



2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 10 The Bible and History

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The lesson points out that the Bible is constituted history—in other words it is recording events that occurred in history in a linear fashion.

There are a variety of ways to approach the Bible. If one uses the wrong approach then one can take the same Bible texts, stories, and come to divergent conclusions.

- The Bible is a storybook written by people ignorant of reality who were trying their best to describe what was happening.
- The Bible is history with religious beliefs that were borrowed from multiple other religions in the region
- The Bible is a book of myths, not to be taken seriously but metaphorically
- The Bible stories are stand-alone stories each teaching us the power of God and the principles of right and wrong—do right God blesses, do wrong God punishes.
- The Bible is to be understood through imposed law lenses, God is supreme and made up law and we are expected to obey, but if we don't God is required to punish.
- There are two dispensations—the Old Covenant recorded in the Old Testament in which salvation was achieved through law and animal sacrifice, and the New Covenant recorded in the New Testament in which salvation is by grace through faith in the blood payment of a human sacrifice—Jesus the Son of God.
- The Bible is to be taken literally, just as it reads, without understanding figures of speech, metaphor, symbols.
- The Bible is the authoritative source of all truth—no, the Bible is the authoritative source of saving truth—the truth about God, the origins of humanity, sin, the plan of salvation—everything necessary for salvation. But it is not the authoritative source of truth on the best manufacturing techniques for ink pens, or printing presses, or metallurgy, or physical therapy techniques.

All of these approaches are flawed—the approach that helps us see the truth God has inspired to be recorded in the Bible is:

- Understanding God as Creator and thus His law as Design Law
- Using the integrative evidence-based approach wherever multiple threads of evidence are available.



- Taking all 66 books together as one dispensation—one God, one human race, one sin problem, and one solution to the problem—thus understanding the Bible is telling one story—not many stand-alone stories.
- Appropriately interpreting figures of speech, metaphor, simile, parable
- Refraining from using the Bible to teach things it is not intended to teach
- Examples of extreme literalism and using the Bible to teach or apply to things in was never intended include:
 - Not starting a fire on Sabbath means any action which has a spark, such as turning on an electrical switch—so we must have computer programming to turn on all the switches for us, or program our elevators to constantly run stopping at every floor on the Sabbath.
 - The New Testament never mentions musical instruments in worship, therefore we can only worship God with our voices and cannot use instruments.
 - The Bible is a book on the physics of motion and therefore when the Bible refers to the sun rising in the east or setting in the west, or in Joshua’s battle the sun stood still, then such comments are referring to the sun moving around the earth or the sun being stopped from moving.

But with our method in mind we see that the Old Testament is the process of God working to bring Messiah and Satan and evil forces working to not only corrupt human beings into sinfulness, but also to specifically prevent the coming of the Messiah. That is the focus, goal, key. If Jesus never came as a human then the human race is eternally lost, planet earth is not freed from sin, Satan’s rebellion continues, perhaps more intelligent beings in the universe are deceived and join Satan’s rebellion.

But, with Jesus’s victory on earth at the Cross, Satan’s rebellion is overthrown. The rest of the sinless beings in the universe are solidified in loyalty, none give Satan a second to present his arguments any more, thus his work is restricted to earth. Further, the human race was redeemed in Jesus, which means eventually the planet is going to be restored—the only outstanding variable is how many individual humans will cooperate with Jesus for healing of their hearts and minds.

So, the key is Jesus. With this in mind the stories fall into place, the focus of the Bible falls into place. We understand what is transpiring right from the beginning:

- Immediately after Adam’s fall, God is working to reveal the truth about Himself, the coming Messiah and the plan of salvation—seeking to heal hearts and minds. Satan is working to harden hearts and minds, distort the plan of salvation with a lie and obstruct the coming Messiah. So, Satan inspires Cain to reject humble trust in the coming Messiah and to embrace pride in his own hard work and take the fruit of his own labor and offer these to God as a means to pay or merit salvation—denying his need of a Savior. Abel, humbly accepts his sin condition and puts his faith and trust in the promised Messiah to come. Satan stirs up jealousy in Cain and inspires him to kill Abel—kill the one who embraces truth and practices God’s methods and teaches God’s plan of a coming Messiah.



