not be comforted, because they are not." Again we must study the original passage in order to see the setting from which this verse was taken before we notice Matthew's interpretation of it. Let us now turn to Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah lived in the fateful days prior to the Babylonian captivity, through the siege of Jerusalem, and into the post-war days of that mighty crisis which befell the Jewish people. He did all he could to prevent the catastrophe by calling the people to repentance, but they would not heed. After the capitulation of the city, the captives were led out to Ramah, which is about ten miles north of Jerusalem, by Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard of the King of Babylon. There this official released Jeremiah, giving him permission to go either to Babylon with him or to remain anywhere in the land. But the captives were taken into exile. It was indeed a bitter, heart-breaking experience for the mothers of the heroic captives to see their sons, and in many instances husbands, led into exile in a land far away. Hence they wept and mourned over the lamentable situation.

These mothers are spoken of in terms of the favorite wife of Jacob, Rachel, whose tomb is beside the Bethlehem-Hebron Road four miles south of Jerusalem. It was she who was the mother of Benjamin, the tribe in whose territory Jerusalem was located. It was therefore natural for Jeremiah to think of these sad, stricken mothers, as he did, in terms of Rachel.

The prophet spoke to these weeping women and gave them hope that though their loved ones were going into captivity, there were brighter days ahead. He had, as we see in chapter 25 of his book, foretold that the exiles would remain in Babylon for seventy years, and that at the expiration of that time they would have the privilege of coming back to the land of their fathers. Jeremiah in chapter 31 not only speaks of this return after the Exile, but looks beyond it to the time when all Israel shall be gathered from all nations back into their own land, when every man shall live under his own vine and fig tree. Such is the significance of the quotation which we are studying, as the facts of the original context indicate and as is reflected in the historical records of the times of Jeremiah.

Matthew takes this verse from Jeremiah 31 and applies it to a similar situation of sadness and sorrow on the part of the mothers of Bethlehem. Herod had ordered the slaughter of all the male children of Bethlehem two years and under, thinking that by so doing he would accomplish the death of the Christ child. As we have already seen, Joseph had taken Mary and the child to Egypt before the massacre of the children was ordered. These Bethlehem mothers naturally wept for their babes. Matthew, thinking of the solidarity of the Jewish people and seeing this time of heart-rending sorrow piercing the very souls of these bereaved mothers, was led by the Spirit of God to use this prophecy and to apply it to this case of similar grief.

The original event which called for this utterance was literal and real as well as the one to which the passage was applied. This position cannot be denied. Bethlehem was literal. The slaughter of the innocent babes likewise was literal. There was, therefore, a literal basis in both cases. Since they were similar in one respect, Matthew applied the language of the former prophet to the situation of his day. From all the facts we draw this conclusion: This prophecy is a case of the literal meaning plus an application to a similar case.

We have made the same allowance for figurative language in this prophecy as we did in the prediction from Hosea. After that is done, we see the literal significance of this passage as well as that of the one from Hosea.

## **THE LITERAL MEANING PLUS A SUMMATION**

THE fourth type of prophecy is found in Matthew 2:23 in the following words: "and [Christ] came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene." Here we are told that an angel of God appeared to Joseph in Egypt after the death of Herod and told him to bring the child and His mother back into the land of Israel. Upon reaching Judaea, he found that Archelaus was reigning in the place of Herod. He, therefore, wisely avoided settling in Judaea and located in Nazareth. Matthew tells us that he did it in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled which foretold that Christ should be called a Nazarene. This language is clear and unmistakable.

What is meant by "a Nazarene"? Let us remember that a Nazarene, a resident of Nazareth, is not necessarily a Nazarite. It is altogether possible that there were some residents of that city who had taken the Nazarite vow and, of course, they would be both Nazarenes and Nazarites. Anyone who took a certain vow was designated a Nazarite. The facts regarding a Nazarite are found in Numbers 6:1-4. Samson also was a Nazarite (Judges 13), but the words used by Matthew have no connection with such a vow. Nazarene referred, as the word shows, to an inhabitant of Nazareth.

But why should He be called a Nazarene? Are there any prophecies in the Old Testament which foretold that He would live in Nazareth, similar to Micah's prophecy which indicated that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem? There is no such prediction to be found anywhere. Hence the word Nazarene cannot be used simply with its literal meaning. Does this name have any other connotation? Yes. It was a term to indicate reproach and shame. When Christ was at Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles, prior to His crucifixion, there arose a dispute among the people as to whether or not He was the Messiah. Some said that He was indeed the prophet (mentioned by Moses, Deut. 18). Others believed that He was the Messiah; while still others retorted by saying, "What, doth the Christ [Messiah] come out of Galilee?" (John 7:41). This question reflects the contempt with which Galilee was held by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the days of our God Galilee was spoken of as "Galilee of the Gentiles." The strict Jews, of course, looked down on anything connected with Gentiles as a thing of shame and contempt.

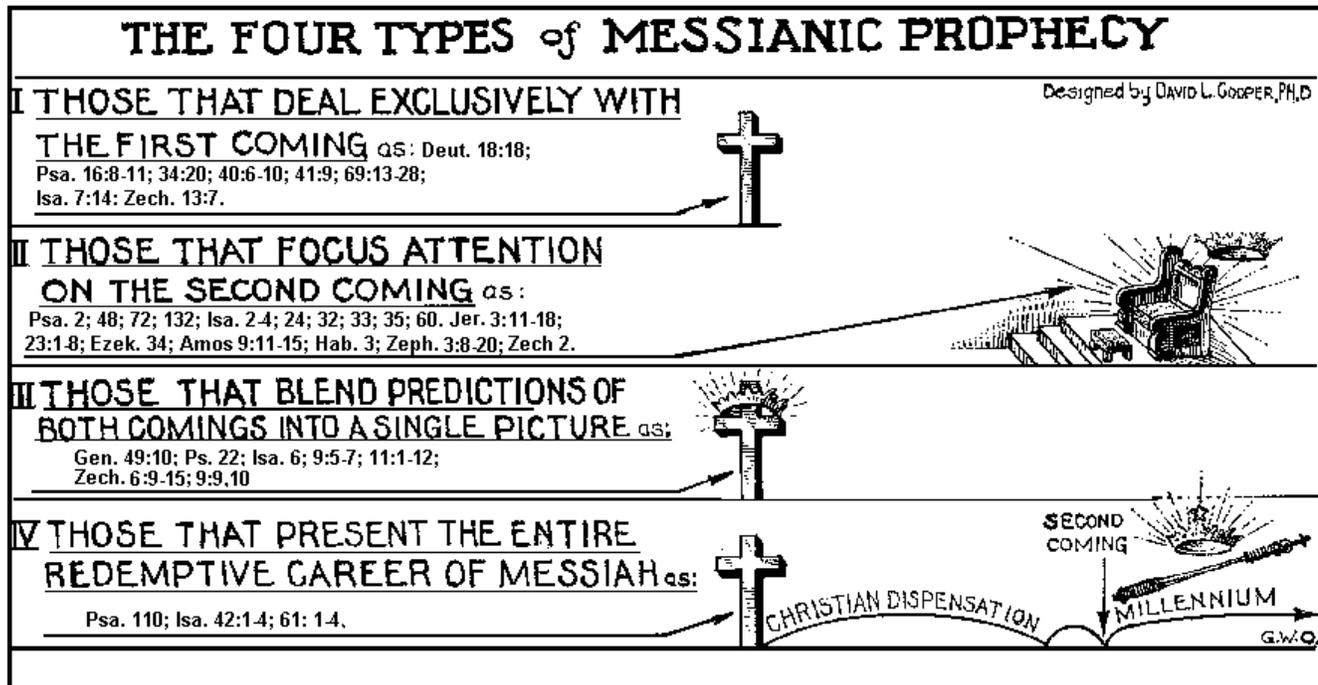
But there must be something more specific than this general attitude against the Galileans. In Isaiah 53 and also in Psalm 22, we see predictions concerning Messiah which foretell that He would be despised and rejected of men and finally be executed as a criminal. The word Nazarene was a term of reproach and also was a synonym for one despised and hated. This attitude is reflected in the question which Nathanael put to Philip: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). This term, therefore, being one of contempt and reproach, well summarizes the predictions which foretold that the Messiah would be hated and finally rejected by His people. Thus, when all the facts are taken into consideration, one is led to the conclusion that, since there is no specific prophecy foretelling that the Messiah would be called a Nazarene, Matthew was in his statement summing up those predictions which speak of His being despised and rejected.

Nazareth was a literal city. Our God resided in it. He was hated and despised because the people looked down upon its residents. In addition to this fact the natural enmity of the unregenerated heart caused people who did not want truth to hate and despise Him. He himself said, "The world hated Me." This attitude, therefore, could not have been expressed in a more concise way and with more feeling than by calling Christ a "Nazarene."

The conclusion to which this investigation leads is that this prophecy is a literal one plus the idea of summation—the labeling of many prophecies by a single term, which adequately expresses the thought of this special type of prediction.

From this study we see that there are four classes of prophecy and that they are all to be taken literally—at what they say. The second type, however, has the additional idea of a typical signification. The third is the literal meaning plus an application. The fourth is the literal with an added thought of summarizing the general teaching of the prophets on a definite subject.

## FOUR TYPES OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY



A CLOSE examination of the prophetic word reveals the fact that there are four general types of messianic prophecy. These must be understood thoroughly if one is to have an intelligent grasp of the Scriptures. A failure to recognize any one of them is to lose, to that extent, the proper perspective of the prophets. That this statement is true is immediately evident to the one who is familiar with Jewish interpretation of predictive prophecy, their failure to recognize the true Messiah, when He came, and the tragic results that have followed that fatal mistake. Christ well said to the leaders of Israel on the last day of His public ministry: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). In speaking in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, the Apostle Paul declared that "they that dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled *them* by, condemning *him*" (Acts 13:27).

Israel's failure to recognize the Messiah was not due to the fact that she did not have men qualified, intellectually and educationally, to understand the messages of the

prophets; for there were many illustrious, devout students in the nation of that time. Moreover, their failure was not due to a lack of faith in God and in His word. Furthermore, one cannot attribute it to an obstinate perversion of heart, which blinded their eyes so that they could not understand the truth and recognize their true Messiah. It was as Christ said: They knew not the Scriptures nor the power of God. It was as Paul said: They knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets. These two statements substantiate the historical facts. It is true that there were then, as now, people who would not receive truth, but who chose their own ways rather than those of God. It is also true that there were then, as now, hypocrites among the people (Matt. 23). Wherein then lay the trouble? The answer is this: The leaders were blind guides of the blind (Matt. 15:14). The nation, with few exceptions, therefore, fell into the ditch of banishment from their land and rejection by the God of their fathers.

Why were the leaders so blind that they did not recognize the Messiah in the person of Christ of Nazareth? The answer is to be found in our present study.

There are four lines of predictive prophecy relating to Messiah. They are indicated on the chart above. Any unbiased person who has no theory to support but who wishes facts and truth can recognize these distinctive types. One must be very careful and study the entire connection in which any given prophecy appears in order to see the exact import of the given oracle.

The first of these four classes contains the predictions that focus attention upon the first coming of the Messiah, His sufferings, and His return to God in heaven. When a person studies the entire context of each passage, he will see that there are very few prophecies that speak only of the first coming and the sufferings of Messiah.

The second class is far more numerous. This type of prophecy focuses the attention upon the second coming of our God and the glories that will be manifest at that time. On the chart above I have noted, of course, only a few of them; but these scintillate with such dazzling and glorious splendor that they immediately attract the eye and the heart of the reader. Especially is this true with reference to those who are in sorrow and distress and who long for deliverance.

In the third class, which is not quite so numerous as the second, fall those predictions which blend descriptions of both comings into a single picture. This fact is represented graphically on the chart above, which places the crown of glory upon the cross. From this type of prediction, one would gather that the sufferings and the glories are simultaneous. Typical passages are noted under Section III of the chart above.

The fourth type of messianic prophecy consists of those predictions which lay before us the entire redemptive career of King Messiah. See Section IV of the chart above. All four of these classes are essential in order to present all the facts; but, when we study the fourth type—especially in the light of the historical past—it becomes immediately evident that this group of predictions are possibly the most important. In each of the first three, we get only a partial view of the facts concerning Messiah's redemptive work; but in the fourth one, we have a blueprint of *Messianic Times* laid before us, which consists of the first coming of King Messiah, the entire Christian Dispensation,

the Tribulation Period, and the millennial reign of our God. When a person reads Isaiah 42:1-43:7; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Isaiah 61:1-3; Isaiah 62:1-63:6; Isaiah 65:1-25; and Psalm 110, together with numerous other passages, he sees immediately that in these scriptures there is unrolled before him the blueprint of the entire redemptive career of King Messiah—a panorama of His redeeming labors.

One who studies these passages carefully can instantly see the place into which each of the first three types fits. (May I urgently request the reader to study carefully all the scriptures referred to on the chart above, and then examine the discussion of the passages in Isaiah on Messiah's redemptive work.)

MEN do much wishful thinking. Israel did that—especially during times of trouble and disaster. During the Maccabean struggle and the Roman occupation of Palestine, the hearts of the leaders of Israel turned wishfully to the future. They scanned carefully those predictions which speak of Messiah's glorious reign. Nevertheless they largely overlooked those passages which refer to the first coming. They were confused by the third type and gave little attention to the fourth class. The second group of passages loomed largely before their eyes and in their thinking. As the Messiah did not appear in the role expected, they were disappointed and did not recognize Him although He came on-time and in the manner foretold by the prophets.

Let us profit by Israel's mistake. Let us study the Word of God as did Ezra: "For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances" (Ezra 7:10). If we do this, we shall see the truth, which makes one free.

# Rules of Interpretation

112 pages

Articles from Biblical Research Monthly 1947, 1949

By David L Cooper Th.MPh.D, Litt.D

Outlines by Rev. Burl Haynie

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## **NECESSITY FOR THE LAWS OF INTERPRETATION**

ALL NORMAL intelligent individuals are able to speak and to express themselves by means of language. In our association with others and in our constant use of language, we seldom think of the laws, the basic principles, involved in the speech which we are employing constantly.

Most people use language very loosely and lack accuracy of expressions. On account of insufficient mental discipline and inattention to what others say, we frequently misunderstand what is said. All too often we act upon the misinterpretation of what is expressed and make mistakes. Just a moment's consideration of these vital facts leads one to see the importance of our knowing the basic principles of language.

There are reflected in our language the logical processes of the mind. Psychologists tell us that there are certain definite fixed laws of the mind according to which all normal persons think and act. Thus a document, the expression of the working of an orderly mind, bears the imprint of the laws of thought and can only be understood properly and adequately by one who knows the normal, logical working of the mind. The importance of our knowing these laws may be illustrated by the laws of nature in the material, physical world. There are many laws governing the materials which are built into an automobile. Among them are those governing the different metals used; those controlling gases and the explosion of the same; and those directing electrical energy. No manufacturer could produce an automobile that would run and serve the purchaser, who does not understand all these laws, and who does not conform his workmanship thereto. There are many laws involved in the construction and the operation of the ediphone into which I am now speaking. If something goes wrong with the electronic part of this machine, it will not record what I am speaking. Then the repair man must come out and make the proper adjustment in order that the machine may operate normally. Language has definite, specific laws of thought that are just as real as the laws governing physical matter. These must be understood, therefore, if we are fully to enjoy the blessings of the language which we are using, and which we are endeavoring to understand. I may further illustrate this necessity by calling attention to the Greek. In college and seminary I devoted seven years to the study of that language. Since then I have been studying it. In fact, there are very few days which pass during which I do not consult my Greek New Testament or the Greek grammar. I have thus put thousands upon thousands of hours into the study of the language, not only the words, but the syntax, and the various shades of ideas that are expressed by the delicate shades of the grammar. I have done this in order to get at the exact thought of the original, inspired writers. No one can adequately understand the Greek New Testament or the Hebrew Bible unless he is willing to study hard and long to master the principles

of those languages.

Our Bible has been translated by scholars out of the original Hebrew and Greek into the English. The American Revised Version is probably the best translation to date—although there are places where it can be improved. It is the work of fallible men, and all men make mistakes. Nevertheless, it is, in my judgment, the best we have. The English reader must study hard and long if he is to get the real message of this excellent translation.

The Bible is God's revelation to man. We have every reason to believe that, not only the thoughts were inspired, but also the very words by which the ideas were expressed in the original tongues were given infallibly by the Spirit. Thus the sacred writers combined spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. God said exactly what He meant and meant just what He said. The prophets and the Apostles spoke in the language of the people to whom they ministered. At the same time their messages were poured into the moulds of the thought forms of the messengers and those to whom they ministered. God had a very definite idea to convey whenever He made a statement. For instance, let us read the first verse of the Scriptures: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the phrase "In the beginning," the time element of the creation is given. God the Creator is mentioned in the noun, the subject of the verb. What He did is expressed by the word, created—the bringing into existence that which prior to the act, had no form or substance. The heavens and the earth are the things that are said to have been created in the beginning. This is one of the most profound statements to be found anywhere. It is exact and definite. It is crystal clear, so very much so that it refutes the basic assumptions of most modern philosophies.

We could take any statement found in the Scriptures and see that it has a definite, specific meaning. The purpose which we should cherish is to learn exactly what is said, to arrive at the precise idea of the inspired writer.

## **Spiritual Requirements**

The Bible is a spiritual book and must be spiritually discerned. The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit; for he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. There are therefore certain spiritual qualifications which a person must possess if he is to understand the revelation of God.

First and foremost, I would say that the first prerequisite is ***a person's loving God.*** God made of one man every person to dwell upon the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitations that they should seek God. All men have a thirst for God, though it is generally perverted beyond recognition by inheritance and by one's seeking pleasure in sin. Man's seeking his own pleasure is the result of this perverted love of God and of man's ignorance. What he wants is satisfaction, contentment, rest, joy. These can be found in God alone. The soul of man was made and given capabilities and capacities so that he could enjoy these blessings in communion and fellowship with God. But by the introduction of sin and by

wicked practices this inborn capacity for appreciating God has become perverted. Man therefore seeks pleasure here and there.

But the one who has followed the natural instinct in seeking after God, has come to Him and found Him, and has been born again possesses a love for God implanted in his soul. This supernatural affection may be cultivated by the individual until he, like David, can say that his soul pants for God as the hart does for the water brooks.

I can understand my wife and the things that she says and does better possibly than anyone else. I love her with all my heart. I have associated with her and known her actions and reactions to various situations. Thus loving her and understanding her, I can evaluate a statement that she might make or some action that she might perform better than anyone else. So it is with the one who knows God and loves Him.

A second prerequisite to knowing God's Word is **to will to do His will**. Christ said to certain Jews that, if anyone willed to do the will of God, he would know of the teaching which he was then putting forth, whether it was from God or from men (John 7:17). Anyone must come to the point where he has made the will of God his will, if he is to enter into a full appreciation of the revealed will of God. Christ said constantly that He came not to do His own will but the will of Him who sent Him. Thus He continued through prayer in communion and fellowship with God.

Another spiritual qualification is **the laying aside of human theories and the practices of men which are contrary to the will of God**. In Isaiah 66:1-5 we have a prediction regarding the Jews who will rebuild the Temple and reinaugurate the old Temple services and the Mosaic ritual.

In regard to these Isaiah, speaking for God, said that they will have chosen their own way and that their souls will have delighted in doing their own abominations; He therefore declares that He will choose their delusions and will bring their fears upon them. These men choose the things which they will do and the things in which they delight. Thus they do not consider God whatsoever in their plans and purposes. He therefore chooses their delusions and makes them believe a lie. He then brings upon them the judgment of their deeds.

Certain of the elders of Israel came to Ezekiel. Concerning them God revealed to the prophet that they were not really seeking the will of God, but that they had taken their idols into their own hearts; yet they were coming to him to inquire concerning the will of God. Concerning such people God made this revelation:

"Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols" (Ezek. 14:4,5). Thus all idols, of whatever type they may be, must be laid aside if one comes to God—to His Word—in order to ascertain the real message from the Almighty.

Still another prerequisite for the understanding of God's Word is that **each person**

***should pray to God to open his eyes in order that he might see the wonderful things in the Word.*** David had the revelation of God before his eyes in the form of written documents. He was a brilliant man, but he realized that the human mind must be illuminated by the Spirit of God in order that it might know what is in the Word. The ordinary intellect can grasp some of the facts that are lying on the surface of the Word; but David was not satisfied simply with this superficial meaning of the Revelation. What he wanted was to see the wonderful and the deep spiritual things of the Word. He knew how he could be brought to see them. Thus he cried to God constantly to open his eyes that he might behold these wonderful things. The Apostle Paul urged the church at Ephesus to pray that their spiritual perception might be heightened in order that they might understand the great spiritual realities which are ours in Christ.

I well remember when I learned this important truth. When my attention was called to it, I began to pray for this spiritual insight. The first time I uttered that prayer, God enabled me to see things that I had never observed before, neither had heard fall from any man's lips. In tens of thousands of instances since that day I have asked Him to open my eyes to behold these wonderful things. He always grants my petitions for further light. I am not one of God 's pets, because He has none. Any of His children who will come to Him and ask Him in faith to give them spiritual insight into the Word will be heard, and the blessing will be granted—provided they will use it to His glory and honor and to their spiritual good. Let us therefore constantly ask Him to enable us to see the wonderful things in the Word. As we learn them, let us put them into practice and go forward in His cause.

## **Intellectual Requirements**

We shall now turn to the intellectual requirements that are necessary to the understanding of the Word. In the first place let me call attention to II Timothy 2:15: "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." The Apostle urged Timothy to give diligence to show himself approved unto God, handling aright the Word of God. The King James Version says "study to show thyself approved unto God." The translation found in the Revised Version is of course the correct literal rendering. But a person may handle aright or incorrectly the Word of God. If he handles it aright, or "holding a straight course in the word of truth," he will, all things being equal, get the real message of the Word. Paul himself believed in studying the Word, even though he was an inspired apostle. He therefore urged Timothy to bring "the books, especially the parchments" (II Tim. 4:13). Daniel, a prophet of God, studied Jeremiah's prophecies and compared them with "the books," probably the books of Kings and Chronicles. In doing this research, the prophet was endeavoring to get at the meaning of the written Word. Let us therefore study the Word in order that we might get its message.

The importance of this principle I may illustrate by the primitive Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian languages. Scholars went through out the ruins of Egypt and stood amazed before the hieroglyphics inscribed on the monuments. They sought in every way to decipher these. All efforts were in vain until the Rosetta Stone was discovered,

which afforded the key to this archaic writing. Then scholars began to study and to translate it. Thus there has been extracted from these unique records of Egypt the stories of the ancient Pharaohs.

The old Babylonian and Assyrian monuments were as silent as the grave to us moderns until Rawlinson copied the Behistun inscription, which afforded the key to the old cuneiform writings. Since then scholars have mastered the languages of these peoples and have read the stories of empires long buried beneath the sands of the centuries. It took hard work on the part of these scholars to ferret out the orthography and the grammar of these languages long-dead. Faithful scientific study and toil always bring results.

Thus it is in the field of biblical study. There are certain fundamental laws of biblical thought that must be mastered, if anyone is to understand adequately the message of the Scriptures. Below I am giving the principal laws of interpretation that will be discussed, God willing, in this series of articles:

- I. The first step in interpretation.
- II. The second step in interpretation.
- III. The golden rule in interpretation.
- IV. The law of first mention.
- V. The law of double reference.
- VI. The law of recurrence.
- VII. A play on words.
- VIII. An analysis of figures of speech.
- IX. The avoidance of extreme literalism.
- X. The law of the contexts of quotations.
- XI. Hebrew parallelism.
- XII. Interpretation vs. Application.
- XIII. Symbolic language.
- XIV. Comparing scripture with scripture.
- XV. Studying obscure passages in the light of plain ones.

## **THE FIRST STEP IN INTERPRETATION**

IN OUR FIRST study of the laws of interpretation we have seen the importance of this subject. Most of our troubles and ills are due to misunderstandings of what others have said. These misunderstandings are always the occasion of hard feelings and often trouble. Much, therefore, of our troubles and difficulties would be avoided if we only understood accurately and clearly what the other person says, promises, and the like. The same thing is true with reference to his understanding us and our intentions and promises.

As stated in the initial study of this subject, the first principle to be discussed in this series is what might be designated as "the first rule of interpretation." This rule may be stated as follows: **The first step in interpreting the Scriptures is to discover the author, the people addressed, and the life and times of the people involved in a given case.**

At first glance one may say that this is such a simple rule that it needs little or no discussion. Such a view is indeed superficial. Very few people ever observe this rule in their Bible-reading. In my making this statement I am speaking from observation and my contacts with people. In tens of thousands of instances, I see how the Scriptures are generally treated.

To bring the points before us immediately I wish to call attention to a letter. At the office of the Biblical Research Society we receive thousands of letters from all parts of the world. When I attempt to read one, if the name and address of the writer are not given on the envelope, I immediately look at the beginning of the communication to see the place from which the letter was written. Then I look at the end to find the writer's name. I also notice the date. If I am acquainted with the author and know something about his home, his life, his labors, and his general outlook, I can enter very sympathetically into whatever he has to say. On the other hand, if I receive a letter from a stranger, of whom I have not even heard, and he begins his letter by talking about the special business which he has in mind or the thing he wishes to bring before me, I cannot enter sympathetically into what he says so much as I can if he tells me who he is, his outlook, his intentions in writing, and other data that will make me better acquainted, with him. Let me say that I receive letters of both types. Sometimes there develops quite an extended correspondence concerning some matter and a number of letters are exchanged between us on the one hand and the original writer on the other. We always keep carbon copies of every letter written, which are put on file. As the correspondence develops, frequently we have an occasion to refer to a letter of a given date in order to make a point which we have in mind. It often is necessary to state that a given letter is the second, third, or fourth one of the correspondence. Very frequently it becomes necessary for one, in order to understand one letter of a series, to read the entire correspondence from both sides just as it developed. In so doing a person gets the picture clearly before his mind.

Whenever the correspondence is about some business or legal matter, the date and the place become of vital importance as well as the writer and the one addressed. It is of the greatest importance to know the author of a letter or a document and the one addressed. This is clearly seen by such a case as this: One person writes to another and promises to give him ten thousand dollars. Should that letter fall into my hands, I would have no right in claiming the ten thousand dollars; because the letter was not addressed to me. The same thing is true with reference to the Scriptures. The sacred writers wrote to different individuals and groups of people. They made various promises in behalf of God to certain ones. Before I can claim such a promise, I must know that that document was written to me directly or to someone or ones occupying a position in relation to God such as I likewise sustain to Him. If therefore I have the same standing before God that the one to whom a special promise has been made, I

can claim the same promise upon the principle that God is no respecter of persons and that what He would do for a certain one in my exact position He would do for me.

EACH STATE OF the Union has its own laws. What is law in California may not necessarily be on the statute books of the state of New York and vice versa. Of course basically the laws of each state are practically the same, but local conditions of course make necessary changes in amendments or modifications that are not required in another state. The same thing is true with reference to the laws of the United States in relation to other nations. English law is one thing; German law is another. We must understand those things if we are to comply with the laws of the country in which we live or are residing temporarily. The same principle holds true in the Scriptures. God spoke certain things to the people in the Patriarchal Age. His revelations met the conditions then existing. It seemed that God dealt with the individuals and tribes or clans during those primitive times. Finally, when Israel developed into a nation, He delivered her from Egyptian bondage and delivered unto her the Mosaic Code together with her sacrificial and ceremonial worship. Thus Moses and the prophets spoke directly to Israel and their outlook as a rule was from the legal standpoint.

WHEN the fullness of the time came, God brought His Son into the world who suffered and died in order that we might have redemption full and free through Him. He has thus opened up a new and living way by means of the veil of His flesh, which was rent on the cross. He has thus entered into a new covenant with all believers who will accept His invitation to come and find rest. Thus what was spoken to Israel nationally is not necessarily applicable to the church of God today and vice versa. A failure to recognize this plain distinction has led to untold confusion. Many of the older theologians made no distinction between the children of Israel and the church of God. Thus indiscriminately they applied what the prophets spoke to Israel nationally to the church of today. They were always, however, careful to see that the curses and the threats hurled at national Israel are not to be applied to the church.

Let us be a little more specific. What Moses and the prophets spoke to the nation of Israel as a people should not be applied to anyone else except Israel. If we see in a given passage a certain fundamental basic principle set forth, we may apply the principle to an analogous case. But we must be certain that the analogy exists before we make an application of the principle. When God, for instance, promised to enter into a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, which would be different from the one into which He entered when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, we are to understand that this is a very definite promise to the Jewish people. This prediction is found in Jeremiah 31:31ff. God entered into a specific covenant with Israel when He brought her out of the land of Egypt and led her to Sinai (Exod., chap. 24). Now He says to the same nation that He will enter into a new covenant with her, but that it is to be different from the one which He made with her formerly. The language is specific. By no method of mental gymnastics can anyone twist this passage to mean anything else other than what it says.

In Hebrews, chapter 8, a part of this marvelous prediction from Jeremiah, chapter 31, is quoted. Some theologians have concluded that, since Paul in Hebrews quotes this passage, and since he is speaking about Christ in the realities that we now have in

Him, the prediction of Jeremiah was completely fulfilled in the Christian Dispensation by the coming of Christ who enters into a covenant with every believer. This is incorrect reasoning.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to the nation of Israel, who at the time of the writing had been evangelized. The Jews everywhere had heard the word but had not accepted—only a few here and there received Christ as Messiah and Saviour. The writer therefore called upon the Jewish nation to consider Christ as the Apostle and High Priest of their confession (Hebrews 3:1). In the fourth chapter Paul said that the Jews of His day had been evangelized as the Hebrews of Moses' day had been, but that the word of hearing had not profited them because it was not mingled with faith. Thus it was with the Jews of Paul's day. The gospel had been given to the entire nation, but only a few had accepted it by faith.

One can continue to go through the Book of Hebrews and study it carefully. Such a one will find that this majestic Epistle was addressed to the entire nation—unbelievers as well as believers. It was God's final call to the Jewish nation of the First Century to accept Christ while it was called "To-day." Those who had heard, but who had not heeded, needed the exhortation to take the initial step of accepting Christ as Saviour and Messiah. Those who had accepted Christ, but who were still babes, needed the exhortation of the Epistle urging them to go forward in their Christian life and experience. But in his speaking to the nation, as a group, Paul urged his brethren to accept Christ, who is the Apostle and High Priest of their confession, in order that He might fulfill the promise which He made to Israel nationally through Jeremiah in chapter 31. Thus a New Testament application of this passage is in perfect accord with the original prediction in its proper setting. It constitutes a promise that God will yet enter into covenant relationship with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Whenever the messages of the prophets to Israel are thus analyzed and understood in their proper setting it is seen that the prophets meant exactly what they said and that they held out their promises to Israel nationally and likewise threatened them with punishment in the event of disobedience.

THE Book of Psalms is Israel's songbook. In it are expressed the national hopes as well as the longing of the individual soul for God and a closer walk with Him. To ignore the fact that the Psalms constitute Israel's songbook and to apply them indiscriminately to the believers today is to pervert the Scriptures. Most of these hymns are nationalistic in their outlook and are spoken either directly to Israel as a nation or concerning her. Most of them speak either of Israel's Messiah or the great Messianic Age when He, the King of Israel, comes to reign in glory and power. There are, however, certain psalms that are of an individual nature, such as Psalms 1, 23, and 25. Here are promises that are made to individual believers who are trusting in God.

The writers of these songs expressed, by inspiration, thoughts relative to the relationship that exists between God and the individual believer. One may see the principles in this portion of the Word and then apply them to cases that are analogous with that set forth in the Psalms. Such is a legitimate handling of the Word. For instance, David was a true son of God and trusted Him. He thus could claim the

promises of protection and the like. The believer stands in a relation to God similar to that in which David did. He, however, is brought closer to God than was David, but in general the relationship is similar; therefore the believer today can take the principles set forth in these individualistic psalms and can apply them to his own case. In doing this he is legitimately using the Scriptures.

AGAIN, let us look at the Book of Job. One must study the situation presented in this book in order to interpret it properly. After the introduction, which consists of chapters 1 and 2, we enter into the speeches that were made by Job and his would-be comforters; These are found in chapters 3-37. As one studies these carefully, one sees that all of these men made incorrect statements. Some of them, however, are absolutely contrary to fact. Job's friends did not understand the great fundamental principles of the truth as a rule. He, however, did understand them more nearly correctly than they, and yet he at times approached the point of blasphemy against God. That Job's friends did misunderstand and did misrepresent God is clear from the statement of the Almighty when He appeared upon the scene: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). God's charging these men with darkening counsel without knowledge shows that they were not inspired in their utterances. Many of the things which they said were correct, but many were incorrect, and some positively wrong. Since Job, along with his friends, did make mistakes in their statements, we conclude that those chapters which thus present their speeches were not originally inspired. But let me hasten to emphasize the fact that the writer of the Book of Job was infallibly inspired and has given us a faithful account of what was said and done by these actors in this great drama. There is a difference between the inspiration of the sacred writer and the lack of inspiration on the part of the original speakers and actors. I might compare the infallibility of the Spirit by which the writer of the book was guided with this Ediphone into which I am now speaking. As I talk, this machine records faithfully everything that I say. Thus it gives an exact record of what I speak. If I chose, I could make false statements and even contradictions. This machine would record the contradictions and the false statements that I make just as accurately as it will the correct ones. Thus we conclude that the entire Book of Job was infallibly inspired by the Spirit of God who told us exactly what was said and done on this occasion. But it is a mistake to quote any of the utterances of Job and his friends and present them as God's infallible revelation to man—because they are not. It is simply the inspired record of what men said and did, often in the heat of controversy. But the prologue, chapters 1 and 2, and the sequel to the story, chapters 38-42, are revelations that the sacred writer made to us as he spoke infallibly by the Spirit. A person may therefore quote anything in chapters 1, 2 and 38-42 as the inspired revelation of God. But he dare not lift the material found in chapters 3-37 to the level of a revelation from God.

