

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Copyright © 1992

For years I have looked for a good course to use to teach my children how to study the Bible for themselves. I never could find just what I was looking for so I decided I'd have to put something together myself. I patterned it after the way I do my own Bible study and sermon preparation. I've used this several times, with children and adults, and find it conveys the basic information needed to make Bible study fun, easy and understandable. The analogy used throughout is that of eating: feeding on the Bible. This makes it more understandable.

**OBSERVATION
INTERPRETATION
INTERPRETING HISTORY
APPLICATION
INTERPRETING DOCTRINE (TEACHING)
INTERPRETING PSALMS & POETRY
INTERPRETING PARABLES & PROPHECY
CHARTS
INTERPRETING TYPES
INTERPRETING NUMBERS SYMBOLICALLY
INTERPRETING PROVERBS, PEOPLE & MUSIC**

JERRY SCHMOYER
252 W. State Street
Doylestown, Pa 18901
215-348-8086
jschmoye@ptd.net



HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part I - OBSERVATION By Jerry Schmoyer

For years I have looked for a good course to use to teach my children how to study the Bible for themselves. I never could find just what I was looking for so I decided I'd have to put something together myself. I patterned it after the way I do my own Bible study and sermon preparation. Last year I used this with my own children, and in April taught it at our home school retreat. Presently I am using it with adults and children in our church Sunday evenings going through Galatians. Each month this year I will include in the newsletter an article from that series.

Some time ago I read a story about a man who died in deep poverty. In fact, he died from lack of proper food and housing. Among his possessions was found a Bible and in the Bible thousands of dollars were stuffed. The Bible was left to him by his parents -- but he never opened it! How often we are like that man -- our soul is starving and we are living in spiritual poverty while the provision for our needs lies between the covers of our Bible. We must get it and use it.

Suppose you want to sit down and study your Bible. You open to a passage and read a few verses, wondering how to begin. "How does that man in the pulpit find the things he talks about? I never see those things when I read the Bible," you say. In frustration and guilt you read a few more verses, check the footnotes, then go answer the telephone. Thus ends your Bible study for the day. It's like a miner walking along looking for gold nuggets or diamonds lying on the ground. Usually he comes up empty! It doesn't have to be that way! There is no quick, easy, magical formula to get instant insight into a passage. Like anything else worthwhile, it takes work. However that work must be purposeful and worthwhile or nothing good will come of it. That is where this series comes in.

My purpose here is to provide some practical help for those who are motivated to improve their Bible study skills. This certainly isn't the only way, but it is one way of study. As I see it, Bible study is broken down into three main steps: Observation ("What do I see?"), Interpretation ("What does it mean?") and Application ("How should I respond?"). The Bible provides spiritual nourishment for our souls as food provides physical nourishment for our bodies (I Peter 2:2; Psalm 119:103; Hebrews 5:13-14). There is a close similarity between partaking of physical and spiritual food, also. First you thoroughly analyze your food (cut and chew), then break it down so it can be used (digestion) and finally apply it (used by bones and muscles). We will develop this in future articles. First observation.

Before you can swallow and use food that you are eating you must first chew it in bite-size sections. In fact, the better you chew your food the more you will benefit from it. Someone has said we suffer from "habit-focus," we see only what we have seen before. That is where the work part of Bible study comes in. You must train yourself to see what you haven't seen before! A doctor will closely examine you, gather facts, and ask questions before interpreting them and coming up with a plan of action. Likewise a detective needs to look for things that aren't at first obvious. The same is true of a scientist. For all of these, the final application is only as good as the early observation. The better the discovery period, the more accurate and helpful the conclusion. The same is true in Bible study. Too often we skip the observation period and right away try to find out what it means and how it applies. This always leads to shallow, surface results that leave us thinking we can't get anything out of the Bible. Dig!

So then, how are we to observe the Bible as we study it? Let me give you some steps:

1. LOOK AT THE WHOLE The first thing you do when food is placed before you is to look at the whole, get an overview of what is there. When you feed on God's Word do the same thing. Read the passage or book through in one sitting. Do this several times for a short passage. Don't do anything

but read it over and over. Do this for several days. It's like looking at a favorite picture or listening to a favorite song, you seem to notice new things each time. You never get it all the first time!

2. WRITE DOWN QUESTIONS When you first see that table of food you ask yourself what you like, how was it made, is it good for me, etc. The same with Bible study. As you read keep a paper and pencil handy. After the first few times questions will start coming to mind, things you don't understand and would like answers for. Write them down! In fact, try to write down as many questions as you can. Don't worry about answering them now, most will answer themselves as you go along. However if you don't ask the question you will never notice the answer when it comes floating by and will miss it! You won't answer questions you haven't asked, so make sure you are thorough, creative, and patient in writing down questions. Ask yourself, "If Jesus were here, what would I ask Him about this word/verse?" I cannot overemphasize the importance of developing well the skill of asking the right questions! Don't let your questions get in a rut either. They should include the following types of questions:

DEFINITION - What does a word or phrase mean? "What was a deacon?"

REASON - Think in cause-effect terms. Ask WHY something happened. "Why did Jesus come to earth?" Lk. 19:10

PROCESS - Ask HOW it happened. "How do we know about God's power?" Ephesians 1:19-20

DESCRIPTION - Collect details about an attribute, person, place or idea. "What was Isaiah like?"

COMPARISON - Look for differences or similarities between people, objects, events or aspects of the verse. "What is the difference between law and grace?" John 1:17 Beware of quick, standard answers. Dig deeper. Probe!

CLASSIFICATION - Put ideas, events, attributes, etc., into categories. "What kinds of people followed Jesus?"

PERSUASION - Analyze a point of view and give proofs for or against it. "Why do you believe Jesus is God?"

3. DIVIDE IT INTO PARTS After you look at the whole and start asking questions (keep adding questions the whole time, you never stop writing questions down) then you divide it into parts. From the food on the table you divide it into portions and put some on your plate. You further divide that into portions to eat -- forkfuls. You can't shove it all into your mouth at once! With your Bible passage start breaking it into major sections. These can then be broken into subsections. Eventually you will come up with a rough outline. This you will be constantly changing and improving on, but now is the time to start. An outline gives you word labels to make large sections easier to grasp and manage. It forces you to think through the flow of the passage and discover the relationships of the various parts. It makes you read between the lines, thus improving your observation. Of course you keep adding to your list of questions.

4. LOOK CAREFULLY AT THE DETAILS Now that you have the food broken down on your plate and are starting to eat it, you must make sure you chew it thoroughly. Neither too little nor too much chewing gets the best results. Like with food, you will have to learn how much to chew each mouthful of Scripture you work with. Don't try to put too much in your mouth at once -- that is why it is good to outline and break it down into smaller segments. Thoroughly work each small segment -- looking closely at everything. Let me make some suggestions to help you here. Try to look at it as if you are seeing the passage for the first time. Suppose you never read a Bible before, or a missionary just brought you one, or you are a child who doesn't have training in the Scriptures. Pretend you are teaching this passage to a group of new believers, what questions would they ask? This will add a freshness to your study. Another way to accomplish this is to rewrite the passage in your own words. This can be extremely helpful, for it will quickly show you how much you don't know about the

passage! But remember, until you discover what you don't know (write those questions down!) you won't be able to come up with answers for it! You won't get all your questions answered -- no one does. However as your study continues you will find the answers to most of them just come as you study. In future articles I'll give you helps on how to find answers to questions that need outside resources (history, culture, background, etc.). Be patient. Think of a child learning to eat. He doesn't do it perfectly the first time and neither will you -- just don't give up! Try to spend even a few minutes a day at it and you'll be amazed at the results!

Butterfly's and bees both live off pollen. The butterfly just skims the surface of the flower while the bee digs deep. When winter comes the butterfly dies, but the bee has a supply to last through the winter. Be a bee -- dig deep!

ASSIGNMENT: Now practice what you have just read. Do it with your children or whole family. You aren't teaching them (i.e. spoon-feeding them answers). Together you are discovering the process to use to feed yourselves. Start with Bible history (Gen.-Esther.; Mt.-Acts). Start several, then go back in future months for the next steps.

MAKE IT FUN Play some observation games. Show them a picture, cover it and ask them questions about it. This will train them to look at the picture in a new way. Do the same with Bible verses. Play detective with a Bible passage, looking for clues together. Talk about the difference between "looking" and "seeing."

ALWAYS REMEMBER TO PRAY BEFORE STARTING

ORGANIZING YOUR WORK Buy 2 inexpensive (used) Bibles of the translation you like best. Cut out the passage you are working on and glue a few verses in the middle of a blank 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Wait until you do your outline, you can break it up better then. Write the reference in the upper right hand corner. Use all the white space around it to record notes. Don't put your questions on the paper, just the answers! Color code it, do anything you'd like with it. Years later you can refer to it, add more notes to it, use it to teach from, etc.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION A full set of handouts (\$5) and/or VCR tape (\$7.50) is available.

NEXT ISSUE we will look at interpreting passages about history.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part II - INTERPRETING HISTORY By Jerry Schmoyer

Last newsletter I wrote about the first step in Bible study - Observation. This month we will go over the next stage. There will be about 6 parts in this series until it is completed. If you would like a copy of part I, send a SASE to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State, Doylestown, Pa. 18901.

Do you know that many men paid with their lives to give you the privilege of interpreting the Bible for yourself? Just owning a Bible in your own language is a privilege that not many have enjoyed through the centuries. God has given us this privilege to use. It is our responsibility to study His Word and learn it.