- Satan leading the world into rebellion against God, seeking to harden hearts permanently against God so that not one human being would work with God, thereby closing the avenue for the Messiah. God waits until there is only one righteous man left on the entire earth and acts by bringing the flood in order, not to punish, but to keep open the avenue for the Messiah. The flood was also not like Sodom immediate vaporization, but was a period of time giving all on the earth who had heard the 120 years of Noah's preaching time to repent—like the thief on the cross their earthly life was over, but they could still turn to God if there was any part of them not hardened beyond healing. And, God changed the face of the earth to increase the necessity of work in order to slow the corruption of human character and to shorten the lifespan of mankind to again slow the spread of sin—all of these actions designed to keep open the avenue for Messiah, eliminate sin and save humanity.
- The same process with the tower of Babel, Satan working to unify the world into rebellion, to harden hearts and close avenue for Messiah. God works to slow the spread of evil and keep open the avenue for Messiah.
- The focus on Abraham and his family is because it is through Abraham's family that the Messiah is going to come—the Bible no longer needs to focus on the entire human race, but that branch through which Messiah will come. Additionally, Satan's prime focus is now to destroy that branch of the human family through which Messiah is going to come. And that is what we see happening throughout the Old Testament.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The monarchy of David..." First question—what this God's plan—to have a monarchy?

This so-called golden age was not God's plan, but God working with them, within the limits of the people's willingness to trust and follow God.

Consider what God told them:

Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. 11 He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. 12 Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. 16 Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. 17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. 18



When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

19 But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. 20 Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

21 When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. 22 The LORD answered, “Listen to them and give them a king.” 1Sam 8:10-22

Multiple things come to mind—is this a stand-alone story or part of the one story—humanity fallen into sin and God working to bring Messiah to save humanity while Satan works to obstruct the coming Messiah?

- What did God describe would be the result of their request? A ruling elite, monarchy, aristocracy, in which that ruling elite exploits the people for the benefit of the aristocracy. Whose form of government is this? Satan’s form of government. What happens to the masses in this form of government?
- Why did the people want this, according to the text? So they could be like the other nations. Again, what did Jesus say about the kingdoms of this world? His kingdom was not of this world. They didn’t want God’s kingdom and methods, they wanted to be like the world. And what did they get?
- Do we see how this again was an attack on God’s plan, to bring in methods and principles of exploitation, domination, control that would damage and destroy the image of God in people and thereby harden hearts and obstruct the avenue for Messiah. And in fact that happened, they continued through their leadership to go into false worship with ever increasing selfishness which obstructed God’s plan—not only to bring Messiah, but obstructed God’s plan for the people—they never became the nation of priests to evangelize the world for Messiah, but instead became ever-increasingly self-centered nationalists.

So, in this so-called golden age we find the Great Controversy being played out with Satan subverting God’s plan with his own imperial law methods.

God’s plan was for the people to be a kingdom of priests, i.e. who would go out into the world and share the truth about God and that God would be there king.

Now, consider what we saw in the wilderness—God provided food for them, water for them, sustained their clothing so things didn’t wear out, and provided good health so they didn’t get sick. God was giving of himself to support them and provide for their health and welfare. He instructed them only with such instructions as were good for their character development:

- the offerings of various kinds (gold, silver, mirrors etc. to build the sanctuary) was not for God’s benefit to support and sustain God, but was for the benefit of the people, to bring them in by practice to be participants in God’s methods; for them to be givers in order to open the



channels of love and trust in their hearts by action. To give them opportunity to invest themselves with God in their own healing of heart and mind.

- the various regulations God set up were not for God's benefit, or to control and dominate people but for their health and protection and maturity—to lead them into ever increasing character development and unity with God

But they rejected God's plan and substituted their own and we see the patience, love, mercy and grace of God who meets them where they are and works with them to still bring about His plan of Jesus coming to save humanity.

The point of the lesson is to establish that King David and Solomon were real people who existed and ruled Israel as the Bible describes. They provide various archeological evidence that corroborates the Bible narrative that David and Solomon did in fact exist.

What would be the purpose of arguing that David never existed, he is a fictional character? It is part of the obstruction of the plan of salvation to deny the descendant of David—Jesus who is our Savior.