Thus in our study of the Scriptures we must learn who is the speaker, to whom he speaks, under what conditions, at what time, and for what purpose. The Book of Job illustrates the importance of this rule.

WHAT has been said about Job is correct also with reference to the Book of Ecclesiastes. Throughout the book the Wise Man tells us how he thought that he could find pleasure and amusement in this thing and that thing. In other words, he gives his

spiritual biography. Some of the things that he said and thought were correct whereas others were not. Finally, the Holy Spirit guided him infallibly to write this spiritual biography, which he concluded with this divine revelation:

*This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13,14).*

LET us now come to the New Testament. We see the four records of the one Gospel in the form of the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Tradition tells us that Matthew wrote his record of the Gospel for the Jews, that Mark wrote for the Romans, and that Luke wrote for the Greeks. The historical facts seem to support this tradition. John wrote to convince unbelievers and to combat certain heresies and false systems of philosophy that were disquieting to the early disciples.

Because Matthew was written primarily for the edification of the Jewish people, some excellent brethren conclude that that record of the Gospel is not for Christians today. Thus everything that is said in it is applied to the Jews.

The Sermon on the Mount is said to be for the Jews and not for Christians. Following the same course of logic, we would say that, since Mark was written primarily for the Romans, it has no message for us today. Following the same rule, we would come to a similar conclusion with reference to Luke. We could not avoid coming to a like decision with reference to John. Upon this principle, then, we are robbed entirely of the four records of the Gospel. The Acts of the Apostles was written to Theophilus and is historical. Some have concluded, therefore, that it is not for believers today. Some brethren see that the Epistle to the Romans was written to the church at Rome. If we follow this principle to its logical conclusion, then we would say that the Book of Romans has no message for us. What is said with reference to this Epistle might correctly be said with reference to all the New Testament Epistles to the churches. The pastoral Epistles were written to two young preachers, Timothy and Titus. Hebrews was written to the Jewish nation and constituted "God's final call to Israel of the first century to accept Christ as Messiah." If we follow this principle we shall say that it has no message for us today, since it was to the Jews of the first century. We can apply the same principle to the general Epistles and likewise to the Book of Revelation. By blindly following this principle and by ignoring many facts we can rob ourselves of the precious message of the New Testament.

There are certain ones who do follow out this principle to its logical conclusion, but they make an exception of the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—even though these Epistles were written to specific churches. They claim these "prison Epistles" upon the basis that they speak of the body of believers as the body of Christ and declare that there was a change—a radical change—at the end of the Acts of the Apostles (chapter 28). The church from Pentecost until then was Jewish and is the bride of Christ. But believers from 63 A.D. and onward until the rapture (for Acts of the Apostles brings the history of the church to 63 A.D., to the end of Paul's second year of imprisonment in Rome) constitute the body of Christ and are separate from the bride.

Those, however, who accept Christ after the rapture of the body of Christ and during the Tribulation, will complete the bride of Christ (generally speaking this is the position to which a number of excellent brethren have been led in their rigidly adopting the principle under discussion while ignoring other plain, evident facts).

Let us look at the facts more particularly. There is but one gospel. The New Testament knows of but one gospel. Paul pronounced an anathema upon anyone who preached any other gospel than that which he preached (Gal. 1:8,9). This one gospel is called "an eternal gospel" in Revelation 14:6 (margin, R.V.). When Paul was giving the plain simple truths concerning Christ's dying for our sins, being buried, being raised for our justification, and offering salvation to all who accept it, he was speaking a plain simple gospel message—"the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Paul, who preached the plain simple gospel and thus led men to a saving knowledge of the truth, likewise went about "preaching the kingdom" (Acts 20:25). In the last two verses of Acts Luke tells us that Paul remained in his own hired dwelling and received all that went in unto him, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." Thus the Apostle Paul preached the good news concerning salvation through Christ and the good news concerning the kingdom of God. So does every true gospel preacher. This full gospel message is to be preached, according to Matthew 28:19,20, to the end of this Dispensation of Grace, by the church. After the church is gone and there arise a hundred and forty-four thousand Jewish servants of God (Rev., chap. 7) they will go about preaching "the gospel of the kingdom" for a testimony unto all the nations and then the end of the age will come (Matt. 24:14). In their preaching this gospel of the kingdom they will be proclaiming the same message that the Apostle Paul did when he preached the good news concerning Christ and the kingdom of God.

If there is but one gospel, how, for instance, are we to understand the Book of Matthew? Matthew wrote by inspiration a record of the life and the sayings of Christ. He was led by the Spirit to present the message of the gospel in such a way as to appeal to his Jewish brethren and in such a manner that they could understand it. His approach was logically from the standpoint of the Old Testament. He therefore emphasized the fact that the Old Testament predictions concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in Christ. Matthew's record of the one gospel is Jewish only in this one particular: the Apostle was led by the Spirit of God to put the message in such a way that the Jew could understand what Christ said and did.

Mark, we are told, wrote for the Romans. By the Spirit of God he understood the proper approach toward the Romans. He therefore was inspired to give an account of the life and teachings of our God and to present them in such a way as to appeal to the Roman mind. This Gospel is for the Romans only in one particular, namely that it was put in such a way as to appeal to them. But it is a record of the one gospel of God's grace and loving-kindness.

The Gospel written by Luke was sent primarily for the Greeks who loved beauty and elegance of expression. Luke, the beloved physician, was inspired by the Spirit to put the record of the one gospel in such a way as to appeal to the Greek mind.

John, on the other hand, was led by the Spirit to select the proper material from the life of Christ and to put it in such a way as to appeal to the honest doubter. John presented in his record the one message of the gospel. His record therefore is for the doubters only in that it was presented in such a manner as to appeal to the honest skeptics.

I MIGHT illustrate the situation which is presented by the four records of the Gospel by calling attention to Sunday School literature. A certain section of scripture or a certain subject is selected for the study on a given God 's Day. Writers who understand psychology and who especially understand the proper approach to children of different ages are selected by the Sunday School boards of the various churches to write the proper type of literature for those who are in the following departments: Beginners, Primary, Junior, Intermediate, and Senior. Some have other divisions, but these are the principal ones. The message that is in the literature for the Beginners is the same as that which is in the quarterlies for the Seniors, but of course it is put in the simplest manner in order that those in that department may get the message to the best of their ability. What is said of the Beginners is true also of those in the Primary, those in the Junior, those in the Intermediate, and those in the Senior departments. The way of giving the message and the approach to the subject are different in the case of each of the classes of the different departments, but the message is the same. In the Apostolic Age there were four types of people with their varying backgrounds and outlooks upon life. Matthew, led by the Spirit of God, presented the one Gospel—which is for the entire world—in such a way that the Jews could get it. But that which is in his record is not a special message for the Jews, and the Jews only.

What is in Mark is not simply God's particular message for the Romans, exclusive of all other people. The same is true with reference to Luke and John. As we read these four records of the one Gospel, we must be careful to see who is talking and to whom his speech is directed and under what conditions the statements presented were made. Frequently the time when a statement was made has bearing upon its proper interpretation; because some statements presuppose certain conditions. The Apostle Paul recognized that there was but one Gospel and that the words of the Christ have been preserved for His people. Thus he said to Timothy, "If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consented not to sound words, *even* the words of our Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is puffed up ..." (I Tim. 6:3). The words of our God are found in all four records of the Gospel, and they have been preserved for us, for our edification and up building.

The Acts of the Apostles, though written at first to Theophilus, is for our edification and enlightenment. In it there are various speakers. The sermons that were preached are of inestimable value to us today.

Though the Roman Epistle was directed and sent to the church in the world metropolis at that time, it is a general treatise on the gospel. It sets forth the great fundamental doctrines of the gospel of Christ and is for everyone who sustains the same relationship to God that the Roman Christians did. The letters to the church at Corinth were sent primarily to the body of believers in that city. And yet in the first verse of the first Epistle Paul says that the letter is for everyone, regardless of where he is or where he

lives, just so he believes in God. Thus those letters are of universal application to those who sustain the same relationship to Christ and God as did those Corinthians. What is said of these letters and the Roman Epistle may be correctly said of all the other Epistles to churches found in the New Testament. Each of the twenty-seven books found in the New Testament is an integral part of a whole. Each part has its special function in revealing the mind and will of God to us today. What Paul said in regard to the Old Testament is correct with reference to the New also.

Every scripture inspired of God *is* also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: 17 that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

The knowledge of certain rules of interpretation and the observance of these rules when studying the Scriptures is very important and helpful in arriving at a clear understanding of Gods Word.

## **THE SECOND STEP IN INTERPRETING THE SCRIPTURES**

IN THE LAST INSTALLMENT of this series we studied what I designated as "The First Rule of Interpreting the Scriptures." In our examination of this first step we saw that a person must understand who the author of a writing is, the time of his writing, the occasion of his doing so, the specific purpose for which he wrote, and the times in which he and the people addressed lived. When anyone has this data, he can, as a rule, interpret more accurately what is said. He can catch the drift of the thought and can see the connection between statements more clearly than otherwise.

The next rule for the interpretation of language as it pertains to the Scriptures may be stated thus: **The second step in interpreting the Scriptures is to discover the facts and the truths presented in a given passage and to note the exact wording of the text.** Having gleaned all that we can from the data in hand regarding the author and the recipients of a communication, the times and the seasons, and the occasion of such a communication, a person is in a position to apply the second rule or step of interpretation in his effort to get at the message which the author intended to convey.

### **I. Analysis Of The Rule —The Collection And Classification Of The Facts And Truths.**

We are part of all we meet. Life is a chain of causation. All consequences have antecedents. In view of these axiomatic truths one must collect the facts of any given text and classify them properly, relating each of them to those with which it is associated—if there be any connection.

#### **A. Collection of Facts and Truths of a Given Text**

It is necessary for us to note carefully every statement that is made and every fact that is stated, regardless of whether or not it is an historical fact or a scientific truth or principle.

We are living in a practical world. The visionary has great difficulty in such a workaday atmosphere as that in which we live. A person must keep his feet on the ground even while he is attempting to reason out a thing or to theorize regarding any matter. Facts are facts—things that have actually taken place. Facts always overthrow theories that are not in harmony with truth. Whenever, therefore, there is a conflict between theories and facts, we must throw the theories into the discard and hold to the facts.

There are great and fundamental principles or truths in every sphere of man's activity. The physical world is controlled by laws which have been imposed upon it by the all-wise Creator. In the realm of mind there are likewise principles which are just as unbreakable, and which are as unvarying as any of the laws of the material realm. In the field of ethics and religion there are also truths and principles. These are likewise inflexible. They can never be set aside with impunity. In the same manner there are principles and truths that are operating in the spiritual realm. These are likewise unchangeable and unvarying.

In view of the facts just stated, whenever a person is reading the Scriptures, he should endeavor to glean every fact and to note every principle that is set forth in a given passage. In other words, let me say that words are symbols of ideas. Every word and every group of words set forth a definite, specific meaning. This statement is especially true with reference to the Scriptures, which are the profoundest writings and which are more than the writings of uninspired men. God has preserved this information for us. We should therefore endeavor to discover the facts that are stated and to take note of the principles and truths set forth.

## **B. The Classification of Facts and Truths of a Given Text**

The classification of the facts and truths which are presented by any text of Scripture is of the utmost importance. A sentence consists of various parts of speech. In some of the more involved sentences every part of speech is used. In many of them the same part occurs over and over again. In a well-written paragraph each sentence is properly related to the general thought which is being set forth in such a section of a document. As we analyze a sentence or a paragraph, it is most important that we notice the time element, if any be given. We must take note of the type of sentence used: whether it is a declaration, an interrogation, or a command. It is likewise imperative that the reader note the subject of the sentence or the theme of the paragraph or composition. Is the subject of the sentence acting or is it being acted upon? What motive, if any, may be discovered prompting the act? Is anyone affected by what is said or done? The facts that are discovered must be related and classified—those that pertain to the physical phenomena as well as those that are operative in the sphere of psychology or the spiritual realm.

## C. Noting the Exact Language

In anyone's speaking of the collection and classification of facts and truths, it is necessary for him to refer to the analysis of the sentence, looking at the various parts of speech employed and the relation of one to another. A little further caution is necessary: A person must look at the *exact words* that are used. If possible, he should know the original meaning of the words in English. There is a fundamental thought that is enshrined in every word. Usage, however, frequently modifies terms and adds additional ideas. In this connection let me say that it is most important to notice the small words. They are frequently of as great importance as the larger ones. Sometimes, on account of the fact that prepositions are small, short words, we ignore them. But they indicate the exact relation between words. Conjunctions are no less important. Certain particles lend shade and color to thought. This is especially true in the Greek. A person must therefore note accurately the exact wording of a passage, if he is to formulate a correct, definite, specific idea of any given text.

## II. The Application Of This Rule

Having analyzed the principle involved in the rule which we are studying, let us now apply it to certain passages of Scripture, taken from different sections of the Word. As the first example let us notice Genesis 1:1,2:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

According to the second law of interpretation we are to discover the facts and principles, if any, involved in this statement. In verse 1, which is one of the profoundest utterances in the entire Word of God, we learn a number of facts. The phrase, in the beginning, is adverbial and refers to that part of eternity which antedated time. Time began with the creation of the universe. Thus the beginning which is spoken of here is that part of eternity which antedated the creation. Back in that part of eternity God existed. He is the Eternal, the Everlasting God. He is the Uncaused Cause of all things. He is the one who supports the material universe and is carrying it forward to a grand consummation. He is the one in whom we live, move, and have our continual being. Volumes could be written concerning the Almighty.

In this verse we are told that this omnipotent, self-existent Being whom we know as God put forth the act of creation. An examination of this word discloses the fact that it means to bring into being that which had no prior form or substance before His

performing this act. A study of the Scriptures shows that no one is capable of putting forth this act except the omniscient, omnipotent God.

That which the Almighty created, according to the verse which we are considering, was "the heavens and the earth." "Heavens" includes all the celestial bodies throughout the vast extent of space. Modern astronomical instruments are bringing within the range of man's vision fields of space never dreamed of before our day and time. When larger and more efficient instruments are made and new methods of investigation are discovered our ideas of the universe will be enlarged and our conception of the omnipotence of God greatly enriched. While we are interested in the heavens and the celestial bodies, we are greatly absorbed in this earth upon which we are living. Thus in this one verse, which in the Hebrew has only seven words, we are given the profound, majestic statement concerning the beginning of physical phenomena, the sphere of the spirit world. This verse combats and refutes polytheism, pantheism, materialism, and idealism. In fact, it overthrows all the modern false philosophical conceptions concerning the origin of the universe and gives us the most rational, logical account of it.

In the second verse our attention is focused upon this earth. We are told that it was "waste and void." When we read this statement and recall Isaiah 45:18, which tells us that "God ... formed the earth ... and created it not a waste," we come to the conclusion that evidently, since God's works are perfect, the earth was wrecked after its being created. Thus an accurate rendering of the Hebrew of Genesis 1:2 would be: But the earth became a desolation and a waste. We are also told that darkness was upon the face of the deep. The implication of this statement is that there was light here first, but that after the catastrophe, darkness enveloped the earth.

Some time after—we know not how long or how short the period was—the Spirit of God moved or brooded upon the face of the waters. Why He did this we are not told in this connection. As to who is meant by the Spirit of God we are not told here. When, however, we read this statement in the light that is thrown upon it from other related passages, we know that the one called "the Spirit of God" is none other than the third person at the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Thus in our applying the second rule of interpretation to this passage, we analyze the two sentences constituting these two verses. We look at the various phrases, nouns, verbs, prepositions, and adjectives. We likewise take note of the meaning of these words. We determine the exact and accurate signification of each term. By our doing this, we discover the facts and truth that are set forth and thus get a definite, specific idea of the truth that is conveyed.

In the application to these verses of the principle under consideration, I have been able only in the briefest manner to refer to the great facts and truths that are set forth in these marvelous statements. A large volume could be devoted to the discussion of this passage. But my analysis will suffice to show the importance of noting what is said in a given text. Thus, when we read any passage, let us first ask ourselves this question: What does the text actually say? Then let us set to work to discover its meaning.

IT IS now in order for us to turn to a different type of statement to be found in the Scriptures. Genesis 1:1,2 is historical. Let us look at a prophetic utterance:

Why do the nations rage and the peoples meditate a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth set themselves,  
And the rulers take counsel together,  
Against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying,  
Let us break their bonds asunder,  
And cast away their cords from us (Ps. 2:1-3).

By paying careful attention to what is said in this passage, we understand that the psalmist, by the Spirit of God, saw a forthcoming international, atheistic, anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, politico-religious convention. The marginal reading of the first question, which is literal, is this: "Why do the nations tumultuously assemble?" Evidently the nations are assembling in a tumultuous gathering. Is this statement to be taken literally? We know that it is physically impossible for the two-billions of peoples of the world to gather together in any one assemblage. But, according to verse 2, the delegates to this convention are the kings and the rulers of the earth. This second verse enables us to understand the meaning of the first one. The purpose of this gathering is to meditate what the psalmist calls "a vain thing"—something that will fail utterly. When we recognize that this is a prediction of a convention to which kings and rulers of the world are the delegates, we see that it is a prediction of an international gathering. That it is an atheistic convention is evident from the fact that it is "Against Jehovah." That it is anti-Semitic is seen from the further fact that it is against Jehovah, the God who revealed Himself to Israel, and who throughout the Old Testament speaks of Himself as "the God of Israel." That it is anti-Christian is also seen from the fact that it is against God's "anointed," His Messiah.

After much debate the following resolution will be put before the house for a vote: "Let us [the convention] break their [Jehovah and His Messiah's] bonds asunder, And cast their cords from us." The words of these verses, if they mean anything at all, mean just what is indicated above. They mean nothing more, nothing less. Of course each idea could be enlarged upon and the picture could be brought out in bold relief; but these are the fundamental thoughts of the passage.

Has such an international gathering ever been called to do away with the religion of God and Christ? Everyone who knows anything about history would answer in the negative. This prediction has never been fulfilled.

But someone calls my attention to the fact that these verses are quoted in Acts 4:25,26 and are applied to the action that was taken by Pilate, Herod, and the Jewish Sanhedrin against Christ. But this was no convention. There were two petty Roman officials who were working in connection with the Jewish Sanhedrin against Christ. In no sense did they put forward the resolution, "Let us break their bonds asunder, And cast their cords from us," and vote upon it. Since the action of these enemies of Christ did not fill out the picture of the original passage, we may be certain that that to which it is applied in the New Testament was simply a partial, limited, incomplete fulfillment of this prophecy. Moreover, we may be certain that it will yet be fulfilled literally—accordingly

as it is written. We are therefore driven to the conclusion that this passage is a prophecy of the "forthcoming international, atheistic, anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, politico-religious convention."

We have discovered the facts that are stated in Psalm 2:1-3, have classified them, and have given special notice to the exact wording. We have not of course gone into an extensive study of this passage—which thing is not possible on account of limited space. (In my volume, [\*Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled\*](#), I discuss Psalm 2 more at length.)

Let us now look at John 1:1,2: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

The phrase introducing verse 1, "In the beginning," instantly reminds one of Genesis 1:1. When we read verses 3 and 4 of John, chapter 1, and compare the statement given in these four verses with Genesis 1:1, we are convinced that this phrase has the same signification in both passages, namely, that it refers to that portion of eternity which antedated time.

The next thing for us to note is the copula, *was*. The word standing in the Greek text indicates continuity in the past; and in this context, continuity in the past without any limits.

The subject of this sentence is "the Word." The peculiar use of this term shows that it is employed with an unusual signification. When we study the various related passages, we see that it refers to one of the Holy Trinity, whom we know from other passages as the Son, second person of the triune Godhead. That this interpretation is correct is seen from the rest of this verse—"and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The preposition translated "with" indicates personal relationship. This one was in personal relationship, in fellowship with God; but He was not an angel, nor a cherub or seraph; but He was divine—as is indicated by the last of the sentence.

In order to forestall any false, erroneous positions and to insure the correct idea, the Apostle in verse 2 stated that "The same was in the beginning with God." He was in fellowship and communion with God from all eternity. We could take up each word, examine it microscopically, and could, by turning to parallel passages, bring out the various shades of thought here presented. But these are sufficient to illustrate the importance of one's discovering the facts and the truths that are stated in any passage and of noting exactly what is said. In other words, these examples are sufficient to emphasize the importance of the second rule or step in interpreting the Scriptures.

## **THE GOLDEN RULE OF INTERPRETATION — THE THIRD STEP IN INTERPRETING THE SCRIPTURES**

IN THE DISCUSSION of the first step in interpreting the Scriptures, we saw that it is most important for the biblical reader to understand who the human author was, the one addressed, the times in which the writer lived, the occasion of his writing, and all facts that may be gathered in order to have the proper approach to any one passage of Scripture. In the discussion of the second step of interpreting the Scriptures, we also saw that one must gather the facts that are stated in any given passage and must note the exact language that is employed. When one has therefore followed these instructions to the best of his ability, he must observe what is properly called the golden rule of interpretation which is as follows:

**When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word, at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.**

The sum and substance of this most important rule is that one should take every statement of the Scriptures at its plain face value, unless there are indications that a figurative or metaphorical meaning was intended by the original writer. In other words, one is to take the Scriptures as they are written and is not to attempt to read into the Sacred Writings his own ideas or the thoughts of men. Since this golden rule of interpretation is such a very important one, it becomes necessary for us to look at it more minutely.

### **I. The Plain, Literal Meaning Of The Scriptures**

The first part of this rule urges us to take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning—unless there is positive evidence pointing beyond this plain face meaning. Our words today have a history behind them. Originally, when words are coined, they represent a fundamental primary idea. Throughout the period of its being used, each word has taken on new shades of ideas, all of which as a rule are related to the fundamental original conception. Usually the inherent idea of a word still clings to it. There are of course exceptions to this general trend of the development of words. Certain terms have changed their meaning so very radically that they connote the exact opposite now from what they did originally. As an example of this, we may note the word *let*. In the time the King James Version was translated, it meant to *hinder*. Today it means exactly the opposite—to permit, to allow. But this is a rather strange and extreme example of a word which changes its meaning entirely.

According to our rule we are to take the primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning. The adjective *primary* emphasizes the original, inherent idea in the term. *Ordinary* and *usual* are practically synonyms, especially in this definition, "usual" being employed for the sake of emphasis. The word *literal* is used to emphasize the thought that every

word must be taken as referring to the actual thought of the time when it used. Literal, therefore, is opposed to figurative or symbolic.

This part of the rule must be observed strictly; otherwise the interpreter will, in many instances, miss the meaning of the sacred writer. As an illustration of the importance of this part of our rule I wish to call attention to the statement found in Jonah 2:2,3: "And he said, I called by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah, And he answered me; Out of the belly of Sheol cried I, *And* thou heardest my voice. For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas. And the flood was round about me; All thy waves and thy billows passed over me." The Prophet, in explaining how it was that he had been to Sheol, stated that he had been cast into the depth, that the flood had been round about him, and that the waves and billows had been passing over him. If we observe this part of our rules, we are to take the words, depth, flood, waves, and billows, literally as referring to water—unless there are indications showing that he did not use these terms literally. When we read chapter 1 we see that Jonah was thrown overboard and landed in the water—the literal sea. He was there in the depths. The flood was round about him; and the waves and billows were passing over him. To interpret Jonah 2:3 figuratively is to miss the meaning entirely. The presumption is that every word is to be taken at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless there are facts that indicate a departure from the face meaning. Some have ignored this important element of the rule and have insisted that it is used figuratively. In support of this contention those espousing this position have called attention to Psalm 69:2:

I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:  
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

They triumphantly point to the fact that there are no waters in this passage, although David did use the words, waters and floods. They are correct in saying that there are no waters or floods in Psalm 69. How do we know that? The facts of the context point positively in the direction that these words are used figuratively. To read waters into this passage would be to do violence to the Scriptures and to inject into them a meaning that they do not have. On the other hand, to close one's eyes to the literal sea into which Jonah was thrown when he was cast from the ship is to do violence to the Book of Jonah. The author says that he was thrown out into the water and records the prophet's prayer while he was bobbing up and down in the water before he sank. Thus he spoke literally when he said that the flood was round about him and that the waves and the billows were passing over his head.

## **II. Seek Figurative Meaning Only When Facts Demand Such An Interpretation**

Though this point has been partially covered in discussing Jonah 2:3, it is such a vital element of our rule, I feel that I should emphasize it at this point. Possibly a violation or two of this principle will help to show emphatically why it is so very important. There are those of the rationalistic persuasion who do not believe that there ever was such a man as Abraham, the patriarch of whom we read in Genesis. If one should read

*Legends of Genesis* by Gunkel, he would see how the rationalists break the force of the Scriptures arbitrarily and make them to mean something entirely different from what they say. They tell us that there was no such man as Abraham, the great progenitor of the Hebrew race. Having thus deprived us of this historical character, they proceed to explain to us how it is that the name of Abram, or Abraham, as it was later called, appears on the sacred page. According to the rationalistic theory the Jews, as they came in contact with other nations of antiquity, wanted to objectify their history as the nations did. They did this by inventing some great illustrious hero from whom they were descended. Instead of Israel's having descended from Abram, a resident of the Ur of Chaldea, they were simply the descendants of various nomadic tribes that wandered around in the Arabian Desert until they finally crossed over the border into the fertile crescent, into Palestine. The so-called historians of the eighth and ninth centuries B.C. drew upon their imaginations, created the characters, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and thus manufactured the history which we read in the Pentateuch and in the earlier historical portions of the Scriptures. It is hard for us who are in the habit of believing that the Bible is the very Word of God to see how men—brilliant, scholarly men—can deal with history and facts in such a fast and loose manner. But such is the logical outcome of the violation of this phase of the golden rule of interpretation.

IN THIS connection I wish to call attention to what one of my old professors in the University of Chicago said in lecturing on Genesis. During his lecture (as I sat as a student in the class) he said that most scholars denied the historicity of the Hebrew patriarchs, and that he had taken the same position with reference to all of them at one time; however, he had changed his mind in regard to Abraham. The thing that caused him to revise his opinion regarding the Father of the Faithful was that a clay tablet had been discovered upon which the name Abram appeared. This man rented a wagon to another person in order that he might make a journey from Chaldea to the land of Ammur, the westland. Think of it! A brilliant scholarly man denied the existence of Abraham, notwithstanding all that the Bible says about him. But that which caused him to change his opinion was a clay tablet on which the contract for renting a wagon was recorded. This account caused the learned professor to change his mind and to believe in the historicity of Abraham.

If a person can take a plain passage of Scripture, close his eyes to its real meaning, and read into it a figurative or symbolic meaning, he will be forced to do the same thing with related passages—if he is logical. In doing this, he is forced to reconstruct large sections of the Scripture and to impose upon them a meaning foreign to that of the original writer. When one has once adopted this method, one has no place to stop—short of a denial of the records and of forcing a meaning upon the Word of God contrary to all facts and reason. As we have seen above, the rationalistic critics have simply carried this spiritualizing process to its inevitable conclusion. Modernism and rationalism are the logical outgrowth of forcing a figurative meaning upon a passage that is clearly literal. In the light of these facts we can see how very important it is for us to apply the golden rule of interpretation rigidly to every passage in the Word of God.

### **III. Studying Obscure Passages In The Light Of Related Texts And Axiomatic And Fundamental Truths.**

Frequently one comes across a statement which is made with little detail. It is therefore difficult to study it simply in the light of its context. Whenever we come to such a passage as this, it becomes necessary for us to lay such a text beside a related one about which there can be no doubt, and concerning which there are full details. But we must be absolutely certain that the passage from which we hope to get light on the obscure one is dealing with the same subject and is relevant. False identification always brings confusion.

As an illustration of this principle, let us look at Psalm 2. In the first three verses we read of an international, atheistic, anti-Christian, religio-political convention, that meets for the purpose of putting the religion of Jehovah, the God of Israel, and His Messiah, the Christ, under the ban. That these verses foretell such a conference is evident from the fact that the delegates are the kings of the earth and the rulers. That it is an atheistic convention is evident from the fact that it is called together for the purpose of taking action against God. That it is an anti-Semitic congress is reflected in the fact that it is against Jehovah, the God who revealed Himself to Israel. That it is an anti-Christian gathering is also evident from the fact that action is taken against God's Anointed, God's Messiah, the Christ. That it is a religious convention is seen from the fact that it meets for the purpose of deciding whether or not the religion set forth in the Old Testament and that in the New is to be tolerated. That it is a political assembly is seen from the fact that politicians, the rulers and kings of the earth, are the delegates. Having learned that this passage foretells such a convention, we must if possible learn when it will occur. In vain we look at Psalm 2.

Some call our attention to the fact that the first two verses of this psalm are quoted in Acts 4:25,26 and are applied to the action Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Jewish Sanhedrin, and the people of Israel took against Christ. What these did against God is only a partial, limited, incomplete fulfillment of the prediction. Since such a gathering has never been called, and since the Word of God can never be broken, we may be certain that it will yet be convened in the future. When a person studies Daniel 9:36ff, he will see that the willful king spoken of in this passage takes drastic action against all religion and puts forth his own type of divine service and imposes it upon humanity. This action he will take in the middle of the Tribulation, for there will be only three and one-half more years of it to run until it is finished. Thus when Psalm 2:1-3 is studied in connection with Daniel 11:36-12:13, the impression is immediately made that in all probability David in Psalm 2 was talking about the action that the willful king, the world dictator, will take in the middle of the Tribulation. When we pursue our studies a little further and investigate the teaching of Revelation, chapter 13, the profound conviction is made upon the mind that without doubt David in Psalm 2 was speaking of the events of Revelation, chapter 13. In this passage we read of a great beast who is none other than the Antichrist, and of the unparalleled role which he will play in world affairs. He forbids the nations of the world to worship any gods, even the true God; but demands that they worship him alone. His assistant, the second beast of this chapter, issues a decree that all shall take the mark of the beast upon their foreheads or their hands. These and other facts that are in Revelation, chapter 13, lead one to believe that the

action of Psalm 2 is to be located in the middle of the Tribulation. Thus we interpret Psalm 2 in the light of a related passage, Revelation, chapter 13, which gives full details.

That part of our rule which we have under consideration says that we should study an obscure passage in the light of related ones and axiomatic and fundamental truths. God is the author of all axiomatic principles. We may be certain that whatever utterances are found in the Word are to be interpreted in the light of these axiomatic and fundamental truths. Usually there are related passages from which we can get light on obscure texts. But we can always be certain that no statement of Scripture sets aside axiomatic and fundamental principles. Hence we shall interpret all Scripture in the light of these axioms.

#### **IV. Applying The Golden Rule Of Interpretation**

Having looked at the various parts of our rule, we are now in a position to apply it and see what results we have. Let us take the controverted passage of Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore God himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The revelation found in Isaiah, chapter 7, was occasioned by an alliance formed by the king of Israel with the king of Syria to come against Jerusalem, to dethrone Ahaz, and to set up an appointee of the two kings. This report brought nothing but consternation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The young king, Ahaz, began to inspect the water system, a vital factor in time of war and siege. To him God sent the Prophet Isaiah in order that he might strengthen his faith by giving a message from the Almighty. Ahaz, who had already initiated negotiations with the king of Assyria, to come to his assistance, did not wish to give up his ideas and plans. At the revelation of God Isaiah offered to perform a miracle either in the heavens above or in the depths, sea, beneath, according as the king wished. Hence the word rendered sign means either a miracle, something wrought by supernatural power, or an ordinary fact or event to which an arbitrary meaning might be attached. Since it has these two connotations, the context in which this word appears must be consulted to determine what is its exact meaning in such a case. It is clear that Isaiah meant by *sign* a miracle, for he offered to perform this sign either in the heavens above or in the sea beneath. This offer shows clearly what Isaiah meant by the word, sign—an act, the result of supernatural power.

Ahaz did not wish his faith to be strengthened because he did not wish to give up his plans and purposes. He therefore spurned the offer by a pious, hypocritical dodge. When he assumed this attitude, the prophet turned from such an impious one as he and addressed the house of David, saying, "Is it a small thing for you [the Hebrew word is in the plural number] to weary men, that ye will weary my God also?" which passage shows that the prophet was no longer talking to Ahaz as an individual, but to the royal house of David. Since the prophet was looking out into the future, we must conclude that he had not only the royal house of David then living in mind, but also those who would live in the future. To the regal house therefore he promised to give a sign, which is expressed in the verse, quoted above.

The birth of this child is miraculous. This conclusion we cannot avoid since, in the

mention of the word, sign, to Ahaz, the prophet gave it a supernatural connotation. When Ahaz refused to ask God to perform such a sign, the prophet was led to promise to the house of David that God would perform a sign in a sense similar to its meaning when he employed it the first time. Then he told us of what this supernatural sign would consist, namely, that *the* virgin "shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," which means. *God with us*. It is clear from the prophet's language that he was thinking of miraculous conception and virgin birth of the child who is promised to the house of David.