The first step in studying the Bible is OBSERVATION - learning to look carefully, seeing details you overlooked before. This is like chewing food. The better your food is chewed the easier it is for your body to digest it. Digestion is like the second step in Bible study - INTERPRETATION. Observation gathers the details: facts, questions, insights. Interpretation brings meaning and organization to these observations and answers to your questions. You must continue to ask and write down questions during this stage, but now you start to answer your questions. You don't start by going through your list of questions one by one, but as you interpret you will find many of the answers are there. If you would have not asked the question you wouldn't have recognized the answer, it would have passed by unnoticed. With the question in your mind you will pick up the answer as it comes along in your interpreting. For a doctor this is the diagnosis stage when conclusions are drawn. The same is true of the detective and scientist who must make sense out of the information they have gleaned.

How do we do this in Bible study? The key to correct understanding of the Bible is to put yourself in the place of the writer and read his mind - what did he have in mind? Why did he write this? What would he say it means? The science that covers this is called "HERMENEUTICS." Whole libraries are filled with books on this subject. We will summarize some of the most important principles to use here.

LET SCRIPTURE INTERPRET SCRIPTURE The Bible cannot contradict itself. When interpreting the Bible, your conclusion must be consistent with all other Scripture. Because God is the author of the Bible, His message is in complete harmony and agreement with itself. To do this:

1. LET THE BIBLE BE ITS OWN INTERPRETER Don't jump to wild conclusions or read in what you assume or have heard. Look at each word clearly and objectively, as if reading it for the first time. Interpret the Bible in its natural sense according to the rules of grammar. The meaning of a word is tied to the sentence by the rules of grammar. Analyze it as you would an English grammar assignment.

2. TAKE THE WORD IN ITS USUAL SENSE The Bible is literature and as such words must be taken at their face value. It is to be interpreted literally. This is how Jesus understood the Old Testament. He literally interpreted it down to a comma (in Luke 4:14-30, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2) and verb tense ("I Am" in Matthew 22:23-33). This means we aren't to look for hidden, 'spiritualized' meanings everywhere. To the other extreme, we aren't to take it so literally we miss what the writer had in mind. For instance, "hot dogs" can mean one thing in a literal sense and another in its normal, usual sense. Use your common sense in determining the meaning. We will talk about figurative language later, so don't worry about that for now. Just read the Bible as you would a letter from a friend!

3. TAKE THE WORD IN THE SENSE WHICH THE WHOLE SENTENCE INDICATES If a word by itself is unclear (like "hot dogs"), look at the sentence it is used in and let that help determine the meaning. Read the meaning out of the sentence, not into it. Again, put yourself in the writer's place and read his mind.

4. TAKE THE WORD IN THE SENSE WHICH THE CONTEXT INDICATES If you can't tell for sure what a word means by its sentence then look at the whole paragraph or chapter. Keep in mind the historical times in which the writer lived. Customs, culture and daily life were much different then than now. Books like *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* by Fred H. Wight (Moody Press). This is very important if you are to accurately put yourself in the writer's mind. Studying life then can be a very rich and rewarding part of your home school. I videotaped our short series on Life in Bible Times with our local support group. You can buy (\$7.50 for VCR & \$5 for handouts) or borrow it.

5. THE OBJECT OR PURPOSE OF THE WHOLE BOOK MUST BE CONSIDERED You should have a feel of this from your observation time of reading, outlining, titling, etc. Understanding the mood, the tone, the spirit of the passage is important, too. The atmosphere is intangible but very real. Is there excitement, despair, awe, thanksgiving, urgency, joy, humility, tenderness - whatever? Sometimes there is a variety of swift changes within a passage, too. Today mood music on TV communicates a lot. In the Bible you must read this between the lines, but it is there if you look. With practice and relying on God's Spirit, you can certainly 'hear' it. This is a subjective gut feeling, not a science. Often women are better at this than men. It is important to consider.

6. CONSULT PARALLEL PASSAGES This is a last resort, not the first thing to do. This is when the cross references in your Bible come in handy - but not before you have done what is listed above! When using references, first of all look at those by the same writer, then those in the same historical frame, and last the rest.

These general rules apply to all interpretation. Next we will look at some specific principles that apply to interpreting one type of Bible literature: history.

INTERPRETING HISTORY

History refers to those portions of the Bible which give information about people, places, events, groups or time periods. Genesis through Ruth and Matthew through Acts are mainly history. Today we have historical books and novels and biographies.

First of all, let's go back to our analogy of eating. After chewing, food is digested. The mouth and saliva start breaking down the food into small pieces, but the digestive system breaks it down into something useful for the rest of the body. Various foods are broken down by different enzymes. Some foods digest quickly (like carbohydrates) and others slowly (like fats). The process differs for different kinds of foods. So it is with Bible study. Interpreting history is different than doctrine, or poetry, or prophecy. It is a bit of a different process for each. We will look at these one at a time. We will first look at the easiest to digest - history.

History can be thought of as being the food group called FATS. It is composed of dairy products like milk, ice cream, yogurt, butter and cooking oils. These take longest for the body to digest, and to really understand all about Bible history takes much time because of the different customs and historical events. Fats give our bodies reserves to fall back on when needed. Lessons from history give guidance, encouragement, precedents, examples and principles for us to fall back on and use when necessary. Facts are basic to health and are the first thing babies need and eat. Learning basic Bible stories is fundamental for new Christians. Fats cushion and insulate and allow

general good health. Knowing the historical events and lives of people in the Bible does this in our Christian lives. Fats are often mixed in with other foods, and history is in other sections of literature, too - like teaching (protein) and poetry (carbohydrates).

Use the principles above to determine the meaning of works in historical sections. Bible dictionaries (such as Unger's Bible Dictionary) can offer excellent, easy-to-find helps. To help you in your own study, though, it is good to use the following questions to help you find answers yourself:

WHO is involved?

HOW did it happen?

WHEN in history did it happen?

HOW did it affect them?

WHERE was it located?

WHY did it happen?

WHAT happened?

WHY is it recorded for us?

WHAT was life like then?

Sometimes it can be very helpful to look up information about the person, place or time in a concordance to see what other passages may throw light on the one you are studying. If there are many passages about your study area go through them all. Keep a list of all the passages say (good or bad) and put the reference behind the fact. Then divide the list into positive and negative lists. Try to further group the facts within each column. Write a sentence summarizing your findings in each group. Combine these to form a paragraph about each column.

Remember to keep adding to your list of questions all the time. Periodically go back through them and answer the ones you can. Keep doing this throughout.

Now its up to you to get to work applying this information. There is no substitute for hard work! Find a nice easy historical passage (birth of Jesus for example), do your observation, interpret any words you aren't sure of, and answer the questions above about the passage. Douse it thoroughly in prayer, and expect a thrill - you'll get one!

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part III - APPLICATION By Jerry Schmoyer

This is the third part in our series on How To Study the Bible. Part I was about Observation, the first step. Part II was about Interpretation, looking specifically at interpreting historical passages. There will be approximately 6 parts in the whole study. If you would like a copy of part I and/or II send a SASE to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W> State St., Doylestown, Pa. 18901. Comments on this series would be greatly appreciated!

OBSERVATION is the first step in Bible study. Read and reread as if you are seeing the passage for the first time. Outline it, write it in your own words, keep a list of questions going. If you rush this step your results will suffer!

INTERPRETATION comes next. Last time we looked at general principles of interpretation and some specific ones to help in understanding history passages. In future articles we will look at interpreting doctrine, poetry, prophecy and parables. In this article we will go over the final step, after you have interpreted the passage.

APPLICATION is the final step in Bible study. After the living food of God's Word is chewed (observation) and digested (interpretation) it is then sent to various parts of the body that need it. Some vitamins, minerals, calories or whatever go to the muscles, others to the bones, still others to whatever organ is in need of it. So it is with God's Word. The purpose of studying and learning it is to apply it to areas of your life where needed.

The digestion and application of food, as well as Bible truth, is a gradual but continual process. How much you get out of it depends on how well you chewed and digested it. You can't swallow food whole and expect it to do your body much good. Unfortunately many people read a passage and then think about how it applies to them. They don't come up with much, for they have neglected the first two steps. Much of what happens after swallowing is out of your hands. Your body does it. Much of how the Bible is applied is out of your hands, too. Only God's Spirit can really make it work in your life. We must be willing to submit to what God teaches us.

Thus application is very, very important - in its proper order. It is the culmination of the first two steps. From it comes spiritual health and strength - the goal of all eating. Application asks and answers the questions: "How should I respond?", "What should I do with what I've learned?" During the observation and interpretation stages of Bible study you study the Word of God; in application, the Word of God studies you! In the application process you look for principles, suggestions, commands, etc., that can affect your behavior and make you more like Jesus.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Carefully APPLY the passage, looking for any:

COMMAND TO OBEY

EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

CHALLENGE TO HEED

SIN TO AVOID

TEACHING TO LEARN

ACTION TO TAKE
SOMETHING TO **PRAY** ABOUT
PROMISE TO CLAIM
DIFFICULTY TO EXPLORE
PORTION TO MEMORIZE

AN ACCEPTABLE APPLICATION

For an application to be true it must meet the following criteria:

1. It must be TRUE TO YOUR INTERPRETATION. It cannot be forced in, read in, taught in another passage but not this one, or something the original writer would not completely agree with.
2. It must AGREE WITH THE REST OF THE BIBLE. It cannot contradict other Bible passages.
3. It must be SPECIFIC AND MEASURABLE, as all good goals must be. "Be a better person" is not a good application. "Be more patient with my daughter when she interrupts supper preparation, explaining to her why I can't listen to her right then," is a good application.