MONDAY

The lesson reviews the history of King Hezekiah when Isaiah was prophet and the Assyrians attacked Judah—how the Assyrians sacked several cities, but Hezekiah turned to the Lord who promised they would not breach the walls of Jerusalem—and how the angel of the Lord overthrew the 180,000 Assyrian army.

The lesson gives archeological evidence that all these individuals lived and this gives veracity to the Biblical account.

Do we see this story as a stand-alone story—just another example of how if we trust God He delivers us from our enemies, but if we don't then He doesn't deliver us? Worse, if we fight against God He destroys us?

Without understanding the larger Great Controversy narrative, it is frequently presented like this. But these are false conclusions leading to the health-wellness gospel—do the right thing, keep the right rules, pray the right prayer and God blesses you with health and wealth. But if you don't you either don't get the blessing or worse, God actively harms you.

- During this time in human history the Zhou dynasty ruled China. Did God punish the Chinese who were under the Zhou dynasty at this time? They didn't promote Yahweh; they established the idea of Mandate of Heaven which gave them the authority to take wealth from others to support their regime. During this time Confucius who founded Confucianism and Laozi the founder of Taoism lived. Did God punish these people for their failing to follow Him? Why not? Because the theory that God inflicts punishment is false.



- During this time in human history the Chavin empire ruled in portions of South America. Did God punish the ancient Chavin society which was pagan and polytheistic? No—why not? Because the theory that God punishes people for wrong worship or not obeying Him is a lie.
- Satan's lie from the beginning—I love this quote from one of the founders of the SDA church, revealing what the SDA church was supposed to teach:
 - In the opening of the great controversy, **Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed**, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, **he declared**, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. DA 761.4

Satan's lie from the beginning is that God's law functions like human law and God must inflict punishment for disobedience. Some take the Bible stories, like Hezekiah and misapply it to teach this very lie—in fact the vast majority of Christian teaching seems to do this. Why? Because a beastly system infected Christianity with a lie that essentially every theology department of every Christian denomination teaches to their pastors and Bible teachers—that God's law functions like human law.

But what do we understand then is going on with the Assyrians and Hezekiah if God is not punishing the Assyrians and not merely rewarding Hezekiah? It is the plan of salvation—this is the story. Satan is working through the Assyrians to try and destroy the avenue for Messiah. God acts to keep open the avenue for Messiah. It is that simple. Without Jesus then every human being throughout all human history is eternally lost. So, the key to understanding the entire Scripture is the plan of salvation centering upon Jesus.

Then, with that understanding in mind we must still understand God's design law and how love actually works, the principles of liberty. We must understand God cannot heal hearts and minds without willing agreement and participation of the sentient being.

This is why God gave them kings when He didn't want them to have kings—because God cannot force hearts and minds into loyalty. God cannot heal hearts and minds from fear and selfishness by exercise of power—such actions would only turn sentient beings into mindless programmed robots. So, when we refuse to trust God, to allow Him to lead and direct, God meets us where we are and allows our choices to bring us painful consequences to awaken us to what happens when we are outside His will. Then, when we turn to Him, He heals and restores our hearts and minds.

But if we embrace the Great Controversy view and understand the Bible is focused on Jesus the Messiah, yet still hold to the human imposed law lie, then we still teach a lie and make God out to be the source of pain and suffering and still misunderstand the Bible stories.



WEDNESDAY

The lesson provides archeological evidence to support that Jesus was a real historical figure as well as other people who lived at the time of Jesus and who are mentioned in the Bible.

I really don't know of any arguments that have been put forth that take the position that Jesus didn't exist or that Jesus is a made-up figure like Santa Claus.

The attacks on Jesus have not been that He did not live, but that He was not the incarnate Son of God, but just a good Jewish teacher. That is the more typical attack.

Why can we have confidence in rejecting the idea that Jesus was just a good teacher?