But there are those who say that the word rendered by the English term *virgin* means *a young, married woman*. This word occurs seven times in the Hebrew Scriptures. An examination of the other six occurrences in the light of their contexts leads unmistakably to the conviction that the word here used indicates an unmarried woman of marriageable age. (I have discussed this question fully in my volume, *Messiah: His Nature and Person*.) There are two occurrences of musical notations in the Psalms which may be our same word modified and with a different connotation. But they have no bearing upon the issue now under discussion. Thus a thorough understanding of the word here rendered "virgin" makes the profound conviction upon the mind of the truth seeker that Isaiah promised the house of David that there would be miraculously conceived and born of a virgin one who would be recognized as God in human form. Hence His name would be called, according to Isaiah, Immanuel—*God with us, or, God is with us*.

The facts of this chapter through verse 14 demand this interpretation. By no sleight-of-hand tricks or mental gymnastics can any other meaning logically be forced upon this passage. We must accept it as a promise of the virgin birth of King Messiah.

But, in verses 15-17, we read of another child, whose birth was to be out in the immediate future from the time of the prophet's speaking this prediction. This fact is seen by the statement that this child would be eating butter and honey, when he was old enough to know to refuse the evil and to choose the good. Moreover, before the child "shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good," the land of the kingdoms of Israel and of Syria would be devastated. We know from contemporary history, as it has been recovered from the monuments of the Assyrian monarchs, that, beginning about 734 B.C., Syria was laid waste, and that, by 719 B.C., the kingdom of Israel likewise was overthrown and trodden down. Since these lands were to be devastated before the child would know to choose the good and refuse the evil, and since we know when those lands were overrun, we know that in verses 15-17 the prophet was talking about a child that would be born in his day. Some have thought that this child was that of the prophet himself, for in 8:1-4 Isaiah tells about the birth of his son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

If we are to let the record give forth its message just as written, we cannot avoid the conclusion that there are two children mentioned in these verses. The evidence is very plain and positive to this effect, but the description of the one is blended with that of the other. But such a method of revelation is not strange to the one who is familiar with the Old Testament predictions. Frequently we see that two events, separated by a long period of time, are mentioned together. As an illustration of this, see Zechariah 9:9,10:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon the foal of an ass. 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." An examination of verse 9 show that the prophet was speaking of the first coming of the Messiah. A study of verse 10 shows unmistakably that in it Zechariah was speaking of the second coming of Christ. Thus between verses 9 and 10 intervenes the entire Christian Dispensation. Nevertheless, there is no indication of this separating period. A blending of descriptions regarding two other widely separated events may be seen again in such a passage as Jeremiah 29:9,10 which speaks of the restoration of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, and which was fulfilled by Zerubbabel and Joshua, who brought back the captives to the Holy Land. Jeremiah 29:11-14 gives a prediction of Israel's world-wide regathering in the time of the end. Thus between verses 10 and 11 intervenes the period between Israel's restoration from Babylon and her final restoration in the end time. The principle of blending such widely-removed events and presenting them as one picture is known as the law of double reference and might be illustrated by the stereopticon lantern that gives the dissolving effect. This machine throws one picture upon the screen. As the audience looks at it, the picture begins to fade. At the same time the dim outlines of another picture begin to appear. By the time the first one has disappeared, the second one is in full view. This is a perfect illustration of the law of double reference. When we recognize this fact and read Isaiah, chapter 7, with a knowledge of this principle and allow the words to deliver their message to us unmodified by human opinion, we come to the conclusion that two different children are mentioned in the passage, and that they are real children. The first one mentioned is the virgin-born Messiah, the Saviour of the world: the second one was a child who was born in the immediate future from the standpoint of the prophet. Thus we get a clear picture of the prophecy when we apply the golden rule of interpretation and recognize the law of double reference, which principle will be studied later in this series of articles.

From all that has been said it is clear that the golden rule of interpretation is one of the most important principles governing us in our interpretation of the Scriptures. If we follow this rule, we shall not go very far wrong: if we fail to follow it, we shall never go right.

# THE LAW OF FIRST MENTION

HAVING STUDIED the first step in interpretation, the second step in interpretation, and the golden rule of interpretation we are now ready for the fourth principle of interpretation, which may be properly designated as: *The law of first mention*. Those who have followed the series thus far can see that this is the next step logically to take in this most important line of thought.

## I. The Simple Preceding The Complex

Life and experience teach us that the only proper way to study or investigate anything is to begin with the simple and go to the complex; to start with the fundamental, basic principle and then to develop the subject in its complexities. A glance at the history of the development of anything shows that everything which we have now in our modern life sprang from something in the very simplest form. For example, consider the steam engine. From our standpoint the first one invented was the very embodiment of simplicity, with practically no controlling gadgets. As this most useful invention was developed, more devices were invented that tended to increase the efficiency of the engine. Today the modern locomotive is complexity almost to the nth degree. In the Smithsonian Institute at Washington we have some of the very earliest models of the airplane. A glance at them and a comparison of them with present-day modern planes reveals the fact that the first machines were simplicity itself in comparison with the models of today.

The growth and development of ideas and doctrines might be illustrated by some simple word. An examination of a lexicon or a dictionary shows the root, fundamental meaning of the words. Throughout the history of a term it has increased its meaning and has changed certain shades of ideas. Yet the basic, original fundamental thought is seldom ever lost. The fact is that this fundamental concept usually controls or is dominant in coloring every shade of idea expressed by a term in its current usage. This may be verified by looking at various words in an unabridged dictionary.

From the facts just stated, we can see the importance of studying the simplest form of a machine and of the subsequent models in order to understand the very latest one. The same thing is true with reference to words of all languages. This same fundamental idea is also applicable to the study of doctrine. In order for anyone to understand the fundamentals of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament, it becomes necessary for him to understand the principle that is designated as *the law of first mention*.

## II. The Meaning Of The Law Of First Mention

The law of first mention may be said to be **the principle that requires one to go to that portion of the Scriptures where a doctrine is mentioned for the first time and to study the first occurrence of the same in order to get the fundamental inherent meaning of that doctrine**. When we thus see the first appearance, which is

usually in the simplest form, we can then examine the doctrine in other portions of the Word that were given later. We shall see that the fundamental concept in the first occurrence remains dominant as a rule, and colors all later additions to that doctrine. In view of this fact, it becomes imperative that we understand the law of first mention.

### **III. An Examination Of Various Examples**

The book of Genesis has Properly been called the "seed-plot" of the Bible. The word, Genesis, comes from the Greek expression which in its verbal form means *to begin*, or, *to come into existence*. This first book of the revelation of God is properly called, therefore, "the book of beginnings." According to its name and its position in the canon, one naturally expects an account of the beginnings of things. When anyone studies it, he is not disappointed. In this short exposition I wish to call attention to seven fundamental doctrines that are found in this "Book of Beginnings." The basic concept that is here presented is enlarged upon and enriched by later statements and discussions of the same facts or principles.

#### **A. The Creation of the Universe**

The account of the beginning of the universe, the disaster which overtook the primitive earth, and the reconstruction and the repairing of this damage, together with the beginning of the present human race, are set forth in Genesis 1:1-2:3. This passage gives us, in panoramic form, a clear-cut definite idea of the past and points to things future from the standpoint of "the days of reconstruction." In the first verse, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," we see that portion of eternity which antedated time and the creation of the material universe. But in the second verse we see that a cataclysmic catastrophe wrecked the earth and reduced it to a chaotic condition. Nothing, however is said with reference to the damage wrought throughout the rest of the material universe. There are, however, little hints here and there in later passages of the Scripture that throw some light upon this question.

There were six days of reconstruction, during which God was engaged in repairing, to a certain extent, the damage that had been wrought. It was impossible for Him, under His moral government, to restore the primitive, sinless order. He therefore repaired the wreckage that was necessary in order that He might create man in His own image, to whom He would give authority and dominion over the entire earth and all of its denizens. But man, as we shall learn later, forfeited his right and authority to dominion over the world. Knowing God as we do, we may be certain that He would not be thwarted in His plans and purposes by any of the machinations of Satan and of his wicked purposes. In keeping with this general thought, we see that Psalm 8 takes up this very idea and shows that God will restore to man his forfeited authority, and that He will do that by paying man a special visit. Psalm 8 looks out, therefore, into the future, is quoted in Hebrews, chapter 2, and is applied to the great Kingdom Age of the future. Thus when we grip all of these facts, we can see that eternity past and time—the period during which the present material universe is in existence—are presented in Genesis 1:1-2:3, together with the eighth psalm and Hebrews, chapter 2, which are the outgrowth of the Genesis original. Thus these passages give us in general the outline of the developments of the Almighty's plans from eternity in the past out to the end of the

Millennial Age. Everything else that is mentioned in the Scriptures fits into this general picture. Without this plan of the ages, one is unable to locate and to pigeonhole, figuratively speaking, events that are referred to in the subsequent writings of the Scriptures. In view of the facts just mentioned, one can see that it is of the utmost importance that we study carefully and microscopically the first account of the creation of the heavens and the earth, of the primitive disaster which wrecked the earth, of God's repairing the damage wrought, and His creating man upon it. Man, as we shall see, is an immortal spirit, who lives on after his earthly life has passed. He is destined to live somewhere throughout all eternity. Thus there is laid in this first portion of the Scriptures the fundamental outline of eternity past, of time, and of eternity throughout the ages of the ages which follow the great Millennial Era.

## **B. The Creation of Man**

We are told that, on the first day, God created the fishes of the sea and the great sea monsters and the fowls of the air. On the sixth day He created the land animals, that were docile, and that lived in peace with the others.

But, before God finished His creative activity, there was a conference held by the Godhead, in which the three personalities constituting the one true God participated: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They decided to make man in their own image and in their likeness. No such conference as this was held, so far as the Scriptures are concerned, in regard to the making of the beasts of the field or the monsters of the sea. In this conference a decision was reached to make man in the image of God. There are the three personalities of the Godhead, and yet they all have the same image. They are therefore of the same nature, substance, and essence. To see one is to see the other. To deal with one is to deal with the other. Though they are three personalities, they are one in a different sense. Thus there is reflected in the account of the creation of man the plurality and the unity of the Godhead and of man's being patterned after the Holy Trinity.

God gave to the animals their natural or physical life with very limited intelligence—when compared with man. The animals have never given any evidence of development throughout the centuries. The first nest that a bird makes is just as good as the last one that it makes. The species has not improved in its architecture. What is said of the birds may be said correctly of all animals. The beaver, for instance, does things by instinct and not by reason, logic, and progress.

God made man's body out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils "the breath of lives" and he became a living soul, "an immortal spirit." That which was imparted to him and made to dwell within him is called "a living soul" or "immortal spirit." Nothing like this was given to the beasts of the field. It is this immortal spirit that differentiates him, therefore, from the animal kingdom. This superiority of man over the beast is reflected in the fact that God authorized man to add the flesh of animals to his diet, whereas He forbade man to kill his fellow-being (Gen. 9:1ff). The fact that man may take those animals that are good for food, kill them, and eat them shows that the animals do not have an immortal spirit. But the prohibition against one man's killing another proves that man is on a much higher level than that of the

animal. That which makes man superior to the animal is, as we have already seen, God's breathing into man's nostrils the breath of lives and his becoming an immortal spirit.

The account of God's creating man thus in this manner, as we see in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, emphasizes the importance of our studying the first account that we have of man in the Holy Writings. All that we learn of man as to his constitution and of the place which he has in the plan of God fits into this original conception. Thus the basic teachings found in these original passages are essential to our understanding other references to him and to his future.

### **C. The Doctrine of Sin**

When God placed man in the Garden of Eden, He gave him the privilege of eating of the fruit of all the trees therein, with the exception of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Concerning it God said: "The day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17, lit. trans.). In Genesis, chapter 3, we see that man disobeyed God and partook of the fruit of this forbidden tree. When he did this, he had a new experience, one that he had not anticipated. For the first time he and his wife had the sense of shame in the presence of each other and in the presence of God who came visiting them on different occasions. Thus when God made His first visit to them after they had sinned, they tried to cover their nakedness with robes of fig leaves. They also hid, or attempted to hide, from His presence.

When God came and talked with them, He told them that the curse had fallen upon them and upon the earth. As a result of this disobedience there would be sickness and disease, which ultimately would result in death. The earth would bring forth thorns and thistles. Man would have to wrench his daily food from the earth in the sweat of his face. All of these facts indicate that some great change came over the world and the sphere of the human family, when man disobeyed the one and only prohibition that God placed upon him. This which entered the world had changed his nature as well as had affected the earth. This fundamental conception of sin lies engraven upon the account of the first mention of disobedience in the Word of God.

As we study the Word, this conception will appear throughout the Scriptures. New shades of ideas will be added to it. The classic passage, however, which goes into a detailed account of the nature of sin is Romans, chapter 7. In this passage the Apostle in a figure transferred to himself the case of man in general. What a person in his sober moments desires to do, he is unable to carry to completion. What he does not want to do, he very often does. Paul declares that, if such is anyone's experience, it is not he who does it, but sin "which dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:17). From this statement we see that sin in the scriptural sense of the term is basically an evil, wicked force which drives man to do things that he knows he should not, and which prevents his doing those things that his better nature dictates to him to do. The information therefore which we get when we first read about the entrance of sin into the world is basic to our understanding of the sin doctrine as it is set forth in this fullest statement concerning it in Romans, chapter 7.

## **D. Sacrifices**

When man first disobeyed God and tried to cover his nakedness with fig leaves, God gave him a covering made from the skins of animals: "And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). Instantly one asks, *From what source were those skins derived?* There can be but one answer which is that God slew animals, took their skins, and made clothing out of them for His disobedient children. Why the skins of animals? Why did He not make clothing out of something else besides the skins of animals? This is a legitimate question. It is not answered in this account. But when anyone turns to the fourth chapter of Genesis and reads the account of Cain and Abel's bringing offerings to God, and when he studies this historical account carefully, he arrives at a very definite conclusion with reference to this subject. Abel, as we learn, by faith brought of his flocks sacrifices which he made to God, to atone for sin. Cain, his brother, substituting his wisdom for that of God and his desires for the commandments of God, brought of the fruit of the field an offering to God.

God, we are told, "had respect unto Abel and to his offering," because he did it by faith. Evidently God had instructed him just what type of sacrifice to bring and the spirit in which it should be done. We cannot avoid this conclusion when we read Hebrews, chapter 11, and find there that Abel by faith brought his sacrifice. The fact that God rejected the vegetable sacrifice which Cain brought shows that his offering was not acceptable. He did not do it by faith. He failed to follow God's instructions but instead substituted his own wisdom and ideas for those of God. Thus in this case we see that the fundamental idea of sacrifice is that of meeting the demands of a holy and righteous God. Thus there is a very close connection between the animal sacrifices and man's being acceptable in the sight of his Maker.

Thus we see from these first intimations concerning sacrifices the fundamental conception underlying such offerings. This conception is enlarged and enriched by later revelations which show that the animal sacrifices under the Mosaic economy were simply typical of the real sacrifice made by Christ nineteen hundred years ago on Calvary's cross. Thus the original idea of sacrifice runs through all the instructions and the teachings concerning sacrifices that are found in the Book.

## **E. Biblical Chronology**

Throughout the Old Testament there are hundreds upon hundreds of dates here and there in the Scriptures. God is careful to give the age of various ones of His servants. This is seen by looking at Genesis, chapters 5 and 11. In various portions of Genesis we are given data concerning the year of the birth of a certain one, how old this one was at a given crisis in his life, and when he died. In the Books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, we have quite a bit of chronological data. In the Book of Joshua there are a few passages that bear upon this subject. The Book of Judges has much chronological data. In the historical Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles we have hundreds of dates given. In the Books of the prophets many of their oracles are dated. Since God has given so much data of this type, evidently it plays a very important part in His revelation.

But the questions come, *How are we to understand this chronological data? What does God mean by a year? What does He mean by a hundred and thirty years? Or nine hundred and sixty-nine years?* In other words, are the months and years mentioned in the Scriptures the same as the months and years of our calendar? In Genesis, chapter 5, we have the first chronological tables in connection with the genealogies of the theocratic line. We are told of the creation of Adam; then we are given his age when his first son was born. Usually we are told that he had other sons and daughters. Finally, we are informed that he died at a certain age. If a person will take his pencil and paper and put down the figures that are given here, he will see how God wrote chronology. He will see that Noah was born in the year 1056 A.H., (that is, in the year of man). The chronology is counted from the creation of Adam and is reckoned as the centuries passed. This system of chronology is different from the B.C. dates with which most of us are familiar. Thus in this study of the fifth chapter of Genesis we learn how God writes history and the importance that He attaches to chronology.

Let me say in this connection that the chronological system set forth in the Old Testament is to the history found therein just what our skeletons are to our bodies. If by some kind of electrical or chemical process our skeletons could be removed from our bodies without injuring our vital organs, we would instantly fall down in just a mass of flesh. Of course we could not survive under such conditions. We are able to stand erect and to perform our duties only because we have skeletons that enable us to stand erect. What our skeletons are to our bodies, therefore, the chronological system of the Old Testament is to it. The Old Testament is not a jumble of facts to me since I have studied chronology. It is a living organism, vibrating with life and power. (I have discussed practically every date in the Old Testament in the fourth volume of my "Messianic Series," *MESSIAH: His First Coming Scheduled.*)

## **F. The Judgment of the Wrath of God**

In Genesis, chapters 6-8, we have an account of the causes of the Flood judgment and the Flood itself. This shows us how God thought concerning sin and how He punished it on a world-wide scale. Of course, circumstances alter cases. From the account of the Flood, we see that man can continue in sin and go so very far that God must intervene and deal drastically with all concerned. What the world needs today is to learn these basic truths that are found in the records of the first instances of man's disobedience to the divine will. Then, as a person studies the Word more and more, he will see how God must deal with sin on a world-wide scale yet in the future. Thus the Flood judgment lays down the fundamental principles of God's dealing with sin on an international scale.

## **G. The Rainbow Covenant**

In Genesis 9:1-16 we have an account of God's entering into covenant relationship with all humanity. This covenant was made when Noah came forth out of the ark and sacrificed to God. There are four conditions that were imposed upon the race in this covenant. The sign of this compact is the rainbow. It is called "the everlasting covenant." Whenever, therefore, anyone sees the rainbow in the sky, he should recall that it is a reminder that God entered into a covenant with all humanity. It is a

reminder that God is looking on the world and is going to hold it responsible for carrying out those four conditions that are stipulated in the covenant. In Isaiah, chapter 24, we have a prophecy concerning the judgment of the great Tribulation and of the terrible destruction of life and property that will result from these judgments. In Isaiah 24:5 we are told that they will come upon the world because the inhabitants thereof "have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant." The mention of this everlasting covenant which men will have broken, and which disobedience will bring on the Tribulation, instantly suggests the original covenant and the rainbow, the symbol of the same. Thus we can see immediately why it is that God will be just in punishing the world as He will in the Tribulation.

In the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation we catch a vision of God's throne. Encircling it is a rainbow. What is the significance of this unusual sight? When a person remembers the law of first mention and looks back to Genesis 9:1-16, he will see why the rainbow appears above the throne of God in the fourth chapter of Revelation. God will bring His judgments upon the world during the Tribulation mainly because of the people's having violated the everlasting covenant.

## **H. Beginnings of Hebrew History**

In Genesis 12:1-3 we have the account of God's entering into a covenant with Abraham. In this He laid down His plans for blessing the entire world. This passage is the cornerstone of all prophecy. God chose Abraham and his seed to be the channel through which He will bless the world. He has given us His revelation through the descendants of Abraham, but they have not yielded to Him and allowed Him to do for the world that which He longs to accomplish for fallen humanity. But He will yet use His disobedient ancient people in bringing a blessing to the entire world.

When God divided the peoples and separated them at Babel, He did so with reference to the children of Israel. This is seen in Deuteronomy 32:8,9. Throughout the Bible we have the history of Israel written. We see mention of other nations only as they came in touch with the Chosen People. Thus Israel is rightly called the "hub" of the nations. Thus the fundamental principles of God's dealing with Israel, are set forth in the first passage dealing with that people as a whole. Everything subsequent to that passage is given with reference to the original one.

The field in which the law of first mention operates is wide indeed. It is a very important law. If a person wishes to understand the revelation of God, he must study the Book of Genesis, which lays down the fundamentals that are developed and set forth in the rest of the Scriptures. There are, however, certain themes that are mentioned later on in the Scriptures for the first time. Thus the first mention of them gives the fundamental conception of such teachings. That the law of first mention, therefore, is of greatest importance to the Bible student can be readily seen from this brief study.

# THE LAW OF DOUBLE REFERENCE

THE NEXT PRINCIPLE for investigation in our study of Hermeneutics is what is termed the law of double reference. We are now in a position to study this most important rule, which is found through the prophetic portion of the Word. We have seen that the basic rule of all interpretation is what is properly called the golden rule of interpretation, which insists upon our taking every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages, demand a departure from the literal, ordinary meaning and require that we understand a passage as figurative or metaphorical. When we have mastered this rule until we can apply it unconsciously to our Bible study, and when we have made a note of the fact that we must recognize the law of first mention, we are then in a position to study the law of double reference.

## I. Statement Of The Law

The law of double reference is based upon one of the fundamental laws of psychology: **the principle of the association of similar or related ideas.** Similarities always suggest comparisons. Thus the prophets constantly depicted that which was as a rule in the immediate future or present. Since history repeats itself, as all admit, the prophets looked out into the future and saw similar situations arising like those which were confronting them or immediately in the future. Thus the transition from describing that which was immediately before them to that which was in the remote future was very easy, normal, and natural.

This principle has been illustrated by mountain scenery. I recall traveling through the western prairies of the province of Alberta and approaching the Canadian Rockies. In the distance, as our train was speeding along, I could see the low-lying hills, as they rose from the plains. But towering above them in the far distance, I could see larger and higher mountains. Upon reaching the summit of the nearer mountains, or the foothills, I could see a long valley separating this range from the higher and more massive ones still in the distance. But as I was approaching the foothills, the valley separating the two ranges was not visible. This little phenomenon, familiar to all peoples, may enable us to understand how it was that the prophets spoke of something in the immediate future or present in their day and then blended this description with a situation that would arise in the distant future.

I may also emphasize this principle by calling attention to a stereopticon lantern that gives the dissolving effect. One picture is thrown upon a screen. The audience sits, rapt with attention, enjoying the sight. Presently the members of the group notice that the scene is beginning to fade, or become dim. Then there presently appear the faint outlines of another picture. By the time the first one has disappeared from the screen, the second one is in full view. Speaking in terms, then, of the pictures of the stereopticon, I would say that the prophets threw upon the screen the picture of the present or immediate future and then, when this picture began to fade, the dim

outlines of another and more distant one began to be thrown before the gaze of the audience. Finally the first picture disappears entirely and the observer sees only the second one.

The student must be very careful in reaching the conclusion that the principle of double reference obtains in a given place. Every word of a description must be taken at its primary, usual literal meaning, unless the facts studied in the light of related passages indicates otherwise. In other words, we must believe that the prophets were honest and capable of expressing themselves exactly as they thought and as the truth was revealed to them. We are never justified in interpreting a passage as an illustration of the law of double reference unless there are facts that show positively that the speaker ceased to talk about the thing immediately before him and began to describe something in the distant future. The facts of the context alone are to guide one in this particular. When the student sees that the prophet went far beyond his own day and time and was describing a second scene but a different one, then and only then, must he call to his aid the principle of the law of double reference or a manifold fulfillment of prophecy. A careless observance of this rule will only lead to endless confusion and misunderstanding.

When anyone is convinced that the facts in a passage indicate that the prophet was following the principle of double reference and he interprets the passage upon that principle, he should by all means check his interpretation of the facts by other passages which are plain and positive, and about which he cannot be mistaken. Understanding these general principles, we are now in a position to examine certain passages of the Scriptures illustrative of these fundamentals.

## **II. Examination Of Examples Of The Law Of Double Reference**

The first example to which I wish to call attention is Psalm 16. I ask the reader to stop at this moment, return to this psalm, and read it very carefully. Everyone who does this will be well repaid—many-fold.

In the first seven verses David, the human author of this poem, used the personal pronouns *I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine*. Everything that appears in these verses was literally true of David and of the experiences through which he passed. Thus if we follow the ordinary rules of interpretation, we are to apply everything in these verses to the historic King David, the author of the poem.

But when we look at verses 8-11, we see that he still uses the personal pronouns (*I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine*) of the first person. At the same time we know that David did not enjoy the experiences that are mentioned here. To show that David was not speaking of his own experiences, I will quote these last four verses.

8 I have set Jehovah always before me: Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall dwell in safety.

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.

11 Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fullness of Joy; In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Ps. 16:8-11).

The historic David did not keep God always before him. He got his eyes off God and fell, sinning most miserably and wretchedly. One unconfessed sin called for another, and that one, still unconfessed, called for another. David was enmeshed in a series of moral lapses and sins. He certainly was moved. His heart was not always glad. Neither did his soul rejoice; and his flesh was not always dwelling in safety. Moreover, when he died, he went to Sheol and, so far as the record goes, remained there. His body was placed in the tomb and saw corruption—that is, decomposition and decay. When he went down into Sheol, God did not point out to him the path of life and he did not come forth.

But the one of whom David actually speaks in these verses always had God before Him; He was never moved; He was never guilty of a moral lapse. His heart rejoiced in God, His soul was glad, and His flesh always dwelt in safety. God was protecting Him. He died. His body was laid in the tomb. His spirit went to Sheol. But, according to this prediction, He comes forth. His spirit re-enters the body and He comes forth, bringing life and immortality to light—showing that there is a blessed life of immortality out beyond death. Everything, therefore, in verses 8-16 shows that though David did speak thus, he was not describing his own experience.

Of whom then, was he speaking? Being a prophet and knowing God had sworn with an oath that of the fruit of his loins he would raise one to sit upon his throne, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, his Greater Son. David was a type of the Messiah, being an anointed one who sat upon the throne of Judah. It was natural for him, upon the principles set forth in the first part of this article, to speak of his own experiences and then to be carried by the Spirit of God into the future and to move in a circle of experiences that far transcended any through which he passed. We therefore know that he was speaking of the Messiah in the latter part of the psalm. This psalm, therefore, is an illustration of the principle of double reference, or the manifold fulfillment of prophecy. See Acts, chapter two.

LET us now look to Psalm 22 which was also written by David. In the first twenty-one verses it is clear that David, though he began by speaking of some personal experiences of his own, was describing those of the Messiah, who would be crucified for the sins of the world. That verses 1-21 was a prediction of the crucifixion of the Messiah has been held by all believing scholars in the Christian world throughout the present Dispensation. This portion of the psalm was thus interpreted by the Apostles and the early church and has been accepted as the correct position throughout the Christian centuries. In the latter part of this first section, in verses 19-21, we see the silent Sufferer finally expiring, gasping His last, yet with confidence that God would hear His cry and deliver Him.

In verses 22-31, however, the scene has been changed. A great transformation has

taken place. There is a gap between verses 21 and 22. This break of thought is properly expressed by the translators of the American Standard Version in that they left a break between those verses, that is, a space, indicating a gap in time and change of thought. In verses 22-31 we see this one come back to life again. He is in the midst of the great assembly of the redeemed. He is praising God for what He has done for Him and through Him; and He it is who takes the kingdom of the world into His own strong hands and accepts the reverence, worship, and filial obedience of all nations. He is the triumphant Messiah and Redeemer of the world.

Thus in the first twenty-one verses we see the Messiah as He makes the supreme sacrifice of laying down His life for His people at His first coming. In the second section we see Him, after He has made that sacrifice, and after He has come forth from the other world and at His second coming, when He takes the world into His own hands and establishes a world-wide reign of righteousness—which thing He will do at His second coming. Thus in this psalm we see an illustration of the law of double reference.

WE may turn to Psalm 40 and read the first ten verses. This hymn was written by the human author, David, king of Israel. He uses the personal pronouns of the first person, I, me, my. Everything that is said in the first five verses was true of the historic King David. About this position there can be absolutely no question whatsoever.

But when we consider verses 6-10 we see that they go far beyond any experience that David ever had. Because of the importance of these verses I wish to quote them:

6 Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; Mine ears hast thou opened: Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.

7 Then said I, Lo, I am come; In the roll of the book it is written of me:

8 I delight to do thy will, O my God; Yea, thy law is within my heart.

9 I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great assembly; Lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Jehovah, thou knowest.

10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation;

I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great assembly (Ps. 40: 6-10).

David could under no conditions say that God did not delight in sacrifices and offerings, "burnt-offering and sin-offering," and that therefore he had come to do the will of God in respect to these sacrifices. No mortal man could claim this. Those sacrifices had a typical meaning, as everyone who knows the Scriptures realizes. Here the author of the verses under consideration declares that these offerings are insufficient, do not do the will of God, and do not meet the question of sin at all. They had their function to perform and were used of God in performing this function. But here the writer or speaker of these verses declares that He himself is able to do the will of God with reference to the sin question which those sacrifices could never accomplish. When we realize this, and when we realize the further truth that "in the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; Yea, thy law is within my heart," we know that the one who is doing the speaking here is none other than the Messiah of

Israel, the Saviour of humanity, Christ.

The facts of the first five verses demand that we understand them as referring to David. There is no negative evidence pointing in an opposite direction. But all of the evidence of verses 6-10 shows positively that, although David did use the personal pronouns of the first person, he was not speaking of himself; but, being a prophet of God and knowing the promises that God had made to him, he spoke for his Greater Son, Christ. This passage, therefore, is an illustration of the principle of the law of double reference.

LET us now turn to Isaiah, chapter 11, and read carefully the first ten verses. When we study the first two verses of this passage, we know that the prophet Isaiah was speaking of the Messiah and of His coming to the earth to redeem the world, which verses were fulfilled at the first coming of Christ. All conservative scholars are agreed on this point.

But in verses 3-5 we see a prediction which will be fulfilled only when Christ returns in glory and power to judge the world. That you, dear reader, may see this I quote these verses: "3 And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; 4 but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth: and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins" (Isa. 11:3-5).

When our God was here the first time, He refused to become an arbiter in the settling of an estate. He pronounced judgment upon no one in the sense of a judge who renders a legal decision. Because He is the Son of man, as we learn in John 5:26,27, God has committed all judgment to Him. He will play this role when He returns, which event will take place at the end of the Tribulation.

This prediction, dealing with Christ's judging the world at His second coming, is followed by one in verses 6-9 which deals with the lifting of the curse and with the freeing of the animal creation from the bondage of the curse which fell upon all creation when man disobeyed God. The lifting of the curse we know does not occur until Christ returns. Then in verse 10 of this chapter we see a short, glorious description of Jerusalem as it will be when our God reigns there personally in glory.

When we thus examine all of these verses, 1-10, we see that verses 1 and 2 refer to the first coming. Between verses 2 and 3 the entire Christian Dispensation intervenes. It is passed over without a single reference to it. Then verses 3-10 apply to what will occur at the return of our God. In this passage, therefore, we have an application of the principle of double reference, the blending of two widely separated events by a long period of time—the two comings of the one Messiah, separated by the Christian Dispensation.

In Jeremiah, chapter 29, we have a letter which the prophet, who was in Jerusalem, wrote to the captives who went when Jehoiachin was carried by Nebuchadnezzar to

Babylon. The exiles were restive and were being stirred up by false prophets who declared that they would soon have the privilege of returning to the land of their nativity in the very near future. In order to counteract these false prophecies, Jeremiah wrote to the captives and declared that they would have to remain there for seventy years. They were therefore to settle down to a quiet, orderly life and to wait the time when God would bring them back. This is set forth in Jeremiah 29:10,11 which I now quote: "For thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end." In order for God to carry out His plan for Israel yet in the future, Jeremiah said that God would have to bring them back from exile at the end of the seventy years, just as He had foretold in chapter 25 of this book.

In verses 12-14, however, we have a different prophecy which is as follows: "And ye shall call upon me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14 And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." Here we see the promise that God would turn Israel's captivity again and would gather them from all the nations and from all the places to which He had driven them and would bring them again into their own land. This is a regathering and a restoration from a world-wide dispersion. Jeremiah promised this restoration when Israel seeks God with all of her heart and soul. This prophecy was not fulfilled at the end of the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity. There were approximately fifty thousand Jews who returned under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The bulk of the captives remained in Babylon. But the restoration mentioned in verses 12-14 is yet out in the future. It is the second restoration that God will accomplish for Israel when He puts forth His hand to gather them from the places whither they have been scattered, even from the four corners of the earth.

In view of these facts we see that the period from the first restoration after the Exile to the final restoration of Israel to the land of the fathers is passed over between 11 and 12. Thus there is a blending of the two restorations in this one prediction. This passage therefore is an example of the law of double reference.

The prophets often resorted to this method of presenting their messages. It becomes absolutely necessary that the student of prophecy master this principle of double or manifold fulfillment of prophecy, if he is to get a clear-cut picture of the messages of the prophets. To this end may God bless this little exposition is my sincere longing and prayer.

# THE LAW OF RECURRENCE

CLOSELY ASSOCIATED with the law of double reference, the double or manifold fulfillment of prophecy, is the law of recurrence. In many passages of Scripture where we have the law of double reference, we likewise find an application of the law of recurrence. To many of those who are not familiar with this principle, especially characteristic of the prophetic word, many passages of Scripture are just a jumble of words. The picture presented is one of confusion until this law or principle is recognized; then the picture is properly focused and appears in its true perspective.