LEARN TO OBEY

One problem Christians continually face is that of having more abstract knowledge of God than concrete experience with Him. Obedience is the objective of Bible study, and the best student is the one who regularly applies the principles of Scripture to his or her daily life. If we constantly fail to apply the Bible to our lives, God may turn off the flow of insight. Why should He instruct those who don't want to obey? Will He continue to reveal deep truths to those who reject them? This truth is expressed simply and seriously in this couplet:

Light obeyed increaseth light,
Light rejected bringeth night

GOD'S WORD STUDIES YOU

The better you know your own strengths and weaknesses, the more sensitive you'll be to Scriptures that speak to your own areas of need. Then, as you study the Bible, you'll find yourself saying, "Yes, I do seem to have a problem with _____. " If not, you'll find yourself always applying what you study to others, thinking of who could use this passage, and not applying it to yourself. Are you aware of what your strong and weak areas are? It would be good, in your Bible study notebook, to keep a list. This is your own private list. Add to it as you discover more about yourself. If you have never done this before please do it now!

MY PERSONAL STRENGTHS

MY PERSONAL WEAKNESSES

Pray through both lists. In the strengths list, mark one you haven't been using much lately and ask God to help you use it. In the weaknesses list, mark the one you feel God would first have you work on and improve. By doing this you will find applications that apply to you and not just to people around you. Your physical body knows its weak areas and that is its first priority in applying digested material. The same must happen spiritually.

RECORDING YOUR APPLICATIONS

Write your applications down on your Bible study papers - either on a separate sheet or with the verses they come from. I save the color red for this, so it jumps right off the page and I don't miss it. Do it any way you like (highlight it, underline it, box it in, put a star by it, etc.) -- just do it!

As God works in your life, record what happens and when this can be a real encouragement for you and others, it will increase your faith in God, and it can be very helpful in praising God. A spiritual diary is something good to get your children started doing, too.

KEEP YOUR LIST OF APPLICATIONS WITH YOUR DAILY DEVOTIONAL MATERIALS SO YOU CAN PRAY ABOUT THEM EACH DAY. EXCHANGE LISTS WITH OTHERS IN YOUR FAMILY SO ALL CAN PRAY FOR EACH OTHER.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part IV - INTERPRETING DOCTRINE (TEACHING) By Jerry Schmoyer

This is the fourth in a series of articles to help children and adults better study the Bible. Part I covered Observation, Part II was about Interpreting Historical Passages, and Part III was about Application. For a copy of any or all of them send a SASE to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State Street, Doylestown, Pa. 18901.

In previous articles we have talked about how to study the Bible by three steps: Observation, Interpretation, and Application. We have looked at these, one each, in the first three articles. For the next three, though, we will go back and spend more time in Interpretation, for this is where people usually need help. We have already seen how to go about interpreting History sections, this time we will talk about interpreting Teaching (doctrine) sections.

Teaching, or doctrine, refers to any communication of ideas from one person to another. That is why I prefer the word Teaching. This would include Jesus' teaching, Paul's epistles, the preaching of the Old Testament prophets, and many other portions of Scripture. Literature today of that type would include study books, sermons, how-to books, lectures, educational programs on TV, and non-fiction books of any kind. It is quite a large area, and one that is very important for Bible study. It is the most direct means of communicating truth from God to man through His Word.

To continue our food analogy, teaching can be thought of as the food group **PROTEIN**. It is composed of products like meat, fish, poultry, cheese, eggs and beans. Protein is necessary for growth of tissue. Learning the teaching of the Bible is essential for spiritual growth. Protein is also necessary for repair and maintenance of the body. We need to keep falling back on what we have learned from the bible's teaching to repair and maintain our own Christian life. Learning what the Bible teaches is very important to spiritual health. Protein is key to a strong structure of bones and muscles and that is the framework for our bodies and all they do. The teaching sections of the Bible also provide for our spiritual bones and muscles, the inner structure for our Christian life.

MAIN IDEA

One of the most important steps in interpreting a teaching section is to discover the main idea of the section. In effect, this is what you are doing when you outline and then title a section. The title should summarize the main idea. That is very helpful and important for all kinds of Bible literature, but for teaching sections it is a real must. Think of a good sermon or Bible study you heard recently, or a book you enjoyed -- you should be able to summarize it in one or two sentences. Now think of one which never got ahold of you and still remains fuzzy -- there was no one main idea. Remember this when you are teaching or communicating. Always write down and know your main idea, what you want to convey. Stick to what your main idea is and don't add too much extra information. This is what makes the difference between a good teacher and a not-so-good teacher. The Bible teaching is done by good teachers, and they always have a main idea. If you don't read the writer's mind and discover it, you won't be able to correctly interpret the rest of the passage correctly. Remember, you have direct access to the very mind of the One who wrote it all, so stay in constant contact during this process through prayer. Do not go further in your Bible study until you can write the main idea of a passage in as few words as possible. You can and probably will adjust and fine tune this as you go, but you must work hard to make sure this is straight. It is the foundation for all you will build as you study the passage - make it true!

TOPICAL STUDIES

Sometimes you will come upon a subject in a passage you would like to study in more detail, or instead of studying a passage to begin with you want to study a topic. That is an exciting, informative, excellent way to study.

First you must collect passages about your subject. You can do this using a topical index (I have one I put together, and there are others available in print, Naves is good, so is the Thompson Bible, the back of Strong's Concordance is excellent, too). You can also use cross-references in your Bible or a concordance, although these sometimes become hit-and-miss. You can do this for a person as well as a subject, although that is more of a history study.

Next, list all the facts you can find in each passage about your subject, putting the reference behind it. Make sure you do your observation exercises for each, looking at it as if for the first time, writing questions to answer about the subject you are studying, etc. Make a separate entry for each individual fact.

Then group the facts with others which relate to it. If a group is too large break it down into smaller groups. This synthesizing of the material makes it useable.

After you have done this, write a paragraph as well as a summary statement for each group. You can put the various groups in order of progression or outline them.

Finally combine your paragraphs into a paper or outline which includes all the information you have written about the subject. Make sure you have a summary sentence for the whole subject. This will be the main idea.

WORD STUDIES

When you come upon a key word, a hard or confusing word, or just a very interesting word, it can be very useful to do a word study on it. First go through the general principles of interpretation (normal sense, use in sentence, use in context, purpose of writer, etc.). Do this carefully and thoroughly. Like in anything else, your final product is only as good as what you put into it.

To do a complete study, though, you need to go beyond this. How much you can do here depends on what reference tools you have. If you have a concordance like Strong's or Young's that will give helpful information about the word, its root, and where it is used. Looking at all the uses can be very helpful. Another helpful book is *Vines' Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Some commentaries do a good job of explaining words (like John MacArthur), although use of commentaries can become a crutch that can undermine your Bible study. For now don't use them.

PRINCIPLES OF OBSERVATION

As you interpret teaching, always be aware of certain ways of writing that tip you off to what is going on in a writer's mind. These are the same as if a writer would highlight, underline, or start things in his writing and are very helpful in interpreting passages.

1. LOOK FOR THINGS THAT ARE **COMPARED**. It is natural to describe an object or idea by comparing it with something similar or by giving an illustration. Make note of such comparisons and illustrations and determine how they bring out the author's message. "AS, LIKEWISE, ALSO, LIKE" are such words.

2. LOOK FOR THINGS THAT ARE **CONTRASTED**. Contrast is the association of opposites. Our minds can recall contrasts better than comparisons. "BUT, YET, ALTHOUGH, OTHERWISE, MUCH MORE" are words to look for.

3. MAKE NOTE OF THINGS THAT ARE **REPEATED**. In order to impress a point, a teacher will repeat words, phrases or ideas - maybe in the same or maybe in different ways. Note these carefully.

4. MAKE NOTE OF **LOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS**. Whether we write or speak, we often give commands, advice or warnings and then back them up with reasons, purposes, proofs or results. Make special note of such admonitions because they are very important. Look for cause and effect relationships. A writer may describe a condition and then give the reason for it. Train yourself to look for *BECAUSE* or *FOR* (shows reason or result), *IN ORDER THAT* (gives the purpose), *THEREFORE* (summary, result, conclusion), *IF* (condition which requires action).

5. MAKE NOTE OF **GENERALIZATIONS**. Noting the arrangement of the material is important. Sometimes the author makes a general statement and then explains it with an example or illustration. Or he may list a series of ideas and then summarize them with a general statement.

6. MAKE NOTE OF **PROGRESSIONS IN THOUGHT**. Take special note of lists, looking for how they relate and build on each other.

7. MAKE NOTE OF THE USE OF **QUESTIONS**. An author may use a question to introduce a problem or for a summary challenge.

8. MAKE NOTE OF **GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS**. Verb tense, prepositions, and all that goes with grammar is very important in Bible study. God picked each word and tense for a reason. Use your Bible passage for a grammar lesson. Watch for words like *HOWEVER*, *YET*, *LIKEWISE*, *TRULY*, *FINALLY*, *BEHOLD*, etc.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part V - INTERPRETING PSALMS & POETRY By Jerry Schmoyer

This is the fifth of approximately 6 articles on how to study the Bible for homeschooling families. So far we have covered observation, interpretation of history and doctrine (teaching), and application. For a copy of any or all of these send a SASE to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State Street, Doylestown, Pa., 18901. Any comments you may have on this series would be greatly appreciated and help me improve it. Thanks!