- The fulfillment of all the OT prophecies in the person of Jesus—the actual historical events that all accurately are fulfilled in His life
- What the teachings of Jesus reveal—the complete and perfect revelation of God and God's design law of love.
- Jesus's own testimony about who He was. If He is not the Son of God, then He would be viewed as delusional as He claimed to come from God and was returning to God. He referred to Himself as the I Am, a reference to God.
- The witness of the Apostles—and the fact they worshipped Jesus.
- The empty tomb
- The understanding that the entire OT was teaching the Messiah was coming and what the Messiah was to accomplish and then how it was accomplished in Jesus
- Did you notice I did not reference the miracles that He performed? Not because they are unimportant, but because the other weight of evidence is so overwhelming and persuasive and because miracles are the easiest to counterfeit. In other words, we don't need to believe in Jesus based upon miracles. And on the road to Emmaus Jesus's method to lead his disciples to understand the truth of who He was and His mission, was not to reveal Himself as risen—a miracle to be sure—but to take them through the evidence of Scripture fulfilled in His life.

THURSDAY

The lesson points out that the Bible records the history of people not only to give us historical events, but to demonstrate to us from history how faith changes lives and brings victory.

What is faith? It is trust, confidence, belief, devotion that leads to action.

Let's examine how faith led to action that led to victory in people's lives and worked as part of God's plan of salvation. Let's examine the list of people in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11:



- Abel—we already discussed how he trusted God and cooperated with God for his own healing and taught God’s plan to bring the Messiah—and how Satan worked against the truth and inspired Cain to kill him, trying to close the avenue of truth.
- Enoch—we see God’s ultimate plan, those who trust God and walk with Him are cured of sin, given immortal life and taken from the world of sin. This is the promise we receive in Jesus.
- Noah—Satan worked to harden the hearts of the human race to close avenue for Messiah. God worked through Noah to keep open avenue for Messiah.
- Abraham—trust God and left his family, moved to a new land, and had a promised child in old age. Abraham through trust experiences a new heart and becomes the father of the faithful and his family were God’s chosen helpers through which the Messiah came. The focus of the Bible narrows down on this branch of the human family. Satan focused his energies on trying to destroy or corrupt this branch of the human family in order to obstruct God’s saving plan.
- Sarah—trusted God and was healed of infertility and enabled to become a mother at age 90. Again, God’s plan to bring forth Messiah was carried forward by people who trusted Him and were willing to cooperate with Him.
- Isaac—trust God and voluntarily surrendered himself to be sacrificed, cooperating with God to give a metaphor for the plan of salvation, to help his father Abraham overcome his own fears and be sealed in faith.
- Jacob—who struggled throughout his life with fear and selfishness, but who with God’s help wrestled against his own fear and selfishness and gained the victory by trusting God. Thus his name was changed to Israel, one, who with God, overcomes. We see in Jacob’s life how Satan tempted him to give up and do his own thing—again working to destroy the avenue for Messiah.
- Joseph—we see Satan working to destroy this branch of the human family by stirring up jealousy in Joseph’s brothers, inspiring them to sell him as a slave. I believe Satan brought the famine trying to starve out the family—working to stop the coming Messiah. But Joseph trusted God and though the brothers intended their actions for evil, God overruled for good. God allowed (did not cause) the bothers to sell Joseph in order to place Joseph just where he was needed when the famine came in order to save the family and keep open the avenue for the Messiah.
- Moses—after God’s victory over Satan’s plan through Joseph and the resettling of the family in Goshen. God blessed them and they grew. But Satan inspired the new leadership in Egypt with fear and selfishness and they enslaved the Israelites. Satan working to destroy the avenue, to erase the image of God in them, to demoralize them, to harden them, to get them to give up on trusting God. So, God sends Moses. But Satan inspires Pharaoh to kill all the males of a certain age in order to try and stop God’s deliverance of the people. Again, working to destroy this branch of the human family. God intervenes and places Moses in Pharaoh’s family and provides Moses with the best education in the world. Satan tempts Moses to act on his own and he murders an overseer and Satan uses this to undermine Moses resolve and the trust of the Israelites in Moses. Moses flees—Satan working to get rid of God’s chosen agent for that time. But God continues to develop Moses over the next 40 years and Moses returns to deliver the people from slavery and establish them as God’s helpers keeping open the plan of salvation. Throughout this entire story we can see this struggle between God working to bring the Savior



and Satan working to destroy this branch of the human family: the false gods of Egypt to corrupt the minds of the Hebrews and the plagues to expose the false gods and turn the people back to Yahweh; Korah, Dathan and Abiram leading the people into rebellion and God acting to stop the rebellion in order to keep the plan of salvation moving forward; the golden calf and the destruction of the calf and drinking of it in the water; the well, on and on, you can see this battle between Satan trying to corrupt and destroy the avenue for Messiah and God working to keep open the avenue for Messiah.

