

Holy Scripture?



Think about these questions.

What is Scripture?

And

*How do **you** read Holy Scripture?*

Hear David, the Psalmist!

*“Oh how I love thy law (Torah)
It is my meditation all the day.”
Ps 119:97*

The material in this study is intended for personal enrichment, bible class preparation, and understanding what Scripture is and how it serves in shaping religious life.

Most of the material included in this study is drawn from personal research and notes, and liberal references to dictionary, encyclopedia, Wikipedia, and internet research on the relevant topics. References to scholarly publications are included where necessary.

What is Holy Scripture?

We might begin by asking a Jewish writer this question.

I have already introduced you above to one of the most famous and well quoted Jewish thinkers of all time, David in Psa 119:97 as he reflected on the *Law of Moses*, the sacred writings of Israel. David, and of other *Law* or *Torah* psalms, Psalm 1, 109, *et al*, was quoted with respect by Jesus and at least two of the Apostles, Paul, and Peter, as *Torah*.

We will learn that devout Jews defined what we call *Law* as *Torah*, *God's instruction of how to live in a faithful relationship with him*.

First, we must note that Paul and Jesus considered David's psalms to be *Law* (Rom 3:9-20-Ps 14:1-3, Ps 36:1; John 10:34-Ps 82:6; John 15:25-Ps 35:19, Ps 69:4)! What the Apostles referred to as *Law*, or *Torah*, we call the Old Testament.

Torah at first was used to describe the first five books of the Old Testament, the *Pentateuch*, but eventually was used to refer to any or all the *Sacred Writings* of Israel, our Old Testament.

The Hebrew word *Torah* refers to *instructions* that explain *the Law of Moses*, or *of God*.

Torah was not only considered as *Scripture*, or Sacred Writings, 2 Tim 3:14-17, but it was also *God's divine instruction to the Jews on how to live a righteous life with God*.

So what is Scripture? An answer, or two!

Under normal usage scripture may refer to *any kind of formal writing used to convey meaning to a reader*.

A comment in the Miriam Webster Dictionary reads, "*Scripture*, [from the] middle English, and late *Latin scriptura*, from *Latin scriptus*. *Scripture* is an act or product of writing [it means that which has been written]."¹

A common term describing one type of *scripture* may be *literature*—something presented as a published book or writing, some publication or part of a larger work.

One definition of literature is "*written works, especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit*." Merriam-Webster Dictionary further defines *literature* as "*writings in prose or verse especially having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest*."

However, the *forms* of writing, meaning the *letters, characters, or figures* comprising the written form, differ from age to age and from culture to culture. English literature adopts a Latin-script. The Russian alphabet adopts a Cyrillic script. The Greek script is derived from an old Phoenician alphabet. The Hebrew language is a form of the paleo-Hebrew script.

Obviously, the written form of ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, and Mesopotamian "*writing*" is in a "*pictorial*" *hieroglyphic*² script.

Each of these different written forms is shaped by their own cultural diversity and conveys significant cultural meaning.

Examples of Religious or Literature as Sacred Scripture

The following brief introduction to the major religions of the world indicates how their roots, early development, and faith, are *reflected in some literary form, or sacred writings or scriptures*.

¹ I have added a few explanatory comments to clarify the dictionary meaning.

² *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Hieroglyph, a character used in a system of pictorial writing, particularly that form used on ancient Egyptian monuments. Hieroglyphic symbols may represent the objects that they depict but usually stand for sounds or groups of sounds. Hieroglyph, meaning "sacred carving," is a Greek translation of the Egyptian phrase "the god's words."

Most *sacred* or *religious writings* indicate the *nature* of their “god” or divine being. In many cases the nature of their “god” reflects their encounter with the *forces of nature* experienced in their region, or a reflection of *the powers of nature* perceived in their rulers who were considered “*descendants of the gods.*”

Egyptian Polytheism

The marvels of Egyptian archaeological discoveries in the Pyramids and the numerous royal temples and mausoleums, inform us in pictorial form of the nature of Egypt’s many gods. The “literature” or “scripture” of Egypt’s God’s and religion is found in the ancient “cryptographs” and *steles* distributed over the centuries of Egypt’s ancient history.



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“Egypt had one of the largest and most complex pantheons of gods of any civilization in the ancient world. Over the course of Egyptian history hundreds of gods and goddesses were worshipped. The characteristics of individual gods are hard to pin down. Most had a principal association with the sun or the underworld. But these could change over time as gods rose and fell in importance and evolved in ways that corresponded to developments in Egyptian society.

Osiris, one of Egypt’s most important deities as god of the underworld. He also symbolized death, resurrection, and the cycle of Nile floods that Egypt relied on for agricultural fertility. According to the myth, Osiris was a king of Egypt who was murdered and dismembered by his brother Seth. His wife, Isis, reassembled his body and resurrected him, allowing them to conceive a son, the god Horus. He was represented as a mummified king, wearing wrappings that left only the green skin of his hands and face exposed.

Isis. The origins of **Isis** are obscure. Unlike many gods, she cannot be tied to a specific town, and there are no certain mentions of her in the earliest Egyptian literature. Isis embodied the traditional Egyptian virtues of a wife and mother. Isis was one of the last of the ancient Egyptian gods to be worshipped.

Horus is depicted as a falcon, or as a man with a falcon’s head. Horus was a sky god associated with war and hunting. He was also the embodiment of the divine kingship, and in some eras the reigning king was a manifestation of Horus.

Re, the sun god, was one of the creator gods of ancient Egypt. Over time, Re came to be syncretized with other sun deities, especially Amon.

Anubis was concerned with funerary practices and the care of the dead. He was usually represented as a jackal, or as a man with the head of a jackal.

Amon was a god of the air. The name Amon means the “Hidden One.” In a form merged with the sun god Re, he became the most powerful deity in Egypt, a position retained for most of

the powerful New Kingdom which included the expansive regions of Nubia, Syria, Jordon, and Libya.”³

Babylonian Polytheism

Ancient stone stele, clay tablets, and obelisk monuments have recorded much of the early history of the ancient near east which included Babylon, Assyria, and Persia. They became the documents recording the “divine” success of their rulers.

“A web of perplexity ... surrounds the history of Babylonian religious beliefs. Dating back to 3500-2000 BCE, the Sumerian civilization was home to a plethora of gods and goddesses, including *Anu*, *Enlil*, *Ishtar*, and *Marduk*; each [was] believed to possess power over fertility, war, justice and more. Of them all, *Marduk stood out as the most venerated – seen as both creator deity and protector god*. As time progressed, he gradually rose to become the head of the pantheon.