We hear a lot about carbohydrates today. Athletes load up on them before times of high output. We all need them. They supply energy for our bodies, and they are enjoyable and tasty eating. Grains, fruits and vegetables provide carbohydrates. Simple carbohydrates are among the quickest and easiest foods to digest and use. They are fast-working and productive.

God Word, our spiritual food, has something similar. There is a type of literature that is enjoyable and appealing to all. It is easy to digest and provides quick spiritual energy. Spiritual meals are made more exciting by it. It is **POETRY**. Poetry is one of the quickest and easiest forms of Bible literature to understand and apply. It is full of emotion and life and speaks to our hearts. It provides the quick boost of spiritual energy we sometimes need. Poetical portions of the Bible include Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Song of Solomon. There is hardly a book without at least some poetry in it. Much of what the Old Testament prophets had to say was in poetical form. Much of it gets lost when the Bible is translated into English. Still, there is a lot left for us to enjoy. You'll never run out of this food item!

When interpreting poetry some of the skills already covered must be used. The **QUESTIONS** covered with interpreting history are important to use (Who, When, Where, What, How, Why). Look closely for **STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS**, too (Contrast, Comparison, Repetition, etc.). Doing a **TOPICAL STUDY** or **WORD STUDY** is very useful and rewarding when studying poetry.

One literary device of special value in understanding poetry is the use of **FIGURES OF SPEECH**. While these pop up in all forms of literature, they are especially common in poetry so we are considering them here. I refer to these as the **FIGURE FAMILY** and use pictures of people (from a child's coloring book) with the names on to help children understand them. Let me introduce you to the Figure Family.

RHODA RHETORICAL is the grandmother of the family, the one always asking questions. The questions she asks aren't for an answer but to produce an effect. "Is Christ divided?" is an example. Also Gal. 1:10; 3:2

PAPA PARABLE is the storyteller in the family. He tells stories about natural happenings, but always with the purpose of teaching a spiritual truth by it. Aesop also did this. Jesus told many parables. We will look at them more closely in the next article.

ALICE ALLEGORY, the mother of the family, also tells stories. In hers, however, there is not one point but many parallels. Her stories are to teach something spiritual from each physical event recorded. Pilgrims Progress is an allegory, so is the Christian's Armor in Ephesians. 6:11ff.

TILLIE TYPE is the oldest child in our family. As a teenager she likes to act out, do impersonations. However she is shy and does them behind a screen so all you can see is her shadow. A type is a deed, person or object that, which really happening, also teaches about a

coming deed, person or object. It is the shadow which comes before the object. Jonah, Joseph, the serpent of bronze lifted up, in fact everything about the Tabernacle - all are types.

MELODY METAPHOR is the young daughter, but you find her everywhere, getting into everything. She copies what her mother does, but in smaller form. She doesn't say much, just acts out in simple form. A metaphor is a figure based on some similarity between two objects, things or beings. One is characterized by what is true of the other. Jesus used this when He said, "I am the door," or "Go tell that fox Herod...".

SCOTTY SYNECDOCHE is one of the twin boys. A synecdoche is when part is put for the whole or the whole for the part. "Drink this cup" is an example, for it is the contents of the cup which are referred to.

MICKEY METONYMY is the other twin. He puts the cause for the effect or the sign or symbol for the reality it indicates. "They have the prophets," or "He will judge the circumcision" are examples. You can see these twins are very similar, yet a bit different. Don't worry if you can't tell them apart at first, many people have that problem.

SAMMY SIMILIE is the baby. He is the smallest in the family and his activity is easily discovered. A similie compares two objects with the words *AS* or *LIKE*. Look for these two and you have a similie. "All we like sheep have gone astray."

PERCIVAL PERSONIFICATION is the uncle, a real character who likes to dress up and pretend he is something entirely different. Personification attributes actions of people to inanimate objects. "O death, where is your sting."
"The mountains leapt for joy, the hills clapped their hands."

HEFTY HYPERBOLE is the family dog - a bit overweight ("Hefty"). A hyperbole represent something as being much bigger than it really is. "We were as grasshoppers in their sight."

LITTLE LITOTES is the other family pet - a cat. She is very skinny. A litote is an understatement of truth for the sake of emphasis. Often there is sarcasm involved. "Wisdom will die with you."

Now that you have been introduced, look for this family and recognize them when you meet them. You'll even find them coming out of your own mouth! For practice look up some of the following verses: Proverbs 1:20; 12:19; Luke 13:32; 18:1-7; I Cor. 4:8; Isaiah 55:9, 12; Romans 7:1-6; 3:30; Judges 12:7; Heb. 1:14, 10:20; Deut. 1:28; Galatians 1:10; 5:1; 4:14, 21-31; 1:18; 18:25; Num. 21:6-9; Matthew 13:3-8; 24:42; 5:13; Genesis 18:25; John 3:14; 6:51-63.

TYPES OF PARALLELISM

Since Psalms are part of poetry, it is necessary to look at some specific forms of poetry involved in them. One is the way Jewish poetry rhymes. It does not rhyme words, like English poetry, or all would be lost in translation. God knew that, so His poetry rhymes thoughts/ideas. It is really neat when you get the idea of it. Basically it is the relationship of the 2nd line to the 1st that makes their poetry 'rhyme.'

These apply wherever there is Hebrew poetry, not just the book of Psalms.

FIRST LINE REPEATED

ITERATIVE = in the same or nearly same words (Psalm 93:3)

SYNONYMOUS = repeated in different words to reinforce a thought (Psalm 24:1)

INTROVERTED = members are placed in reverse order (Psalm 5:7)

ALTERNATIVE = members follow one another by turns, 1st line being parallel to 3rd, 2nd to 4th (Ps. 103:11-12).

FIRST LINE FINISHED

CLIMATIC = 2nd line completes the 1st (Ps. 29:1)

SYNTHETIC = 2nd line explains, adds to first (Ps 19:7-9)

OPPOSITE OF THE FIRST LINE

ANTITHETICAL = thought of 1st line emphasized by a contrasting thought in 2nd (common in Prov.) Ps. 1:6

Try some exercises: Psalm 37:9; 19:2; 2:6;

TYPES OF PSALMS

Like with all interpretation, finding the main idea is important. With poetry it is easy for, like our church music, it breaks down into various kinds:

PRAISE, THANKSGIVING

INDIVIDUAL = fulfills private vow to publicly praise God. Reason for praise & application to listeners given, too. (Psalm 8, 9, 11, 16, 19, 23)

NATIONAL = group praise to God for all His blessings (Psalm 33, 36)

LAMENT

INDIVIDUAL = person in time of trial asks God to deliver him. (Psalm 3,4,5,7,10,13,14,17,22,25)

NATIONAL = Israel in trouble, turn to God for deliverance (Psalm 12)

MESSIANIC PSALMS

MESSIANIC = person and work of Christ in 1st coming as Messiah (Psalm 22, 53)

ROYAL = Christ as reigning in kingdom in 2nd coming (Psalm 2, 20, 21)

PENITENTIAL = Confession of sin (Ps 6, 32)

PILGRIM = Sung traveling to Jerusalem, captivity, etc. (Psalm 120 - 134)

IMPRECATORY asking God to cure one's enemies (Psalm 7,35,55,58,59,69,79,109,137,139)

TRUST = profession of faith (Psalm 11, 16)

HISTORICAL = praise God for faithfulness in past (Psalm 78, 105, 106)

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part VI - INTERPRETING PARABLES & PROPHECY By Jerry Schmoyer

This is the sixth in a series on how to study the Bible. Past articles have covered observation, interpretation of history, doctrine (teaching), poetry and psalms, and application. For a copy of any or all of them send a SASE (2 stamps please) to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W> State Street, Doylestown, Pa. 18901. I would appreciate receiving any comments or observations you have about this series and process so I can use that to improve it as I continue to use it. Thanks!

In this article on studying the Bible we will look at two kinds of literature that make their own special contribution to our spiritual diet. They aren't essential to basic health, but add variety and enjoyment to Bible study. When used in their proper place they make a fine contribution to a menu. They are spices (parables) and desert (prophecy).

PARABLES can be thought of as spices because both are used to bring out the main flavor of what they are served with. Parables bring out and illustrate a spiritual truth. Spices (salt, pepper, sage, ginger, oregano, cinnamon, etc.) do the same thing. Over use, or trying to get too much out of them, will do more harm than good. Neither are any good alone, and you couldn't live on a diet of just them, but when used correctly they are super! A parable is a short story used to illustrate a truth, like the story or illustrations your pastor uses in his sermons (I hope!). Aesop used them, so did Jesus. There are many in the Old Testament, too, although not as common as easy to pick out.

Many of the skill you have been developing in studying the Bible are used in interpreting parables. Your history **QUESTIONS** (Who, When, Where, What, How and Why) must be answered correctly. Also **CUSTOMS** and practices of how people lived in the time & place the parable is about is of the utmost importance!