## I. Statement Of The Law Of Recurrence

As the word, recurrence, indicates, we may expect this principle of scriptural interpretation to involve **the record of an occurrence of an event and the repetition of the account.** A thing occurs and then, if it is repeated, it recurs. It is by repetition that we learn things. We must have experience after experience in order to appreciate or to understand fully certain things. The adage that practice makes perfect is true. Advertisers realize the importance of this principle. An advertisement inserted in a paper once is practically money lost. If it is repeated at least three or four times, results begin to come. This is what advertisers have told me, and I have tried and learned by experience that this is true. God understands human psychology and knows that a thing must be repeated time and time again in order to make the proper impression upon the human mind. It is therefore in accordance with this principle that God has adopted the principle of the law of recurrence.

I might set forth this fundamental by calling attention to an artist who is painting the portrait of one who is posing for his likeness. After the artist has properly arranged his lights and shades and after he has posed his subject to his liking, he can do in a very short time what he terms "blocking out the portrait." It is impossible for one to maintain the proper pose and the correct attitude and expression of face for a long period of time. The artist, therefore, after he has posed a person properly, can very quickly transfer the likeness to the canvas. But the mental strain upon the person posing cannot endure indefinitely. He therefore can maintain one pose only a very short time. A second sitting is necessary. At this time the artist, after having posed his subject, will add new details that were not shown at the first sitting. He will likewise bring out more clearly certain features that he put on the canvas at first. In somewhat the same way the prophets "blocked out the portrait" at the first "sitting." Then they went over the portrait at a subsequent sitting and added new details and brought out more clearly the things given at the first sitting. We must now examine the Scriptures to learn the value of this principle and see its importance.

## **II. Examination Of Examples Of The Law Of Recurrence**

Throughout the writings of the prophets we see this law recurring many, many times. But in this short study we can only choose certain typical cases that will enable us to analyze the principle or principles that are involved so that we may be able to recognize these basic truths in other cases and thus be better able to interpret the Scriptures.

THE first example to which I wish to call attention is found in Isaiah, chapters 11 and 12. Before studying my analysis and explanation of these chapters, the reader should turn to his Bible and carefully read them. By doing this, he will be better able to follow me as I interpret this passage. If he does this, he will be able very easily to learn the principles involved and will be able by himself to interpret other passages involving these basic truths.

The first ten verses of chapter 11 constitute the blocking out of the portrait. In verses 1 and 2 we see a prediction of the first coming of Messiah when He enters the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth. Of course these two verses do not speak of the virgin birth, but simply speak of the Messiah and of His coming into the world, comparing Him to a shoot that comes out of the stump of a tree and that develops into a tree bearing fruit. These verses are recognized as a prediction of our God 's first coming.

Verses 3-5 speak of His being a judge, of His meting out justice and righteousness to the poor of the earth, of His smiting the earth with the rod of His mouth, and of His slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips. When our God was here upon the earth the first time, He did not play the role of a judge. On the contrary, He was a messenger of good tidings of salvation. When He returns to earth, however, He will take up the role of a judge and will establish justice and righteousness in the earth. In view of these facts we know that verses 3-5 constitute a prophecy concerning the second coming of our God.

Following this prediction we see in verses 6-9 a prophecy concerning the lifting of the curse from the earth and of the especial results as it affects the animal creation. Prior to man's disobedience the animals were peaceful. After the curse fell upon the world, they became vicious and bloodthirsty. When our God returns to earth to establish His reign of righteousness, He will remove the curse as we learn from other passages, and the animals will be gentle and will no longer have their vicious nature. Thus we know that verses 6-9 are dealing with the second coming of our God, or the results of His return to earth.

Verse 10 tells us of Jerusalem and of its being the beauty spot of the whole earth. Psalm 48 gives us a glowing description of glorified Jerusalem when our God returns. Thus in these ten verses of Isaiah, chapter 11, we see the first coming of our God, His return, the lifting of the curse, and His reigning in Jerusalem, the glorified capital of the whole world.

In 11:11-12:6 Isaiah in this same sermon went back over part of this portrait that had

already been blocked out in 11:1-10. He did not touch up all of the picture by any means. On the contrary, he added new details as we shall presently see.

In verses 11:11,12 we see the regathering of Israel for her final establishment in the land of the fathers. According to this prediction God puts forth His hand again the second time to regather His people who are preserved from their world-wide dispersion. God regathered Israel after the Babylonian captivity for the first time. There can be only one more return of Israel to the land, which is the one here foretold. This regathering can be none other than that which is set forth in the vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek., chap. 37). This regathering has already begun and will continue until it is completed at the time of our God 's return from heaven to establish His reign of righteousness.

In Isaiah 11:13,14 we find a prediction that the enmity and the jealousy that existed between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel during the period of the divided monarchy will vanish.

In verse 14 we see that, when Israel is gathered back into her land, trouble will arise between the Jews on the one hand and the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, and the children of Ammon on the other. Disturbances between the Jews and the Arabs who have intermarried more or less with the descendants of the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites have been going on ever since 1929. They will continue indefinitely to go on; but here is a promise that the Jews will in the end be victorious in the struggle. In other words, verse 14 is being partially fulfilled at the present time.

Verses 15 and 16 call attention to God's opening up a way for the Hebrews who will be in Egypt to return to the land of their fathers. He will likewise open up the way through the Euphrates River for those Jews who will be in Mesopotamia to return home. He will do this for them as He did for their ancestors when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Chapter 12 tells of the blessedness and joy of the Hebrew people when they are restored to their land and are in fellowship with God, which prophecy will be fulfilled in the Millennial Era.

From this little survey of the contents of these two chapters we can see that 11:11-12:6 constitutes an example of the law of recurrence. In Other words, in these verses, the prophet added new details connected with the return of the God which he discussed in verses 3-10 of chapter 11. This whole prophecy would be thrown into confusion and would be unintelligible if one did not recognize this law of recurrence. Moreover, this Scripture would contradict other passages if one does not recognize this law. A failure to note this principle would put the return mentioned in 11:11,12 after the Messiah has established His reign of righteousness in Jerusalem. But we know from the vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek., chap. 37) that this second restoration of the Jews begins and continues for some time in an orderly development. Furthermore, if we do not recognize this law of recurrence, we would have the Jews fighting with the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites during the millennial reign of our God—which thing is an absurdity. But, by recognizing this law of recurrence, the prediction

is indeed intelligible and has a very definite, specific meaning.

ANOTHER illustration of the law of recurrence may be found in the famous passage regarding Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. (See Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39.) Speaking in terms of the artist blocking out the portrait of his subject, I would say that in chapter 38, Ezekiel blocked out the portrait or picture at the first sitting. At the second sitting he filled in more of the details as they are found in chapter 39. A failure to recognize an example of this principle as it applies in these two chapters throws the entire prophecy into confusion. Let us therefore look at these chapters in the light of this principle.

In Ezekiel 38:1-6 we see a prediction of the great "northeastern confederacy" consisting of Russia, Persia, Ethiopia, Put, Germany, and Turkey. In verses 7-9 we learn that, after these powers secretly arm, they send a great aerial armada into the blue which comes like a storm and covers the land of Palestine like a cloud. Thus the northeastern confederacy will send an airborne army to seize Palestine.

In verse 10-12 the motives for this invasion by the forces of Gog are set forth. Jews, a representative number, will be gathered back into the land of their fathers and will be living in unwalled villages, dwelling in peace and security. They will have great wealth. Suddenly, without any warning, this great airborne army will descend upon the land and will have it in its grip. We have every reason to believe that this will be one of the greatest, if not the greatest, armies that ever takes to the air.

In verse 13 we see a second group of nations which I call the "western democracies." In this alliance will be Sheba, Dedan, England, together with all of the "young lions thereof," the western democracies or the younger nations of the world. When Palestine is thus invaded and seized, these western democracies will send a protest. That will be all that they will do. This is seen in verse 13.

In verses 14-16 God shows that it is He who brings them into Palestine. They go there prompted by their own lust for the spoil and wealth of the Jews. God overrules this base instinct to accomplish His plans and purposes. Gog, the future leader of Russia, is, according to verse 17 and 18, the one of whom God has spoken through various prophets of old.

When Palestine is thus seized by this airborne army and is held in the grip of the enemy, God causes an earthquake in the land of Israel, which throws down the mountains and fills the valleys. This quake will snuff out the life of the bulk of this airborne army. Those that are not killed by the initial shock will be thrown into consternation and "every man's sword shall be against his brother." In a miraculous manner God will smite those still alive with pestilence and with blood. Following this He will rain down a cloudburst upon the land which will be accompanied by great hailstones, fire and brimstone. With all of these strokes this mighty, innumerable host of invaders will be wiped out. Thus Gog's armies will have met the Almighty and will be dashed into a Christless grave.

Thus in chapter 38 Ezekiel blocks out his picture. Following the law of recurrence, he

supplies other details and completes his picture in chapter 39. To this let us now give special attention. In verses 1-3 of this chapter God reiterates the fact that He is the one who brings Gog with his forces into the land of Palestine. In verses 4 and 5, He tells that He will vanquish him in the holy land. But in verse 6 information is given which is not hinted at in chapter 38. In this verse we are told that God, at the time He wipes out this mighty army in Palestine, will also rain down fire upon Magog, Russia. In 38:22 we see that God rains down hailstones, fire, and brimstone upon the army in Palestine. But nothing is said about His raining fire and brimstone down upon the great country of Russia. In the second picture, however, we see that, this is true. Not only will God rain down fire upon Russia at that time, but He will also rain this fire down upon "them that dwell securely in the isles." The word *isles* in this passage signifies nations, as we learn from many places. This oracle made against Gog in chapters 38 and 39 concerns itself with telling of the complete defeat and overthrow of Gog and his cohorts. Their military forces, as we have just seen, are destroyed in Palestine. The country sponsoring such a treacherous act, Russia, is likewise destroyed by a stroke of divine judgment. Thus we can see that the prophecy is dealing with God's hurling His judgments against the forces of Gog. At the time of His entering into judgment with him, He rains down fire upon them that are secure in the nations. In view of all of the facts and the sweep of this passage, we are safe in concluding that those who are in the isles of the sea and upon whom the fire is rained from heaven are those who are aiding and abetting Gog and his lieutenants in their lawless plan for world revolution. Or, in other words, these upon whom the fire and brimstone rain and who are secure among the nations, are the fifth columnists of the Russian government. Thus, when the invasion of Palestine comes, God, with a series of judgments, will wipe out completely the regime of Gog and his cohorts.

In verses 9 and 10 we see that, when Gog goes there with his armies and with untold equipment, there will be sufficient wood gathered from the wreckage of his weapons to furnish the natives of the land with firewood for seven years. This is, to be taken literally. Seven months will be occupied in cleansing the land from the dead bodies of that innumerable host that will be wiped out by the judgments of God. This is set forth in verses 11-16.

When the armies of Gog are overthrown in Palestine, the birds of the heavens will be invited to come and feast upon the carcasses of this army. This thought is presented in verse 17-20.

The overthrow of the armies of Gog when they invade Palestine occurs before the Tribulation, as I show beyond a peradventure in my small volume entitled *When Gog's Armies Meet the Almighty*. Thus, in chapter 38, the picture of this future invasion and of the end of this great army is blocked out in chapter 38. The picture is touched up and completed in Ezekiel 39:1-16.

But this signal overthrow of the forces of Gog, before the Tribulation by divine intervention is suggestive of the overthrow of the forces of the Antichrist at the end of the Tribulation, and of the inauguration of the kingdom of God when the Antichrist is overthrown. Thus in verses 17-29 the prophet goes from the discussion of the overthrow of Gog before the Tribulation to the overthrow of the Antichrist and the

establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth after the Tribulation. When these chapters are thus studied in the light of the principle of the law of recurrence, they become very intelligible and most definite. Clarity of thought and perception is what is needed today in the study of the prophetic word.

I WISH to call attention to one more illustration of this law of recurrence, which is found in the Olivet Discourse as recorded in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25. In terms of the illustration of painting a picture, I would say that our God blocked out His portrait in Matthew 24:1-31 at the first sitting. At the second sitting, He touched up and completed the picture as we see in 24:32-25:46. Unless one recognizes an illustration of the law of recurrence in this passage, it is but a jumble of predictions. But when one recognizes this fact, the prophecy becomes very intelligible to him.

Let us look at the facts which are presented in 24:1-31. In verses 1 and 2 God made a prediction concerning the destruction of the Temple, which prophecy was fulfilled, as we know, in A.D. 70. In verse 3 the disciples asked God two questions: (1) When would the prophecy be fulfilled; (2) what would be *the* sign of two events, of His coming and of the consummation of the age. In view of the fact that there would be false Christs appearing from time to time, Christ depicted them in verses 4 and 5. Then in verse 6, he warned the disciples against drawing hasty conclusions with reference to the end of the age when a war would break forth; for He declared that, during the entire Christian Dispensation, there would be wars and rumors of wars. Hence they were not to attach any prophetic significance to any of these. When, therefore, a war would break out, declared he, the end would not be yet; for "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. 8 But all these things are the beginning of travail" (vss. 7, 8). The wars and rumors of wars are local conflicts, which characterize the Christian Dispensation. "Nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom" of verse 7 is a prediction of a world war. This language is a peculiar Hebrew idiom which appears in the Old Testament. When it is examined in the light of its context, it is seen to be a war that affects all of the territory before the prophet's vision when he used a like expression. Since Christ in the Olivet Discourse had a world outlook, His use of this idiom could mean only a world war, that begins with one nation rising against another and other nations coming in until it becomes a global conflict. Such a world war attended by famines, and Luke adds pestilences, and great earthquakes constitutes, said Christ, the first birth pain—the warning to the world that the time to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God is at hand. Thus verses 7 and 8 foretell that *the* sign of the end of the age is a world war, attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes. Following this prediction is one concerning the first half of the Tribulation, found in verses 9-14. In this period of travail iniquity will abound but the gospel is to be preached at that time unto all the nations. When the full testimony will have been given, then the end, the end of the age concerning which the Apostles asked, would come.

The "abomination of desolation," according to verse 15, will be set up in the middle of the Tribulation. This abomination is nothing but an idol, the image of the Antichrist, which will be set up in the middle of the Tribulation, as we learn in Revelation, chapter 13. Matthew 24:15-28 is a description of the second half of the Tribulation.

In verses 29-31 we see that, at the conclusion of the Tribulation, there will be a total blackout of the heavenly bodies. Then will appear the sign of the Son of man coming in heaven. At that time He will also gather up His elect from the four corners of the earth. When He thus comes, He takes the world situation in hand and establishes His world-wide reign of righteousness.

Thus in Matthew 24:1-31 Christ has outlined the entire Christian Dispensation, beginning with His day and taking us through the present era and the Tribulation, which follows, and has taken us to His second coming. At this time He, in the illustration of blocking out the picture, finishes that phase of the work. Then, beginning with verse 32, He begins to fill in or add details—emphasizing some things that He had mentioned before—and to add new ones. Thus in verses 32 and 33 He declared: "Now from the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; 33 even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, *even* at the doors." The fig tree means the fig tree. When its buds begin to become tender, and it begins to put forth, one knows that the summer is near. Now Christ said in the same manner that the ones who see "all these things" can draw a conclusion with reference to the nearness of His return. The words in the original rendered "all these things" are the very ones that He used in verse 8 in the quotation: "But all these things are the beginning of travail." The "all these things" in verse 8 are none other than a world war, famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes attending this global conflict. Thus in verses 32 and 33 "fig tree" can be nothing but a fig tree. There is nothing to indicate a departure from the literal meaning. We must, therefore, understand God as referring to a literal fig tree. The people who are living when the fig tree begins to put forth its leaves and to bud know that summer is close at hand. Christ said that, in the same way, the one who sees "all these things," a global conflict attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places, can know that His coming is close at hand. How close? The answer is: "Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished." Was He speaking of the generation that would be dying off when the global conflict would break forth upon the world? Certainly that would not have any meaning. Neither was He talking about the generation that had spent half of its life. All the facts of the context demand that we understand this to be the generation that was rising and that was old enough to look at the prophecy, then to examine current events, and to identify the raging conflict as the one foretold by God. Thus the generation that was old enough at the time of the first global conflict, 1914-1918, was the one of which He was speaking in verse 34. From this fact we see that Christ in verses 32 and 33 was talking about World War I. Here He adds a detail to His picture, that He omitted in verses 7 and 8. This is a very important bit of information.

In verses 36-39 Christ told us that the same conditions will develop prior to the Tribulation, about which He spoke in verses 9-28, as existed in the days of Noah immediately before the catastrophe of the Flood. In those days, prior to the Flood, men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, until the very day that Noah entered the ark. The Flood came and destroyed all of that godless generation. God says that those times will be duplicated immediately before the Tribulation. Thus there is no promise in the Scriptures of a great revival prior to the

Tribulation. The judgments of the Tribulation will come suddenly upon the world, and the bulk of the people upon the earth will be swept away by that titanic catastrophe. Prior to the bursting forth of the Tribulation upon the world, two men will be in a field; one will be taken and one left (vs. 40). Two women will be grinding at a mill; one will be taken and one left (41). The disciples therefore are urged to watch for they know not on what day Christ will return. From the entire drift of the thought it is clear that Christ here was speaking of the rapture of the saints, when He descends from the heavens to the air to raise the dead in Christ and to catch up the living saints. He continues to speak of this great event down through verse 44. In verses 45-51 He speaks of the faithful and the unfaithful servants. In 25:1-13 He describes those who are in the kingdom of heaven. A study of the parables of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew shows what Christ meant by the kingdom of heaven and who are in it. Now all of those who are in the kingdom of heaven fall into two groups—the saved and the lost. The saved are, in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, represented by wise virgins. The second group, the lost, are represented by the five foolish virgins. In 25:14-30 Christ spoke of rewarding those who are in the kingdom of heaven. The man receiving the five talents gained five others and was rewarded accordingly. The one who received two talents gained with them two others and was likewise rewarded. But the one who received one talent buried it and did nothing about it. He was cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This one represents the man who is in the kingdom of heaven, but is unsaved and does not use the talent that is given to him.

From this survey of 24:32-25:30 it is evident that Christ was talking about the rapture and things connected with that glorious event. But with 25:31 He left a discussion of the rapture and went to the end of the Tribulation and spoke about His glorious coming. Thus between verses 30 and 31 the seven years of the Tribulation intervene. The relation between 24:32-25:31 and the block of Scripture consisting of 25:31-46 is an illustration of the law of double reference, which we studied in last month's meditation.

By anyone's carefully studying the law of recurrence and the illustrations discussed in this article, he can soon learn to recognize an example of this most important law.

## **PARONOMASIA OR A PLAY ON WORDS**

THE BIBLE is the revelation of God put in human language. God not only gave the thought, but also chose the words by which the disclosure was to be conveyed to man. In giving His Word He used the language of the people to whom He spoke. In all languages there are *literal* terms and figurative expressions. There are all types of figures of speech and metaphorical language. Unless a person realizes this fact, he will run into difficulty in interpreting the Scriptures. Moreover, the student must be familiar with the various figures of speech. One of the least known and yet one of the most important figures occurring in the Scriptures is that of paronomasia or a play on words and ideas. Since it occurs so very, very frequently, and since in many instances the entire point in a passage is bound up in an understanding of this figure, it is of the utmost importance that the Bible student should familiarize himself with it in order that he might follow the thought of the Scriptures as they are making their revelation known to him.

## I. What Is Paronomasia?

As stated in the heading of this study, **paronomasia is a play on words or ideas.** This term is from the Greek and is a combination of a preposition and a noun, the former primarily meaning *beside*; the latter indicating to name or to give a name to. Laying aside the rigidity of the etymology of the term, we would say that **paronomasia consists of our laying down beside one word or idea that has been used—a similar one with a little variation or change.** The point or force of the word or idea thus employed is contingent upon our understanding of the word or idea upon which it is a pun.

An illustration, however, is worth many definitions and words. Everyone of us is familiar with the fact that frequently a parent has spoken to a child, who has taken a serious matter lightly and laughingly, saying: "You will be laughing on the other side of your face (or mouth)." No explanation of what is meant is needed. The child is not considering the seriousness of the matter in hand; but, on the contrary he is laughing about it. The warning is given in terms of what is being done, namely, laughing. But the parent does not suggest that the child actually will be laughing; he simply means that he will be crying; but he speaks of what the child will be doing in terms of what he is doing at the time of the reprimand. In scores upon scores of passages throughout the Word we find this same usage of language. It must therefore be recognized in order to understand what is meant.

## II. Examples Of Paronomasia

In this discussion we shall notice only a few examples of this usage, the first of which is Amos 8:1,2: "Thus God showed me: and behold, a basket of summer fruit. 2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said Jehovah unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more." God showed the prophet, in vision, a basket of summer fruit. The word rendered "summer fruit" is the Hebrew word, *kayits*, when transliterated. To the prophet's answer God said: "The end is come upon my people Israel." The word

rendered "the end," when transliterated, is *kets*. The radicals of each word are the same, with the exception of the "y". But in Hebrew they appear very much alike. There is a play, not upon the idea, but upon the words, which were so very similar that the general impression made upon the prophet's mind was indelible. Thus when anyone who had listened to the oracle saw a basket of summer fruit, he would automatically think of the oracle that it indicated the end that would come upon the people of Israel.

ANOTHER example of paronomasia is found in Micah, which reads as follows: "Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2 And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. 3 Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily; for it is an evil time." (Micah 2:1-3).

The prophet spoke, or rather pronounced, a woe against those who devised iniquity and worked evil upon their beds, when they were lying in the quietude of the night. But when the day arose, they would put into execution their diabolical plans. They were covetous people who would take advantage of others and oppress them in any and every way possible. To them, therefore, God gave the following warning: "Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily; for it is an evil time."

These people would plot against innocent helpless ones, scheming how they could rob people by every method and device possible. They planned what was indeed outright wickedness and sin. Against them, therefore, God hurled the threat that He would likewise devise an evil against them. He would do some planning and plotting. He, by His omniscience, could out-plan and out-manuever them. In doing so, He would bring calamity upon them. Since the Almighty is a holy God and is not tempted of evil, that is, *moral wrong*, we can see that the word "evil" is used in a different sense. The word rendered "evil" in the Old Testament very frequently indicates calamity. As an example of this meaning note the following passage: "I [Jehovah] form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil [calamity]; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things." In this passage we see, then, when we view all the facts, that God is threatening punishment to the evildoers who were plotting iniquitous acts against their fellowmen. God plans the evil, that is, the punishment, that He must as a holy and just God bring as retribution upon people for their sins. Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for that which a man sows, he shall also reap. Man should ever remember that his sin will find him out.

AS another example of paronomasia, let us notice the following passage: "But ye that forsake Jehovah, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for Fortune, and that fill up mingled wine unto Destiny; 12 I will destine you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but ye did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not" (Isa. 65:11,12). In order to understand this passage, one must recognize the fact that, according to the prophetic word, after the church is gone—removed from the earth by the rapture—paganism will spread like a prairie fire all

over the world. Men of every nation and tribe will resort to gross idolatry. That they will do this is evident from such a passage as Revelation 9:20,21: "And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the work of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." There are a number of passages in the Old Testament that foretell the same thing. We see therefore that men will actually revert to gross idolatrous paganism in the Tribulation Period.

In Israel idolatry will spring forth at that future time. Isaiah, therefore, assumed, in the passage under consideration, this flood tide of paganism. There are two idols that are mentioned in Isaiah 65:11, Fortune and Destiny. The word rendered "Destiny" in the original is *Meni*. This is the name of the Babylonian goddess that corresponded to the Venus of the Roman pantheon. Having accused the people of filling up mingled wine unto Destiny, that is, *Meni*, the prophet then used the word which when transliterated into the English, is spelled *Manithi* and which means *to appoint, to allot to, or to destine*. Thus the prophet chose that verb the simple form of which is *Manan*, which corresponded most nearly to the name of this Babylonian goddess, which meant to appoint or to allot to, and which, in this case, indicates to destine to. He therefore said that God would "destine you to the sword," since they had engaged in the worship of this goddess.

ANOTHER most important case of paronomasia is found in Daniel, chapter 9. It appears in verse 24 in the statement, "Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy." What is the meaning of the expression "seventy weeks"? Literally it is "seventy sevens." To translate the second word by our English word, weeks, was a most unfortunate rendition. Our English word, week, has a specific, definite meaning of *seven days*. This is not true with reference to the original Hebrew term. It simply meant *seven*. If one, speaking in Hebrew and using the language as Daniel did, should be talking about trees and wanted to let us know that he had seen only seven trees, he would use the same word which the angel Gabriel employed in this verse. On the other hand, if he were speaking of men and wished to indicate that there were seven, he would use the same word. Moreover, if he were talking of chickens and wanted to tell us that there were seven of these fowls, he would use the same word. Thus the term indicates only the number *seven* in the Hebrew.

What, then, did the angel Gabriel mean by affirming to Daniel that there were seventy sevens decreed upon the people of Israel and upon the Holy City? This query can be answered only by looking at the entire context in chapter 9. The key to the proper understanding of this passage is to be found in the first two verses, which read as follows: 1 "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, 2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem,

even seventy years." Daniel in these verses informs us that he understood by the books the number of the years whereof God spoke to Jeremiah regarding the accomplishment of the desolations of Jerusalem. From this statement it is clear that Daniel was studying the book of Jeremiah, who foretold the Babylonian siege and the consequent Exile, and other books that threw light upon this prediction. One naturally and immediately thinks of the Books of Kings and Chronicles, which record the causes of the downfall of the Hebrew monarchy and the actual collapse of Jewish resistance, together with the Babylonian captivity. Those books gave the historical account of the fall of the Jewish monarchy. In the light of the historical records and significance of the word, year, in those works, and also in the light of Jeremiah's prediction that the Babylonian captivity would continue for seventy years, Daniel naturally understood the years for the Exile to be seventy of the ordinary solar years—the years mentioned in those books.

In Daniel 9:1 we see that the prophet was studying Jeremiah's works in the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes. This year was the sixty-eighth of the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Believing the word of Jeremiah to be the very Word of God and trusting God to say what He meant and to mean what He said, Daniel believed that the Exile would be completed within two years. In this he was correct.

The prediction that the captivity would last for seventy years is found in Jeremiah, chapters 25 and 29. I invite the reader to turn to these scriptures in his Bible and to study them carefully. I shall, however, quote only from the latter. "For thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end. 12 And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14 And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive" (Jer. 29:10-14).

Note the fact that, in verse 10 of this quotation God says that, at the end of the seventy years, He would bring back the people to the land of the fathers. In verse 11 the prophet shows that this is necessary in order for God to carry out His plans and purposes regarding Israel which reach out into the distant future—"to give you hope in your latter end." Thus verse 11 drops the subject of the Babylonian captivity and the restoration from the same and darts out into the future to the latter end. Still having his attention focused on the end of this age, the prophet continued the prediction. "And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14 And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah ..." Observe the fact that in verse 10, in speaking of the restoration from Babylon, he simply said that God would cause them "to return to this place"—Palestine.

But with reference to the other regathering of Israel and her being restored to her land, in the latter end, God declared, "I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations ..." Here the word "again" is inserted, indicating that this is another restoration, a second one. This is in perfect accord with Isaiah 11:11 where God promised to put forth His hand again the second time to regather Israel from her world-wide dispersion. Thus it becomes evident to every close student of the Word that there is a blending of the predictions concerning the two restorations of Israel to her own land—the first from Babylonian captivity; the second from her world-wide dispersion. Only the very close Bible student will catch this most important point.

Since Daniel was studying the Book of Jeremiah, and since the seventy years of desolations of Jerusalem are mentioned in these two chapters, we know that he was studying Jeremiah, chapter 29. In his perusal of this passage it is quite evident from what the angel Gabriel said that Daniel did not see the fine point of there being two restorations of Israel to her own land but expected the final and complete restoration after the Babylonian captivity. That Daniel did arrive at this conclusion is reflected in Gabriel's statement to him, as he (Daniel) had informed us: "And he instructed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee wisdom and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to tell thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision" (Dan. 9:22,23). Daniel needed instruction. For that reason God sent Gabriel to the prophet, who declared that he had been sent to him "to give thee [Daniel] wisdom and understanding." Gabriel felt the necessity of warning the prophet not to dismiss the issue, but to open his heart and to receive the instruction which Gabriel was giving him. From these facts it is very evident that Daniel did not understand thoroughly the message of Jeremiah.

The prophets, when the Spirit of God was upon them, were infallibly inspired and could not and did not make any mistakes. But the Spirit of God was not upon the prophets all the time. The Spirit came on various occasions. Usually the prophets date the time of their reception of a message from God. When the Spirit was not thus upon them and inspiring them, they could make mistakes, as Nathan the prophet did in his advising David to build a temple to God. After he had thus encouraged the king, Nathan was forced by God to go and correct his mistake (II Sam., chap. 7).

We can gather from the prediction in Daniel 9:24 the mistake that Daniel made. He concluded that the six things mentioned in Daniel 9:24 would be fulfilled at the end of the Babylonian captivity—within two years of the time. That the reader might see the mistake that Daniel made, I quote this verse again: "Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy." Instead of these six things being fulfilled at the end of that first period of seventy years of the Babylonian captivity, as the prophet had thought, Gabriel said that there were *seventy sevens* decreed upon the Jewish people and upon Jerusalem for the bringing in of millennial conditions.

Gabriel said that there were seventy sevens (not seventy weeks of days) decreed upon

Israel and Jerusalem. Seventy sevens of what? Of the thing about which Daniel had been reading and studying. As we have already seen, he had been reading about and thinking of literal years, regular solar years, consisting of the four seasons—years such as are recorded in the historical portions of the Scriptures. The angel Gabriel therefore said to Daniel that, instead of the Millennium's coming at the end of that first period of seventy years, there would be *seventy times seven years* before that vision would become reality.

Thus we see that the Exile lasted for seventy times one year, or seventy years. But there must pass seventy times seven years before the establishment of this reign of righteousness upon the earth.

In view of all the facts we see that the expression, seventy times seven, is an illustration of the principle of paronomasia. The recognition of this fact gives us the keynote to the proper understanding of the passage. A failure to recognize that this is a case of paronomasia throws the entire passage into confusion. As a result, many wild and weird guesses and interpretations have been imposed upon Daniel, chapter 9. In fact, a certain system of a chronological prophetic outline is based upon the conclusion, drawn from this passage, by many who fail to see that this is a plain and evident case of a play upon words.

For a full and complete discussion of the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 9, see either my volume, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*, or *The Seventy Weeks of Daniel*.

## **PARONOMASIA                      PART II**

STILL another important instance of paronomasia is found in Daniel 11:38 in the expression "the god of fortresses" found in the sentence: "But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things."

In order to understand this marvelous prediction concerning the willful king of the time of the end, it is necessary for one to see this specific prophecy in the light of the entire context. Daniel, chapters 10, 11, and 12, constitute one complete oracle. In Daniel 11:2-4 we have a rapid survey of the Medo-Persian Empire which was brought to an end by the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. The collapse and division of Alexander's empire among his four generals is likewise foreshadowed in verse 4. In verses 5-19 is a very rapid survey of the conflict that raged between the Greco-Syrian Empire under the Seleucid kings and the Greco-Egyptian kings of the Ptolemaic line in Egypt. The former king is called "the king of the north," whereas the latter one is called "the king of the south." Thus in these verses appears a survey of the struggle between Egypt and Syria, down to the time of the father of Antiochus Epiphanes of the Greco-Syrian kingdom. In verse 21 we see Antiochus Epiphanes, the great persecutor of the Jews. A description of the war between Antiochus and the Maccabees is set forth in verses 21-35. But in verses 31-35 there begin to appear little glimpses of conditions

that will exist in Israel in the end time. Thus in these last verses there is a blending of the immediate future with the far distant period of the end time. This is a very reasonable thing, because a situation similar to that of the Maccabean Period will exist in the end time.

But when we come to Daniel 11:36, we are in the midst of the Tribulation Period. The reason for my saying this is that the things which this willful king will do are described by John in Revelation, chapter 13, as occurring in the middle of the Tribulation.

BUT let us look at the immediate text: "36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods; and he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. 37 Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things. 39 And he shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whosoever acknowledgeth him he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price" (Dan. 11:36-39).

Here is a determined king who does according to his will. He exalts himself and magnifies himself above every god, he speaks horrible things against the God of gods, Jehovah, the true God, and prospers in his designs to the close of the period of indignation. This information we gather from verse 36. In the following verse Daniel gives us more explicit information. He disregards the gods of his fathers. This raises the question as to the nationality of this great king. From Daniel, chapter 7, we know that the prince who will rule the world empire of the end time is none other than a person of Roman extraction. This fact is reflected in the statement that the people of the coming prince shall, according to Daniel, destroy the city and the sanctuary. This is a prediction that was fulfilled by the Roman conquest and overthrow of the Jewish commonwealth in A.D. 70. The people who overthrew the Jewish nation were the Romans. Daniel tells us that these who overthrow the Jewish commonwealth are the people of this future coming prince. Since the Romans did that, we know that the future world ruler is to be of Roman extraction. Then the gods of his fathers are none other than the gods of the Romans. The next statement that is made is that he does not regard "the desire of women." For the moment let us pass by this expression to the next one: "neither does he regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all"—that is, above all gods. This passage presupposes the springing up of idolatry all over the world in the time of the Tribulation. Thus there will come back into existence the old Roman gods, the old Norse gods, the Teutonic gods, the gods of the Greeks; in fact, the world will be engulfed by idolatry, as we have already seen in other discussions appearing in this magazine. This condition will continue throughout the first half of the great Tribulation Period. But in the middle of the Tribulation, as we learn from Revelation, chapter 13, this world dictator will demand the worship of all people. He will oppose all idolatry and Christianity as it will be preached by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the first half of the Tribulation. He will have an image of himself set up in Jerusalem in the Jewish Temple. At the unveiling of that image, it will be given by Satan the power to

speak and will perform miracles, even causing fire to descend out of heaven to earth in the sight of men. Doubtless the ceremonies in connection with the unveiling of this image will be sent by television and by radio to the entire world. In this manner the population of the world will probably witness the great demonstration of satanic power that will be enacted at that time—at the time that this willful king opposes the Roman gods and exalts himself above all gods.