The Babylonians also held [the] afterlife in high regard: one realm for those who lived virtuously, another for those who did not. *The righteous were said to be rewarded with eternal bliss while evildoers faced eternal torment*.

Uncovering the secrets of Babylonian religion has been a long and complex process, with *archaeologists using a wealth of evidence from artifacts to texts. Excavations have revealed clay figurines, votive offerings, cylinder seals and more from sites dating back to 4500 B.C.E., while cuneiform tablets written between 2000 and 500 B.C.E. provide detailed accounts of religious beliefs and practices during that period ...* By piecing all these pieces together, scholars have been able to gain an unprecedented understanding of this ancient faith throughout its history—from its Sumerian origins to its decline under Persian rule in 539 B.C.E.—and how it still resonates today.”⁴

Indian Hinduism

The literary heritage of Hinduism is rich in recordings in dramatic fashion and imagery. The trajectory of Hinduism thinking, and religion is reflected in Vedic literature. Wikipedia includes the following valuable information regarding the vast spread and impact of *Vedic literature*.

“The **Veda**, (Sanskrit meaning “Knowledge”) are an anthology of poems or hymns composed in archaic Sanskrit by Indo-European-speaking peoples who lived in northwest India during the 2nd millennium BCE. No definite date can be ascribed to the composition of the Vedas, but the period of about 1500–1200 BCE is acceptable to most scholars. The hymns formed a liturgical body that in part grew up around the soma ritual and sacrifice. They were recited or chanted during rituals.

The foremost collection is **Rigveda** (“Knowledge of the Verses”), the **Samaveda** (“Knowledge of the Chants”). Those three Vedas—**Rig**, **Yajur**, and **Sama**—were known as the *trayi-vidya* (“threefold knowledge

To this day, several of these works, notably the three oldest Vedas, are recited with subtleties of intonation and rhythm that have been handed down orally from the early days of Vedic religion in India.”⁵

³ www.britannica.com/list/11-egyptian-gods-and-goddesses

⁴ www.ancientpast.com/history-of-babylonian-religion-uncovering-the-ancient-faiths-of-mesopotamia.

⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Veda.”

Buddhism

Buddhism is the religion of much of the eastern world as in parts of India, China, Japan, Malasia, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* records the following summary of Buddhism.

“Buddhism, the religion, and philosophy that developed from the teachings of the Buddha (Sanskrit: “Awakened One”), a teacher who lived in northern India between the mid-sixth and mid-fourth centuries BCE (before the Common Era). Spreading from India to Central and Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan, Buddhism has played a significant role in the spiritual, cultural, and social life of Asia, and, beginning in the 20th century, it spread to the West.

Buddhist scripture and doctrine developed in several closely related literary languages of ancient India, especially in Pali and Sanskrit. In this article Pali and Sanskrit words that have gained currency in English are treated as English words and are rendered in the form in which they appear in English-language dictionaries. Exceptions occur in exceptional circumstances—as, for example, in the case of the Sanskrit term *dharma* (Pali: *dhamma*), which has meanings that are not usually associated with the term *dharma* as it is often used in English. Pali forms are given in the sections on the core teachings of early Buddhism that are reconstructed primarily from Pali texts and in sections that deal with Buddhist traditions in which the primary sacred language is Pali. Sanskrit forms are given in the sections that deal with Buddhist traditions whose primary sacred language is Sanskrit and in other sections that deal with traditions whose primary sacred texts were translated from Sanskrit into a Central or East Asian language such as Tibetan or Chinese.

There was much discontent in India over Brahminic sacrifice and ritual. In northwestern India there were ascetics who tried to create a more personal and spiritual religious experience than that found in the Vedas (Hindu sacred scriptures). In the literature that grew out of this movement, the Upanishads, a new emphasis on renunciation and transcendental knowledge can be found. Northeastern India, which was less influenced by Vedic tradition, became the breeding ground of many new sects. Society in this area was troubled by the breakdown of tribal unity and the expansion of several petty kingdoms. Religiously, this was a time of doubt, turmoil, and experimentation.”⁶

Islam

The most sacred literature of Islam is the *Quran*, or the *Koran*. The *Quran/Koran* is reputed to be the sacred revelation of Allah’s word (God’s word) to Mohammad. It was progressively revealed in a series of visions to Muhammad as he pondered the nature of his new religion for the Arabs in what was then know broadly as Arabia.

The *Quran/Koran* is considered a most high holy divine book, and any denigration of the Quran is considered blasphemous with the “sinner” condemned to death.

Hadith refers to a secondary book of sacred writings of Islam. Hadith is considered a divinely appointed sacred literature by a *Shia* Imam whose teachings are considered inspired and authoritative.

Muslims are primarily divided into two basic sects or “denominations” within Islam, *Shia* Muslims, and *Sunni* Muslims. They are both politically and religiously divided over who were the true Muslim representatives following Mohammad’s death.

⁶ www.britannica.com/topic/Buddhism

There are several other variations of the primary Islamic faith, but these groups are shaped more by cultural and ethnic interests; Ahmadiyya, and Sufism represent two other denominations in Islam

Muhammad married a wealthy Arab trader, Khadija, of who's primary caravan of traders he had become significantly successful and influential.

Using his wealth and cultural position, and power, and through a series of warlike evangelistic efforts, Muhammad consolidated the divisive tribes of the region into a religious power Islam seated in Medina.

According to basic Islamic doctrine, Mohammad was a divinely inspired prophet commissioned by God/*Allah* to preach and confirm the monotheistic teachings of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets.⁷ Abraham, Moses, and Jesus were God's prophets to Israel. Muhammad was God's (*Allah's*) prophet to the Arabs.

*Judaism*⁸

The ancient religion of Israel is commonly known as *Judaism*. This term is derived from the name of a Hebrew ancestor and progenitor⁹ of *Judah*.

I have included additional notes on Judaism and the Sacred Scriptures of Judaism since much of this material is valuable, but not well known.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* has the following brief introduction to Judaism.

“Judaism, monotheistic religion developed among the ancient Hebrews. Judaism is characterized by a belief in one transcendent God who revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew prophets and by a religious life in accordance with Scriptures and rabbinic traditions. Judaism is the complex phenomenon of a total way of life for the Jewish people, comprising theology, law, and innumerable cultural traditions.”

Types of Judaism

Since the heritage of Israel and Judaism is so ancient, at least over 3500 years old, and since Judaism has experienced many offshoots due to national, political, and religious upheavals in its history, its lineage and development is somewhat incremental within a fairly narrow corpus of religious material. In most of these offshoots Jerusalem and a fundamental *Torah* heritage has remained the cultural and religious epicenter of Jewish faith, with religious centers in Shechem, Tiberias, and Babylon developing over time.