Use these **PARABLE PRINCIPLES** when you interpret parables. Keep in mind the purpose of parables: 1) to reveal truth to believers and 2) to hide truth from unbelievers (Matthew 13:10-17). Look for the main idea of the parable. Interpret all subordinate details in light of the main idea for parables only teach one main spiritual truth. Remember that not all details have a spiritual meaning so don't try to force more than the main idea into a parable. The context is the best interpreter of parables. What was the occasion, the audience, the effect of it? Always keep in mind that parables illustrate doctrine, they do not establish it.

PROPHECY can be thought of as being dessert! It is like pie, cake, cookies, etc.! These are really part of other food groups, just as is prophecy (it is part of teaching). However, desserts have a special role in how they are used. Dessert is served last, and prophecy is the study of last things. They both give you something to look forward to. Again, neither are good as a steady diet of only them. Overuse undermines health. They are meant to supplement other, more basic food items. Dessert, like prophecy, is served in a special time and way, and thus there are some special principles that apply to eating it, too.

Besides the portions of the Bible we consider prophecy (Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Matthew 24-25) we must keep in mind that much of what the Old Testament prophets said was prophetic when it was said. Previous skills also apply to the study of prophecy: **QUESTIONS** (Who, When, Where, What, How, Why), **WORD STUDIES**, **TOPICAL STUDIES**, **FIGURES OF SPEECH**, **STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS** (Comparison, Contrast, etc.), and finding the **MAIN IDEA** all apply. Here cross-references can be helpful if you are sure they are talking about the exact same event. With prophecy it is always helpful to draw a **CHART** or **OUTLINE** of the passage. This could even be a picture you draw.

Here, too, there are **PROPHECY PRINCIPLES** to help you in your study. Interpret prophecy literally, taking the words in their usual/normal sense. The same rules of grammar and language apply here, use them! Don't make interpreting prophecy harder than it is! Interpret it in harmony with other prophecy. It must fit in with the rest of the Bible. You aren't going to discover something all scholars have missed, if you do check your work! Often one prophecy will refer to similar happenings (for example Old Testament prophets often talk about Jesus' first and second coming in the same prophecy). The purpose of prophecy is to focus on Christ and give Him the glory. As you work in the power of the Spirit, He will glorify Christ through it all.

SYMBOLS can be more difficult. Again, let the Bible interpret itself. Just use your common sense. When interpreting a symbol, look for the main characteristic the writer would have seen in it. Symbols are used the same way when used at different places in the Bible. If you aren't sure of a meaning, don't push. Just make sure your interpretation agrees with the rest of the Bible.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part VII - CHARTS By Jerry Schmoyer

This is the sixth in a series on how to study the Bible. Past articles have covered observation, interpretation of history, doctrine (teaching), poetry and psalms, and application. For a copy of any or all of them send a SASE (2 stamps please) to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W> State Street, Doylestown, Pa. 18901. I would appreciate receiving any comments or observations you have about this series and process so I can use that to improve it as I continue to use it. Thanks!

(THIS ARTICLE CONSISTES OF COPIES OF CHARTS. SEND ME A S.A.S.E. AND I WILL SEND YOU A COPY OF THE PAGE.)

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part VIII - INTERPRETING TYPES By Jerry Schmoyer

"And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He (Jesus) explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." (Luke 24:27) How great it would have been to have attended that Bible study! Jesus went through the whole Old Testament revealing all the things it taught about Him! I'm sure he referred to all the obvious prophecies (starting with Genesis 3:15) and teachings about the coming Messiah. However that was only part of what the Scriptures said "concerning Himself". Much of what He told His followers that day were what we call "types" today. A TYPE is a physical event, person or object in the Old Testament which communicates a spiritual truth which is fully explained in the New Testament. The physical events were real, but in addition to what they obviously were to the people in their day, they carried a picture of a spiritual truth not then fully expressed.

A type is like a shadow which you see before the person, event or object itself is seen. It is like seeing a shadow come around a corner of a building before the person making the shadow appears. Shadows are hard to identify for they are unclear, showing only rough outlines. When you see the person then you can appreciate all the more what the shadow was. That's what a type is. For example, before Jesus referred to the first prophecy about Himself in Genesis (3:15), he explained about how the skins covering Adam and Eve after their sin were a picture of what He would do on the cross. Man can't cover his sin with the works of his hands (fig leaves), only as innocent blood is shed (the animals whose skins they wore) can sin be covered. Man is helpless, he only receives the covering. But he must receive it or it won't do him any good. This type is carried out in the whole Old Testament sacrificial system. While those using it didn't understand all about Jesus' work on the cross, they did know they were at the mercy of a holy God whose only provision for their sin was innocent blood being shed. This was the shadow before the event, not as clear but certainly containing the basic truths of it all. Adam himself was called a "type" of Jesus according to Paul (Romans 5:14).

The Bible is full of types, and the richness they add to our understanding of New Testament truth is astounding. God uses types to illustrate and make alive points of doctrine the same way your pastor uses stories and illustrations in his sermons. They are like windows to let light in so you can see a subject more clearly. Jesus used Jonah (dead 3 days then back to life) as a type/illustration of what would happen to Him (Mt. 12:39).

In fact, the whole Old Testament is an acting-out of the spiritual truths in the New Testament. Man is sinful (Genesis), under the power of the world (Egypt), the flesh (themselves) and the devil (Pharaoh). Only God can deliver them, and He does so by blood (Passover) and power (Red Sea opened). They are given a new life with God's Presence with them and to guide them (Shekinah Glory in the cloud). They are to live holy, obedient lives. When they do there is victory and blessing, when not there is defeat and lack of blessing. This is the story line of the Old Testament physically, and the story line of our lives spiritually. By understanding the Old Testament picture we (adults and children, too) can better see and appreciate the New Testament doctrines.

Augustine said, "In the Old the New lies hidden; in the New the Old stands revealed." We need them both for a full, clear picture. Understanding types is the key to bringing them both together. Use the following list of types. Ask God's Spirit to reveal these truths to you as you develop these wonderful truths from God.

AARON: Christ as a priest Ex. 28:1;
Lev. 8:12

ABEL: Christ as shepherd slain Gen
4:2

ACACIA WOOD: Christ's humanity
Ex
26:15 Isa 53:2

ADAM: Christ the last/second Adam, head of new
creation (Rom 5:14; I Cor 15:22)

BEAUTY & BANDS: Christ with Israel Zech 11:7

BENJAMIN: Suffering one, Victorious One Gen 35:18
43:34

BIRDS: Christ in death and res. Lev 14:4
Slain bird: Christ in death
Live bird, dipped in blood: Christ in res.

BLOOD, SACRIFICIAL: innocent blood (Christ's)
shed
for sin to satisfy God's Holiness Lev 17:11

BURNT OFFERING: Lev 1:3
a. Ox: Christ as a servant
b. Sheep: Christ's surrendering to death
c. Goat: Christ as sinners substitute
d. Turtledove, Pigeon: Christ the "Poor man's"
sacrifice

CITIES OF REFUGES: Refuge from Judgment in
Christ

COATS OF SKIN: Christ the believers' righteousness
Gen 3:2 Rev 19:8

CORN OF THE PROMISED LAND: Christ
resurrected
and glorified Josh 5:11

DAVID: Christ as shepherd and King I Chron 17:7

FEASTS:
a. Passover: Christ's death for sin
b. Unleavened Bread: Christ's sinless life
c. First Fruits: Christ's resurrection
d. Pentecost: Christ to send Holy Spirit, unite Jew
and Gentile in himself
e. Trumpets: Jews regathered
f. Atonement: Israel turns to Christ
g. Tabernacles: Christ's Kingdom

FINE LINEN: Sinless Life of Christ Ex 26:1

GATE or DOOR: Christ as access to God for
salvation: Ark (Gen 6:16) & Tabernacle (Ex 27:16; Jn
10:7)

GOATS: Two Lev 16:5-10

a. Goat Sacrificed: Christ's death satisfying God's
Justice
b. Scape Goat: Christ taking our sin Heb. 9:26

ISAAC Gen 21:3; 22:9; 24:1
a Miraculous Birth as God promised
b Obedience unto Death
c Resurrection in type Heb 11:19
d Bridegroom of the called-out Bride

JONAH: Christ to die, and raise after 3 days Mt
12:39

JOSEPH: One of the most nearly
perfect types
a Special objects of Father's Love Gen 37:3, Mt 3:17
b Hated by brethren Gen 37:4, Jn 15:25
c Superior claims rejected Gen 27:8; Mt 21:37-39
d Brethren conspired to slay Gen 37:18; Mt 26:3-4
e Slain by brethren Gen 37:24; Mt 27:35-37
f Blessing among Gentiles, obtained a Gentile Bride
Gen 41:4-41; Acts 15:14; Eph 5:25-32
g Reconciled Brethren to self & then exalted them
Gen 45:15; Dt. 30:1-10; Rom 11:1,15,25-26

JOSHUA: Hebrew equivalent of
Greek "Jesus", captain
of our salvation Heb 2:10-11

KINSMAN-REDEEMER: Ruth
a Was a persons & an inheritance
Lev 25:25;48; Gal 4:5
b Must be a kinsman Lev 25:48-9; Ruth 3:12-13; Gal
4:4; Heb 2:14
c Must be able to redeem Ruth 4:4-6; Jn 10:11,18
d Must pay the just demand in full Lev 25:27, Gal
13:13