- The people passing through the Red Sea and the Egyptian army drowning—Satan working to destroy the avenue for Messiah by inspiring an army to kill them and God working to keep it open.
- Rahab—who hid the spies and lied—but she lied in faith—she trusted God when it was a danger to her life. God working to establish Israel as His agents for the communication of truth to free hearts and minds from sin and ultimately the arrival of Messiah, and Satan working on the pagan groups to either war against and destroy Israel, or to infect them with further false beliefs. Either directly by pagan worship practices, or by fear and intimidation and thus doubting God. Thus God works to remove these agents from being able to destroy the avenue for Messiah. You will notice, throughout all of this history, God typically removes the minimum required to keep open the avenue for Messiah. As evidenced by Sodom, God has the ability to completely annihilate and eradicate and wipe clean. He could have done that to all the people in Canaan and thus given Israel a depopulated land. But that is not God's goal—God doesn't want to remove people, He wants to save people. So when He acts He acts like a surgeon who removes only the cancer, the minimum tissue necessary in order to heal.
- Gideon—same thing, Satan is stirring up enemies to try and destroy the avenue for Messiah. God uses Gideon to drive them back and keep open avenue for Messiah.
- Barak—same thing, Sisera was used by Satan to try and destroy God's people, closing the avenue for Messiah. Deborah instructs Barak to oppose Sisera and God gives them victory keeping open avenue for Messiah.
- Samson—God called Samson to be a champion to hold back the enemies, and Satan attacks and corrupts Sampson through lust and selfishness. Samson in the end destroys many of the enemies of Israel thus limiting their negative influence and ultimately working to keep open avenue for Messiah.
- Jephthah—Same thing, Satan inspires the Ammonites to attack Israel, seeking to destroy them thus shutting down the avenue for Messiah, but through Jephthah's faith in God he is used to lead forces against the Ammonites driving them back and keeping open the avenue for Messiah.
- David—Satan is working through the Philistines to destroy Israel thus seeking to close the avenue for Messiah. God works through David to kill Goliath and route the Philistine army. Satan corrupts Saul and seeks to have David killed, thus destroying the avenue for Messiah. But God preserves David keeping open avenue for Messiah.

Do you see the story, how the Bible makes perfect sense when we understand the issues going on?



FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, “The Bible is the most ancient...” I agree with this statement, but does this mean the Bible is to be used alone, or combined with God’s other revelations in nature and experience?

Consider these quotes from the same author:

It was not alone upon the hills of Judea, not among the lowly shepherds only, that angels found the watchers for Messiah's coming. **In the land of the heathen** also were those that looked for Him; they were wise men, rich and noble, the philosophers of the East. **Students of nature, the Magi had seen God in His handiwork. From the Hebrew Scriptures they had learned of the Star to arise out of Jacob**, and with eager desire they awaited His coming, who should be not only the “Consolation of Israel,” but a “Light to lighten the Gentiles,” and “for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” Luke 2:25, 32; Acts 13:47. **They were seekers for light, and light from the throne of God illumined the path for their feet.** While the priests and rabbis of Jerusalem, the appointed guardians and expounders of the truth, were shrouded in darkness, the Heaven-sent star guided these Gentile strangers to the birthplace of the newborn King. GC 315.2

As these magi studied the starry heavens, they beheld the glory of the Creator. Seeking clearer knowledge, **they turned to the Hebrew Scriptures.** In their own land were **prophetic writings that predicted the coming of a divine teacher.** Balaam's prophecies had been handed down by tradition from century to century. But in the Old Testament the magi learned with joy that the Saviour's coming was near. The whole world was to be filled with a knowledge of the glory of the Lord. From Heaven with Love 34.3

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at <http://theriverconference.com/>