The Torah/Tanakh

Primarily, Judaism is tied the *Torah*, or various forms of the *written* and *oral* traditions descending from the view that its original divine instruction came through Moses and the Prophets of ancient Israel. The *Torah* (written and oral) has been passed down in various translations or editions of the “original” Hebrew *Torah*. Geographic and cultural translations such as the Greek *Septuagint* tradition which originating in Alexandria, Egypt ca 230 CE plus were

⁷ Dr. Ian A. Fair, personal teaching notes and Wikipedia, “Muhammad”.

⁸ Most of this material on Judaism is drawn from personal teaching notes, Wikipedia references, and various theological or biblical dictionary comments.

⁹ Dictionary definition. “A person or thing from which a person, animal, or plant is descended or originates; an ancestor or parent. Sons and daughters were the progenitors of many of Israel’s descendants, as were Scotland's leading noble families defined by the family clan.

made to meet the needs of Greek speaking Jewish people in the Mediterranean and European Diaspora.

The Masoretic Text

The *Masoretic* text is a “modern,” ca. 700-1000 CE Hebrew “transcript” or version of the *Torah/Tanakh*.

Most Jews and Protestants consider the Masoretic Text to represent the authoritative Hebrew Bible (Protestants call it the Old Testament). While it was written sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries CE, it was based on the meticulously preserved oral tradition and the best available manuscripts of the original Hebrew text.

Versions of the Hebrew *Torah* scrolls that existed before the destruction of Jerusalem were treasured and housed in the Jerusalem Temple and in numerous shrines or Synagogues throughout Israel.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and all other places of Judaism were destroyed by the Romans, ca. 66-70 CE. Some manuscript and scroll copies were secluded by the Jewish Scribes. Remains of these were preserved by the Jews in schools of Jewish faith throughout Northern Judea and Babylon where many Jews were displaced when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Beginning as early as 200-400 CE Jewish Scribes began to piece these manuscripts and scroll fragments into what is identified in the modern era as the *Masoretic Text*, found in some valuable codices such as the Leningrad Codex, or fragments of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, discovered ca. 1947-55, cf. the great Isaiah Scroll in the Jewish *Shrine of the Book* in Jerusalem.

The *Leningrad Codex* is the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew, using the *Masoretic Text*. According to its publication details it was made in Cairo in AD 1008. It has been housed at the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg since 1863.

Most English Translations of the Old Testament are based on the *Masoretic Text* and the Greek *Septuagint*

The *Masoretic Text* was an answer to a problem that had been building in the Jewish community for centuries: biblical Hebrew was ambiguous, and most Jews did not know how to read it well. With no vowels, punctuation, or stress marks, the original Hebrew left a lot of room for interpretive errors. And as biblical Hebrew fell out of usage, the Hebrew Scriptures became virtually inaccessible to the public.

To save the Hebrew Bible from dissolving into competing interpretations, a group known as the *Masoretes* (traditionalists) primarily in Babylon, produced a new copy of the original Hebrew *Tanakh*, working from the best available manuscripts, just as countless others had—but with a twist. They used a rabbinic tradition of adding an intricate system of punctuation and stress marks so that non specialists could read their Masoretic text.

Origins of the Masoretic Text

While the *Masoretic Text* was completed rather late (the oldest copies we have of the Masoretic Text are from the ninth century), it was the culmination of several centuries of Hebrew Rabbinic scholarly work.

Rome destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 66-70 CE

Back in 70 AD, the First Jewish-Roman War came crashing to an end when the Romans lay siege to Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple. Countless manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible (the *Tanakh*) were lost in the aftermath.

Determined to preserve Scripture, the Jews established multiple academies, where countless Rabbis studied the Hebrew Rabbinic Traditions and memorized the Jewish oral traditions in a highly collaborative environment.

Likely fueled by fear that important Jewish teachings could be lost forever, the Rabbinic community began a forbidden project: transcribing the Jewish oral traditions.

Preserving oral tradition

While not explicitly discussed in Scripture, the “oral *Torah*” was considered authoritative, because it was considered to have been handed down from God, to Moses, and the Israelite Prophets. The oral tradition was carefully preserved, passed on to each generation of rabbis through rigorous repetition and memorization.

The oral tradition applied the Hebrew Bible to everyday life and various legal situations. Rabbis did more than simply memorize the Old Testament: the oral tradition included quotes from Scripture and gave it a specific context, which helped Jews understand how it affected their lives.

At the various Jewish academies, numerous rabbis worked to transcribe the oral tradition into a text everyone agreed was authoritative. Sometime in the early third century CE, they completed the *Mishnah* (“study by repetition”), the first written collection of the Jewish oral tradition that was organized around 63 topics.

The oral tradition ensured that Rabbis knew how to apply each passage, pronounce each word, and stress each syllable. The *Mishnah* preserved the oral tradition in written form and helped lay the groundwork for clarifying how to read and pronounce the biblical Hebrew.

Establishing the Jewish canon, list of “authorized Scripture

Scholars are not in complete agreement as to when the Jewish canon or list of authorized Scripture was established, but it likely occurred sometime between the second century BCE and the third century CE. As the Jewish oral and written traditions were carefully harmonized, the “*scribal schools*” were well trained and careful in their dealing with what they considered YHWH’s word and instructions. Reference to this, the remains of the Dead Sea Scroll *scriptorium* at Qumran is an example of this disciplined process.

The *Torah* (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) had always been considered authoritative and had been carefully memorized, copied, and preserved. The rest of the Hebrew canon took longer to define, and so other books splintered off into multiple editions.

Other early manuscripts like the *Septuagint* (a ca. 230-270 BCE Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was translated by “70 Hebrew scholars” in Alexandria, Egypt) and the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest that additional books may have been considered authoritative by some Jewish sects, but Jewish tradition holds that the Masoretic Text authentically represents the canon as it had been passed down.

The *Talmud* (a collection of oral traditions including the *Mishnah*) suggests that the canon was defined by 120 scribes at the Great Synagogue somewhere in Judea as early as Ezra and Nehemiah, ca. 450 BCE. This would imply that while there were disparate versions of numerous books and some collections that included extrabiblical works, the Jews still knew which writings were authoritative. (Similar to how modern Protestant Bibles may have different maps, notes, and appendices, but we still agree on which parts of the Bible are truly Scripture.)

What books are included in the Masoretic Text?

The Masoretic Text is traditionally divided into three groups of books:

Torah (Teaching)

Nevi'im (Prophets)
Ketuvim (Writings)

This is why the Hebrew Bible is also known by the acronym *Tanakh*, from *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim*.