BUT what is meant by the expression in Daniel 11:37, "the desire of women"? The verse is dealing with the gods that are worshiped in the Tribulation. The first phrase, as we have already seen, refers to the Roman gods. The last term signifies the gods of all other nations. But between these phrases is "the desire of women." Since it is thus sandwiched between these two expressions referring to the various gods of the nations, the implication is that it likewise refers to a god. What then does this expression, desire of women, mean in Jewish thought? We learn that it was the desire of the Jewish women to become the mother of the Messiah. Thus the Messiah, then, is probably "the desire of women," of the Jewish women. When we study messianic prophecy, we see that He is God in human form who enters the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth. He is truly a man and at the same time He is God—not God *and* man (a monstrosity), but the God-man. See such passages as Isaiah 7:14, 9:6; John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:5-11, and Hebrews, chapters 1 and 2.

When we recognize that "the desire of women" refers to the divine-human Messiah, and when we see that this willful king is opposed to all gods and equally to this one, "desire of women," we see that he is likewise opposed to Christ. Thus this passage shows that though the church is removed from the earth before the Tribulation, Christ will be preached and Christianity will continue to exist during the Tribulation. As suggested above, the banner of Prince Immanuel that the ascending church drops as it wends its way to meet God in the air is picked up by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, who accept the message which we are now giving to Israel, who rush forth into the breach that has been left by the departing church and go forward into battle, pressing the claims of Christ upon the world. These evangelists bring about the world's greatest revival, in which multiplied millions and hundreds of millions of souls will accept Christ Christ and wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Thus we see from this Old Testament prophecy how the willful king will make a determined stand against the true God, against Christ, and also against the idolatry which will at that time have swept over the world.

FURTHER information regarding his activity is given us in verse 38, which is as follows: "But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things."

Although we have been told in verses 36 and 37 that this willful king, the world dictator, will magnify himself above every god and oppose every thought of a Divine Being, yet in verse 38 we are told that "in his place [mar. *office*] shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold ..." Since he puts himself above every god, and since he opposes the very thought of the existence of any god, the expression *the god of fortresses* cannot refer to an idol or

god. This fact shows that our term is not to be taken literally, but rather metaphorically. What figure is this? There is but one answer—paronomasia. In other words, Daniel speaks of force, power, and military equipment to which this willful king gives all of his attention in terms of the topic of the conversation. Since he has been speaking of gods whom this dictator opposes, and since he uses the expression, "the god of fortresses," we know that this term simply speaks of the creation on the part of the world dictator of a great military force with which he intends to conquer the world and bring it under his power and control. Thus the great and unparalleled military force which he creates and marshals proves to be his god—the object of his devotion and the thing upon which he depends for the carrying out of his plans of world conquest and subjection. Hitler built up the greatest war machine that the world thus far has ever seen. He ground down the German people, taking their "gold, and silver, ... precious stones and pleasant things," and poured all of this into the creation of his god—the German armed forces. Just what Hitler did in this respect, the world dictator will do on a much larger scale.

From the following verse we see this willful king, the Anti-christ, as he launches his war of aggression against the ten dictators who are represented by the ten toes of the image vision of Daniel, chapter 2, and the ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel, chapter 7. "And he shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whosoever acknowledgeth *him* he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price" (11:39).

From Daniel, chapter 7, we see that the world will be headed up in the end of this age into a colossal political octopus, a world government (vs. 23). Then it will, as indicated by verse 24, fall to pieces, splitting into ten divisions. Over each of these sections will arise a dictator. Following their appearance, will come up the final dictator, or willful king, who will gradually ingratiate himself, by his flatteries, into the favor of these dictators. Thus he will cooperate with them and finally enter into a covenant with the Jews for a period of seven years. When this treaty is signed, the Tribulation begins. During the first half of the Tribulation, there does not appear to be any friction between these dictators and the willful king. He seems to work, however, in an underhanded way, manipulating the affairs of all, and causing great powers to gravitate into his own hands. Finally, when he will have created his "god of fortresses"—his war machine—he launches his power against the strongest fortresses—those of the ten kings who have brought him to power. In other words, this is a clear prediction that this willful king will launch his war of aggression against the armed forces of his ten associates, over whom he will already have won by diplomacy the mastery to a certain extent. He does not launch this war simply in human strength, for we are told that he does it "by the help of a foreign god." Who is this foreign god? It cannot be any of the gods of the nations, when idolatry has a resurgence, a rising again into life, at this future time. This expression, "a foreign god," when read in the light of Revelation, chapter 13, which deals with the same situation as does Daniel, chapter 11, is seen to refer to none other than Satan himself, who turns over his throne and power to this world dictator. Thus Satan is a foreign god so far as the various gods that are made by men are concerned.

Whatever persons, at the time of the launching of this war of aggression, will acknowledge the willful king will be promoted to great honor and power. They will be given positions in the government to rule over many. At that time the Antichrist will

"divide the land [Palestine] for a price."

When the Antichrist thus launches this war, he may start out with *a war of nerves*. In all probability he will do this. But there will be two of these dictators who will accept his challenge and rise up in armed might against him. The first is the king of the south; the second is the king of the north. The conflict will be indeed a blitz or possibly a "push button war." Palestine will figure very largely in this great conflict, for "he [the willful king, the Anti-christ] shall enter also into the glorious land [Palestine], and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon." Let us note that, at the time of the launching of this war, many countries will be overthrown. It will rapidly take on global proportions. But the conflict will not spread to Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon. God will prevent its entering into that section of the world. Why? My suggestion is that the Jews who will be in Palestine in the Tribulation will flee into these countries where God will protect them.

A further description of the spread of this war is seen in 11:42, which reads: "He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape." The blanket statement is made that this willful king will stretch forth his hand upon "the countries." While this expression is not exactly definite, yet it is general and implies that this war will be waged against the countries of the world in general. The Egyptians, the Libyans, and the Ethiopians will fall under the sledge hammer blows of this mighty world dictator.

While the war is raging in the countries just mentioned, the report, as is seen in verse 44, will come that there are insurrections in the far east and in the distant north. Thus, according to this prediction, practically the whole world will be engulfed in a titanic struggle between the willful king on the one hand and the ten dictators with whom he will have been associated for the first half of the Tribulation on the other. According to verse 45 he will be brought to his end and none shall help him. His being brought to an end is what occurs at the end of the Tribulation.

Daniel was very much interested in the length of time from the willful king's opposing all gods, magnifying himself above the God of gods, and his launching this aggressive war against his associates in government, to the time that he is brought to an end. This question is answered in Daniel 12:6,7 which reads as follows: "And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river. How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces of power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." How long shall these wonders take place? The answer is, "a time, times, and a half." *Time*, in the Book of Daniel and in Revelation, which quotes this phrase from Daniel, is a year. *Times* is in the dual number, two years, and a *half a time* is half a year. Thus the total of time, times, and half a time is three and one-half years. There will therefore be three and one-half years from the time of the willful king's attempt to abolish idolatry from the world and to require the worship of himself to the end of the Tribulation, when he is brought to his end. When this passage is laid down

beside the Book of Revelation, it is quite evident that these three and one-half years of Daniel, chapters 11 and 12, are the latter half of the Tribulation Period.

Thus the recognition of the figure of paronomasia in Daniel 11:38 opens up the entire passage of Scripture for an intelligible exposition of the same. Only, therefore, when we recognize that the expression, the god of fortresses, is an instance of paronomasia and interpret it accordingly, can we see this "push button" war of aggression that will be launched in the middle of the Tribulation and that will be so very disastrous to the world. Thus the whole interpretation of this marvelous revelation is contingent upon our recognition of this figure of speech.

## **PARONOMASIA                      PART III**

THE PROPER UNDERSTANDING of Daniel 11:36-45 is absolutely imperative for the correct evaluation of that marvelous revelation found in II Thessalonians, chapter 2, which is of utmost importance to everyone who wishes to comprehend the prophetic word. Having the correct interpretation of Daniel 11:36-45 as a basis of II Thessalonians 2:1-12, we are now in a position to understand correctly, accurately, and grammatically the teaching of this marvelous message. At this juncture, may I state that, apart from the proper grasp of Daniel 11:36-45, it is impossible for one to see the truth of II Thessalonians, chapter 2.

In I Thessalonians Paul spoke much of the return of God and what is termed the rapture of the church. The classic passage on this point in this letter is found in 4:13-5:11. From all the data which we have, it seems that the Thessalonian Christians with whom Paul had sojourned only a short while, when he brought the gospel to them, were being disturbed by false teachings concerning prophetic matters. From Athens Paul wrote the Thessalonian letters. Moreover, it seems that, although the first letter had been received, there still was a grave necessity for his writing the second one to allay misapprehensions and to correct certain erroneous teachings which had been brought to them. In II Thessalonians 2:1,2 the Apostle was very eager that this church should understand the rapture of the saints and its relation to the day of God. Thus he spoke of "the coming of our Christ, and our gathering together unto him." Christ's coming and our being gathered together to Him can refer to nothing except the rapture of the church as set forth in the fourth chapter of the preceding Epistle. The Apostle wanted these Christians to understand this matter in order that they might not be quickly shaken from their mind in any way—either by someone's claiming to have a revelation by the Spirit, or by a special message, or by an epistle as from him and his co-workers. We gather from what he says that there was a grave likelihood that these Christians would be disturbed in some of the ways mentioned by those who were claiming that the day of God had already come. *The day of God* is a technical term used in the Old Testament to refer to, the Tribulation Period, which is of seven years' duration. The present perfect tense is used in this verse and is translated in the Revised Version "is just at hand"; but the perfect tense here should be rendered "has already come." Since Paul wanted them to understand clearly the doctrine regarding the

rapture of the church and did not want them to be disturbed by the teaching that the day of God had already come, it is clear that he wanted these Christians to understand that the rapture would occur before the Tribulation. If this was not his thought, there would be no point in their being disturbed regarding the rapture by the report that the day of God had already come. If the church was to go through the Tribulation, or through the first half of it, the announcement that this period of wrath had already come would give them the assurance that, within a very short time, they would be caught up out of the world, and that all of their troubles would soon be over. But if, as taught in the Scriptures, the rapture occurs before the Tribulation, the teaching that the Tribulation had already begun, and that they had not been caught up in it, would be a matter of great concern. In that event, they would know that they were not pleasing to God, and that He had not taken them up out of this present evil world.

The Apostle continued his exhortation to these Christians by declaring, "Let no man beguile you in any wise: for *it will not be*, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ..." The words, "it will not be," are in italics, which fact shows that they are supplied by the translator. The Greek text is elliptical here. These words must be supplied in order to convey to the reader's mind the meaning of the text. The question arising at this point is: What is the antecedent of "it," which is here properly inserted? Naturally, since the day of God is mentioned immediately preceding this statement, we would be inclined to take this phrase as its antecedent, or rather the word "day." This is the natural construction. If this be the correct interpretation, Paul tells us that the Tribulation will not begin except two things first occur, "the falling away" and "the man of sin be revealed." On the other hand, the possible antecedent of "it" is the coming of God and our being gathered together unto Him to meet Him in the air—the rapture. This construction is altogether possible. It has much in its favor. Regardless of which thought was that of the Apostle, both are true. The rapture must, as is presented here by strong implication, occur before the day of God. This position is absolutely confirmed by other Scriptures. Moreover, the falling away and the revealing of the man of sin must also come before the Tribulation. Thus in verses 1-3 the Apostle is talking about those things which must occur before the Tribulation.

WHAT is meant by "the falling away"? This word by derivation indicates a departure or a forsaking of one group with which those who are the subject of conversation have been associated. They apostatize or leave this group and go out from it. An illustration of this is seen in I John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us." Those of whom John was speaking had been associated with the Christians to whom the Apostle was writing. But not being born-again and not being Spirit-filled, they on some occasion walked out from the group, forsook it, and went, figuratively speaking, into another camp—that of the enemy of Christianity. Thus there was a deliberate, calculated departure on the part of those leaving. This apostasy, said Paul, must come first before the Tribulation. The second thing which, he affirmed, must also occur before the Tribulation is found in the same verse: the revealing of the man of sin, the son of perdition. The word *reveal*, in the original text, means *to remove the cover*. When the cover which has been over an object, and which has been hiding it from view, is removed, it can be seen. This is the

primary signification of the word *reveal*. Thus the man of sin, the son of perdition, according to this prediction, is to be in the world but not be recognized at first. Then there will arise some circumstance or event that will make this one known. In other words, his identity will be revealed to the world. In this prediction Paul therefore affirms that the identification of the man of sin will become a known fact before the day of God, before the Tribulation. Since the language is clear and explicit, there can be no doubt about this position.

In verse 4 the Apostle identifies the man of sin from the prophetic standpoint. He does this by telling us that this one is "he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." All reputable commentators with whom I am acquainted take the position that Paul by this language tells us that this man of sin is the very one of whom Daniel, in 11:36-45, was speaking. In other words, this man of sin of our passage is the willful king of Daniel 11:36ff. The reason for his being identified as this one is that he does the very things that Daniel said the willful king will do. He is living at the same time, namely, in the end time—in the Tribulation. As we have seen, Daniel's willful king, opposing all that is called God and that is worshipped as God, prepares for a war of aggression against the world, which precipitates a global conflict. In carrying out his plan, he is successful; for, "he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished." The term *indignation* signifies the Tribulation Period and its judgments. But "he shall *come* to his end, and none shall help him." From the time of this titanic struggle until the indignation is accomplished and he comes to his end, is a period, as we have already seen, of three and one-half years, which culminates with the coming of God to establish His reign of righteousness upon the earth. Paul's man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, is slain by Christ "with the breath of his mouth," and is brought to nought by the manifestation of his [Christ's] coming (II Thess. 2:8). The facts of both passages are clear and definite and identify the willful king of Daniel's prophecy as the man of sin of Paul's prediction. But Daniel discusses only the actions of the willful king in his opposition to idolatry and to the worship of the true God, which precipitates a war of aggression, and his prospering in this one particular enterprise until he is brought to nought at the end of the Tribulation. Since Daniel's willful king does not launch his campaign of aggression until the middle of the Tribulation, and since Paul identifies the man of sin with Daniel's willful king by calling attention to what he does in the middle of the Tribulation, it is clear that Paul in II Thessalonians 2:4 has moved in his thinking from the days prior to the Tribulation in verse 3 to the middle of the Tribulation in verse 4. That the reader may see this more clearly, I shall again quote these two verses: "Let no man beguile you in any wise: for *it will not be*, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, 4 he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God."

It is of the utmost importance that we recognize the fact that verse 4 describes the events of the middle of the Tribulation, and that Paul is dealing in it with the willful king's aggressive action against idolatry and his attempt to seize supreme power. But by reading verse 4 in the light of its background in Daniel 11:36-45, a person cannot possibly avoid seeing that this verse is beyond all controversy referring to the events of

the middle of the Tribulation.

The next step forward which we must take in the study of this passage is to examine carefully verses 5-7: "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only *there is* one that restraineth now until he taken out of the way." In verse 5 Paul began by reminding his readers of the fact that, when he was with them, he told them "these things." The things here referred to can be none other than the things mentioned in verses 1-4; namely, the rapture of the church, the apostasy, the revealing of the man of sin before the Tribulation, and finally the opposition of this willful king to all idolatry and his exalting himself above everything that is called God, in the middle of the Tribulation, which things are mentioned in verse 4. Thus with verse 4 the Apostle stops momentarily in his advancing thought when he has reached the middle of the Tribulation. He wants his readers to recall the things which he had taught them when he was present with them, and which were in perfect alignment with what he was then writing in the Epistle.

After his question in verse 5 he stated that the Thessalonians knew "that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season." Since he had taught them thoroughly, in regard to these matters, they knew exactly what he meant. *That which restrains* is in the neuter gender. That which restrains is used of God to keep back and to prevent the coming forth of this willful king, this man of sin, the son of perdition, until the time arrives which is here designated as "in his own season." From this language we see that there is some force or power which is used of God in preventing and hindering the appearing of the man of sin before his time really comes. The reason why God in His providence has that restraining force or power preventing the coming of this man of sin before "his own season" is stated in verse 7, which is "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only *there is* one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way." That which is called "the mystery of lawlessness" is the thing that is being kept back or hindered by "that which restraineth." When that restraining power is removed, this mystery or secret of lawlessness will bring forth this willful king or man of sin, who will play the role that is foretold of him in Daniel 11:36-45 and parallel passages. What is this mystery of lawlessness? In the words of this passage it is that which will eventually bring forth the man of sin. But, according to verse 9, the coming of this man of sin is due "to the working of Satan." When we take these two statements into consideration, it seems quite plausible that "the mystery of lawlessness" is Satan's working in an underhanded, hidden way in his attempt to bring forth the man of sin.

As we have already seen from verse 6, Paul speaks of "that which restraineth," but in verse 7 of "one that restraineth now." *That which restraineth*, as stated above, is in the neuter gender. *One that restraineth* is in the masculine gender. That which is an impersonal force in verse 6 is spoken of as a person in verse 7; therefore the expression, he that restraineth, appears here. Such a personification of an impersonal force is appropriate. From all the facts of this context, it would appear that God is using some force or power during the present age to keep back the coming forth of this man of sin, who will play the role that is foretold of him in the Old Testament, as well as in

this statement of Paul and others of the New Testament writers.

WHAT is this restraining power, or who is he? Various answers are given. Some excellent Bible teachers assert that this restraining power is the Holy Spirit in the church and that, when the church is removed from the earth by the rapture, the Holy Spirit goes with it and departs from the world. On the other hand, there are those who take a different view of this situation. They are convinced that the restraining power is none other than civil governments led by man. In support of this proposition they call our attention to the fact that when the maneuvers and preparations for war of this willful king in the middle of the Tribulation precipitate a global conflict, he is successful. Three of the ten kings represented by the ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel, chapter 7, are put down. The other seven become simply subservient to this world dictator, represented by the little horn which comes up after them, and which becomes so much more powerful than they. The other seven, as factors to be reckoned with, cease to be. There is then no civil government whatsoever, that can any longer hinder or retard the coming forth of this man of sin as he is energized by Satan. Thus the restraining power headed up by the ten kings or dictators is removed in the middle to the Tribulation. Only when this is done, does this man of sin, the son of perdition, show his real character. Prior to this time he has been a smooth-speaking, suave flatterer, who seeks to win the favor of all. On the other hand, when all civil governments have been crushed and he alone is supreme in the world, he walks forth upon the stage of human activity as the absolute one who has complete control and power throughout the earth.

There doubtless is truth in both interpretations of this prophecy. When, however, due consideration is given to the latter, it seems most highly probable that the latter one is the correct one; for it meets all the conditions set forth by Daniel and the facts presented by Paul. One should read the explanation of Hogg and Vine in their *Commentary on II Thessalonians* on this subject.

From our study of verses 5-7 we see that Paul is simply reminding his readers concerning his former teaching to them regarding the rise to absolute dictatorial power of the willful king, the man of sin. When he in this war seizes complete control in the middle of the Tribulation, there is no one to resist him. Thus these verses do not advance the thought of verse 4, but rather explain it. Verses 5-7 are therefore parenthetical.

In view of these facts we see that verse 8 picks up the thought that was advanced in verse 4 and develops it. Thus in verse 8 Paul declares, "And then shall be revealed the lawless one ..." The adverb *then* of this verse ties his thought to the action expressed by verse 4, which we have already seen refers to the events that occur in the middle of the Tribulation. By his bold action this man of sin will enter a new stage of his career. He reveals at that time his real self. Figuratively speaking, he lays aside his mask and manifests to the world his true character of lawlessness. The revealing of the man of sin in the middle of the Tribulation is entirely different from his being revealed as mentioned in verse 3, which we have already noted. This latter revealing occurs before the Tribulation. It makes his identity known, but the revealing mentioned in verse 8, which occurs in the middle of the Tribulation, unmask this monster of hideousness who

then acts according to his real character and the promptings of Satan.

Having mentioned the fact that this lawless one is revealed in the middle of the Tribulation, the Apostle asserts that Christ will slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to nought by the manifestation of His coming, which event occurs at the end of the Tribulation (vs. 8). This thought, at this stage of Paul's unfolding of this future drama, simply by way of anticipation tells the doom which awaits this wicked one at the second coming of our God.

The coming of this willful king, this man of sin, is "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish ..." (vss. 9-10). This quotation is still speaking of the coming forth of this man of sin in the middle of the Tribulation. When he reveals his true character, Satan will back him up and inspire him, thus enabling him to perform every kind of super-natural sign and wonder in order to confirm his false claims of being God himself. The message of verse 9 should be studied very carefully in the light of Revelation, chapter 13, which gives in detail the information concerning his coming. We read also in Revelation 17:8 of this same event: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, *they* whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come." In this struggle the willful king receives the death stroke. His spirit goes down to Hades where he remains a very short time; then is brought up by Satan. His spirit re-enters his body. Then Satan takes possession of him and performs unprecedented signs and wonders through him in the presence of the people. This display of miraculous power will be the greatest demonstration of superhuman (diabolical) energy that will ever be witnessed by mortal man.

Satan will perform these mighty wonders through the Antichrist, who, at that time, will have been raised to life, in order to deceive those who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." There will be a certain portion of the human family for whom Satan and this willful king put on this demonstration of superhuman power. They will have had an opportunity of receiving truth in order that they might be saved, but they do not avail themselves of it—"they believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." But this is in the Tribulation and the church will have been taken out of the world prior to the beginning of that period of judgment. How will the entire world have an opportunity of hearing and receiving the truth at that period? The answer is to be found in Revelation, chapter 7, which tells of the great ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who conduct this mightiest of all revivals at which time there will be a turning to God on the part of countless millions, which no man can number.

AS WE give Israel the truth at the present time, it is like sowing seed in a vast dry field with moist spots here and there. That seed which falls in the moist places germinates and produces immediately. But that which falls upon the dry ground will remain where it falls until it is watered by the showers later. Thus the showers of the judgments of the great Tribulation will water the seed which is now being sown in the indifferent hearts of the Jewish people. Then there will spring forth from that seed-sowing the 144,000 Jewish servants of God, evangelists like the Apostle Paul, who will conduct that

mightiest of all revivals, in which multiplied millions will come to a saving knowledge of the truth. They wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. This revival continues throughout the first half of the Tribulation. But hosts of men will not turn to the God then. After these have had full opportunity to receive the truth, but reject it, God will allow the world dictator, energized by Satan, to perform the great wonders and signs, mentioned in II Thessalonians, chapter 2 and in Revelation, chapter 13, in the sight of the people of the world. Not having loved the truth but having had pleasure in unrighteousness, and being blinded by Satan, they will be confirmed in the belief that the Antichrist is God. They will then worship him and receive his mark upon their foreheads and on their right hands.

A WORD by way of recapitulation: The proper interpretation of the expression, "the god of fortresses," unlocks the door for the correct understanding of the marvelous passage concerning the willful king and his victorious struggle against the entire world and the elimination of all rulers as potential rivals for imperial authority and power. Thus the proper understanding of the passage in Daniel gives us a basis upon which to stand as we study the marvelous prediction in II Thessalonians 2:1-12. These two passages show very vividly and forcefully the importance of our understanding the figure of speech known as *paronomasia*.

## **PARONOMASIA                      PART IV**

AS STATED BEFORE, a play on words is such an important matter in the Scriptures that I feel constrained to give another study on this subject.

John 3:5

*Christ answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Nicodemus, who was of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews, came, as we are told in John 3:1-15, to Christ by night. Why he came at night no one knows. It is possible that he wanted to have an uninterrupted interview. On the other hand, he may have sought Him in the darkness of the night because he was afraid of the Jews. Since we have no testimony along this line, we shall have to hold our judgment in suspense.

According to the records Nicodemus began his conversation by recognizing that Christ was a teacher come from God. In fact, he called Him *Rabbi*. This was unusual. For a man occupying the position which Nicodemus held in the councils of the nation to recognize that Christ was a Rabbi, although He had never attended the theological seminary in Jerusalem, was an indication of the high esteem in which he held our God. The reason for his recognizing Christ as a teacher sent from God was that no one was able to do the things which He performed unless God was with Him.

Christ immediately broke off his line of thought by abruptly saying, "Verily, verily, I say

unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Of course we do not have the full account of the interview. We have only sketches of it here and there. But from what we have, it seems that Christ was very abrupt. He knew, however, what He was doing; and we may be certain that He did the right thing. He brushed aside all formalities and preliminary discussion and went right to the vital issue of life—the matter of regeneration, salvation. Thus Christ informed Nicodemus that he had to be born anew or again; otherwise he would not be able to see the kingdom of God which John and He were proclaiming.

Nicodemus did not understand the words of our God. He therefore asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" In reply Christ said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Why did Christ use the expression, "be born anew" or, again? We do not see it anywhere else in the Scriptures. Why does it appear here? The reason is easily seen. The Jews doted on the fact that they were the descendants of Abraham. John the Baptist knew that fact and told them not to think that they had Abraham as their father, for God was able to raise from the stones children unto Abraham. Nicodemus, a teacher in Israel, shared the general view of the people, which was that the Jews were the seed of Abraham; therefore, the children of God. The kingdom of Israel is called the kingdom of God in I Chronicles 28:4,5. In order for any Gentile to worship the true God he had to come over into the Jewish fold and accept circumcision—become a proselyte; thus he entered the kingdom of God as it then was. But the Jews were born, by natural birth, into this kingdom of God. Thus to be born of Jewish parents was a great thing. In Jewish theology of that day the hopes of the nation for time and eternity were built upon the fact that the Israelites were the seed of Abraham, that they were of the circumcision.

Christ, knowing this fundamental teaching of Judaism, immediately brushed away these false hopes by stating to Nicodemus that, if he wished to see this kingdom which He and John were proclaiming, he, Nicodemus, and everyone else with the same desire, must have another birth, a spiritual one; for "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Your natural birth, said Christ to Nicodemus, will avail you nothing so far as this new phase of the kingdom which we are preaching is concerned. You must have a second or new birth.

Thus Christ spoke of regeneration of the soul in terms of the natural birth of the Jew. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creation which is in Christ.

My friend, have you accepted Christ as your Saviour? Has the Spirit of God regenerated your heart? If you have not had this experience, you will never see the kingdom of God.

John 4:10

*Christ answered and said, unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

In the fourth chapter of John's Gospel we have a record of our God 's leaving Judaea and going into Galilee. Not having the prejudice that the Jews of that day had against the Samaritans—hence going from Judea through Peraea northward into Galilee—our God went directly through Samaria on His journey northward. When He came to Sychar, He sent the disciples into the village to buy food, while He remained at the well. As He sat there, a woman of Samaria came for water. (I have been to this very well and have drunk of the same water.) Christ asked her for a drink of water. She, being a woman of Samaria, recoiled, because the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Moreover, a man, from the Jewish standpoint, would never condescend to speak to a strange woman. Thus she was surprised and asked Him how it was that He who was a Jew would ask her for a drink of water, since she was a Samaritan.

Christ replied, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (4:10). Why did Christ say that He would give her *living water* if she asked for it? *It is clear that this language is a play on words or ideas.* He had asked for a drink of water, literal water. Then He had declared that, if she would ask of Him, He would give her, not the water from the well, but "living water." Thus it is clear that the expression, living water, is an echo of the water about which the conversation was being held.

What did Christ mean here by "living water"? From verse 14, we learn that He told her "... the water that I shall give ... shall become ... a well of water springing up unto eternal life." Thus we see that He was talking about something which He would give her upon request, and which would result in eternal life—throughout all the ages of eternity. What makes it possible for people to live with God forever and ever? It is the salvation of the soul, the regeneration of the heart, the being "born again." Thus Christ spoke of salvation in terms of the topic of the conversation.

Our God declared that, if she asked, He would give. The proposition was clear, no misunderstanding possible. All she had to do was to ask, which request would simply indicate a desire for salvation. He did not impose any acts of obedience whatsoever; He simply declared that, if she wanted it and asked for it, salvation would be hers.

Salvation is a very simple matter. It is to be had for the asking, if one simply believes, turning to the God for that which He alone can give. Friend, have you enjoyed drinking this water of life? It is free to you for the asking. If you have not asked Him for it, may you do so today. Having received, may you go forth serving Him day by day.

John 6:28,29

*They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God?  
29 Christ answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

The Jews all the time thought in terms of work, of service, of obedience to law. They could not think in any other categories. They therefore asked Him, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" His reply was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Here again we have a play on words. The universal testimony of the New Testament Scriptures is that salvation is by grace through faith. God was under no obligations to save anyone. But He, out of His graciousness, has provided a means of redemption, whereby salvation is made acceptable to all, to the rich and the poor alike. All one has to do is to believe.

The Jew thought that he had to do some work in order that he might work the works of God. Christ took advantage of this statement and set forth the plan of salvation. If they wanted to do the real work of God, then they should believe on Him, Christ, whom God had sent. In so doing, they would accept Him as their Redeemer and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. Christ is the Good Shepherd. He is leading the way. All His sheep harken to His voice and follow Him daily. Let us follow Him, not afar off, as Peter did at the time of the crucifixion; but let us follow Him closely and daily.

John 6:48-58

*I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died ... 51 I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world ... Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. 54 He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day ... This is the bread which came down out of heaven: not as the fathers ate, and died; he that eateth this bread shall live for ever.*

How are we to understand the language of this quotation? Was Christ talking about cannibalism, eating His literal flesh and drinking His literal blood? Such an idea is ridiculous and abhorrent. The key to the understanding of this language, however, is to be found in the circumstances which gave rise to this message. The events recorded in the sixth chapter of John occurred at the passover time, one year before the crucifixion. In the first fourteen verses we have a record of Christ's feeding the five thousand on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. When the people came and were trying, by force, to make Him King, He retired into a mountain alone. At eventide the disciples entered into a boat and were crossing the sea to the west side. As they were sailing along, there arose a storm. Christ came to them, entered the boat, and brought them safely to the opposite shore. On the next day, the multitudes that had been fed—given a free dinner—ran around the north end of the sea and came to Capernaum. Christ entered into the synagogue and delivered His message. It was quite evident that the people had come and were following Him in order that they might receive another free dinner, or many of them. Knowing the motives that had prompted them to come, Christ told them that He was the true bread that had come down out of heaven and that they would have to eat Him—eat His flesh and drink His blood—otherwise they would have no life in themselves.

In view of the circumstances which gave rise to this message, it is very evident that Christ was speaking of their receiving Him as their Saviour in terms of their receiving

the food which He had given to them free the day before. He was therefore speaking of their accepting Him and the gift of salvation in terms of the thought which was uppermost in their minds at the time.

To refer this passage to the Christ's supper and to build up a doctrine around it that, unless one partakes of the loaf and the cup, he has no life in him is to do violence to this passage. The Bible does teach that the children of God should meet on the first day of the week and remember their God by observing the supper, but this thought was farthest from His mind on the occasion of His preaching the sermon recorded in John, chapter 6.

To take this passage literally and to claim that the cup and the loaf, when blessed, are literally converted into the actual body and blood of Christ is not suggested by anything in the language. Christ did not intimate that the loaf would be converted into His actual body and the fruit of the vine into His actual blood in order that His disciples might partake thereof and live. Such an idea is paganism.

The extreme and unreasonable positions that have been placed upon this language would never have been thought of if this passage had been recognized as a plain case of paronomasia or a play upon word.

John 11:25

*Christ said unto her, I am the resurrection, and, the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live.*

Why did Christ declare on this occasion, "I am the resurrection, and the life"? And, "... he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live"?

A glance at the context points instantly to the force of His language. Lazarus had died and his sisters, Mary and Martha, had sent for Christ, who came. Upon His arrival, Martha met Him and began talking to Him about Lazarus. She was indeed grieved at the loss of her brother. In the course of the conversation Christ said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." She rejoined by declaring, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." "I am the resurrection," responded Christ, "and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live ..." When Christ told her that her brother would rise, Martha thought that He was talking about the resurrection at the last day. But Christ said: No, I am the resurrection and the life. Was He the literal resurrection and the life? No. Resurrection is an abstract term. It connotes an action. Since they were talking about the resurrection of the body, and since He is the cause of the resurrection, He declared that, "I am the resurrection ..." In the light, therefore, of these facts we instantly grasp the significance of the language.