LIGHT; Christ the Light of the World Gen 1:10; I Jn
1:5

MANNA; Christ as the Bread of Life Ex 16:35; Josh
5:11; John 6

MEAL OFFERING; Christ in his perfect humanity
tested
by suffering Lev 2:1

MELCHIZEDEK: Christ as King - Priest Gen 14:18;
Ps.
110:4; Heb 6:20; 7; 23-24

MOSES: Christ our Deliverer
and Prophet Ex 2:2

NAZARITE: Christ separated
wholly unto God Num 6:1

PEACE OFFERING: Lev 3:1; Col 1:20; Eph 32:14,17

PRESERVATION IN ARK: Christ cares for Believers

11 Pet 2:5,7,9

PRIESTHOOD: Believers Priesthood of Christ

RAM: Christ our substitute Gen 22:29 Lev 16:3
Heb 10:5-10

RED HEIFER: Sacrifice of Christ is the ground of the
believer & cleansing Num 19:2; 1 Jn 1:7,9

ROCK: Christ smitten to make possible the
outpouring
of the Holy Spirit Ex 19:6; Num 20:8; I Cor 10:4; 1 Pet
2:8; Mt 21:44

ROD OF AARON; Christ in Resurrection Num 17:8

SERPENT OF BRASS: Christ made sin for us
Num 21:9; Jn 3:14

SIN OFFERING: Christ in our place Lev 4:; II Cor 5:21

SWEET SAVOR OFFERING: Christ in his
perfections
offering his merit for us Lev 1:9; II Cor 5:21

TABERNACLE: Ex 25:9

- a Brazen Altar; Atonement through sacrifice Ex 27:1
- b Brazen Laver; Spiritual renewal (through Holy Spirit); Christ's cleansing from defilement Ex 30:18; Jn 13:2-10; Eph 5:25f I Jn 1:9
- c. Table of showbread; Christ the Bread of Life Ex 25:30
- d. Candle stand; Christ the Light Ex 25:31
- e. Altar of Incense; Christ our intercessor Lev 30:1; Jn 17; Heb 7:25; 13:15; we must pray in His name (Jn 14; Rev 5:8)
- f. Ark of the Covenant; Access through the Covenant Relationship (our access through Christ as our Covenant Ex 25:10)
- g. Mercy Seat; Acceptance by God (Through Christ) Rom 3:25

TRESPASS OFFERING; Christ Atoning for the injury
of
sin Lev 5:6,7:1-7; Ps 51:4

TURTLEDOVE: Christ innocent Heb 7: Lev 1:3,14

VEIL OF TABERNACLE: Christ's Human nature
perfect,
broken in death for us Ex 26:31; Mt 26:26' 27:50; Heb
10:20

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part IX - INTERPRETING NUMBERS SYMBOLICALLY By Jerry Schmoyer

This is the ninth in a series on how to study the Bible. Past articles have covered observation, interpretation of history, doctrine (teaching), poetry and psalms, and application. For a copy of any or all of them send a SASE (2 stamps please) to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State Street, Doylestown, Pa. 18901. I would appreciate receiving any comments or observations you have about this series and process so I can improve it as I continue to use it. Thanks!

The study of numbers and their meaning can be a very fascinating study when done right. Since there is no parallel in English (except our use of "13" and sometimes "7") it takes a real awareness to get it just right. Usually people go to extremes. Some totally ignore the symbolic meaning of numbers in the Bible, and others read symbolic meanings into every number (as well as other places) with strange results. Of course, we need balance.

The most common use of numbers in the Bible is to denote a specific quantity (the book of Numbers), but many times they are used to convey spiritual truths (the book of Revelation). In Old Testament times using numbers symbolically was a common literary device of scribes in Babylon, Egypt, etc. Examples start in the time of Hammurabi and appear in most cultures in nearly every generation.

Actually the study of numbers is only a part of the larger study of symbolism in the Bible. We are all familiar with the use of light (for God) and darkness (for Satan and evil), for blood (forgiveness of sin), and of the cross (the whole work of redemption). We use colors to teach spiritual truth (black for sin; red for blood; yellow for glory; etc.), too. These symbols, like types (part VIII of this study) usually have a literal as well as figurative meaning at the same time. The same is true of numbers. Usually numbers do not lose their numeric value when they become symbolic, they actually combine the two.

Below is a summary of what numbers symbolically refer to in the Bible:

1 = UNITY

One symbolizes the unity of God (Dt 6:4 Zech 14:9 Mk 12:32 Jn 10:30). It shows God is one, and is sufficient in Himself. In Eph 4:4-6 there are 7 distinct unities.

2 = UNION

Two can be a figure both of unity and of division. Man and woman form the basic family unit (Gen. 1:27; 2:20,24). Animals associate in pairs together in companionship, e.g. Joshua's spies (Josh 2:1) and the Twelve and Seventy disciples were sent out in pairs (Mk 6:7 Lk 10:1). In addition, at Sinai there were two stone tablets and animals were often offered for sacrifice in pairs. Two witnesses were necessary for a fair trial and two witnesses will testify during the tribulation (Rev. 11:3). By contrast two is used as separating things into two (Mt 7:13-14).

3 = DIVINITY

Three is called the divine number because it is mentioned so often in connection with holy things. It speaks of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). The 3rd day stood for completeness (Ex 19:11 Hos 6:2 Lk 13:32 Jon 1:17 Mt 12:40 I Cor 15:4). Jesus had 3 disciples in the inner group (Mk 9:2 Mt 26:37). There were 3 great feasts. There is the 3-fold temptation of Jesus, denial of Peter, question ("Do you love me?") and charge to Peter, and vision of

the sheet. Of course, Jesus was dead 3 days. God is in the 3rd heaven.

Three is prominent in Revelation. It is used of Jesus ("who was, is, and is to come"; "Holy, Holy, Holy"). There is even Satan's counterfeit trinity. There are 3 woes, 3 frog-like spirits, 3 plagues on Babylon, etc.

Three is also prominent in nature. There are 3 primary colors (red, blue, yellow), 3 kingdoms (animal, vegetable, mineral), and 3 forms of matter (gas, liquid, solid).

4 = EARTHLY COMPLETENESS

Four, the number of the sides of a square, is one of the symbols of completion in the Bible. There are 4 seasons, points of the compass, quarters of the moon, elements (earth, air, water, fire), world powers (Dan 2:7), and Gospels. The divine name YHWH has 4 letters in Hebrew (YHWH). Four living creatures symbolize God (Ezek. 1; Rev. 4:6). There were 4 rivers flowing out of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:10).

40 is 4 intensified. This earth is place of testing and trials, and 40 stands for that. At the flood it rained for 40 days & nights. Moses was on probation 40 years in Egypt, 40 in the desert, and 40 with the Jews in the wilderness. The spies were in the land 40 days. Israel wandered 40 years. Saul, David and Solomon all reigned 40 years. Goliath defied Israel 40 days. Nineveh had 40 days before destruction. Elijah fasted 40 days. Jesus was tempted 40 days. He ascended 40 days after His resurrection. Punishment was 40 stripes.

400 is 4, or 40, intensified even more. It, too, stands for complete earthly testing. The Jews were in Egypt 400 years and there are 400 silent years from Malachi to Christ.

5 = DIVISION

Five is not used often in Scripture. There were 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins, Jesus fed the multitude of 5,000 with 5 loaves. David took 5 stones to kill Goliath. There are 5 senses and 5 books of Moses (Gen - Deut).

6 = MAN (FAILURE)

The number six is closely associated with man. God created the world in 6 days and man on the 6th day. Man was to work 6 days of the week. a Servant had to serve for 6 years to be freed. The land was to be worked 6 years and then rest one. For 6 days the Jews walked around Jericho 1 time. There were to be 6 steps to Solomon's throne (I Ki 10:19). Nebuchadnezzar's statue, a type of those who want to deify man, was 60 cubits by 6 cubits. Six falls one short of God's number & perfection - 7, as does man.

666 The number of the beast in Revelation is 666 (Rev 13:13-18). This is man's number intensified greatly. It refers to all that man is at his worst (short of God).

7 = SACRED PERFECTION

Seven has an eminent place among sacred numbers in the Scriptures and is associated with completion, fulfillment and perfection. It is made up of the sum of 3 + 4, the divine number and the world number. It is used more often in the Bible than any other number. God rested on the 7th day and sanctified it. This gave the pattern for the Jewish Sabbath and sabbatical year. The year of Jubilee followed 7 sabbatical years (7 x 7). There were 7 days of grace after Noah entered the ark. There were 7 years of plenty and 7 of famine in Egypt. Jericho fell on the 7th day after walking around the wall 7 times. Seven is used often in the Jewish feasts and sacrifices. There are 7 feasts and 7 branches of the lampstand. Naaman washed 7 times in the Jordan. Jesus spoke 7 times on the cross. Revelation is full of the number 7. The book is clearly divided into 7 sections, each with 7 things in it (7 churches, bowl judgments, seal judgments, trumpet judgments, etc.). The tribulation will be 7 years long. Israel's history from Daniel's time to the Millennium consisted of 70 7 year periods.

3 1/2 is a division of 7 and shows incomplete perfection.

14, 49, 70 are all multiples of 7. Pentecost was 49 days after Passover and the Year of Jubilee was after 49 years. Jesus sent out 70 disciples.

8 = NEW BEGINNING

The 8th day is the beginning of a new week. Jesus rose on the first, or eighth day. Eight people were saved in the ark. Jews were circumcised on the 8th day. David was the 8th son of Jesse. Eight fit in often with the feasts and sacrifices of Israel, too.