The listing of the books of Masoretic Text looks different from most Christian Bibles. While there are 39 books in most Old Testaments, the *Tanakh* only has 24. Nobody *added* the additional 15 books to the Christian Bible. The texts are just divided and listed differently in the Hebrew *Torah/Tanakh*, “Old Testament.”

The Masoretes combined numerous books and reduced the total number to 24. 1 and 2 Kings are combined into one book, and so are 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Nehemiah and Ezra are a single book as well. All twelve of the Minor Prophets are bundled into one book.

The Various Sacred Literature of Judaism

Torah/Tanakh

What Christians identify as the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, Israel accepts as twenty-four sacred books which they call the *Tanakh* or *Torah*. The books of the Jewish *Tanakh* are primarily the same books as the 39 books of the Old Testament only they are grouped differently in 24 books.

The 24 books of the *Tanakh* have gone through centuries of religious upheaval and have been canonized by rabbinic scholars into what is today “codified” as and known as the Hebrew and Aramaic *Masoretic text*.

Mishna

The first major written collection of the Jewish *oral traditions* was collected into what is known as the *Mishna* or the *Oral Torah*. It is also the first major work of rabbinic literature.^[2] The *Mishnah* was redacted by Judah ha-Nasi probably in Beit Shearim or Sepphoris between the ending of the second century and the beginning of the 3rd century CE in a time when, according to the *Talmud*, the persecution of Jews and the passage of time raised the possibility that the details of the oral traditions of the Pharisees from the Second Temple period (516 BCE – 70 CE) would be forgotten. This was codified by ha-Nasi into the oral tradition of the. Most of the *Mishnah* is written in Mishnaic Hebrew, but some parts are in Palestinian Western Aramaic.¹⁰

Midrash

Primarily, *Midrash* refers to a manner or style of interpreting the *Tanakh* (written *torah*) and the *Mishna* (Oral tradition) in a form of rabbinic exegesis of the Scriptures of Israel. The commentary of the written *torah* and Oral tradition of the *Mishna* forms the basis of the *Talmud*. The word *Talmud* itself means "textual interpretation", "textual study", or "exegesis" as used of a rabbinic study that interprets Scripture in rabbinic style. Such studies contain early interpretations and commentaries on the *Tanakh*, the written *Torah* and the *Mishna*, the *Oral Torah*. Some rabbinic exegesis as well as some non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*haggadah*). Occasionally, Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), occasionally formed a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture. The word *Midrash*, especially if capitalized, can refer to a specific compilation of these rabbinic writings composed between 400 and 1200 CE.¹¹

¹⁰ “Mishna”, Wikipedia.

¹¹ “Midrash”, Wikipedia.

The *Mishna* and *Midrash* form the basis of both *Talmuds* which were written by Rabbinic scholars.

Gemara

In time, following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, 66 CE, and the Jerusalem centre of Jewish rabbinic scholarship, Jewish scholars settled in various centers in Galilee and others in Babylon. Their continued studies and scholarship on the *Tanakh* were referred to as *Gemara*.

"Gemara" refers to the process of producing two Talmuds, one in Babylon, the Babylonian Talmud, the other in Galilee known as the "Jerusalem Talmud."

The older compilation is called the Jerusalem Talmud, or the *Talmud Yerushalmi*. It was compiled in the fourth century CE in Galilee. The Babylonian Talmud was compiled about the year 500 CE, although it continued to be edited in later years.

The word "*Talmud*", when used without qualification, usually refers to the Babylonian Talmud containing Jewish scholarly rabbinic tradition of *Tanakh* interpretation and application.

While the editors of Jerusalem Talmud and Babylonian Talmud mention each other, most scholars believe these documents were written independently.

Two Talmuds

The process of "Gemara" proceeded in two major centers of Jewish scholarship, in Tiberius located in Galilee, and Babylonia. Correspondingly, two bodies of analysis developed, and two works of *Talmud* were created.

Until the advent of political and religious modernity, in all Jewish communities, the *Talmud* was the centerpiece of Jewish cultural life. It foundational to "all Jewish thought and aspirations", serving also as "the guide for the daily life" of Jews.

The Canon¹² of the Old Testament as Scripture

"There is no scholarly consensus as to when the canon of the Hebrew Bible (or *Tanakh*) was fixed. Rabbinic Judaism recognizes the twenty-four books of the Masoretic Text (five books of the *Torah*, eight books of the *Nevi'im*, and eleven books of the *Ketuvim*) as the authoritative version of the *Tanakh*. Of these books, the Book of Daniel has the most recent final date of composition (chapters 10-12 were written sometime between 168 and 164 BCE). The canon was therefore fixed at some time after this date. Some scholars argue that it was fixed during the Hasmonean dynasty (140–40 BCE),^[5] while others argue it was not fixed until the second century CE or even later.^[6]

The Septuagint

"The *Septuagint* (or simply "LXX") is the name commonly given among scholars in the West for the ancient Koine Greek version of the Hebrew Bible translated in stages between the third to first century B.C.E. (one source date this as 230 CE) in Alexandria. It is the oldest of several ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. The name means "seventy" and derives from a *tradition* that seventy-two Jewish scholars (LXX being the nearest round number) translated the *Torah* from Hebrew into Greek for one of the Ptolemaic kings in Egypt..

The LXX was held with great respect in ancient times; Philo and Josephus ascribed divine inspiration to its authors. It formed the basis of the Old Latin versions and is still used intact within Eastern Orthodoxy. Furthermore, the LXX was also the basis for Gothic, Slavonic, old Syriac (but not the Peshitta), old Armenian, and Coptic versions of the Old Testament. Of

¹² Canon refers to the final fixed form of a manuscript.

significance for all Christians and for Bible scholars, the LXX is quoted by the Christian New Testament and by the Apostolic Fathers. While Jews have not used the LXX in worship or religious study since the second century C.E., recent scholarship has brought renewed interest in it in Judaic studies. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls attest to Hebrew texts other than those on which the Masoretic Text was based; in many cases, these newly found texts accord with the LXX version. Also, the LXX version of some works, like Daniel and Esther, are longer than the Hebrew. The oldest surviving codices of LXX date to the fourth century C.E.