## **THE LAW OF THE CONTEXT OF QUOTATIONS**

NO ONE LIVES TO HIMSELF, neither does he die to himself. We are part of all we meet,

according to Tennyson. Everything that comes in contact with us has a certain amount of influence upon us, even though it may be infinitesimally small. Environment is certainly one of the prime factors in determining the conduct and the life of each individual. From these general observations, we can see that the context, which is the "environment" of a sentence, must of necessity have a profound impression upon the thought of a given sentence. Just as, in order to understand a person, we must know his antecedents and his environment, so must we know that which lies back behind the thought and the environment or setting in which it is placed.

## **I. The Statement Of The Law Of The Context Of Quotations**

A thought is first expressed by one of the prophets, for instance, in a certain section in which he is developing a specific theme. A later prophet, or a New Testament writer, lifts that quotation from its context and put it into another one and weaves it into his thoughts. This process I might compare to the gardener who plants seeds in a bed which spring forth into plants. Then some of the plants are taken out of the bed and are placed in an entirely different environment where they grow to maturity. Quotations found in the New Testament, taken from the Old, are like these plants that were sown in the original bed, but are taken up and transplanted to another environment. We want to see the original environment and likewise the final surroundings of these quotations.

Each quotation has a very definite meaning in the original context. Thus one must study the entire connection of any quotation in the original setting, in order to get its full import. When this quotation is removed and is put over into a New Testament environment, the entire context of the New Testament must be sought and the bearing of the quotation upon the thought of the New Testament writer must be studied. When this is done, sometimes it is found that that to which the quotation from the Old Testament is applied in the New fills out the entire picture as it is presented in the original quotation. In other instances it is not the complete fulfillment, but is only a partial or a limited accomplishment of the original prediction. Moreover, it may be the literal fulfillment plus a typical signification. Or it may be the literal fulfillment plus an application to a similar circumstance. Then again it may be the literal fulfillment plus a summation of a given situation. These various phases of the truth will develop as we proceed with the study. These statements being true, one can see how very important it is to study both the original context and the one into which the quotation is transplanted, in order to get the full scriptural picture of a given prediction. A failure to comply with this principle has led to endless confusion and difficulty.

## **II. An Examination Of Some Examples Of The Principle Of The Law Of The Context Of Quotations**

For a first example of this principle let us look in the New Testament. In Matthew 1:23 we have these words: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a

son, And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is being interpreted, God with us." Matthew took this quotation from the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament and not from the original Hebrew. It seems that from a careful reading of Matthew, chapter 1, the angel who appeared to Joseph is the one quoting this passage from Isaiah 7:14; for immediately following it, Matthew tells us that Joseph arose from his sleep. This statement implies that the quotation was given by the angel.

When we turn to Isaiah, chapter 7, we see that God made an offer through the prophet to young King Ahaz to perform a miracle in order to strengthen his faith. The young king was to designate the place where the miracle was to occur—whether in the heavens above or in the deep, that is, in the sea beneath. Ahaz did not care for spiritual things. He chose rather to go on in his own way. Thus he rejected the offer by a pious dodge. When he thus treated sacred matters lightly, Isaiah turned from him and addressed the entire house of David. Not only to those living in his day, but to succeeding generations he spoke and promised that God would give them a sign which would be that a virgin should conceive and bear a Son and should call his name Immanuel. From the trend of the thought in Isaiah, chapter 7, it is very evident that the sign offered Ahaz was a supernatural wonder. It is equally clear that the sign to the house of David should likewise be of super-human origin. In keeping with this thought the promise is made that "the virgin"—some definite specific virgin known to the prophet and his auditors—would conceive and would bear a Son who would be "God with us." Clearly then the Son promised in this passage could be none other than one who was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin, and who would be God in human form.

But immediately following Isaiah 7:14 are verses 15-17 in which is found the promise of another child, concerning whom nothing miraculous is spoken. He was to be born in the very near future from the standpoint of the prophet. Before he would know to refuse the evil and choose the good the two lands whose kings Ahaz feared would be brought to desolation. Thus it is clear that the child mentioned in verses 15-17 was entirely different from the one foretold in verse 14. When we are willing to take the language at what it says, we cannot avoid this conclusion. There is therefore the blending of prophecies concerning two children: one the Messiah of Israel, and the other a child born by natural generation. The blending of two predictions is of frequent occurrence throughout the prophetic word. This phenomena therefore is not strange to those who are familiar with the prophecies. When we turn now to Matthew, chapter 1, we see that the Evangelist quotes the angel as explaining to Joseph Mary's condition at the time. To Joseph's amazement Mary, to whom he was at that time betrothed, had become an expectant mother. This fact shocked Joseph. He decided that he would put her away privately and not make a public example out of her. In order to forestall such action, the angel came and explained that she was the one of whom the prophet Isaiah had foretold and that her child had been miraculously conceived and would be Immanuel, which means *God is with us*. In the light of these facts it is clear that the prophecy spoken by Isaiah was to be taken literally, at its face value; for so did the angel understand it and expound it to Joseph.

The virgin birth was essential to our salvation. Man, in the person of Adam, the representative of the race, lost everything when he partook of the forbidden fruit. Thus

in our representative we lost our birthright. By the transgression of one man sin entered the world. Christ, the second Adam, who according to this prediction enters the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth, championed the cause of man and won back for him his birthright from Satan. He, as a man, fought the battle and won the victory, conquering the Devil, who had the power of death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. It was as man that the Messiah won the victory and obtained all—and more than we lost in Adam.

From the Old Testament it was clear that the Messiah would be a man, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David. In order to be a man, He had to be born as other men are born. In regard to such a birth there were three possibilities: human parents, a new creation, and the substitution of the divine operation instead of a human father. If He had human parents, He would simply be like other men, having the fallen nature. If He were a being created, He would not be a man belonging to our race. Hence, under God's moral government, He could not champion man's cause. The only other possibility would be that of the substitution of the divine operation for a human father. By this method the taint of sin would be excluded, for it is inconceivable that, with the divine operation in the matter of the virgin birth, the taint or element of sin would be possible. Thus, according to reason, the miraculous conception by the divine operation and the virgin birth of the Messiah is the only possibility for the redemption of the human race. Such is the explanation given by the angel. The inspired Apostle's quoting the angel's word puts the divine seal of approval upon the account. There is perfect harmony between the prophecy in its original connection and in the account of the birth of Christ in the New Testament, which was the complete fulfillment of the prediction. The prediction threw light upon the fulfillment and the fulfillment upon the original prophecy.

THE next quotation which I wish to note is the one appearing in Matthew 2:6 which is taken from Micah 5:2. "Now shalt thou gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. 2 But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. 3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel" (Micah 5:1-3). In verse 1 the prophet addresses one whom he calls "O daughter of troops" and tells her to gather her forces together "against us," the Jewish people. Then he foretells that the besieging forces will smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. This language shows that Israel, at the time here foreseen, does not have a king. The siege is against the city where this judge of Israel is. This information immediately shows that the siege is against the capitol city of the Jews, Jerusalem. In contrast with Jerusalem is the little town of Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which is small to be numbered among the thousands of Judah. Yet she is very important because of the fact that the one who is to be ruler in Israel is to come forth from there unto God. This one has had a pre-existence prior to His coming forth from Bethlehem, for it is said concerning Him that His "goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." This passage shows that the one of whom the prophet is speaking has had an existence prior to His going forth from Bethlehem. In fact, He has been active from historic times throughout the past prior to His coming to Bethlehem.

Following this prediction is the warning: "Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." This verse is a conclusion drawn from data that has just preceded—the facts which we have just noted; namely, the siege of Jerusalem. Evidently there is some connection between the siege of Jerusalem and the birth in Bethlehem of this future ruler of Israel. Because of a certain connection existing between these two events, God gives them up until the time "that she who travaileth hath brought forth ..." God gives up Jerusalem with her children until she who travails brings forth. Who is the one travailing and bringing forth? In the light of the context it can be Jerusalem only who brings forth the new Israel; for immediately it is explained that "then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." The rest of the brethren of Judah will return to this tribe when she who travails brings forth. From other passages we know that the twelve tribes of Israel will be united and will constitute one nation, when the Jews acknowledge their national sin and accept Christ as their Messiah. These three verses show us that God brings the daughter of troops against Jerusalem to besiege the people. He gives His Chosen People up until Jerusalem finally travails in the time of Jacob's trouble and the new Israel is born. But this siege against the capital of the Hebrews and the giving of them up until the time of the Tribulation is due to their relation to this one who is born in Bethlehem. The connection isn't given here but is to be supplied from other passages that deal with the same subject. When we examine these in the light of other passages, we see that this one who is born in Bethlehem is none other than the Messiah. The ancient synagogue recognized this fact and thus interpreted this passage as a prediction concerning His birth. When He thus comes to His people, the leaders do not understand who He is and do not recognize Him. They reject Him and clamor for His execution, which is carried out by the Romans. Finally, forty years after that fateful event, Rome, the daughter of troops, brings her forces against the Jewish nation. Jerusalem falls in A.D. 70. The Hebrews are scattered throughout the world and they remain the people of the wandering feet until the time that Jerusalem travails again with child, the new Israel. At that time the Hebrew people will see the mistake of the centuries in their rejecting the Messiah. In true contrition they will acknowledge their national sin, will plead for Him to return, which thing He will do. Then all Israel will be reunited. Thus the residue of Judah's brethren will return to Him. Messiah will mount the throne of David and will establish a reign of righteousness, peace, and justice upon the earth. According to verse 4, Messiah "shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God: and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." Such is the original context of the second quotation given in Matthew.

Now let us look at it as it appears in Matthew. When the wise men came from the East and inquired where was the child who is born "King of the Jews," Herod inquired of the scribes where the expected King was to be born. Their reply was that, according to Micah's prophecy, He was to be born in Bethlehem of Judaea. Thus they quoted Micah 5:2 and interpreted this passage literally. Herod wanted to know the place where He was to be born. The prophecy stated that it would be in Bethlehem of Judah.

This prophecy was interpreted literally. Messiah, who is to be Israel's future Ruler, was,

according to plan and schedule, to be born in Bethlehem of Judah. Thus we see from Matthew's use of this passage that the prophecy was fulfilled literally. Both the original prediction and its application in the New Testament confirm one another.

A THIRD quotation given in the New Testament from the Old is found in Matthew 2:15: "Out of Egypt did I call my son." This passage is found in Hosea 11:1. An examination of the original context shows that the prophet was speaking of Israel and her coming forth out of Egyptian bondage. Israel was in the literal Egypt and literally came out of Egyptian bondage under the leadership of Moses. About this interpretation there can be no doubt. When the wise men departed from Bethlehem, they went directly to their own home and did not return to tell Herod anything about the Christ Child. Knowing what Herod would do, God warned Joseph to take the child and Mary the mother, to flee to Egypt, and to remain there until He would tell them when to come back to the land of Israel. Joseph followed the instructions implicitly. When Herod was dead, God instructed him to bring the mother and the child out of Egypt and to return to Palestine. This thing they literally did. Matthew said that the Holy Family resided in Egypt and came forth, returning to the land of Israel, and thus fulfilled this prophecy. But as we have seen, this prophecy applied to Israel literally and to the Exodus under Moses. Just as Israel's coming out of Egypt was literal, so was the coming of the Holy Family literal. But since Israel is called God's first-born and so Christ was God's First-Born, there was a typical relationship between Israel and the Messiah. Thus we see the literal meaning of the prophecy plus the typical signification. Because of Israel's being typical of the Messiah, this passage was thus properly and legitimately applied to Him.

IN Matthew 2:18 we have a quotation taken from Jeremiah 31:15: "Thus saith Jehovah: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, because they are not." An examination of this passage in the original context shows that these words were spoken concerning the mothers of Israel who wept when their sons, at the conclusion of the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar went forth into Babylonian captivity. There was literal weeping by real women concerning the fate that had overtaken their sons. An examination of the original context shows that this is the significance of the words.

When Herod saw that he had been mocked by the wise men, he issued a decree that all children under two years of age should be destroyed. He issued this edict in order that he might be certain that the Christ Child was slain. When this decree was executed, naturally the mothers of Bethlehem whose children had been slain wept for their children. In the original passage there were actual mothers weeping literally for their children. In the application that is made of this passage to the mothers of Bethlehem the whole situation is literal. But did Jeremiah, in speaking these words, look forward and see these mothers in Bethlehem weeping? This is doubtful. Why then, did Matthew quote this passage and apply it to the case under discussion? The original subjects concerning whom the prophecy was uttered and those to whom it was applied were all literally in a similar position. The cases were parallel in that they were literal and were similar. Thus Matthew interprets this passage literally and makes an application to an analogous case. We see that the prophecy had literal fulfillment plus an application. This is a legitimate use of Scripture.

IN Matthew 2:23 we are told that Mary and Joseph brought Christ and settled in Nazareth that it might be fulfilled which had been spoken through the prophets that He should be called a Nazarene. One will look in vain for such a definite, specific passage of Scripture saying that the Messiah would be called a Nazarene. A Nazarene is an inhabitant of Nazareth. In the first century Nazareth had a very bad name. When Nathaniel was told that Christ was of Nazareth, he asked this question: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). The word, Nazarene, in the days of Christ was a term of reproach. Since there is no specific passage of Scripture which says that Messiah would be called a Nazarene, and since there are many passages which say that He would be hated, despised, and looked down upon, it is very clear that the statement of the Evangelist that He should be called a Nazarene is his way of giving us the gist of those prophecies that tell about the hostile attitude that the people would take toward Messiah. The Old Testament predictions say that men will literally hate the Messiah, and that He will be a reproach and will be despised. All of these ideas are expressed by the word, Nazarene. Thus we see that this is a literal fulfillment of these predictions, but it is also a summation of the teachings of the prophets on this point.

From this short survey of quotations from the Old Testament we can see how very important it is that we examine the contexts of every quotation thus cited in order that we may determine the correct interpretation.

## **THE LAW OF COMPARING SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE**

ONE OF the characteristics of the present era is that it is imbued with what is called the scientific spirit. The word science comes from the Latin word which means "to know."

Science, then, according to definition, is that which is known. In order to know anything properly, a person must have all the facts that pertain to the subject in hand. He must, not only gather the facts, but must correlate his data, and place it in proper relation in its environment.

If a person, therefore, is endeavoring to study any passage or text in a scientific manner, he must gather all the facts that bear upon the subject of the special passage, must relate them to kindred thoughts, and give them their proper place in the scheme of things. I might illustrate this process by the use of the jigsaw puzzle. The component parts are laid out for one to use in reconstructing or building all the pieces into a complete unit. When each single part is placed in its proper position with relation to others without being forced, a picture or map is thus constructed—figuratively speaking, a mosaic is formed, which presents some pattern or scene.

Again, the principle which we have under consideration may be compared to the work of a lawyer on a given case. He seeks all the information and the data that has any bearing upon the situation. The facts and material evidence, if there be any, are presented in the proper relation to other things. In the case of a trial by jury, these facts are presented by the witnesses and are summed up by the legal advisers on both sides. Then it is for the jury to decide the case upon the merits of the evidence.

In a similar way, when anyone is studying any particular subject in the Scriptures, he must examine carefully the testimony of each of the biblical writers on the subject to be investigated. The testimony of each passage must be related properly to the theme in hand in order that a clear picture may be presented by all of those giving their testimony.

## **Some Fundamental Principles Involved**

In order to gather all facts on a given subject—if a person wishes to get a complete and a clear picture of a subject—he should have a good concordance; but should know how to use it. Of course, the references in a good reference Bible are often of great advantage to the student. At the same time, many of these references are incorrect, since they have been placed there by men, fallible creatures who do make mistakes. A person must study each scripture to which a reference is made in order to determine whether or not the particular passage referred to has any bearing upon the theme under investigation. The facts of each context alone can decide this matter.

A very grave error is frequently made by considering a verse as being related to a given one because of the same words in both passages. For instance in Genesis 1:2 we see the words, waste and void, which describe the condition of the earth after it had been wrecked. In Jeremiah 4:23 we also see these same words. Many have concluded, therefore, that Jeremiah was looking backward to the same original catastrophe that overtook the primitive earth. Whenever such an interpretation as this is made, error instantly is injected into the subject. When the context of the passage of Jeremiah 4:23 is studied, it becomes immediately evident that this passage is referring to the great Tribulation, when wreckage and devastation will be the order of the day on account of the terrific judgments which God will send upon the earth.

Again, we see mention made of the new heavens and the new earth in Isaiah 65:17. By looking at and studying carefully II Peter 3:1-13, we find reference to the new heavens and the new earth. By our studying each of these passages and getting the facts in each context, we see that both Isaiah and Peter were talking about the new heavens and the new earth of the Millennial Era. But in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, we also read of new heavens and a new earth. When a person studies the chronological development of the prophecies of the Book of Revelation, he sees that the new heavens and earth of these chapters are those which will be created after the Millennium has ended. To identify therefore the new heavens of Isaiah 65:17 and II Peter 3:13 with the new heaven of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, is a false identification. Whenever these are thus considered the same confusion is immediately introduced into the Scriptures.

Whenever a person studies the Scriptures by comparing one passage with another, he assumes that all truth harmonizes. Since the Bible is the inerrantly inspired Word of God, all of its statements must harmonize. Should there appear to be, on the surface, a contradiction, let us conclude that the discrepancy is only apparent and not real. Any such variance is to be accounted for upon the basis of our lack of knowledge or comprehension to understand the real situation which appears as inharmonious. Truth and facts, whether in the physical, material universe, or in revelation, are in perfect accord. The God who created the universe likewise made the revelation that is contained in the Scriptures. He being the God of reality, stamps truth on His material universe and states it in His Word.

It is of paramount importance that, whenever we attempt to compare scripture with scripture, we must be certain that the passages under consideration are indeed talking of the same things, persons, or events. Sometimes, upon the surface, there appears to be a connection between two passages. But when all the facts of the context of each passage are studied carefully, it frequently becomes evident that those passages that are supposed to be related are not. On the other hand, often there are passages that have bearing upon other quotations, which at a glance we do not immediately recognize. But let it be understood that the facts of the context of all passages must be thoroughly studied before any identification may be made.

We must understand that the fullness, completeness, and the clarity of a picture that is made by comparing scripture with scripture, depend upon the thorough and complete investigation that is made. If only a few passages that have bearing upon a subject are studied and considered, of course the picture or conclusion to which one is brought is only partial, limited, and incomplete. On the other hand if all related passages are studied in the light of the context of each and the facts thus gleaned are placed in the proper relationship with the others that are gathered from different passages, and if a thorough induction is made, then we have a complete and clear picture of the subject under consideration—we have all the truth that God has revealed on a given subject.

## **An Example Of Comparing Scripture With Scripture**

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The first statement of the Scriptures in the original Hebrew contains seven words. This

declaration has mighty and far-reaching ramifications. In fact, volumes are wrapped up in this sublime utterance. By a clear, full understanding of this passage, most of the philosophies and cults may be refuted.

### **"In the Beginning"**

"In the beginning ..." This phrase immediately suggests that found in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word ..." The Word, the Living Word, existed in the beginning, that portion of eternity that antedated the creation of the material universe. Likewise reference is made to this same Living Word who is thought of as Wisdom, in Proverbs 8:22f:

"22 Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way,  
Before his works of old.

"23 I was set up from everlasting from the beginning,  
Before the earth was.

"30 Then I was by him, as a master workman;  
And I was daily his delight,  
Rejoicing always before him,

"31 Rejoicing in his habitable earth;  
And my delight was with the sons of men."

In such a passage as Isaiah 44:6 we have a reference to God and His being back in the beginning, in the eternity of the past, as well as existing throughout all the future ages of eternity.

There are many more passages that deal with this phrase and the idea set forth, but these are sufficient for us to understand how to proceed in comparing scripture with scripture to get all the information on any one particular expression.

### **God, YHUUH**

In Genesis 1:1 we are told that God created the material universe. God here is the original name for the Almighty and carries the idea of Strong Ones, since the word is in the plural number. When, in the thinking of men who refused to retain God in their knowledge, the forces of nature were deified and were considered as actual gods, God revealed His memorial name to His people. In the days of Seth, for instance, men began to call upon the name of Jehovah (Gen. 4:26). This name carried the idea of the Uncaused Cause of all things, the one who stands back behind all things, and who has brought all things into existence, — the one in whom all live, move, and have their continual being.

Since the word rendered "God" is in the plural, and since "three" is the smallest plural—there being the singular and also the dual numbers—we can see how the plural for the word God is an echo of the Trinity, tri-unity—Three in One and One in Three.

Moses declared the unity and at the same time the plurality of the Divine Being in

Deuteronomy 6:4, which literally rendered is: "Hear O Israel! Jehovah, our Gods, is Jehovah a unity." Here the word Jehovah refers to the Holy Trinity. In certain other texts it is evident from these facts that this memorial name of God refers to the Father; in still others the Son is referred to by this same name. And in still others the Holy Spirit is called Jehovah.

By looking at a few passages and by noting the facts just mentioned, we see that, in our study of passages containing the word God, Jehovah, or God, we have an inexhaustible fund of biblical knowledge. We could continue with this second word of Genesis 1:1 and fill several volumes. But these suggestions show us how we should study this phase of our subject.

## **"Created"**

An examination of the fifty-odd occurrences of the word, create, in the Hebrew Bible shows that the fundamental concept lying behind this word is that of bringing something into existence which had no form nor substance before the act of creating was performed. This fundamental meaning lies inherently in the word although it may have secondary applications.

Though the word, create, does not occur in Psalm 90, verse 2, the idea is there, expressed in different terms. Moses looked back to the time when the heavens and the earth were brought into existence. Then he lifted his eyes and took a far-off view in the direction of the past and spoke of the ages which antedated time, and which constituted eternity in the past. From the context it is clear that creation is referred to in this passage.

Again, the creation of the universe is referred to in Job 38:7. When God created the earth, it was not in the condition described in Genesis 1:2. On the contrary, it was not a waste, nor desolation. From John 1:1-4 we see that the Word, the Living Word, Christ, was the one who actually was the Creator of the material universe. This phase, likewise, of our subject could be continued indefinitely. Such a study as this would enrich our lives very materially, but this much discussion is sufficient for us to see the importance of looking at this word.

## **"The Heavens"**

In Psalm 115:16 reference is made to "the heavens" in contrast to the earth. The former belongs to God, the latter He has given to men. In Psalm 11:4 we are informed that God's throne has never been overturned, and that His Holy Temple is in heaven. This Temple of God in the heavens is not of the material order. It is unseen; hence it is of the eternal order (II Cor. 4:18).

Again, we see in Revelation 11:19 the Temple of God in heaven, which of course refers to that tabernacle of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The study of the visible, material heavens, as they are presented in the Scriptures, together with the invisible heavens, likewise constitute the most fascinating and instructive and informative subjects. These references however will suffice.

## "The Earth"

The earth is a part of the material universe which God created in the beginning. Volumes of information are given to us with reference to it throughout the Scriptures.

In Psalm 24:1,2 we are told that the earth and all that is therein belongs to Jehovah. It belongs to Him because He is the Creator of it—as we learn in the Scriptures. It is His, Jehovah the Son's, because He purchased it by the redemption which He wrought for us on Calvary. It will be His by conquest when He returns in glory and power to take the reins of the government of the universe in His hands and to establish the reign of righteousness upon the earth. Volumes likewise could be written upon the subject of the earth. The completeness of our picture with reference to any of these material elements found in this verse depends entirely upon the extent and thoroughness of our investigation.

The material heavens and earth that was created in the beginning, as we learn in Genesis 1:1, will pass away eventually, but one jot or tittle shall in nowise pass away from the law until every word which God has spoken has been fulfilled with reference to them. Christ likewise told us that heaven and earth should pass away, but His word should not pass away (Matt. 24:35). He did not tell us when they will pass away, but merely stated that such would be the case. In Revelation 20:11 we have this statement: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." At the conclusion of the short period following the Millennium, the great white throne judgment will be established. At that time the material heavens and the earth that were created in the beginning will pass out of existence. God created them out of nothing, and into a state of nothings they shall return. At that juncture time, which began with the creation of the material universe, ceases. Then eternity begins.

This eternity of the future begins with God's creating the new heavens and the new earth. What is meant by the new heavens and the new earth? The eternal order of which we read in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. There we see the eternal heavens, and the eternal earth, and the eternal Jerusalem coming down out of the eternal heavens and resting upon the eternal earth. This will be the place of the abode of the righteous, throughout the ceaseless ages of the eternity of the future.

Great things lie ahead of us—that is, for all who know and who love Christ, our Redeemer.

## THE PROPHETIC POINT OF VIEW

### Installment 1

THE SCRIPTURES give us a composite picture of things in the material world, past, present, and future. This is not to be a surprise to anyone who realizes that the Eternal God, the Creator of the universe, has—figuratively speaking—the blueprint of all the

ages through which the physical universe passes. Since God is interested in His children and wishes them to cooperate with Him in the fullest way possible, naturally He has revealed to them secrets concerning the past, facts and principles in the present, and the future glories which are to be theirs throughout the ages of eternity.

Of the thirty-nine Books of the Old Testament sixteen of these are devoted to prophecy—prophecy in the correct meaning of the term. The prophets interpreted history as well as pointed out the future. They explained the future and pointed out the past course of history, for the enlightenment of the people of God.

The word in the original Hebrew meaning a prophet simply indicates a spokesman for God. If he was looking back into the past, he was interpreting for the edification of his hearers and readers the facts of the history. Often times the prophet looked at the present and, realizing that the past, present, and future are linked together by the law of causation, pointed out the salient, outstanding facts of the present and then delineated the future and interpreted its significance for us. In view of this broad meaning of prophecy we are not surprised to learn that, in the Hebrew Bible, such books as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are correctly designated the "Former Prophets." Those, however, which we call Prophets, namely, Isaiah through Malachi, are called the "Latter Prophets."

In keeping with the significance of the terms, prophet and prophecy, we realize that the man who has delved into the Word of God, which records the past history of the universe and of the race, and who gives us the correct philosophy of history, is indeed a prophet—though he is uninspired and cannot lay claim to the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit as were the prophets of the Old and the New Testament. The teacher of God's Word who has, by diligent search and by the illumination of the Spirit of God been able to discover the great fundamental principles of God's moral government, and who is able to see and to discern in the present situation the application of said principles and of the trend of the present time is likewise, in the true sense of the term, a prophet. Also those men who study the Word of God and take it at its face value, believing that God said what He meant and meant what He said, and who, following the golden rule of interpretation\* tell us exactly what the prophets said with reference to the things out ahead of us are likewise prophets in the correct sense. They are this in that they have discovered the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures and are able to see, in the light of the continuity of events, the working of the invisible hand of the Almighty as He directs everything toward a great, glorious, and grand consummation, when He will head up all things in the dispensation of "the fullness of times" in Christ, namely, in the great Millennial Age.

As we learn in Hebrews 1:1f, God spoke to the fathers in different measures and in different manners. According to Numbers 12:7,8 He spoke to Moses face to face. In this intimate manner He did not speak to any of the other prophets after Moses. He spoke to them in dreams and in visions. At the same time, when God gave a revelation to His spokesman, often the Spirit simply inspired the thought and led the divine spokesman to choose or select the proper words and phraseology that would best convey the idea to his auditors or readers. We therefore read throughout the Word that "the word of God came unto ..." In other words, God sent a spiritual communication to

the prophets and they, as ambassadors for Him spoke forth the message, using the exact words and terminology that were given to them by inspiration. The Holy Spirit, as we learn from I Corinthians, chapter 2, gave not only the thought but the words by which those thoughts were expressed. In view of this fact, there is no wonder that the Apostle Paul spoke of the Scriptures as having been inspired by God: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: 17 that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16,17). Peter also spoke thus; "And we have the word of prophecy *made* more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts: 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. 21 For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but man spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:19-21).

When the Word of God thus came to any of His messengers, they, accordingly as they were inspired, dealt with the past, the present, and the future —according to the needs of the ones to whom the message came. For instance, Moses, the great lawgiver, was led by the Spirit of God to give the historical account of the beginnings of the heavens and the earth and the great catastrophe that reduced the earth to a condition of desolation and wasteness. He likewise traced the history of the Patriarchs and finally came, in his discourse upon history, to the time of God's delivering His Chosen People from Egyptian bondage. When Israel was at Sinai, God delivered to her His Law. Moses applied the law to the life of the people to whom he was ministering. Interspersed in the historical and legal sections of the writings of Moses are some of the brightest jewels of prophetic utterance to be found anywhere in the Divine Revelation. When we come to the New Testament and consider the Four Records of the Gospels, we see that the inspired Evangelists wrote accounts of our God's life, giving samples of His teaching and of His works. Here likewise are interspersed in this material prophetic utterances in which our God, figuratively speaking, raised the curtain and gave us a glimpse into the future of the world and of the eternal state of bliss and felicity with God and the redeemed forever and ever.

On certain occasions, when the word of the God came to various prophets, God made graphic the message by presenting it in connection with some vision. Thus the spiritual eyes of the prophets were opened and there were presented to their startled gaze scenes of the spiritual world and also of things that had occurred in the past and things that were yet to come to pass. One of the earliest names given to these divine messengers was "seer." The word seer meant one who was granted a spiritual vision of truth and one who delivered in words chosen by the Spirit that which had been presented to his spiritual vision. From the history of the use of this word and from the fact that it was supplanted by the later word, prophet (a spokesman for God), we are logical in concluding that probably in the earlier stages of Israel's history visions were frequently granted to these ambassadors of the court of heaven. As the years passed by, there was not the need of the presentation in such graphic manner of these messages from God.

Toward the close of the monarchy, after the nation had gotten on the toboggan and was coasting with lightning speed toward destruction, the vision was again employed

by God in stirring up His people and warning them of the dangers into which they were headed and the glories that await the servants of God. In the writings of Ezekiel we see many visions. This prophet was in vision transported from his place among the captives in Babylon to Jerusalem itself and was shown the actual conditions that were to be found in Jerusalem and in Palestine. Thus in very clear, vivid, graphic language, Ezekiel portrayed the real situation back in the homeland to his fellow-captives. In keeping with this thought, Daniel, younger contemporary of Ezekiel, likewise was granted various visions. This type of revelation is called *apocalyptic*. There is no book in the Scriptures that prepares one for the understanding of the course of history from the Babylonian captivity unto the establishment of the kingdom of glory here upon earth as does the Book of Daniel. In chapter 2 appears the vision of the metallic image which symbolizes the four different world kingdoms to whom God would give global dominion. In chapter 7 the same four world empires are presented, but under different symbolism. The fourth of this series of kingdoms is followed by the fifth, namely, the kingdom of Christ, the Messiah of Israel and Saviour and Redeemer of the world. When the captives who wished to serve God returned under Zerubbabel, the governor of the house of Israel, and Joshua, the high priest, from Babylon to the Holy Land, God raised up two prophets—Haggai, an old man, and Zechariah, a young man—who stirred the returned exiles out of their lethargy and caused them to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the service of God. Haggai spoke the words of God, giving evidence of having some privileges of vision; but Zechariah, the younger contemporary, was granted visions and he portrayed in the most vivid and graphic manner the future when Israel will return to God, Jerusalem shall become the capital of the world, and Israel, cleansed and purified, shall become the channel of world blessing. The Apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, likewise was led by the spirit to present his message just as he had received it in vision.

Let us remember that, though the revelation was given in the form of visions, these communications described spiritual realities. It is for us, therefore, to ascertain by hard study and by trustful praying the import of the message whether given in plain words or in the form of a descriptive vision. Let our prayer be,

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold Wondrous things out of thy law"  
(Ps. 119:18).

## **Installment 2**

IN the preceding article of this series we have seen the real scriptural meaning of prophecy—that it refers to things past, present, and future. We have seen, moreover, that some of the revelations of God came in the manner indicated by the scriptural formula: "The word of Jehovah came unto ..." We have also seen that, by vision, the revelation was made more graphic in the case of many of the prophets. In the present study we wish to note several cases of predictive prophecy in order that we may learn just how to approach any utterance in regard to the future.

In John, chapter 8, we have a discussion or debate which God had with the scribes and the Pharisees at Jerusalem, when He attended the last Feast of Tabernacles during His personal ministry. It became quite evident to all who were looking on that the leaders of Israel were bent and determined in their vigorous opposition to Christ. He, with His penetrating divine vision, looked behind outward appearances and detected the presence of the great enemy of both God and man that was moving them on in their bitter opposition to Him. He therefore declared that His opponents were children of their father, the devil, since he was stirring them up and moving them to such unreasonable measures of opposition. In their discussion, they claimed to be the children of Abraham, but Christ showed that they were not children of that venerable patriarch, though they had been born of Jewish parentage.

They had the Abrahamic blood, but they did not have the Abrahamic spirit. They had been blessed of God, in that they were living at the very time when the Messiah would come and with their physical eyes were looking upon Him, yet they did not appreciate that fact, the reason being that they did not know Him nor the Scriptures which were read every sabbath in their synagogues. Even under the old covenant there was such a thing as knowing God in a personal manner. This fact is seen in the following quotation: "Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; 24 but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah" (Jer. 9:23,24).

The Apostle Paul told the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia that their brethren in Jerusalem fulfilled the Scriptures in condemning and crucifying the Messiah simply because they did not know Him nor the Scriptures. These facts show that, even though the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the Old Testament saints were far less than those we possess today, yet they could—and many of them did—know God and had spiritual discernment. But these Jews with whom God clashed on this occasion should have rejoiced that they were living in Messianic Times, and that actually Messiah had appeared and was in their midst for the purpose of working out redemption's scheme. But no, instead of rejoicing in the great unparalleled spiritual blessings which were granted to them, they were actually, with all the force and power of their being, opposing the Messiah who was the Son of God, and who entered the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth.