10 = HUMAN COMPLETENESS

Man has 10 digits on his hands and feet. Ten stood for completeness in man. There were 10 Commandments given man, 10 virgins in the parable, 10 pieces of silver for Judas (Lk 15:8), 10 plagues in Egypt, etc.

1000 10 x 10 x 10, intensifying 10. This is the length of the Millennium.

12 = ETERNAL ELECTION

This is the product of 3 (divine number) and 4 (world number). The Hebrew year was divided into 12 months, the day into 2 periods of 12 hours each. Israel had 12 sons and there were 12 tribes as well as 12 apostles. Jesus visited the temple when 12.

144 is 12×12 , and is used in Revelation as the number of Jewish evangelists during the tribulation (144,000) as well as the size of the wall of the New Jerusalem.

Give numbers a try! Have fun with it. Think of numbers in the Bible and why they are used. Look a number up in a concordance and see how many are literal, how many symbolic, and how many both. Use this with math. There are lots of things you can do to enjoy numbers in the Bible!

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Part X - INTERPRETING PROVERBS, PEOPLE, & MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS By Jerry Schmoyer

This is the tenth in a series on how to study the Bible. Past articles have covered observation, interpretation of history, doctrine (teaching), poetry and psalms, and application. For a copy of any or all of them send a SASE (2 stamps please) to Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State Street, Doylestown, Pa. 18901. I would appreciate receiving any comments or observations you have about this series and process so I can improve it as I continue to use it. Thanks!

INTERPRETING PROVERBS

It seems everyone likes the book of Proverbs. It is practical and helpful. There is down-to-earth wisdom. Proverbs is God's "Do-It-Yourself" book for Christian living. Proverbs aren't restricted to the book of Proverbs, though. Every people has their common sayings or adages. Jesus said "No prophet is accepted in his own country," and "Physician, heal thyself." Today we have proverbs such as "Better safe than sorry," "The early bird catches the worm," "One in the hand is worth two in the bush," "Practice what you preach," and many, many others.

Proverbs are figures of speech like metaphors, allegories or similes. They are often short parables. They often consist of two lines, the second repeating, expanding on, or contrasting with the first.

RULES FOR INTERPRETING PROVERBS:

1. While most proverbs are easily understood common-sense knowledge, much care should be exercised in the interpretation of those which are obscure or difficult. They may be based on facts and customs long since lost.
2. For all proverbs, make sure you do your observation and interpretation and aren't tempted to just jump right into application! Determine which kinds of figures of speech are being used so you can correctly interpret them.
3. Make sure you study the context around the proverb for this often gives the key to the interpretation.
4. If you aren't sure, don't force it. Continue to pray for God's Spirit to reveal it to you. Then await more light on it. Don't force a meaning. Watch for new or different teachings, for you can't base a new doctrine on one obscure proverb! Make sure your conclusions line up with the rest of Scripture.
5. Don't read anything into them, make sure their meaning comes from within the parable itself.
6. Always interpret the Bible from the viewpoint of the writer. Pretend you are living in his time with his customs and experiences.
7. Check cross references of other proverbs and see if key phrases in other verses shed light on this one.

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

My personal favorite type of Bible study is the biographical study. I like studying the lives of people in the Bible. Actually, that is one of the easiest types of Bible study you can do -- and one of the most rewarding. You don't have to be a scholar or theologian. What you really need more than anything else is a creative imagination to make the person alive and put yourself in his or her place. This is the key to doing a good biographical study.

STEPS TO DOING A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

1. Collect all the references you can about the person. If they are only referred to in one place this part is easy. If they are mentioned in various places in the Bible you need to compile a list of all references. Look up the name of the person in a Bible concordance. Using cross-references is a more round-about way of things but may be helpful if you don't have a concordance (actually, if you don't have a concordance you should get one - Strong's or Young's).
2. Go through each passage doing your observation. Read between the lines by asking yourself, "What was he thinking or feeling?" "Why did he do or say that?" "What was probably going on that isn't mentioned in the Bible?" "What would he say to me today to explain his words or actions then?"
3. Break the information you are gathering down into units, arranging them chronologically.
4. Do what is necessary to interpret each Scripture. Make sure you answer "When, Why, Where, Who, How."
5. Write out your Main Idea. What is the one major truth this person's life teaches. After all, that is why God included their story in the Bible!
6. Give it time to settle into you and digest. Put the facts on the back burner of your mind to simmer. Stir them every once in awhile. Pull it to the front for some others to taste and see what they think. Mull on the person when laying in bed or driving. This is when God will put the best insight into your mind! Don't rush it, you can't just turn out a biographical study in a couple hours! Take your time, the results will be worth it!

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

There are 13 instruments mentioned in the Old Testament. The translations below are those given in the King James Version. The Hebrew name is given first.

'ASOR: Translated "instrument of 10 strings" (3 times) and "ten" (13 times). A 10-string harp or similar instrument.

KINNOR: Translated "harp" 24 times, it is really a lyre. This is what David played. It was made of wood with gut or metal strings and decorated in various ways. Its sound box was below and a plectrum was used to play it.

NEBEL: Translated "psaltery" (23 times) and "viol" (4 times), it is the true harp. It is a triangular instrument with a resonance frame which slopes upward from the base. It is not played with a plectrum

CHALIL: This is translated "pipe" 6 times. It is a flute, but no one knows if it is a single or double flute.

CHATSOTSERAH: This is translated "trumpet" 29 times. It is the silver trumpet which God commanded Moses to make (Num. 10:2). It was almost a yard long, a little wider than a flute, with a bell-like end and a slight expansion at the mouthpiece to catch the breath.

SHOPHAR ("Cornet" 4 times and "trumpet" 68 times) and **QEREN** ("horn" 75 times) are both the same instrument. It is a ram's horn in its natural form which was heated and flattened and bent to form a right angle. Usually had 2 tones (tonic and fifth). Sound was loud and piercing, not for concert music.

UGAB: Translated "organ" 4 times, it may have been a type of mouth organ or pan's pipe or possibly a kind of flute.

MENANIM: Translated "cornet" (1 time) this was the sistrum. It had an oval frame with iron rods having hooked ends lying loosely in holes in sides of the frame, to which a handle was attached.

METSILTAYIM: Translated "cymbals" 13 times, they were like the cymbals of today.

PAAMON: Translated "bell" 7 times, it was the same as the bell sewed in the hem of the garment of the high priest.

TOPH: Translated "tabret" (8 times) and "timbrel" (9 times), it was played by Miriam and the women in Exodus 15:20, although sometimes men played it, too. It is our modern tambourine.

SHALISHIM: Translated "instrument of music," some feel it is the triangle.

TSELTSELIM: Translated "cymbals" (3 times) they were the conical type cymbals of Egypt and Assyria. They were struck together vertically.

VOCAL MUSIC

The favorite style of vocal music in Israel was antiphonal (chanted or sung in responsive, alternating parts). Exodus 15:20ff and Psalm 136 show this. It was done in one of three ways: with a leader and choir, a choir and congregation, or two choirs. Musical instruments were used for the purpose of accompanying singers, and not for orchestras as such.

SELAH could have been a pause in the vocal part while an interlude or finale was rendered. It was not something anyone said or sang, just for the music.

This is the last in my series on How To Study The Bible. If there is a subject you would like covered or a question you would like answered PLEASE send the request to me (Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State St., Doylestown, Pa.). Your response will tell me what, if anything, I should cover next year.

TYPES

AARON: Christ as a priest Ex. 28:1; Lev. 8:12

ABEL: Christ as shepherd slain Gen 4:2

ACACIA WOOD: Christ's humanity Ex 26:15 Isa 53:2

ADAM: Christ the last/second Adam, head of new creation (Rom 5:14; I Cor 15:22)

BEAUTY & BANDS: Christ with Israel Zech 11:7

BENJAMIN: Suffering one, Victorious One Gen 35:18 43:34

BIRDS: Christ in death and res. Lev 14:4

Slain bird: Christ in death

Live bird, dipped in blood: Christ in res.

BLOOD, SACRIFICIAL: innocent blood (Christ's) shed for sin to satisfy God's Holiness Lev 17:11

BURNT OFFERING: Lev 1:3

a. Ox: Christ as a servant

b. Sheep: Christ's surrendering to death

c. Goat: Christ as sinners substitute

d. Turtledove, Pigeon: Christ the "Poor man's" sacrifice

CITIES OF REFUGES: Refuge from Judgment in Christ

COATS OF SKIN: Christ the believers' righteousness Gen 3:2 Rev 19:8

CORN OF THE PROMISED LAND: Christ resurrected and glorified Josh 5:11

DAVID: Christ as shepherd and King I Chron 17:7

FEASTS:

a. Passover: Christ's death for sin

b. Unleavened Bread: Christ's sinless life

c. First Fruits: Christ's resurrection

d. Pentecost: Christ to send Holy Spirit, unite Jew and Gentile in himself

e. Trumpets: Jews regathered

f. Atonement: Israel turns to Christ

g. Tabernacles: Christ's Kingdom

FINE LINEN: Sinless Life of Christ Ex 26:1

GATE or DOOR: Christ as access to God for salvation: Ark (Gen 6:16) & Tabernacle (Ex 27:16; Jn 10:7)