The Septuagint derives its name from the Latin phrase *septuaginta interpretum versio*, "translation of the seventy interpreters" (hence the abbreviation LXX). The Latin title refers to a legendary account in the spurious Letter of Aristeas of how seventy-two Jewish scholars were asked by the Greek King of Egypt Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the third century B.C.E. to translate the *Torah* for inclusion in the Library of Alexandria. A later version of that legend narrated by Philo of Alexandria states that although the translators were kept in separate chambers, they all produced identical versions of the text in seventy-two days. Although this story is widely viewed as implausible today, it underlines the fact that some ancient Jews wished to present the translation as authoritative. A version of this legend is found in the Tractate Megillah of the Babylonian Talmud (pages 9a–9b), which identifies 15 specific unusual translations made by the scholars. Only two of these translations are found in the extant LXX.”¹³

The Masoretic Text

The Masoretic Text is an authoritative Hebrew and Aramaic text of the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible (the *Tanakh*). It is the basic text for Rabbinic studies in modern Judaism.

The Masoretic Text *presents* and *defines* the canon for contemporary Jewish scholarly studies in a precise alphabetical text. The *sigla* (scribal insertions) within the text offer vocalization and accentuation known as the *mas'sora*.

The Masoretic text was copied, edited, and distributed by a group of Jews known as Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries, CE. The oldest known complete copy, the Leningrad Codex, dates from the early 11th century CE.

The oldest-known complete copy of the Masoretic Text, the *Leningrad Codex*, dates from the early 11th century. The *Aleppo Codex*, once the oldest-known complete copy but missing large sections since the 1947 Civil war in Palestine, dates from the 10th century. In 2022, Codex Sassoon resurfaced after almost six hundred years of obscurity. This is a codex comprising all twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible, dated to the 10th century. It is considered as old as the Aleppo Codex and a century older than the Leningrad Codex (1006).

Tanakh as Torah

The word *torah* is the Hebrew word referring to “the written books of law” in the Old Testament, the *Tanakh*. Originally it represented only the first five books, the *Pentateuch*, but eventually by the time of Christ it was used for the whole Old Testament.

The word *torah* means *instruction* or *teaching*. In regard to the Law of Moses, or the Old Testament, it defined the Law as the *instruction from God on how to live in a right relationship with God*. It certainly contained *regulations* or *statutes* in which God gave Israel *strict instruction* on

¹³ *New World Encyclopedia*. For a more complete article on the Septuagint cf. the article in BibleGateway, *Encyclopedia of the Bible - Septuagint*

right living and upright human behaviour between one another, and the consequences of transgressing the statutes.

Psalm 119:105. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

The Apocrypha

The word *apocryphal* means *hidden* or *secret*. Applied to Scripture it refers to literature that is *almost canonical, has excellent value, but cannot be used in the sacred assembly*.

The *Jewish apocrypha* are religious texts written in large part by Jews, especially during the Second Temple period. The Jewish Apocrypha were not accepted as *sacred manuscripts* when the Hebrew Bible was canonized. Some of these books are considered sacred by certain Christian denominations and are included in their versions of the Old Testament. For instance, some versions of the early King James Version included the books of the *Apocrypha*.

Certain sects of Second Temple Judaism, such as the Essenes in Judaea and the Therapeutae in Alexandria, were said to have a "secret or hidden" cache of sacred literature. The Pharisees apparently were familiar with these apocryphal texts.

There are fifteen books normally included in the KJV Apocryphal canon.

- 1 Esdras
- 2 Esdras
- Tobit
- Judith
- Additions to Esther
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus
- Baruch
- Letter of Jeremiah
- Prayer of Azariah
- Susanna
- Bel and the Dragon
- Prayer of Manasseh
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees

Apocalyptic literature

The *corpus* of religious literature normally identified as *Apocalyptic* is an example of a "secret," or almost *Secret Sacred* canon of literature. Based on their bizarre dramatic style, these books were not considered either by the Jews or Christians to be Sacred Scripture, but were held as a part of a literary genre that flourished from 200 BCE to 100 CE. These works usually bore the names of ancient Hebrew worthies to establish their validity among the writers' contemporaries.

Since the general context of the apocalyptic genre is periods of *religious* and *political oppression* and *persecution*, apocalyptic is considered to be the *literature of oppression, and religious persecution*.

Since the early years of the Christian faith under Roman imperial and Jewish religious opposition and suffering, the theology of much of the New Testament expresses significant *apocalyptic influence*. Two internationally recognized New Testament scholars, F. F. Bruce, and Hans Käsemann, have observed that *unless a person is able to stand in the boots of an*

apocalyptic they will not be able to understand the *theology of the New Testament*! Käsemann concluded that *apocalyptic is the mother of New Testament theology*!

Although not considered as *normative canonical authority* among most Jewish and Christian scholars, the *apocalyptic genre* is considered *extremely valuable* in understanding the thought of much of the Old and Testaments.

Examples of the Apocalyptic corpus

Daniel 7-12, Revelation, Sybilline Oracles, Testament of Levi, 1 Enoch, Similitudes of Enoch, 2 and 3 Baruch, 4 Ezra, The Apocalypse of Abraham, The Shepherd of Hermas, and The Apocalypse of Peter.

The Sacred Literature of Christianity **"Holy Scripture"**

Most "High" churches, as in the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox churches, Episcopal churches, and most Protestant churches believe that since Scripture derives from a *most Holy God*, then *his word* must be *most Holy*, and should be treated with *an utmost reverent holy mindset*.

Unfortunately, many of these churches believe that although the Scriptures are *Holy*, they *must be interpreted* by a *Holy Church*, resulting in the ancient creeds and "Papal" Synods or conferences. The ultimate result is a diminution of the *clear meaning and authority* of the **written words of Sacred Scripture**. Scripture is considered to be valuable, but must be interpreted by a Holy Church, Synod, or clergy.

Under this mindset, the authority of religion is no longer Sacred Scripture. It resides in religious councils!

One of my favorite New Testament scholars is a Jesuit theologian whose exegetical skills are impeccable and precise. He observes that although the Scriptures meant something to the original readers, the Catholic Tridentine Tradition¹⁴ (meaning the decision of the church council powers) interprets the original meaning *so that* the Scriptures today *may not mean quite the same thing as they originally meant!* The Catholic Church believes that the individual reader does not have the *authority* or *ability* to determine the meaning of Scripture. This *authority* has been passed down by the *church synodal powers* to certain *empowered individuals or priests* whose duty is to interpret the reading of Scripture. Since the Scriptures are *most holy* the right of reading them with meaning belongs to the *most holy church*.

Obviously, those who follow this formal high church doctrine *do not read Scripture in the same manner as do most "low church"*¹⁵ *Protestant churches, or free churches like some Baptist churches and Churches of Christ.*

Most Protestant and *free churches*¹⁶ believe that the Holy Scriptures were written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and must therefore be *Holy Scriptures* and treated with utmost

¹⁴ Tridentine relates to a Roman Catholic church council that met in the city of Trent, Italy, from 1545 to 1563. The Trent council issued decrees and doctrines that defined the Catholic faith and reformed church practices. Tridentine can also refer to Catholic practices that follow the Catholic council's teachings. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*.