In showing the Jews, with whom He was arguing, that, though they did have Abrahamic blood, they did not have the Abrahamic spirit, Christ declared to them "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). What is the significance of the term, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad"? In view of the trend of the thought the facts of the context show that the day to which Christ referred was the very time when He was present with them, that is, the time of His first coming. These opponents, though they were Jews—yet they were not in the true sense because they did not know God and recognize His Messiah—should have been rejoicing in the fact that they were living at that time when God had graciously, in the person of Christ, left heaven and had come to this earth in order to work out their redemption and that of the world. The fact that they did not rejoice to

see Him and His time—to observe the miracles which He performed and to hear the words of grace which proceeded from His lips—was proof positive that they were not real Israelites in the correct and true sense of the term. In marked contrast with them and their attitude, Christ said Abraham, whom they claimed to be their father, rejoiced to see His day, Christ's day—that time when He appeared on earth the first time. Evidently from this language Abraham was given a promise by God that He would in vision see the day when Messiah would appear upon earth in order to work out human redemption. When this vision was shown to him he saw, doubtless crystal clear, Christ, the Babe of Bethlehem the Man of Galilee, the Man of sorrows, throughout His entire career. He saw the agonies of the Saviour in the Garden; he saw Him suspended upon the cross as He suffered the death-throes of one of the crudest methods of the execution of a criminal possible; he saw Him lying cold in death in the tomb; he saw the spirit of Christ descending to Hades and making the announcement concerning the completion of redemption's scheme. He saw His spirit come forth from Hades and re-enter that body which was then glorified. He saw Him walking out of the tomb, the conqueror over all the forces of satanic power, thus bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel. Finally, after the forty days, following the resurrection, He saw Him ascend to glory and sit down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Thus Abraham in spirit was carried forward from his day and time, which was approximately two thousand years before Christ, to the time when the Babe of Bethlehem was born. And he saw the entire life of our God and His glorious triumphant conquest over Satan and the perfecting of the plan of redemption.

Yes, we have every reason to believe that Abraham not only saw Messiah at His first coming and rejoiced in the redemption which He purchased for mankind, but he saw Him when He will rend the heavens, descend to this earth, mount the throne of David, lift the curse, and establish a reign of righteousness from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of earth. We are logical therefore in believing that Abraham, in vision, was thus carried forward over the span of two thousand years of history to the first coming of Christ, and that he likewise surveyed all Messiah's redemptive career, including the Age of Grace and the great consummation when He returns in glory and power to reign in righteousness for one thousand years.

Isaiah lived and engaged in his ministry in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the latter half of the eighth century before the Christian Era. In the year that King Uzziah died, the prophet was granted a vision of Christ as He will sit in the great millennial Temple and will reign over a peaceful world. This is seen in Isaiah 6:1-5: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw God sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face and with twain he did fly, 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy holy, is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King Jehovah, of hosts."

The prophet declares that he saw God sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, "and his train filled the temple." The question immediately arises, "What temple?" There

have been several Temples, and there will yet be two more. Solomon built the great Temple of Israel upon his accession to the throne and power in Israel. This sacred edifice was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Seventy years later, when the exiles who wished to serve God, went back to the land of their fathers under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, they built the Temple which is known in history as Zerubbabel's Temple. This structure was insignificant in comparison with that which had been erected by Solomon. When Herod the Great, by conniving and by political maneuvering at Rome, obtained authority over Judaea, he had a mania for building. He therefore, in 20 B.C. began to tear down the Temple at Jerusalem piecemeal and began to rebuild it upon a more magnificent and grander scale. The work which was thus begun in 20 B.C. was completed, according to the very best accounts we have, around A.D. 64. But in A.D. 70, when Titus captured Jerusalem, this Temple was destroyed, the Jewish nation was overwhelmed, and the survivors of that catastrophe were sold in the slave marts of the world, into bondage. In the very time of the end, according to prophetic prediction, the Jews will rebuild their Temple, which will be standing during the time of the Tribulation. Isaiah the prophet, chapter 66:1-5, foretold that it would be built. Psalm 74 sees its being destroyed in the Tribulation. Christ assumed its standing in the middle of the Tribulation, as we see in Matthew 24:15ff. Paul likewise assumed its existence in the middle of the Tribulation (II Thess. 2:1-12). John in the Book of Revelation, chapter 11, likewise described it. But, as just stated, this Jewish Temple, will be destroyed. But when Christ comes back to this earth, being invited by the penitent remnant of Israel to return, He will rebuild the Temple and will sit upon His throne, wearing a double crown, that of royalty and that of priesthood (Zech. 6:9-15). This Temple is the one which is described very fully in the last section of Ezekiel, chapters 40-48.

Which of these Temples is the one that was shown to Isaiah in the passage which we have under consideration? The third verse of this chapter gives the keynote; "And one [seraphim] cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Let us remember that these verses give us a vision, a vision of Jehovah in His Temple. The prophet therefore sees Jehovah seated upon the throne. At that time the earth is full of God's glory. This statement gives us the time when this vision will be fulfilled, the era of the great millennial kingdom.

Since we know that this is a vision of Christ in His glory, which position is confirmed by John 12:41, we know that Isaiah was carried forward in vision, from the latter part of the eighth century when he lived, across the centuries to the glorious second coming of our God.

In concluding this special phase of study, let us look at Jeremiah 4:23-26: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. 24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved to and fro. 25 I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. 26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful field was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of Jehovah, *and* before his fierce anger." Jeremiah had a vision in which he saw the heavens as black as ink and the earth reduced to a state of chaos, wreckage, and ruin. Was the prophet carried backward in vision to the catastrophe recorded in Genesis 1:2, or forward into the future? A very important question. When a

person reads verse 27 which follows our quotation immediately, he will see that Jeremiah declared that this vision will be fulfilled yet in the future, in the day of Jehovah—the time of the Tribulation. Thus it is clear from these facts that Jeremiah was likewise carried forward in vision by the Spirit and saw the wrecked earth. It is hoped that from this short study the reader may be able to see the importance of ascertaining the proper point of view from which to view the prophecies of the Scriptures. Unless a person discovers this proper perspective, he cannot interpret prophecy aright.

### **Installment 3**

WE HAVE already seen in this series that the word "prophecy" as used originally in the Scriptures was applied to the narration of past events, present circumstances, and future out looks. In other words, the prophets were inspired when they narrated past events, and when they evaluated the present and revealed the future. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit was just as essential for them when they were recalling the past—as they did in the most accurate manner, which proposition has been absolutely proved by archaeological discoveries —as when they foretold the future.

The crowning proof of the inspiration of the messages of the prophets and Apostles is seen in the fact that they alone properly diagnosed human nature and described the infallible cure for the sickness of the soul of man. Their prescription works! When the scriptural analyses of man's condition and his needs are compared with the views and prescriptions that are offered by ordinary men, the emptiness and the shallowness of such human theories become apparent. The uncovering of the future by the prophets, as seen from their point of view, has been proved, by the course of history, to have been infallibly guided by the Spirit of God. We have every reason, therefore, to place absolute and unqualified confidence in every utterance of Moses, the prophets, and the Apostles.

We have also seen that, in order for anyone to understand predictive prophecy properly, he must note well whatever time element may be given in any specific prophecy before he can interpret correctly the prediction. Sometimes checks are postdated. By a person's doing this, he is telling the bank not to honor the check until that future day arrives. Thus it is with the prophecies. They are good only when the time arrives that is indicated by the chronological data that thus stamps them as to when they are to be fulfilled. On this point let us study minutely two psalms.

### **Psalms 90**

Psalms 90, written by Moses and possibly the oldest one in the book, is indeed very illuminating. It sweeps forth from eternity in the past through the ages that intervene between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2, and comes flashing to the time of the creation of Adam, then onward to the day of Moses. The Eternal God, as set forth in verses 1 and 2, existed from all eternity in the past. The last clause of verse 2, "Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God," properly rendered and studied in the light of

the context, should be translated this way: "Even from age to age, thou wast God." The correctness of this interpretation is seen when one realizes that in verse 2 the prophet is still looking back toward the past and is speaking of a time prior to the creation of the universe. As the Hebrew is translated in our English versions, all eternity—before the creation of the universe, the time during which the material cosmos is in existence, and ages of the ages of all future eternity—is by this translation thrown back prior to the creation of the universe. This position is of course an absurdity. In contrast to God's having existed throughout all eternity, Moses refers to the longevity of the human family prior to the Flood. A glimpse at Genesis, chapter 5, shows that the antediluvian patriarchs' lives approximated a thousand years. But that civilization was wiped out by the Flood, a catastrophic Judgment.

In verses 7-11 Moses comes to his own day and time, and speaks of God's having dealt in wrath and indignation with His Chosen People, whose span of life has been reduced to threescore years and ten, "Or even by reason of strength fourscore years." The best commentary on God's dealings with the generation of Moses is the Book of Numbers.

Thus having reviewed the judgment of the Flood disaster and of God's strokes upon Israel in the wilderness wanderings, Moses is carried forward in his thinking out to the time when the nation again sins against God. On account of this rebellion the stroke of judgment falls. Clearly he saw the situation and, identifying himself with his brethren, he prayed that God would lead the nation to "get us a heart of wisdom," that they might evaluate their situation, see their mistake, and recognize that their only hope is to pray for God, against whom they sin when He appears, to return to them and bring deliverance. This is set forth in verses 12-17.

In this last section of this psalm it is quite evident that Moses was carried in vision out beyond the time when Jehovah comes to His people. The prophets constantly spoke of the time when Jehovah would come to His people, and they would reject Him and thus sin against their own souls. Recognizing this fact, and seeing that the solution of Israel's problem lay in their repudiation of the national sin and praying to Jehovah, who alone can solve their problems, to return, Moses thus leads his nation in this penitential confession and prayer.

The face meaning of these verses must be accepted. The information presupposed in this passage must be gathered from related ones. When I recognize this fact, and when I look at such a passage as Isaiah 53:1-9, I immediately recognize that this petition is the same one as that which is set forth in Isaiah 53:1-9.

When a person thus runs the gamut of the ages that are surveyed in this psalm, he recognizes the fact that Moses was viewing the great disasters that have come, first to mankind in general in the days of Noah; secondly, to the Hebrew people in the days of Moses; and thirdly, to the Jewish people in this age when they, not having wisdom, reject Messiah at His first coming. Moses—seeing that the time will come in the history of Israel when the nation will, in genuine repentance, repudiate its national sin and pray for Him to return and deliver them—introduces this petition by the words, "Return, O Jehovah; how long?" Thus the latter part of Psalm 90 is dated at the time when

convicted and penitent Israel will plead for Jehovah to return. On this point the reader should carefully study Hosea 5:14-6:3.

## **Psalm 95**

Psalm 95 is a most important portion of the revelation of God. No one can properly understand the Hebrew Epistle of the New Testament (possibly the most profound portion of the entire Word of God) who does not properly understand Psalm 95.

From a general knowledge of the Word we understand that Psalm 95 was spoken by King David (Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:7). The historical background of this psalm is to be located at the time of the giving of the law (Ex., chaps. 19-24). When God spoke from the heights of Sinai the Ten Commandments, the frightened hosts of Israel pleaded with Moses that God would no more speak to them, but that He should deliver His messages to the great leader and lawgiver, and that he in turn should relay them to the children of Israel. The hosts of Israel made every kind of promise that they would be obedient to the heavenly voice. Keeping this experience in mind, God promised that He would raise up to Israel a prophet saying, "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deut. 18:16-19). Since Israel did not want God to speak to her directly, the Almighty promised that He would raise up a prophet, a spokesman for Himself, who would deliver His message to her.

David, who was inspired by the Spirit of God, and who knew this promise of God's speaking to Israel through this future prophet, uttered the prediction found in Psalm 95. David lived approximately five hundred years after Moses made the original prediction. But he was carried out from his day and time to the time when God would raise up this prophet who would speak to her. This prediction, viewed in the light of the Gospel Records, quite obviously referred to the first coming of our God, who made His advent in the first century of the present era—a thousand years after David uttered Psalm 95.

Being thus transported into the future in vision to the first century, the king, as God's spokesman, viewed the situation in Palestine of the first century and saw this prophet through whom God would speak, as He engages in His ministry. Thus David called to his brethren of a thousand years hence to come and accept this one without hesitation and to render the worship and the praise due to Him. He insisted on their doing this because "Jehovah is a great God, And a great King above all gods," who is the Creator of the material universe, and who is the Shepherd of His people Israel.

In the second half of the psalm (7b-11) David began his oracle with the word, "To-day." What is the meaning of this term? Obviously it refers to the time of Jehovah's coming to earth in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and this present prediction. It therefore means the time when Messiah comes to be with His people. When we read this in the light of Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4, we know that this word, today, refers to the time of our God's first appearance upon earth.

King David—in vision seeing Messiah at His first coming therefore pleaded with the

Jewish people of the time of our God not to harden their hearts when they would hear God speaking in the person of Christ. It is clear therefore, that the word "To-day," dates the prophecy and its fulfillment at the time of Messiah's first coming". Knowing the proper perspective, a person is in a position to interpret the psalm.

All prophecies and predictive psalms must be examined carefully in order to determine the date when they are to be fulfilled. If this is not done, strange and foreign interpretations will be placed upon the Word of God.

Footnote:

\* "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicates clearly otherwise.

## **SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE**

AS A PERSON studies the Scriptures or any other writings, he is to assume that everything is to be taken literally unless there is some indication that there is a departure from the normal, usual, literal meaning. The principle stated in full is as follows;

When the plain, sense of Scripture makes common, sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic

and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.

Whenever this rule is ignored, confusion and misunderstandings always arise.

The early church was plagued with the allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures. While this principle does not exactly come under the head of symbolism, yet it is close akin to it and has done untold damage to the cause of true Christianity. It still causes a blight wherever resort is made to its principles. The allegorical interpreters sought to find running alongside the usual sense of a passage a hidden, spiritual, or allegorical meaning. Whenever they thought they had found this mysterious significance, they usually lost sight of the plain historical record and engaged in the most fanciful interpretations. Thus in a way the historical records of the scriptures stood for great and mysterious principles and facts. Assumed deep spiritual meanings were read into the narratives, for they were not put there by the inspiration of the sacred writers. The Scriptures mean what they say and say what they mean. Of course there are various kinds of language found in the Sacred Oracles. We are to recognize the different types that depart from the literal meaning and to interpret them accordingly.

## **I. Determining Symbolic Language**

How may I determine whether or not a certain citation is symbolic? Fundamentally I am not to assume that a passage is symbolic unless there are indications which point in that direction. Whenever such positive evidence is apparent, I am to look at the facts as they appear in the text. As an illustration of this type of language note the following passage:

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: what God is about to do he hath declared unto Pharaoh. 26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dream is one. 27 And the seven lean and ill favored kine that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind; they shall be seven years of famine" (Gen. 41:25-37). Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had dream in which he saw seven fat, well-fleshed well-favored cows coming up out of the river. Following them came seven poor and ill-fed ones, which devoured the seven fat ones. He likewise saw seven well-filled ears of grain and after them, seven blasted ones. The latter swallowed up the former. Joseph by the Spirit of God interpreted this language and said to Pharaoh that the seven good cows were seven years. We know that this was not literally true. The seven fat cattle represented seven full and abundant years and the seven lean ones signified seven years of famine; It is clear, then, that this is symbolic language.

In Ezekiel: 37:1-14 we have a description of a vision which was granted that prophet. In this vision he saw a valley covered with dry bones. When he prophesied, the bones came together. Then sinews connected them. Flesh appeared on the skeletons, and then skin covered the bodies. Finally the Spirit of God breathed life into them and they arose, a mighty army of God. If the record had stopped with the narration of these events, no one would have been able to determine the significance of that which was revealed. But in verse eleven God declared that the dry bones are the whole house of

Israel: "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off" (Ezek. 37:11). This cannot be literally true. Obviously the bones represent the whole house of Israel at a certain stage in the history of the nation. Thus these bones are symbols of the scattered nation.

In Daniel, chapter 2, we have a description of the metallic image which was shown to Nebushadnezzar in a vision. Daniel by inspiration reproduced the vision and interpreted it to the monarch. In indicating its meaning he declared: "Thou, O King, art King of Kings unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory; 38 wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beast of the field and the birds of the heavens hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all; thou art the head of gold" (Dan. 2:37,38). The head of gold of the image was not literally Nebuchadnezzar; but in this instance it symbolized him and his government. Likewise the chest and arms of silver represented the Medo-Persian Empire. In like manner the belly of brass was an emblem of the Grecian government, whereas the legs of iron and feet and toes of iron and miry clay were symbols of the Roman Empire. This interpretation is forced upon us in the light of all the facts that are involved in the revelation.

Frequently we are told that the Book of Revelation is a book of symbols. This is an overstatement—a greatly exaggerated and perverted judgment. Everyone who will examine it soberly and scientifically must admit that there are symbols appearing here and there in it. At the same time he must also admit that there are many statements that are literal and must be interpreted thus. For instance, we are told in the first three chapters that the candlesticks symbolize the various churches to which letters were sent. That symbolism was chosen because of its appropriateness to the subject. But the churches thus represented were real and literal. The messages that were written by John to them must be interpreted according to their common sense meaning. There are those who endeavor to interpret the living creatures of chapters 4 and 5 as symbols. An examination, however, of the context shows that these are real, celestial beings, that serve God and His purposes. They must be thus understood. In chapter 5 the Almighty is presented to us as having a roll of a book in his right hand. The Lamb, Christ, takes it out of His hand. This book is seen to be sealed with seven seals, which Christ breaks in succession. This pictorial presentation of the book was doubtless chosen to indicate a revelation, since the messages of God which He sent to us are written in material books. We have some difficulty in picturing to ourselves the form and size of this little book and how it was sealed. But we know the significance of a seal. In order to read the message of the book, the seals had to be broken. Such seems to be the significance of the seals and the breaking thereof. When God broke each of the first four seals, one of the living creatures shouted, "Come." In answer to this command there appeared in the vision the rider on a certain colored horse. Thus at the breaking of the first four seals and at the command of the living creatures, four riders on four different horses of various colors came forth. The question which immediately arises is: Are these horses and riders to be understood as symbols, or are they to be interpreted literally? A clue as to the proper answer seems to be found in an examination of the rider on the fourth horse. He is called death. Hades follows after him. It is clear that death is here used symbolically, for it is personified and thought of

as an actual rider. And yet we know that death is not a person. From this fact we see that this rider is a symbol. We have every reason to believe that the other three are used in the same way. When we look at the facts of each case, we can see how very appropriate each of these symbols is to set forth that which is explained in the literal language accompanying the presentation of each symbol.

I could continue through the Book of Revelation, calling attention to those things that are put in symbolic language and those things that are to be taken literally, but what has been mentioned is sufficient to let the reader know that God does use symbolic language in various portions of His Word. But we are never to conclude that the presence of a symbol in a certain section requires that we understand everything that is said in that connection is to be taken symbolically.

But before leaving the Book of Revelation, I feel constrained to refer to the twentieth chapter. There we are told that Christ will return to earth and reign for a thousand years. This statement is frequently nullified by those who tell us that we are not to understand this statement as literal, since the Book of Revelation is highly figurative. Figurative language may appear in the same sentence with a statement of a sober literal fact. One is to use common sense and look at the facts as they are presented in a certain passage in order to determine the significance of the language employed. There is no reason for our doubting that the assertion regarding our God's reigning a thousand years should be taken literally. I therefore believe the statement and accept it at its face value.

## **II. Interpreting Symbolic Language**

In Daniel chapter 7, we have a very fine illustration of symbolic language. The prophet saw in the night-visions the great sea which was at various times agitated by stormy winds. When the water was first churned into a raging fury, there emerged from it and came upon the land a lion-like beast. At a subsequent time, when the water was again agitated, there emerged a bear-like beast, which came upon the land and was master of that which he surveyed. A third time the water was churned into a raging tempest. On this occasion there came forth a leopard-like beast, which came upon the land and did as its predecessors. On the next occasion when the waters were agitated, another one that was horrible, terrible, and different from all the rest came forth and exercised authority in place of its predecessor. He extended his boundaries to include the entire world and became master of all peoples, tribes, tongues, and languages. The account of these visions is found in Daniel 7:1-8.

When anyone reads this passage he is impressed with the fact that it is not a description of a literal occurrence. Lions as we know do not live in water. Bears do go into water at times, but that is not their natural habitat. Leopards certainly do not live in water. The impression which the reading of these verses makes upon one's mind is that this is not literal language. Evidently, then, it is figurative or symbolic. How are we to determine its meaning? The answer is found in verses 17 and 23. "These great beasts, which are four are four kings, that shall arise out of the earth." The interpreting angel informed Daniel that the four beasts which he had seen in vision are four kings

that arise out of the earth. These beasts cannot be literal kings. The only way to understand this language is to interpret it as indicating that the beasts are used symbolically. God chose these animals to represent four different kings. But in verse 23 we learn that the fourth beast is likewise a symbol of a kingdom:

"Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down and break it in pieces." We are logical in concluding that all four of the beasts not only are symbols of kings, but also of kingdoms over which they reign.

Since God has attached this special significance to a beast when it is used symbolically, and since He is not the author of confusion, we may conclude that, wherever a beast is used symbolically, it has this same significance. The importance of our recognition of this principle is seen in the fact that, by the great Protestant reformers, the beast of the Book of Revelation was interpreted as being a symbol of the Roman Catholic church. We must admit that, during medieval days, when the Roman Church enjoyed its hey-day, it did relegate to itself certain political powers and would do so today if it had the authority and opportunity. It was primarily an ecclesiasticism and not a civil government. The beast of the Book of Revelation is a symbol of a civil government which exists at the end time, and which is world-wide in its scope and grasp. When the reformers, therefore, interpreted this symbol as signifying the Roman Catholic Church and system, it did violence to the truth and laid the foundations for much misunderstanding of the Scriptures. This false interpretation has been and is continuing to be the occasion of much confusion in the field of the study of prophecy. Let us therefore hold to the significance of a symbol which God assigns to it.

A further illuminating reference will enable us to see the force of this principle. When God instituted the Supper at the conclusion of the passover on the night of His betrayal, He gave to the elements, the loaf and the cup, a special significance. The loaf represents His body; the cup, His blood. Regardless of where those emblems are used in a Christian assembly, they have the same significance—although various shades of ideas may be read into the language of the Saviour. This memorial supper has the same and everlasting significance wherever it is observed.

Let us, as we study the Word of God, never consider any passage as figurative unless the facts of the context demand such an interpretation. Let us also recognize the various figures of speech that are used. We are to bear in mind constantly that no language is to be understood as symbolic unless the facts of the context thus indicate. When we find such symbols, let us seek for the divine interpretation of them, and never read into the record something that is not found in the inspired text.

## **THE PARABLE**

\AT THIS time let us study *parables* as they appear in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament a crisp, terse saying was called a parable. The Proverbs of Solomon are called parables. An examination of this portion of the Word of God shows that couplets constitute the basis for this type of revelation. In the New Testament the term rendered

*parable* comes from two words which mean *beside* and *to throw down or place*. A parable, according to the etymology of this word, is therefore the laying down of some known or acknowledged fact, principle, or truth beside that which is unknown. The object in doing this was to institute a comparison in order that one might deduct the unknown from the known.

Generally speaking, the parables are of such a nature that only one point was in view. They are like figures of speech. For instance, should I use a metaphor in stating, "He was a lion in the fight," I would be making a comparison between some person of whom I was speaking and a lion. There would be only one point, however, that would be common to the person and the lion. The lion is recognized as the king of beasts and is thought of as being able to conquer the rest, or rule over them. Thus by this metaphor I would mean that the one of whom I spoke had been a victor on account of his strength and power over his opponents. Someone has said that a parable is simply an extended metaphor. This is true and must be acknowledged as such. But in recognizing the kinship between a metaphor and a parable, let us not go to the extreme and think of a parable as an allegory. This latter type of language is the use of certain story material—either fact or fiction—that is presented in order to carry along a spiritual lesson. The facts are stated, or the story is told. But it is not the purpose of the speaker or writer to bring into sharp focus the thing's that he is saying. On the contrary, it is his desire to lead his hearers or readers to see some great fundamental principle which runs along parallel with his story, and which is obvious. If I should speak in geometrical terms, I would say that a parable is like two circles that are tangent. It is for us to find that one idea and not try to make the illustration go "on all fours." This is the general rule for a parable; there are, however, in certain contexts parables that are intended to deal with more than one point. But each one must be studied in the light of the facts as they are presented in the text.

## **An Examination Of Certain Parables**

Our Christ concluded His Sermon on the Mount (Matt., chaps. 5,6, and 7) by giving us a parable of two builders who erected houses, but upon different foundations. In this parable God likened the one who hears His words and obeys them to the person who is wise and discreet, and who, when he builds a house, digs down deep to the rock, lays the foundation upon it, and upon this erects his building. When the rains descend, the winds blow, and the floods come, they beat upon this house; but it stands, because of the fact that it has a firm foundation upon which it is well-located and built. On the other hand, the one who hears His message of love, but rejects it, refusing to accept it and to conform his life thereto, is like the foolish man who built a house upon the sand. When the rains began to fall, the wind to blow, and the floods to beat upon that house, it falls, because it has no foundation. Thus in this pictorial way, our God compared those who hear, and who heed His teaching and those who hear, but who refuse to be obedient to His instructions, to the two different builders. They show their wisdom or their lack of understanding by the kind of foundation upon which they build, the firm foundation or the one that is only shifting sand. The person who hears and heeds the teaching of God is the one who builds his house for eternity; but the one who builds upon the sand suffers eternal loss.

We can see the one main point, therefore, that is illustrated by the parable. For us to try to find some hidden, spiritual, or mysterious meaning and read that into the text would be to do violence to the Word of God.

Let us look at another parable. In Matthew 13:31,32 we have the parable of the mustard seed. Christ stated it thus: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: 32 which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof." That which Christ called the kingdom of heaven, He compared to a certain grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, and which indeed developed into an abnormal plant, a tree. In this thirteenth chapter of Matthew God was presenting the teaching regarding the kingdom of heaven by the use of these various parables, each of which presents some one or more phases of this great kingdom of heaven. In this parable He said that the kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds, which a man planted in his field, and which developed into this abnormal growth, becoming a tree in which the birds of the heavens came and found lodgment. It is clear that God was not talking about just any mustard seed, but a specific one, which a certain man planted and which developed abnormally. This growth, then, of the plant from such a small beginning into this great tree sets forth some one characteristic of the kingdom of heaven.

Christ spoke about this institution which He called the kingdom of heaven and compared it to the reign of God upon the earth. Kings obtain the right to rule over certain territory, that is, over the subjects, the people who live within the limits of the kingdom. John the Baptist announced that the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God, had come to hand. Christ sounded the same note. The Twelve, when they went forth on the limited, or restricted mission in Galilee, proclaimed the same message. During the last six months of our God's ministry the Seventy in Judea proclaimed the same message. Upon the authority of all these witnesses we cannot believe otherwise than that which is known as the kingdom of heaven, or the reign of heaven, had come near. When we read further in the second chapter of Acts, we see that this kingdom was established when the Holy Spirit came and inspired the Apostles to speak the message of truth and to lay the foundations upon which the church of God is built. Before Pentecost, we read of the kingdom as being in the future (Matt.16:18); after that memorable day, we read of it as being in existence (Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:31). These facts point positively in the direction that the kingdom which was announced by John, the Saviour, the Twelve, and the Seventy was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. It exists through this age. During the Tribulation God will purge out all the tares, the wicked ones, from it and will take the kingdom over. (Ed note: If the reader is interested in a study of the Parables of the Kingdom, we suggest that he read [biblicalresearch.info/page318](http://biblicalresearch.info/page318) ). Then will be fulfilled the prophecy that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15). But in the parable of the mustard seed the phenomenal development of the kingdom into a super growth is the one feature about the kingdom which God foretold. Personally, I am convinced that this was fulfilled by the so-called conversion of Constantine the Great, who forcibly imposed Christianity upon the Roman Empire. There was a growth and an expansion of the kingdom of God into one great politico-

religious octopus. The seeds were sown for the development of a corrupt ecclesiasticism, which has borne fruit throughout the Dark Ages and even to the present time.

In Matthew 13:33 Christ spoke a parable, comparing the kingdom of heaven "unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened." Here again we have one outstanding point which is common to the kingdom of heaven, and which is common to the fact related in the parable. The comparison brings out another feature of the kingdom of heaven. According to the statement of God, a certain woman took leaven and inserted it into three measures of meal. This leaven grew and developed until it permeated all the meal. Why God said three measures, no one can tell. Of course conjectures and surmises may be in order; but in the absence of positive proof no one can be dogmatic. The three measures of meal may have been put into one vessel. Then the woman inserted leaven into the meal, and it continued to work and foment until it affected the entire lot of meal. It is clear that this is a parable, and that leaven here is symbolic of something—of some power or force that permeates the entire portion of the meal. By an examination of all the instances in the New Testament where the word, leaven, is used symbolically, it is seen to signify something evil. The presumption therefore is that it has the same significance here, unless there is something in the context contrary to this thought, or unless there is evidence in some other passage that contradicts such an idea. One will look in vain for any such negative evidence. In the preceding parable at which we have just looked, we see that the kingdom of heaven would take on an abnormal growth—something contrary to nature. Anything that is beyond the normal may excite our curiosity. The fact that the leaven permeates all the meal indicates something that at least is in harmony with that in the preceding verses, which is abnormal.

This thought is in perfect agreement with the interpretation that leaven symbolizes something evil in other places and doubtless also in this place. Looking at the facts as just presented, we have a right to believe that leaven here is a symbol of something evil.

The woman is the one who inserts the leaven into the meal. The leaven being symbolic, we have a right to believe that the woman likewise is a symbol. It is she who introduces, this leaven into the meal. In other places where we see a woman used symbolically, she always represents some kind of ecclesiasticism. A pure, virtuous woman signifies the true church of God; whereas a woman who is a harlot represents a false religious system. These facts lead us to believe that the woman in this instance represents the false ecclesiasticism which developed in the Middle Ages, and which injected some leavening, evil influence into the kingdom of heaven that corrupted it. We shall not be far wrong if we conclude that the leaven which she introduced into the meal was nothing but false, corrupt teachings, doctrines and practices; since the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees were called by the Saviour "the leaven of the Pharisees."

Without doubt the explanation given of the parable of the grain of mustard seed and the leaven deposited by the woman in the three measures of meal is beyond controversy. We have seen that each parable had one central thought to present. There

was therefore one point of contact between the parable and the truth to be taught. But, when we look at the parable of the sower, we see that there are a number of points which the Saviour brought, together in this one parable. One should read Matthew 13:1-23. In substance the parable is this; The sower went forth to sow seed. As he did this, some of the seed fell upon the side of the road. The birds immediately came and devoured the seed. Other seed fell upon the rocky soil where there was little earth. Forthwith this seed sprang up into plants; but when the sun became hot and scorching, it withered and died because it did not have depth of soil in which it was growing. Moreover, there were other seeds that fell among thorns. These sprang up and developed into plants, but the thorns choked out these plants so that they did not bring forth any fruit to perfection. There was still other seed which fell upon good soil, and which brought forth fruit—some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold. Christ explained this parable, saying that the seed which fell upon the wayside soil represent the Word of God as it is preached, and as it falls upon the hearts of people who are indifferent, and who are not interested. They therefore do not receive the Word—just like the seed that falls upon the hard, roadside soil. The devil immediately comes and snatches this Word away from the heart lest haply the one thus having heard should believe and be saved. The seed falling upon rocky soil represents those who hear the gospel message and who embrace it most enthusiastically. But they have little stability of purpose of heart. When therefore conditions become somewhat trying, and not so favorable as at first, they fall away, which fact shows that there is no real spiritual life in this group of people. The seed falling among thorns represents those who hear the Word, who endure for a while, but who become offended at the delay of the materializing of the promise of God and become engrossed with the cares of life and its pleasures. Thus the Word and all evidence of spiritual life is choked out so that they do not bring forth any fruit whatsoever. All three of the classes thus enumerated are those who hear, but in whom the Word does not find deep and abiding lodgment, and who do not bring forth any fruit for the kingdom of God.

On the other hand, those seeds which fall in good ground represent those who have faith, who surrender their lives to God, and who accept Christ. The new life is imparted. They are strengthened by the Spirit of God and bring forth different amounts of fruit—some thirty fold, some sixty fold, while others produce one hundred fold.

It is clear from the way God spoke of the four different types of soil upon which the seed falls and His explanation of the seed falling upon these different kinds of soil show beyond a peradventure that these details stood out clearly in the Saviour's mind, and that He wanted us to see them and to understand that there are the four points of contact between the parable and the kingdom of God, to which He wished to direct our attention.

Other parables might be given, but these are sufficient to stimulate in us a desire to interpret the parables and to be cautious, observing the basic laws involved in parables. A failure to recognize these general principles has proved to be a fruitful source for untold guessing, speculation, and wild theorizing.

## The Purpose Of A Parable

Though some of the Old Testament prophets occasionally did use a parable, our God is the one who used them so very much. Evidently there was a reason for His adopting this method of instruction. Why did Christ employ the parabolic method in instructing people? On many occasions He spoke in the simplest language, putting His message in such a way that the humblest and most under-privileged people, educationally speaking, could understand what He had to say. A survey of the Gospel records shows that that was the principle He followed as a general rule. On many occasions He spoke in parables. Why, do you suppose, did He change His method on certain occasions? Evidently there was a reason.

