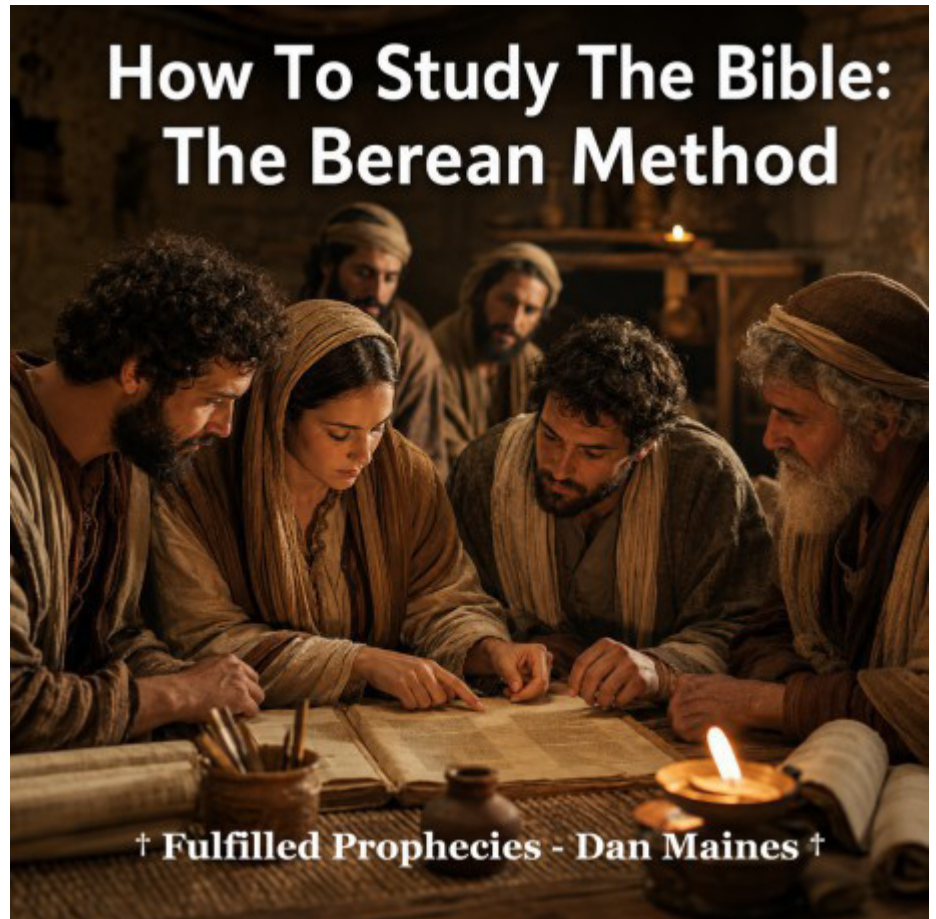


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How To Study The Bible: The Berean Method



By Dan Maines

How To Study The Bible: The Berean Method

Introduction

† The Bible is God's revealed word and must be handled carefully and accurately.

† Many doctrinal errors come from taking verses out of context, ignoring the audience, or failing to compare Scripture with Scripture.

† The Bereans provide one of the best examples of how believers should approach Bible study.

Acts 17:11

Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

† The Bereans did not blindly accept what they were taught. They examined the Scriptures for themselves.

† They approached God's word with eagerness and diligence, not skepticism or laziness.

† Every believer should test teachings by Scripture rather than by tradition, denomination, or popular opinion. (Isaiah 8:20)

Hebrews 1:1-2

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world.

† Every book of the Bible was written to real people living at a real time in history.

† Before we ask what a passage means to us, we must first determine what it meant to its original audience.

† The Bible was written for us, but it was not written directly to us.

† Understanding who was being addressed is one of the most important principles of hermeneutics. (Acts 17:11; Hebrews 1:1-2)

† The New Testament consists of letters, history, prophecy, and instruction written to specific people, churches, and communities facing specific circumstances. (Romans 1:7; Revelation 1:4)

† Time statements must be understood from the perspective of the original audience.

† Words such as shortly, near, at hand, and this generation had meaning to the people who first received those writings. (Revelation 1:1-3; Matthew 24:34)

† We should not remove time statements from their original

audience and assign them to any generation we choose.

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

† Bible study requires effort. Truth is discovered through careful examination, not quick assumptions.

† The phrase handling aright means to correctly divide, understand, and apply God's word.

† We should strive to understand what the text actually says rather than forcing our own beliefs into it. (Proverbs 18:13)

Nehemiah 8:8

They read from the book, from the Law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

† Reading the Bible is important, but understanding what we read is equally important.

† God's word has meaning, context, and purpose that must be considered.

† Effective Bible study asks who was speaking, who was being addressed, why it was written, and what was happening historically. (Luke 1:1-4)

Luke 24:27

Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures.

† Jesus interpreted Scripture using Scripture.

† One passage often explains another passage.

† Difficult verses should be understood in light of clearer passages rather than building doctrine on isolated texts. (Acts 28:23)

Matthew 5:17-18

Do not presume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until

heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter shall pass from the Law, until all is accomplished!