¹⁵ I do not use this *low church* term in a derogatory manner, implying only that they do not subscribe to the same form of government as do the *high church councils*.

¹⁶ The term *free church* has reference to churches that do not function under some synod or church council. Churches of Christ function as free churches. Baptist churches and Churches of Christ nevertheless are influenced by religious groups, church related universities and schools of preaching, and brotherhood religious journals.

respect! The Scriptures are *therefore the Word or instruction of the Holy God and must therefore be Holy Sacred Scripture*

This view follows the claim of Scripture that the writings of the Apostles Paul and Peter, and other apostolic leaders like Luke, Jude, and James, were written under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, 2 Tim 3:14-17; 2 Peter 3:20. Their writings are therefore *Holy Sacred Scripture*.

The Christian Understanding of Scripture

Christian Canonical Books

The fundamental view of most Christian churches is that the 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books are *canonical, normative, and authoritative guides to God's divine intention for his people, for Jesus' Church, the mission of the kingdom of Christ*.

These "66 books" were recorded and transmitted faithfully through the early years of the Jewish and Christian faith by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as *the word of God or of Christ*.

The point for this lesson is that the term ***word of God***, as the nexus of the foundation of faith, as it reads in the KJV at Rom 10:17 speaks of the *uttered spoken* word of God as preached in the message concerning Christ. This means that *the Christian faith* has its roots and foundation in *the preached word concerning Christ* as recorded in the Sacred Holy Scriptures.

Note Rom 10:16, 17, where Paul wrote that *faith comes from hearing the preaching, or preached word (ῥῆμα, rhēma) concerning Christ*. Correctly interpreted as in the ESV and RSV reads below:

¹⁶ *But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"* ¹⁷ *So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the **emphatic preaching** (ῥῆμα, rhēma) of God concerning Christ."*

¹⁶ Ἄλλ' οὐ πάντες ὑπήκουσαν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. Ἡσαΐας γὰρ λέγει· κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; ¹⁷ ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος (ῥῆμα, rhēma) Χριστοῦ. ¹⁸ ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; μενοῦνγε·

We might conclude that *Christian biblical faith and theology* must derive *inductively from within* the Sacred Scriptures of the 66 books of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments. These are viewed as the *canonical, authoritative, and normative rhema, the spoken or uttered word from God*, found in the written texts.

The expression *canonical*¹⁷ implies that most evangelical churches and scholars see *faith and religious practice* "measured" by the theology of these "66 books," the *Sacred Scriptures of the Bible*.

However, due to the age of most of these books, and the ancient history recording their role in the life of God's people, notably the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, each book needs to be *appropriately and carefully examined inductively within its historical and religious contexts* to determine *the precise theological principles* involved in their production, and the sociological and theological principles involved.

¹⁷ The word canonical from the Greek *kanōn* implies a measuring stick, a rod, a standard by which something is measured.

The *Inductive* Approach to Biblical Interpretation

It is at this point that an appropriate *inductive approach to a text* becomes vital! That means finding the meaning *from within the text through a biblical critical exegetical* examination of a text, rather than reading our or some presupposition *into the text*.

This implies a disciplined examination of the text executed initially in its *original historical and cultural context*, followed by an explanation of the *theological principle ensconced within the original text*.

It is necessary to determine *which precise theological principles* were relevant *within the texts when the author wrote the text to a specific community*.

We should remember that a Scripture was not written 2000 plus years ago *to us*. It might have a message *for us*, but it was not written to us! We determine what that message is *through an inductive examination* of the *original text* in its *own environment and culture*.

In contrast to the *inductive* method, a *deductive* approach to bible study will, *by its very nature*, introduce a *predetermined theological meaning* into the text, and interpret the text through the meaning imported *from without the text*. This procedure is commonly described as *proof texting*, interpreting a text by some predetermined external understanding *and proving or establishing your point* by deducing the meaning of the text according to that external *pre-established* principle. It introduces a perceived extraneous opinion into the text that is often only remotely related to the text, rather than establishing the meaning of the text *from within its own context*.

The *deductive proof text* approach to Scripture would by definition divorce the theology of the topic from its *original biblical theological context* and set it in the contemporary context of the issue being studied.

An example of the *inductive procedure* is found in the excellent research and writing by Dr. Thomas Olbricht in his study of the theology of the Old Testament, *He loves forever: The message of the Old Testament*, 1980. Olbricht sought to determine which theological principle seemed dominant in the thirty-nine books of the canonical Old Testament corpus. Olbricht's careful disciplined *inductive* examination of the major theological biblical texts of the Old Testament led him to recognize that although there were several significant *theological themes* in these texts such as the *keeping and obedience* to the Law of the Old Testament. The legal aspect of the Law are important when researched within the context of the Law, these principles were overshadowed by the consistent theme revealed within the Scriptures, the *steadfast love of the Lord* for his people.

The theological theme of *God's steadfast love for his people* is found in over 150 texts in the Old Testament, e.g., Lam 3:21-33; Psalm 136—over 100 times in the Psalms. A careful inductive examination of the Old Testament texts within their own cultural and religious environment and history reveals that God's steadfast love for his people overshadowed the legal aspect of the Law.

In fact, a correct understanding of the Law as *Torah*-instruction through over 1400 years of patient working with the nation of Israel, from Egypt to the cross of Jesus, was a *magnificent display of the steadfast love of the Lord for his people!*

Working *inductively* with the 27 New Testament books is much easier than 1400 years of a contrary nation, since the 27 books were all written during the early years of apostolic ministry addressing specific cultural/religious issues and needs within the life of the early church.

In the 27 Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament the theological principles of *mercy, grace, and love* surface *inductively from within* the text and the apostolic preaching. It is apparent that

those theological themes were *inherent within the text* relating to the formative foundation of the Christian faith and practice.

In this sense, the theological principles *inductively* discovered *within the New Testament books* became *canonical, normative, and formative* for the Christian faith.

Normative authority

From what we gather *inductively from within* the Old and New Testament Scriptures these *Sacred Scriptures* were considered by the apostolic churches to be *inspired, guided by the Holy Spirit, and canonically accepted, authoritative, and contextually normative* for *Christian faith, theology, and practice*¹⁸.

Through the twenty centuries of church life the Christian Bible has been translated with various degrees of accuracy into over 726 languages, and into several popular English translations such as the KJV, the ASB, the NASVB the NIV, the RSV, the NRSV, the Jerusalem Bible, and the ESV. Translations made by a cross-section committee of scholars are considered more dependable than translations made by one individual, or in support of a church *diocese* or *synod*.