We have been told that an old Chinese proverb declares that one picture is worth ten thousand words. This possibility is no exaggeration. In many instances a picture can convey a clearer idea to a person than possibly twice, or several times that number of words. We think in terms of our experiences and the things with which we are acquainted. The one who can clothe his ideas in language that is familiar to his hearers will be better able to teach them. Parables are illustrations. Someone has said that illustrations are to a sermon what windows are to a house—they admit light to it. Every well-chosen and presented illustration in the sermon lets a flood of intellectual light into the hearts and minds of the hearers. We have every reason to believe that Christ adopted the parabolic method of instruction in order that those people who wished truth, and who were under-privileged from an educational standpoint, might see the truth, accept it, and be saved. A study of all the parables that are recorded in the Gospels will lead one to that conclusion. To the one, therefore, who is honest, sincere, and unbiased in his attitude toward the truth, the parables chosen by our God become most illuminating and instructive.

But all people do not want truth. All too many become confirmed in their own ways of thinking and find it most difficult to lay aside their prejudices and preconceptions in order that they might receive the truth. For all such people who were in the audiences of our God on special occasions, Christ used the parabolic method. This fact is seen in the following quotation: "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 And he answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12 For whoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. 13 Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand, 14 And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, and I should heal them. 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. 17 For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not" (Matt. 18:10-17).

From this quotation it is abundantly evident that Christ did speak in parables in order that those who did not want the truth, who had a bias against it, and who would not accept it, might not see it. Why did He not want them to have the truth? Another statement which He made might throw light upon this question. God said to His disciples, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." There are people whose attitude, from the spiritual standpoint, immediately puts them in the class of dogs and hogs. We may conclude that whenever Christ saw people of that nature in His audience, He adopted the parabolic form so that they could not take the gems—sparkling, brilliant rubies and diamonds of truth—and tread them down under their feet. Hence, on the occasion when Christ spoke the parables recorded in Matthew, chapter 13, we are logical in concluding that there were people in the audience who would not receive His message, but who were there to carp and to criticize. Having such an unholy bias, they were unable to take a hold of these marvelous truths. All they could do was to distort them and use them against God.

In view of all the facts discussed above, and especially of those connected with the parable of the sower, we have every reason to believe that one's attitude toward truth and toward Christ will put him into one of the four classes which are represented by the four different types of soil mentioned in the parable of the sower. Does this statement then, one may ask, assume that there may be a person who naturally falls into the class represented by the seed falling on the wayside soil, but who, by his attitude toward the truth, is taken from that class and is placed in the fourth group that brings forth an abundant harvest? Yes, it means that. Are we therefore to assume that all have the same capacity and are on an equal footing by birth and by environment? No; we are not to arrive at such an erroneous conclusion. This is contrary to facts. But we learn that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Rom. 5:20). Anyone who will accept truth and receive the Saviour, coming to Him, shall in no wise be cast out.

## ALLEGORY

ALLEGORY is an important type of speech. The Bible student especially cannot afford to neglect the study of this method of speaking, for it appears at various places in the Scriptures. The one who does not recognize this figure will be at a loss in many instances. He therefore will, as a consequence, miss the meaning of the given passage. Literally, the word *allegory* means to  *speak another thing*. A person speaks of a given matter or relates certain details concerning it, but he has an entirely different meaning in view. This type of language is common, not only to the Scriptures, but also to human language and thought in all parts of the world.

Possibly the greatest allegory that was ever written in the English language is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Everyone who is acquainted with it knows that he spoke one thing as if he were simply talking about certain actual facts, localities, people, circumstances, and conditions. At the same time he did not intend to be understood as speaking solely of them; but he composed his story in such a way that it was evident there was

running parallel with his account a deep spiritual meaning. There are other excellent allegories in the English language, as well as in other tongues.

The allegorical method of Origen, one of the early Christian Fathers, and of many others have done untold damage to the cause of Christ and the cause of true Christianity. Those of the Alexandrian school of thought and interpretation, together with Origen, maintained that the literal meaning of the Scriptures was not the important thing. What they narrated, according to them, was given to convey a deeper, or spiritual, hidden meaning. Practically, everything in the Scriptures was thrown into this category. To them the Scriptures said one thing, but meant something entirely different.

This allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures is indeed a vicious and dangerous method to adopt. Frequently, we speak of it as spiritualizing the Scriptures. Instead of thinking of it as "spiritualizing" the Scriptures, I would rather speak of it as "evaporating" the Word. According to the golden rule of interpretation we are to take everything at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise. We are never to say that a passage is allegorical unless the facts are quite positive in that direction. Only under such conditions are we permitted to think of a passage as allegorical.

Someone has said that an allegory is an extended metaphor. That is true. But we must recognize the truth that an allegory is a special metaphor. It is a story or narration that is told in such a way that the reader or the hearer can get the lesson intended to be conveyed. A parable is the laying down of a known truth, or that which is recognized as true, beside an unknown factor in order to bring out the unknown truth. Parables usually have sufficient data to enable one to recognize them as this type of speech.

Let us look at a few allegories in order that we may be able to recognize one when we see it and be able to interpret it properly.

### The Allegory Of The Vine

In Psalm 80:8-16 the writer declared that God went down into Egypt, procured a vine there, came back, drove the nations in Canaan out of it, and planted this vine in their land. Thus planted in this locality, it grew and developed in a marvelous manner, sending its branches unto the sea and its roots unto the River. After the vine thus grew, God broke down the walls around it. Those who passed by plucked it. Then the boar from out of the woods ravaged it, and the wild beasts of the field fed upon it. Following this description is an earnest prayer that God would turn and would have mercy upon this vine of His planting. When a person takes the entire Psalm into consideration and sees that it is a prediction concerning the last generation of Israel that will be scattered among the nations, when he recognizes it as their prayer to God to come and to deliver them from their evil case, when he remembers the history of Jacob and of his descending into Egypt and his posterity's growing into a nation, and when he remembers all of the events connected with the deliverance at the time of the Exodus, he sees instantly that this is an allegory. While the psalmist spoke as if he were talking

of a literal vine, at the same time the context shows that he did not mean a literal vine, but that he was speaking of literal Israel. Having all these facts in mind, he understands that this is an allegory.

God drove out the nations of Canaan and established His Chosen People in that land, which He gave to them for a perpetual inheritance. On account of their disobedience God broke down the barriers protecting His people and allowed various nations who are represented as wild beasts to come in and tread down this vine and destroy it. But the time will come when Israel will see her predicament and call upon God for deliverance. When she does, Messiah will come.

In connection with Psalm 80, one should study such passages as Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6, and Matthew 21:33-46. The scriptures here referred to are the outgrowth of the original allegory found in Psalm 80. These must therefore be studied in the light of the original passage.

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

In this famous passage the wise man urged young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, before the evil time would draw near, when they would not have any pleasure in Spiritual and eternal things. They should, he said, do this "before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; 3 in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, 4 and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low." This language certainly is not literal. It is introduced in such a way that it is not to be recognized as simply a metaphor or a parable. The writer said one thing, but it is evident that he has a meaning running parallel with what he actually and literally says. The facts of the context indicate that this is true.

This passage has been interpreted as a prediction concerning the judgment day, or what we premillenarians call the great Tribulation Period, when God's judgments are brought upon the world. Of course, when a person takes in the entire trend of thought, he can make that idea fit into this context. But that is not the normal meaning. Again, there are those who interpret this as a reference to the day of death, which is thought of as a gathering storm that comes and takes the life of a person in old age. There are elements in the passage that seem to favor this interpretation. And yet there are still others who interpret this allegory as a reference to the coming of the late winter or early spring in Palestine, which often proves fatal to the infirm and weak. The facts may be twisted to yield such an idea. Again, there are those who think of it as a warning against old age. This certainly cannot be true; for the righteous, when they reach a ripe old age, are represented in such passages as Psalm 92:12-14 and Proverbs 16:31 as being in a glorious condition.

The suggestion has been made, with good reason, that this allegory presents a sensual old man who has spent his life in the gratification of the flesh, and who is approaching

the inevitable hour of passing out of this life. The human body is represented in this allegory as a house in which the man lives. The keepers are probably the arms; the strong men are the legs; the grinders that cease are the teeth; those that look out of the windows are the eyes; and the doors possibly are the mouth and ears. Generally speaking, this seems to be the consensus of opinion of the best commentators.

Thus the young person is urged to remember God, to come to Him and to give his life and all that he is to God in youth and to serve God throughout life to the end of the same. Such a one who does this is indeed wise. The one who fails to do this must inevitably meet the condition which is here mentioned, and against which one is warned.

### Allegories Used By Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel was very fond of the use of allegories. For instance, "chapter 16 contains an allegorical history of Israel, representing, by way of narrative, prophecy, and promise, the past, present, and future relations of God to the Chosen People, and maintaining throughout the general figure of the marriage relation." In similar imagery found in chapter 23, the prophet represented the idolatries of both the northern and the southern kingdoms, the capitals of which were Samaria and Jerusalem. Though these are allegorical representations, the meaning of the prophet is very clear. In chapter 15 Israel is represented under the allegorical picture of the wood of the vine-tree, or grapevine, which is unprofitable at its best for lumber or manufacturing purposes. But after it has been burnt and snatched from the fire, it is of less value than ordinarily. Thus God pictorially represented Israel's unprofitableness in His sight. The imagery in 19:10-14 is practically the same with little changes. In 19:1-9 the allegory of the lioness and her whelps is presented. Again we see the same method of language employed by the prophet in chapter 31 in his prediction concerning Assyria.

### **The Allegory Of The Good Shepherd And The Fold**

In John, chapter 9, appears a record of our God's healing a blind man, whom the Jews had excommunicated from the synagogue. The Pharisees became bitterly angered by our God's performing this miracle. In discussing this situation, Christ said that He had come into the world that they who see not might see, and that those who see might become blind. This saying called forth a retort from the Pharisees in the form of the following exchange of words: "Are we also blind? Christ said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth" (John 9:39-41). This situation was the occasion of our God's speaking the allegory of the Good Shepherd and the fold of the sheep.

Our God declared that those who do not enter by the door, but climb up some other way, are thieves and robbers. But the one that enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter opens. Such a one goes in, calls forth his sheep, puts them forth, and goes before them, leading them to green pastures and to still waters.

This language, spoken under the conditions set forth in chapter 9 and as an outgrowth of that which had just occurred, is obviously not to be taken literally, but is a story that is used to illustrate great and fundamental truths. As we learn from reading the first eighteen verses of John, chapter 10, Christ was and is the Good Shepherd. To him the porter, John the Baptist, opened. He went into the fold of Israel to call forth all of those who were His own. Those who constituted His own are none other than those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who receive the truth when it is presented to them. In other words, the fold of which Christ was speaking was the Jewish nation. His sheep were the truth lovers who accept Christ and His salvation. He leads them forth from Judaism into another fold, that of His own.

Christ declared clearly that He had other sheep that were not of the Jewish fold, that He would bring them and put them together, and that there would be one flock, one shepherd, and one fold. Of course this language is a reference to the honest truth-seeking Gentiles who hunger and thirst after God, and who accept the truth when it is given to them. Thus this marvelous presentation of truth is very forceful and vivid.

In connection with the thought of our God's being the Good Shepherd, one should read and study such passages as Jeremiah 23:1-4. When this scripture, however, is studied in its context, it is seen that it refers to the regathering of the honest, conscientious, truth seekers among the Jews into the great fold of Israel of the millennial kingdom of our God. The same thought is presented in Ezekiel, chapter 34. Our God, as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep is set forth in such a passage as Zechariah 11:4-14.

### **The Allegory Of Hagar And Sarah**

In Galatians 4:21-31 the Apostle Paul gave us the famous allegory of Hagar and Sarah. Hagar, the bondwoman, signifies in this comparison the old covenant, which pictorially presented Jerusalem in her bondage and slavery. On the other hand, Sarah, the free-woman, stood for the new covenant which answers to the Jerusalem which is from above, that is, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven when Christ returns to this earth and sets up His millennial kingdom. (We must not confound the Jerusalem from above here mentioned with the new Jerusalem described in Revelation, chapter 21. This latter one is the eternal Jerusalem, that comes down out of the eternal heavens and rests upon the eternal earth.)

Ishmael, the one born according to the flesh, answers to those Jews who were then in the bondage of sin and in the grip of a dead legalism. Isaac, the child of promise, answers to those who are Christians, and who are enjoying the freedom with which Christ has made us free.

Ishmael, the child after the flesh, persecuted Isaac. This fact answers to, or typified, the persecution of the believers by the legalists. The instruction which God gave to Abraham was that he should cast out the bondwoman with her son in order that the freewoman with the child of promise might enjoy the privileges which were theirs by divine grace. This fact answers to the exhortation for the children of the free-woman not to become again entangled in the yoke of bondage. These analogies are pointed out

and are very clear. It is to be noted that the Apostle stated specifically that the argument which he was making was an allegory. This constituted an argumentum ad hominem. By this type of reasoning the Apostle showed the absurdity of those legalists who were trying to force the yoke of the law upon the believers in Christ.

### **The Allegory Of The Warrior**

In Ephesians 6:10-20 the Apostle introduced his famous allegory of the Roman soldier who was armed that he might make an offensive attack against his enemy. Thus the Apostle spoke of a soldier with the various pieces of his armament and of his fighting to the finish. But in the connection in which the Apostle used this language, a person sees instantly and clearly that he was not talking about literal warfare; but that he was speaking of a spiritual conflict which the child of God has daily. Obviously the Apostle, in this passage, was speaking of the spiritual conflict that believers have daily as they fight against the powers of Satan and sin.

There are numbers of other allegories that are presented in the Scriptures. But these suffice to call our attention to their general use. Of course, the greatest allegory that is to be found in the Scriptures is that of the Song of Solomon. There is however quite a bit of controversy as to its significance. The Jews, for instance, say that it represents Messiah in His relation to Israel. Many Christians, on the other hand, see in this marvelous hymn reference to Messiah in His relation to the church—the body of believers. There are others, however, who see the relationship that exists between Christ and the individual Christian set forth by this book. There are objections to all of these interpretations. Some, on the other hand, see in this pictorial representation the divine setting forth of true love between a young man and his beloved and puts love on a high and holy plane.

It is impossible for one to be dogmatic as to the meaning of this great allegory. It is altogether possible that there may be an element of truth in each one of the interpretations just mentioned. In view of the uncertainty let us hold ourselves in a firm reserve and not become dogmatic where the Scriptures do not warrant such a positive attitude.

May we see, because of this little study in allegories, how to interpret them and thus discover the lesson that the Holy Spirit had in giving us teaching in this form.

## **THE SIMILE**

IN ALL languages there are various figures of speech which are characteristic of all developed peoples. We are told by the ancient Chinese proverb that one picture is worth ten thousand words. In other words, a person can get a clearer idea of an object if a picture is shown than he can from a lengthy verbal description of it. Both the ancient and the modern peoples have introduced figures of speech in their languages in order to make the thought more vivid and to make their narration more intelligible and accurate. Naturally, then, the simile was doubtless one of the first figures used. As its

name implies, a simile is that figure by which a comparison in its simplest form is presented. We shall in this short study notice a few instances of this figure of speech, taking an example here and there—though the Bible is full of them.

There appears a most beautiful, vivid, and graphic simile in Isaiah 55:10,11: "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." There is hardly a place upon the face of the globe where the people are not acquainted with the falling of the rain and the coming of the snow. Of course, around the equator, people do not see snow except in the high mountains. Even in the desert the rains fall at times. Hence Isaiah's comparison was indeed quite apt and vigorous. As the rain and snow fall to the earth and put moisture in the soil, that makes possible the growing of crops, so God's Word which comes down from heaven to man is the spiritual moisture that is necessary for the production of a spiritual crop in the life of those who receive it. All the moisture that comes serves a definite, specific purpose. So it is with the Word of God which comes from heaven to us, falling upon the human heart. For instance, the Apostle Paul, in speaking of the gospel, said that it is the power of God unto salvation to him that believeth. It is a savor of life unto life and death unto death (II Cor. 2:16,17). Thus we are given assurance that every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God accomplishes a definite, specific purpose—that for which it is sent.

In Jeremiah 23:29 we have another beautiful simile: "Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" This verse is taken from a long discourse which Jeremiah delivered concerning the prophets that were in Israel at that time (see Jer. 23:9-40). The false prophets and profane priests were dominating the entire situation. The prophets were giving forth their visions and their own words and were leading the people astray. Because of this fact Jeremiah foretold the coming of the tempest of Jehovah, even His wrath, that would burst forth upon the wicked nation. But Jeremiah let his auditors know that he was speaking of the end time, "In the latter days ye shall understand it perfectly." In order to impress upon the minds of the people the power of his oracle, Jeremiah declared that the Word of God was "like fire" and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ... This language is an echo of the methods that were used for breaking rock. Sometimes fire was placed upon a rock in order to soften it; then the hammer was used to complete the job of breaking it. In a manner analogous to this, declared the prophet, God's Word will break, crush, and crumble all opposition eventually. There is no word of God that is devoid of power. In fact, all the power of Almighty God backs up every utterance that He has ever spoken.

Often the prophets piled up simile upon simile and metaphor upon metaphor in their efforts to enforce the message which they had for the people. As an illustration of this practice let us notice the following quotation: "And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" (Isa. 1:8). Isaiah, in chapter 1, denounced the people for their wickedness, sins and their formal, hypocritical worship. The people had not acted with the intelligence of the dumb brutes

that know where to go to get their food and to be protected, but Israel was not that wise. Therefore, declared the prophet, Mount Zion, the city of Jerusalem, will become as a booth in a vineyard. At that time there were many robbers and marauders in the land of Israel. When the grapes became ripe, watchmen had to be placed on guard to prevent theft. After the harvest of the grapes was over, little food would be left. The situation would look desolate. The leaves would fall from the vines. There would be little or no signs of life in the vineyard. In a manner analogous to this, declared Isaiah, would Zion become in the midst of the country. In other words, he was foretelling an invasion of the country and the depredations that would be committed together with the wreckage and waste of the country. Zion, however, would be left alone in the midst of such appalling waste. This is indeed a dismal picture. Following the simile, the prophet compared Zion to a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. This lodge was similar to the booth in the vineyard and served the same purpose during the time the vines were yielding their vegetables. This figure is followed by a literal statement that Jerusalem would be as a besieged city. It is not difficult for anyone to gain a clear picture of the significance of this prophecy.

We see another very striking illustration in the following passage: "And it shall be when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold; he drinketh, but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion" (Isa. 29:8). In the first seven verses of this chapter the prophet foretold the time when the armies of the world besiege Jerusalem and the city, together with the Jewish nation, and Palestine will be crushed into the dust, figuratively speaking. Israel will be brought to her greatest extremity. From the natural standpoint it will appear to the enemies of Israel that they are just on the very verge of complete victory over God's Chosen People. At the critical moment before the Jewish resistance collapses and the nation is to be blotted from the face of the globe, Jehovah appears on the scene suddenly. This one who appears and who delivers her is none other than Christ, the Hebrew Messiah, when He comes again in glory and power to deliver His people from their enemies. Concerning those nations that will be so very confident of complete victory, the prophet declared that they would be like the hungry man who slept and dreamed of eating. When he awoke, however, he discovered that he had taken nothing—no food whatsoever, nor any drink. So it will be with those nations that besiege the Jews in Jerusalem in the very end of the age. They, figuratively speaking, will be drugged with their overconfidence in their own strength and power. No thought occurs to them except complete victory and the taking of the spoil. But when Christ appears and His feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, these enemies of Israel will be rudely awakened out of their abnormal sleep of confidence and will be as hungry as ever, not having taken any of the spoil. This simile does indeed enforce the lesson.

Turning to the New Testament, see many forceful similes. For instance, our God, in concluding His Sermon on the Mount, gave us the simile in which He compared those who hear His words and do them to the man who built his house upon the rock. When the rains fell and the floods came and beat upon that house, they were not able to destroy it because it had a firm foundation. On the other hand, those who hear His words but do not heed are compared to the man who built his house upon the sand.

When, therefore, the rains came and the floods rolled around it, it fell because it had no foundation. Thus our God in a most fitting and forceful manner concluded the Sermon on the Mount, one of the fullest and most wonderful passages that ever fell from His lips:

"24 Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: 25 and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. 26 And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; 27 and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof" (Matt. 7:24-27).

## THE METAPHOR

THE METAPHOR is one of the very common figures found throughout the Scriptures. Like the simile it is a simple comparison. The simile compares two objects, persons, or things and usually employs the word *as*, or *like*. An illustration of the simile is, He fought like a lion. I can make the same comparison, but change the manner of statement. Taking the person concerning whom I am speaking out of the class of human beings and putting him into the class of animals, I can say, "He was a lion in the fight." In using either of these figures, I am selecting that outstanding characteristic of the lion and of his fighting to emphasize the pugilistic tendencies and actions of the man concerning whom I am speaking.

Many of the figures of the metaphor type, as well as of the simile, are drawn from the animal kingdom. This is especially true in the early part of the Scriptures. For instance, Jacob, in blessing his sons, speaks of Judah in these words: "Judah is a lion's whelp." Here Judah and his descendants are thought of as young lions. Jacob takes them out of the class of human beings and thinks of them as if they were a lion. Continuing the same idea he declares, "From the prey, my son, thou art gone up" (Gen. 49:9). Judah is thought of as a lion that has seized upon his prey and killed it. After having eaten what he chooses, he goes up to his lair in some mountain fastness where he is absolutely free from all attack, of any sort. In the same chapter Jacob thinks of his various sons in terms of different animals. For instance in 49:14 he speaks of Issachar's being "a strong ass, Couching down between the sheepfolds." In verse 17 he thinks of the tribe of Dan and those descending from him as "a serpent in the way, An adder in the path. That biteth the horse's heels, So that his rider falleth backward." Then again, in verse 21, he speaks of Naphtali as "a hind let loose." Joseph is then thought of as being "a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a fountain; His branches run over the wall" (vs. 22). In speaking of Joseph, he thinks of him as a grapevine that is flourishing and very fruitful. In speaking of Benjamin and his tribe he declares that he is "a wolf that raveneth: In the morning he shall devour the prey, And at even he shall divide the spoil" (vs. 27). It is clear from all these references that, with the exception

of Joseph, Jacob draws all of his metaphors from the animal kingdom.

In Deuteronomy 32:34 Moses thinks of God as a mighty warrior who has His sword and His arrows, and who goes into battle against the enemies of Israel, conquering them and treading them under His feet. Thus he thinks of the power of God by which He will destroy both His own enemies and those of Israel as a sharp, glittering sword. Thus infinite power is thought of in the category of a literal sword with which Jehovah, the war hero, fights against His enemies and slays them. (See especially verse 14). In verse 42 he thinks of the arrows in this manner:

"I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,  
And my sword shall devour flesh."

Still in thinking of Jehovah as a warrior with His sword and with His arrows, Moses mixes his figures (a practice that is not sanctioned by modern English, but perfectly proper in the genius of the Hebrew tongue and spirit), and speaks of the arrows as if they were actual people who had drunk of blood of their victims. The same figure appears in Isaiah 34:5: "For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment."

Frequently the place where people are located by God is thought of as the nest of a fowl. For instance, in Numbers 24:21 we read of the Kenites:

"Strong is thy dwelling-place,  
And thy nest is set in the rock."

Here the mountain fastness where the Kenites dwelt is thought of as probably an eagle's nest which is put high up in the mountains far from access by men or beasts. A similar figure is used by Jeremiah concerning Edom: "As for thy terribleness, the pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that boldest the height of the hill: though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah" (Jer. 49:16). Some of the territory of the Edomites was very mountainous and rocky. For instance, the city of Petra—"the rose-red city half as old as time"—was one of their fortresses, or strongholds. This city was practically impregnable in the ancient days. Jeremiah compared it to the eagle's nest and thought of it as being in the high mountains, inaccessible to all of their enemies. Again, Obadiah, who spoke an oracle against Edom used the same figure in the following statement: "Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah" (Obadiah, vs. 4). Habakkuk used the same figure in referring to Babylon, in which expression there evidently is an allusion to the hanging gardens of Babylon: "Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!" (Hab. 2:9)

Jeremiah noted the folly of Israel in her apostatizing from God and in her adoption of

idols as objects of worship: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (2:13). A fountain of living, running water is of course far better and superior to that of the rain-water that runs into a cistern that is hewn out in the rocks. Such a cistern frequently was broken and the water was spilled. It therefore ceased to be of any benefit or profit to the men who thus constructed it. God is, therefore, in this passage thought of as being a fountain of living, running water—that never runs dry. But the idols and idol-worship are thought of as broken cisterns that cannot hold water to meet the needs of the worshiper.

Frequently the prophets spoke of certain spiritual matters in terms of the Jewish ritualism. As an example of this usage, note the following:

"I will wash my hands in innocency:  
So will I compass thine altar, O Jehovah."

Doubtless this language is based upon the Mosaic regulation that the priests before entering into the tent of meeting should bathe themselves with water, lest they die, when they would come near to the altar to minister and to burn an offering made by fire unto Jehovah (Ex. 30:20). The great laver was located between the altar of burnt offerings and the sanctuary. After the priests had made the proper sacrifices, they passed by the laver at which they bathed and cleansed themselves ceremonially and then entered the holy place. Paul was thinking in terms of such an act of approaching God in the following statement: "But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man appeared, 5 not by works *done* in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; 6 which he poured out upon us richly through Christ our Saviour (Titus 3:4-6). In Psalm 51:7 David prays,

"Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

This language is based upon and borrowed from such passages as Leviticus 14:6,7,51. In these verses Moses was speaking about the ceremonial cleansing of the leper who was pronounced clean by the priest, upon a thorough examination of his case, who noted the fact that there had disappeared from the person afflicted every sign and symptom of that dread disease. It is also possible that David's language might be an echo of the ceremonial cleansing of one who had become unclean, according to the law, and who was cleansed ceremonially by the water of purification mentioned in Numbers 19:18,19.

In I Corinthians 5:7,8, Paul speaks of Christ as being our passover, who had been slain for us. We are therefore to purge out the old leaven of wickedness and malice and are to observe the passover in the newness of the spirit and power of the life imparted to us by the Spirit of God. This language of course is based upon and borrowed from

Exodus, chapters 12 and 13. An understanding of the ancient ritualism of the passover makes intelligible Paul's language. Our God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:13) spoke of His disciples as being the salt of the earth. Salt is a preserving power, especially of meats; and of other things. Again, in verse 14, He compared the Christians to light. We are to the world what physical literal light is to the darkness.

There are literally hundreds upon hundreds of metaphors throughout the Scriptures, but these are sufficient to call attention to the general principles of understanding and interpreting such figurative language.

## **METONYMY**

THE FIGURE of *metonymy* is one that occurs very frequently in the Scriptures and should be understood if a person is to interpret the Scriptures correctly. This term is derived from two Greek words, a preposition and a noun. The former indicates *change* and the latter, *name*. Combined, they mean *with a change of name*. In other words, this figure is one which has a change of name in speaking of a certain event. There are different causes for the employment of this type of language. Regardless of the fundamental reason for the change in phraseology, the idea is a very definite one.

### Metonymy Of Cause And Effect

Let us notice a few illustrations of this type. In Job 34:6 we read:

"6 Notwithstanding my right I am *accounted* a liar;  
My wound is incurable, *though I am* without transgression."

The marginal reading of the Revised Version on the expression "My wound" is, literally, *Mine arrow*. Job thinks of himself as being pierced with an arrow, which leaves a wound. This wound is incurable, but instead of speaking of the result of the stroke, in literal language, he speaks of the weapon which is used to produce it. This is doubtless an echo of his statement in 6:4:

"4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me,  
The poison whereof my spirit drinketh up:  
The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me."

It is clear from the context that Job is not talking about literal arrows, but about something which caused him a deep spiritual wound. Again, in Luke 16:29, and 24:27, we read of Moses and the prophets, but an examination of the context of each passage shows that these men were not in view at all, but the books which they wrote. In other words, these books were the result of their labors. Hence, by the figure of metonymy, the authors of those books of the Bible are used in referring to their writings.

Once again, we see that sometimes the patriarchs are spoken of, though from the

context it is clear that their posterity is meant. For instance, in Genesis 9:27 we read: "God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem." It is quite evident from the context that Noah is speaking of the descendants or posterity of Japheth, but thinks of them in terms of their father. A similar example to this is found in Amos 7:9, where we read of the high places of Isaac and of their being made desolate. Isaac of course had been dead for centuries when Amos made this utterance, but he speaks of the posterity of Isaac in terms of their great ancestor. Along this same line is the use in the original Hebrew of the word *mouth or lip*, for that which was spoken by mouth. This does not appear to our English reader always, for the figure is rendered by the translators in literal language. Thus in the translation the real figure has disappeared. For example, in Genesis 45:21 we read: "And Joseph gave them wagons, according to the mouth of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the way." Our translators have rendered this figure by the phrase "according to the commandment of Pharaoh." Thus they have interpreted and rendered literally the figure. In their doing so they have not done violence to the Scriptures. Another example of the same type of speech is found in Numbers 3:16: "And Moses numbered them according to the word of Jehovah, as he commanded." The Hebrew says, "According to the mouth of Jehovah ..." Once again we see this same figure in Deuteronomy 17:6: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is to die be put to death; at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death." The phrase, "at the mouth of two witnesses," is literally rendered, but it is quite evident that the thought is, at or by the testimony of two or three witnesses shall the condemned one be put to death. These examples are sufficient to show us that this is a very common figure of speech and one that must be recognized and interpreted properly.

### Metonymy Of Subject And Associated Ideas

In Leviticus 19:32 we have this language: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am Jehovah." It is quite evident that the idea of gray hairs is associated with that of an old man, who is held in honor and respect. Thus the idea of hoary hairs is associated with the thought of an elderly gentleman who should be respected and honored. We find a very striking illustration of this same principle in Genesis 42:38. Joseph, who was then prime minister of Egypt, demanded that his brothers bring his brother Benjamin with them upon their coming again into the land. Jacob could not get the consent of his mind to allow Benjamin to go. He therefore said: "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he only is left: if harm befall him by the way in which ye go, then will ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol." It is clear that he uses the expression, "my gray hairs," in order to indicate that he was an old man and was on the verge of the grave. Thus he speaks of himself in terms of the associated idea of gray hairs. He felt that, by letting Benjamin go with them, probably something would befall him and the grief would be such a blow that he would succumb and never survive the ordeal. In the same general type of this figure is that which is mentioned in Exodus 12:21: "Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill the passover." It is clear that the passover lamb is here meant, but there was associated with this lamb the historical occurrence the night when Israel left the land of Egypt. On that eventful night Israel killed a lamb which had a symbolic significance. Blood was sprinkled on the doorposts

and lintels of every Hebrew home. God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." In every house of Egypt where there was no blood, the death angel slew the firstborn. Thus the lamb that was slain by each Hebrew family which was large enough for consuming one was called the passover. That ceremony was typical of Christ, the Lamb of God whose blood takes away the sin of the world. In Matthew 3:5 we have this language: "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about the Jordan, ... " Here we are told that Jerusalem and Judaea and certain sections round about the Jordan went out to hear John preach and to be baptized. It is clear that the people dwelling in those places are referred to in terms of the places where they lived. Again, we may look at Psalm 23:5: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Here the psalmist thinks of God as a great Host who prepares a feast of good things for him to eat and does this in the presence of his enemies. But he speaks of the food which is set upon the table in terms of the table itself. Thus in this figure the psalmist spoke of God's vindicating him and taking his part in the presence of those who were his enemies. Again we have another example similar to this one in I Corinthians 10:21: "Ye cannot drink the cup of God, and the cup of demons: ye cannot take of the table of God, and of the table of demons." People do not partake of the cup and eat of the table. They drink the contents of the cup and eat the food that is placed upon the table. In this instance, however, reference is made to the observance of what is called "the God 's supper," remembering God and His death, burial, and resurrection until He comes, by partaking of the elements constituting the supper. We see the same figure in such an expression as "for we were once darkness, but are now light in God..." (Eph. 5:8). The idea of darkness and of light is associated with people. But since Paul was talking to Christians, he spoke of their being associated with light and of their being light and not darkness. Once again, in Psalm 45:2, the writer, seeing the Messiah in vision, said, "Grace is poured into thy lips." By this he meant that there was proceeding out of the Messiah's mouth the message of grace and truth.

## **Metonymy Of The Symbol And The Thing Signified**

In Isaiah 22:32 God through Isaiah spoke to Eliakim saying, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." Here the key is the symbol of authority and power. Hence God spoke of the authority in terms of the symbol. The same thing is true in Matthew 16:19 of the language to the Apostle Peter: I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." God is using the imagery of a city with its walls and gates. From times immemorial the keys have been thought of as symbols of the authority of the one in control of the city. Hence God spoke of the authority that He would grant to Peter in terms of this common symbol. Once again, in Ezekiel 21:26 we have the same figure; "Thus saith God: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown; this shall be no more the same; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high." The crown here stands for the authority of King Messiah. Finally, we find the same language in Isaiah 2:4: "And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat

their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Here the sword and spears symbolize, or signify, the weapons of war. The plowshares and pruning-hooks represent the agricultural implements. It is clear, then, that this is a figure of metonymy and the idea is unmistakable.

If we will be very careful in the study of the language of the Bible, noting the various figures of speech and interpreting them correctly, the Bible will have a vital, forceful message for us.