† One of the most important principles of Bible study is understanding that the New Testament is built upon the foundation of the Old Testament.

† Without understanding the language, symbols, and covenant concepts of the Old Testament, many New Testament passages will be misunderstood. (Luke 24:27; Romans 15:4)

† The phrase heaven and earth often carries covenant significance in Scripture and can refer to the covenant world God established with Israel rather than the physical universe. (Deuteronomy 31:28; Isaiah 1:2)

† Before assigning a modern meaning to a word or phrase, we should first examine how the Old Testament uses that language. (Matthew 5:17-18; Hebrews 8:13)

† Sound hermeneutics asks how the original audience would have understood the language based upon the Scriptures they already possessed, which was the Old Testament. (Acts 17:11)

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

† The Bible contains metaphors, parables, symbols, apocalyptic imagery, and figures of speech.

† Jesus was not literally a vine. The statement is a metaphor that communicates a spiritual truth.

† We should interpret Scripture according to its literary style and context.

† When the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

1 Corinthians 2:13

We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

† Scripture is its own best interpreter.

† Sound Bible study compares related passages and themes throughout the Bible.

† This prevents us from creating doctrines that contradict the rest of Scripture. (Romans 3:4)

2 Peter 1:20-21

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

† This passage reminds us that Scripture originated with God, not man.

† We must seek the author's intended meaning rather than inventing our own.

† Personal opinions must always submit to the actual words and context of Scripture. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Matthew 24:34

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† This verse provides an excellent example of why hermeneutics matters.

† Hermeneutics is the science and method of interpreting Scripture according to language, context, audience, history, and grammar.

† Good hermeneutics considers context, audience, grammar, and historical setting before drawing conclusions. (Nehemiah 8:8; 2 Timothy 2:15)

† Jesus spoke these words to a first-century audience and identified their generation as the generation that would witness these events.

† Ignoring audience relevance often leads to interpretations that conflict with the plain meaning of the text. (Matthew 23:36; Luke 21:20-22)

Isaiah 28:10

For He says,

'Order on order, order on order,
Line on line, line on line,
A little here, a little there.'

† Truth is gathered from the whole counsel of God, not from isolated verses.

† Sound doctrine is built by comparing all relevant passages on a subject.

† This helps prevent false conclusions based on a single text.
(Acts 20:27)

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, providing valuable historical confirmation of first-century fulfillment.

† Eusebius recorded that Christians remembered Jesus' warnings and fled Jerusalem before its destruction.

† Jerome acknowledged that many prophecies concerning Jerusalem found fulfillment in the events of the first century.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Read entire chapters and books rather than isolated verses.

† Always consider who was speaking and who was being addressed.

† Let Scripture interpret Scripture.

† Compare passages on the same subject before drawing conclusions.

† Learn the historical setting of the passage.

† Pay attention to time statements such as soon, near, shortly, and this generation.

† Don't build doctrine from one verse when the Bible speaks about the subject in many places.

† Be willing to change your view when Scripture proves you wrong.

† Approach God's word with the same eagerness and diligence demonstrated by the Bereans.

† Before asking how a passage applies to you, first ask who it

was originally written to and what it meant to them.

Q & A Appendix

Q: What is hermeneutics?

A: Hermeneutics is the method and principles used to interpret Scripture according to its language, context, audience, history, and grammar. (2 Timothy 2:15; Nehemiah 8:8)

Q: What is the most important rule of Bible study?

A: Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Compare related passages before drawing conclusions. (Luke 24:27; 1 Corinthians 2:13)

Q: Should I begin with commentaries?

A: No. Begin with Scripture itself and use commentaries only as secondary study tools. (Acts 17:11)

Q: What is one of the biggest mistakes people make when studying the Bible?

A: Ignoring context, audience relevance, and time statements. (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-22)

Q: What is the difference between exegesis and eisegesis?

A: Exegesis draws meaning out of the text based on its context and intended meaning. Eisegesis reads our own ideas into the text. Sound Bible study practices exegesis, not eisegesis. (2 Timothy 2:15)

Q: What tools should every Bible student use?

A: A good translation, a concordance, cross references, Bible dictionaries, historical resources, and most importantly, the Scriptures themselves. (Acts 17:11)

Q: How did the Bereans study the Bible?

A: They received the word eagerly and examined the Scriptures daily to determine whether what they were hearing was true. (Acts 17:11)

Q: Why is the Old Testament important when studying the New Testament?

A: The New Testament writers constantly quoted, referenced, and built upon the Old Testament. Understanding Old Testament language, symbols, and covenant concepts helps us properly interpret New Testament passages. (Luke 24:27; Romans 15:4)

Q: What does this verse mean to me?

A: The first question is not what it means to me, but what it meant to the original audience. Once we determine the original meaning, we can then apply that truth to our lives. (Nehemiah 8:8; Acts 17:11)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 2:15, Nehemiah 8:8, Luke 24:27, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Matthew 24:34, Isaiah 28:10

† Josephus, Eusebius, Jerome

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