Since the New Testament Scriptures have been considered by the church to be *Sacred Scripture* and of *Holy Spirit inspired origin*, manuscript copying and translation in various *scriptoria* has been considered a *serious Christian rite, sacramental*.¹⁹ Documents have been carefully and meticulously protected, carefully preserved, treasured. The *Dead Sea Scrolls*, of which the *Isaiah Scroll* is possibly the prize, have been *housed, studied, carefully guarded* in a magnificent library in Jerusalem.

Likewise, the *Nag Hammadi Gnostic codices*, also known as the Gnostic Gospels or the Chenoboskion Manuscripts are recognized by most scholars to be heretical. Yet they extremely valuable evidence of early church life in upper Egypt. They are comprised of fifty texts in thirteen leather-bound codices in the Coptic language, and are housed in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Under supervision, scholars may view the texts and study photocopies of the original texts.

The vast library of manuscripts, Hebrew, Greek, Coptic, Latin, Slavonic, that have been preserved in ancient libraries or scriptorium, discovered over the last two or more centuries, bear testimony to the *care the ancients took in preserving their "sacred literature."*

Because of their history and their consistent testimony to the Christian faith, the Old and New Testament manuscripts and books are considered *normative* in that in these great theologically loaded books one finds the *major theological principles* that *shaped both the Jewish and Christian faiths*.

Reading Sacred Scripture

That the Old Testament Scriptures are considered *Sacred Scriptures* emphasizing that the *Law is Sacred Scripture*, it should be taken and interpreted seriously, not haphazardly.

³³ *Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;
and I will keep it to the end.*

³⁴ *Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law
and observe it with my whole heart."*

Ps 119:33, 34

¹⁸ Refer to the topic *Inspired, Inerrancy, Normative* in the catalog of studies in this program.

¹⁹ *Miriam-Webster Dictionary*; "Sacramental, a Christian rite (such as baptism or the Eucharist) that is *believed to have been ordained by Christ* and that is *held to be a means of divine grace* or to be a sign or symbol of a spiritual reality.

Primarily in the remainder of this study we will be examining **how** we should **read Scripture**, or **how to read** the Bible as the *Word*, or **the spoken utterances of God!** The *Law*, or *Word of God*, represents the very **rhema** of God, the very word spoken to us by God (*ῥήματος* (ῥῆμα, *rhēma*, *speech, preaching, utterance of God and Christ*), Thus coming from God and Christ we should recognize it as **the divinely important and urgent utterances from God!**

David, most likely the Psalmist of Ps 1, 19, 119, said he meditates on the law of the Lord “*day and night.*” He suggests that the “*law of the Lord is perfect,*” that it reflects “*the glory of God.*”

We will notice that in **reading the law several reasons may surface for reading the Law.**

First, we recognize the word is of *primary and fundamental importance* to our knowledge of *God and Jesus Christ*, and of *our personal relationship with them.* Just pause for a moment. *The almighty sovereign creator of heaven and earth, who made us, wants to talk to you, has actually spoken to us in his rhema word!*

Second, we read the Bible *to gain understanding of God’s inspired instruction about faith and practice.* Simply put, *we read the Bible to learn what God says about some fundamental points of our faith* such as our salvation and God’s grace seen in the giving of his unique “son” Jesus to die for us. We read of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead which Paul stresses is a foundation stone to our redemption and victory over death. We learn in the *Word, in Scripture* that God did all this *because he loves us and wats to live with us if we would just let him!*

Third, we realize that there are ways of reading Scripture *for personal self-aggrandizement* which Paul condemns in 1 and 2 Corinthians as sinful. *Reading Scripture to support our own presuppositions or views falls under this criticism.* This point is one of the dangers of adopting a *deductive* method of biblical interpretation; *beginning with what we believe then looking for texts that support our views*, define our faith, and guide our practice. *Beginning with a doctrinal point and then looking for texts to support this point*, known as *proof-texting*, falls under this category.

In this study we will primarily be examining this third point of **how** and **why** we read Scripture **to determine our faith, our church practice, and our theology or doctrinal²⁰ practice.**

The fact that Jesus based his kingdom mission and ministry on a fulfillment of the prophecies in the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Old Testament) should establish the point that *Jesus took reading the Tanakh and its message seriously.*

Likewise, the fact that the apostolic church leaders, missionaries, and evangelists saw their ministry as a continuation of Jesus prophetic kingdom demonstrates that the early church believed it was the messianic fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Developing Theology and Doctrine

What follows in the remainder of this study relates to the formation of *personal or corporate theology.* The *inductive exegetical working from within Scripture* is best suited for *doctrinal clarification* when determining *religious practice* regarding *fellowship* in *corporate worship.*

Paul’s doctrinal instructions in 1 Cor 14, Eph 5:15ff, and Col 3:16 are loaded with *theological issues* encompassing rich theological implications that cannot be uncovered by a *deductive proof-text* approach to the texts. It is only through an *inductive* approach to the texts

²⁰ Doctrine is not a bad word but is significantly wrapped up in the great commission of making disciples, baptizing them, and *teaching* them to *observe* all that *Jesus taught his disciples.* The word *doctrine* derives from the Greek words διδάσκω, *didaskō*, διδάσκαλος, *didaskalos*, διδασκαλία, *didaskalia*, meaning *teaching*, or *that which is taught.* *Doctrine* is what is *taught*, it is *instruction* and the equivalent to the Hebrew word *Torah*, *instruction.*

from within the texts that one can uncover Paul's *theological message and apostolic mandates inherent in these texts*.

We continue by asking three fundamental questions; *what is theology, what is doctrine, and what is corporate worship and practice*. Each of these should be defined and controlled from within Scripture, and not from personal persuasions and feelings, or sociological practices.

What is theology?

The word *theology* derives from two Greek words θεός, *theós* - *god*, and λόγος, *logos* – a *word* or an *instruction*. It can also imply *speaking intelligently* or *engaging in a dialogue*. Combined, they refer to *a discussion of God, of his word, and of human experience with God*.

*Theology probes how God's word should integrate with our thinking and **shape our human response to God***.

What is doctrine?

Doctrine derives from two Greek words διδάσκω, *didáskō*, *to teach*, and διδαχή, *didaché*, *teaching* or *giving instruction*. In theological or ecclesiological contexts it refers to *giving instruction or teaching about God and human response to God*.

Doctrine is the result of careful *inductive theological* research in which the *theological principles* of the text are determined.

Doctrine without theological principles is not biblical doctrine!