GOATS: Two Lev 16:5-10

a. Goat Sacrificed: Christ's death satisfying God's Justice

b. Scape Goat: Christ taking our sin Heb. 9:26

ISAAC Gen 21:3; 22:9; 24:1

a Miraculous Birth as God promised

b Obedience unto Death

c Resurrection in type Heb 11:19

d Bridegroom of the called-out Bride

JONAH: Christ to die, and raise after 3 days Mt 12:39

JOSEPH: One of the most nearly perfect types

a Special objects of Father's Love Gen 37:3, Mt 3:17

b Hated by brethren Gen 37:4, Jn 15:25

c Superior claims rejected Gen 27:8; Mt 21:37-39

d Brethren conspired to slay Gen 37:18; Mt 26:3-4

e Slain by brethren Gen 37:24; Mt 27:35-37

f Blessing among Gentiles, obtained a Gentile Bride Gen 41:4-41; Acts 15:14; Eph 5:25-32

g Reconciled Brethren to self & then exalted them Gen 45:15; Dt. 30:1-10; Rom 11:1,15,25-26

JOSHUA: Hebrew equivalent of Greek "Jesus", captain of our salvation Heb 2:10-11

KINSMAN-REDEEMER: Ruth

a Was a persons & an inheritance Lev 25:25;48; Gal 4:5

b Must be a kinsman Lev 25:48-9; Ruth 3:12-13; Gal 4:4; Heb 2:14

c Must be able to redeem Ruth 4:4-6; Jn 10:11,18

d Must pay the just demand in full Lev 25:27, Gal 13:13

LIGHT; Christ the Light of the World Gen 1:10; I Jn 1:5

MANNA; Christ as the Bread of Life Ex 16:35; Josh 5:11; John 6

MEAL OFFERING; Christ in his perfect humanity tested by suffering Lev 2:1

MELCHIZEDEK: Christ as King - Priest Gen 14:18; Ps. 110:4; Heb 6:20; 7; 23-24

MOSES: Christ our Deliverer and Prophet Ex 2:2

NAZARITE: Christ separated wholly unto God Num 6:1

PEACE OFFERING: Lev 3:1; Col 1:20; Eph 32:14,17

PRESERVATION IN ARK: Christ cares for Believers 11 Pet 2:5,7,9

PRIESTHOOD: Believers Priesthood of Christ

RAM: Christ our substitute Gen 22:29 Lev 16:3 Heb 10:5-10

RED HEIFER: Sacrifice of Christ is the ground of the believer & cleansing Num 19:2; 1 Jn 1:7,9

ROCK: Christ smitten to make possible the outpouring of the Holy Spirit Ex 19:6; Num 20:8; I Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 2:8; Mt 21:44

ROD OF AARON; Christ in Resurrection Num 17:8

SERPENT OF BRASS: Christ made sin for us Num 21:9; Jn 3:14

SIN OFFERING: Christ in our place Lev 4:; II Cor 5:21

SWEET SAVOR OFFERING: Christ in his perfections offering his merit for us Lev 1:9; II Cor 5:21

TABERNACLE: Ex 25:9

a Brazen Altar; Atonement through sacrifice Ex 27:1

b Brazen Laver; Spiritual renewal (thru Holy Spirit); Christ's cleansing from defilement Ex 30:18; Jn 13:2-10; Eph 5:25f I Jn 1:9

c. Table of showbread; Christ the Bread of Life Ex 25:30

d. Candle stand; Christ the Light Ex 25:31

e. Altar of Incense; Christ our intercessor Lev 30:1; Jn 17; Heb 7:25;13:15; we must pray in His name (Jn 14; Rev 5:8)

f. Ark of the Covenant; Access through the Covenant Relationship (our access through Christ as our Covenant Ex 25:10)

g. Mercy Seat; Acceptance by God (Through Christ) Rom 3:25

TRESPASS OFFERING; Christ Atoning for the injury of sin Lev 5:6,7:1-7; Ps 51:4

TURTLEDOVE: Christ innocent Heb 7: Lev 1:3,14

VEIL OF TABERNACLE: Christ's Human nature perfect, broken in death for us Ex 26:31; Mt 26:26' 27:50; Heb 10:20

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

TOPICAL STUDIES

Sometimes you will come upon a subject in a passage you would like to study in more detail, or instead of studying a passage to begin with you want to study a topic. That is an exciting, informative, excellent way to study.

First you must collect passages about your subject. You can do this using a topical index (I have one I put together, and there are others available in print, Naves is good, so is the Thompson Bible, the back of Strong's Concordance is excellent, too). You can also use cross-references in your Bible or a concordance, although these sometimes become hit-and-miss. You can do this for a person as well as a subject, although that is more of a history study.

Next, list all the facts you can find in each passage about your subject, putting the reference behind it. Make sure you do your observation exercises for each, looking at it as if for the first time, writing questions to answer about the subject you are studying, etc. Make a separate entry for each individual fact.

Then group the facts with others which relate to it. If a group is too large break it down into smaller groups. This synthesizing of the material makes it useable.

After you have done this, write a paragraph as well as a summary statement for each group. You can put the various groups in order of progression or outline them.

Finally combine your paragraphs into a paper or outline which includes all the information you have written about the subject. Make sure you have a summary sentence for the whole subject. This will be the main idea.

WORD STUDIES

When you come upon a key word, a hard or confusing word, or just a very interesting word, it can be very useful to do a word study on it. First go through the general principles of interpretation (normal sense, use in sentence, use in context, purpose of writer, etc.). Do this carefully and thoroughly. Like in anything else, your final product is only as good as what you put into it.

To do a complete study, though, you need to go beyond this. How much you can do here depends on what reference tools you have. If you have a concordance like Strong's or Young's that will give helpful information about the word, its root, and where it is used. Looking at all the uses can be very helpful. Another helpful book is *Vines' Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Some commentaries do a good job of explaining words (like John MacArthur), although use of commentaries can become a crutch that can undermine your Bible study. For now don't use them.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

INTERPRETING PARABLES & PROPHECY By Jerry Schmoyer

In this article on studying the Bible we will look at two kinds of literature that make their own special contribution to our spiritual diet. They aren't essential to basic health, but add variety and enjoyment to Bible study. When used in their proper place they make a fine contribution to a menu. They are spices (parables) and desert (prophecy).

PARABLES can be thought of as spices because both are used to bring out the main flavor of what they are served with. Parables bring out and illustrate a spiritual truth. Spices (salt, pepper, sage, ginger, oregano, cinnamon, etc.) do the same thing. Over use, or trying to get too much out of them, will do more harm than good. Neither are any good alone, and you couldn't live on a diet of just them, but when used correctly they are super! A parable is a short story used to illustrate a truth, like the story or illustrations your pastor uses in his sermons (I hope!). Aesop used them, so did Jesus. There are many in the Old Testament, too, although not as common as easy to pick out.

Many of the skill you have been developing in studying the Bible are used in interpreting parables. Your history **QUESTIONS** (Who, When, Where, What, How and Why) must be answered correctly. Also **CUSTOMS** and practices of how people lived in the time & place the parable is about is of the utmost importance!

Use these **PARABLE PRINCIPLES** when you interpret parables. Keep in mind the purpose of parables: 1) to reveal truth to believers and 2) to hide truth from unbelievers (Matthew 13:10-17). Look for the main idea of the parable. Interpret all subordinate details in light of the main idea for parables only teach one main spiritual truth. Remember that not all details have a spiritual meaning so don't try to force more than the main idea into a parable. The context is the best interpreter of parables. What was the occasion, the audience, the effect of it? Always keep in mind that parables illustrate doctrine, they do not establish it.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

INTERPRETING PARABLES & PROPHECY By Jerry Schmoyer

PROPHECY can be thought of as being dessert! It is like pie, cake, cookies, etc.! These are really part of other food groups, just as is prophecy (it is part of teaching). However, desserts have a special role in how they are used. Dessert is served last, and prophecy is the study of last things. They both give you something to look forward to. Again, neither are good as a steady diet of only them. Overuse undermines health. They are meant to supplement other, more basic food items. Dessert, like prophecy, is served in a special time and way, and thus there are some special principles that apply to eating it, too.

Besides the portions of the Bible we consider prophecy (Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Matthew 24-25) we must keep in mind that much of what the Old Testament prophets said was prophetic when it was said. Previous skills also apply to the study of prophecy: **QUESTIONS** (Who, When, Where, What, How, Why), **WORD STUDIES**, **TOPICAL STUDIES**, **FIGURES OF SPEECH**, **STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS** (Comparison, Contrast, etc.), and finding the **MAIN IDEA** all apply. Here cross-references can be helpful if you are sure they are talking about the exact same event. With prophecy it is always helpful to draw a **CHART** or **OUTLINE** of the passage. This could even be a picture you draw.

Here, too, there are **PROPHECY PRINCIPLES** to help you in your study. Interpret prophecy literally, taking the words in their usual/normal sense. The same rules of grammar and language apply here, use them! Don't make interpreting prophecy harder than it is! Interpret it in harmony with other prophecy. It must fit in with the rest of the Bible. You aren't going to discover something all scholars have missed, if you do check your work! Often one prophecy will refer to similar happenings (for example Old Testament prophets often talk about Jesus' first and second coming in the same prophecy). The purpose of prophecy is to focus on Christ and give Him the glory. As you work in the power of the Spirit, He will glorify Christ through it all.

SYMBOLS can be more difficult. Again, let the Bible interpret itself. Just use your common sense. When interpreting a symbol, look for the main characteristic the writer would have seen in it. Symbols are used the same way when used at different places in the Bible. If you aren't sure of a meaning, don't push. Just make sure your interpretation agrees with the rest of the Bible.