Personal and corporate practice must be the result of theologically determined doctrine.

Corporate worship and church practice

The New Testament writers understood the word ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, to mean *an assembly of people with community concerns*.

This is the word used extensively in the apostolic epistles, post the resurrection of Jesus. The Greek word ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* is translated into our English bibles as *church*.

When describing the people of God, founded by and belonging to Jesus, ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* referred to a *local community of likeminded people functioning under the kingdom of Jesus' missional commission*, commissioned with the responsibility of *making disciples, discipling converts and molding them into a worshipping and functioning community of believers in Jesus*, **Matt 28:18-20**.

The *corporate worship service*, or *formal Lord's Day worship service* in which the Lord's Supper is celebrated, is such an *assembled gathering* of people, *assembled for a community religious worship purpose*. For examples of this see 1 Cor 5:4; 1 Cor 11:18; 1 Cor 14:23; James 2:2.

The *original root-meaning* of the term ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, refers to a *group of people called by a community leader* (a town crier, *kérux*²¹) *into a meeting to discuss some concerns relative to the community life*.²²

The meaning used by some Christians *to refer to the church as a group of people called out of darkness into light is a mistaken application* of the term to describe a popular theological conclusion. This description of the church is correct of Christians; *they are saved to be a people of*

²¹ A *kérux*, messenger, was the public crier and reader of state messages such as the conveyor of a declaration of war. In the NT... *kérux* designates the herald according to his commission and work as a proclaimer.

²² The noun ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia*, from *ékklētos*, *called out* ... from *ekkalēō*, *to call out*. It was a common term for a congregation of the *ekklētoí*, *the called people*, or *those called out or assembled* in the public affairs of a free state, the body of free citizens called together by a herald (*kérux*) which constituted the *ekklēsia*.

light and not darkness. But this is not what word *ekklēsia* means or implies! It is an interesting “Christian interpolation,” but not what the term *ekklēsia* means.

A Christian ekklēsia refers to a community of people *called to assemble for a purpose, or to be a people called to achieve a particular purpose; to worship, praise, and serve Jesus Christ.*

Five fundamental interpretive principles

To continue our discussion of *how we read the Bible as Scripture* we note *five* useful *interpretive principles* that are essential when reading Scripture with *understanding*. They are essential principles governing *interpreting* all kinds of serious non-fiction “*literature*.”

The interpretative principles relate to *five contexts of the text: its historical context, its literary context, its grammatical context, its sociological context, and its religious context.*

With an awareness of these *five principles* we seek an interpretation of valid *real-life theological situations* and attempt to determine *real-life* principles shaping a community of people.

These five principles encourage, or require the interpreter to examine the text written by the *original author to a specific people* struggling with a real life situation and needing instruction in the context of their own lives. The *theological principles* determine from within the text may be applied to contemporary situations.

We will below notice the importance and practical value of these *five hermeneutical principles* when *exegetically* and *inductively* interpreting the Bible as sacred literature, or Scripture.

Comments on an inductive approach to Scripture, biblical criticism, and exegesis

On the way to this point I have already introduced the reader to an inductive approach to Scripture, to biblical criticism, and to exegesis.

To set these hermeneutic²³ principles in the context of our discussion on *how* to read Scripture as God’s utterance, the Word of God is understood to be the precise utterance or vocalization of God’s word expressed in the Judeo-Christian *Sacred Scriptures*.

We are reminded that serious conservative Christians esteem their Scriptures to be normative, authoritative, inspired records of the utterances of God in matters of faith and Christian faith.

We recognize that these *Sacred Scriptures* were delivered to the apostolic church over 2000 years ago, and in a languages foreign to us today, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. These *Sacred Scriptures* have been passed down through 20 centuries of Christian believers who have been meticulous in their manuscript transmission. We recognize that these ancient documents need translation and interpretation from language to language and culture to culture to have contemporary meaning.

It is in this sense that it becomes necessary to maintain the theology of the original texts within the original Apostolic intention.

A *deductive* approach to the text will tend to import already predetermined theology into the text. The *deductive* approach to hermeneutics provides prooftexts to theological presuppositions already held by the student/researcher.

²³ The word *hermeneutic* derives from the Greek *hermeneuō* which means *to interpret*. Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation, especially of texts. It is often applied to the interpretation of biblical texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts. Exegesis is the critical explanation or analysis of a text. Hermeneutics involves the study of the methodological principles of interpretation.

An *inductive* approach to the text implies that *the theology of the text lies within the text waiting to be discovered through a careful biblical critical exegetical process.*

Biblical criticism is the critical/careful application of *historical, grammatical, linguistic, and sociological* research principles relevant to the time and culture when the text was originally written.

Exegesis refers to the discipline of *leading theological principles out of the text*, principles that are *inherent within the text.*

Exegesis works in the opposite direction of *eisegesis*. The key to understanding exegesis and eisegesis lies in the two prepositions upon which the terms exegesis and eisegesis are built. **Exegesis** is from the preposition *ek*, *to lead, or go out of*, and **eisegesis** *eis*, *to go forward, lead into, or go toward.*

Adopting a *deductive* approach to the text involves *eisegesis, leading meaning into the text.*

Exegesis adopts the *inductive* approach of discovering the theology *already within the text, leading the theology out of the text.*

The Relationship of Scripture and Theology, or of Scripture, to Theological Religious Practices

We believe that theology and the correct or righteous practice of faith flow out of Scripture, are defined by Scripture, and that Scriptural meaning and practice do not flow out of our theology, or from a favored religious practice!

Church doctrine and practice should be firmly grounded in *what Scripture teaches*, and not in what pleases us or our neighbors, *in what our neighbors think, like, or do.*

What is Theology and how does God or Scripture relate to this discussion?

The Christian's faith in Scripture informs them that God intends that they read the Bible as *Sacred Scripture*, as *Torah*, as *His Word* or *message of instruction.*

From Scripture Christians learn what God wants them to know about his divine being and nature. Scripture also informs them about man and how God intends man to respond. Scripture informs man about *salvation* and about the *church.*

All of this interaction is what Christians call *theology.*

But this kind of "divine" theology grows out of reading the Bible as God's sacred writings, responding to his proclamations in faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, and of become involved in his missional/kingdom church which Paul believes Jesus had purchased with his own blood!²⁴

Traditionally, Christians have received some Bible translation preferred by their church as the Word of God.

Preferred Bible Translations

The church where I have had my membership prefers the English Standard Version as their "pew bible," but "recognizes" most major English translations. I have taught several major congregational bible classes out of my favored translation, the Revised Standard Version, without any objection from the elders\minsters, or from the students in my classes.

Conservative Christians prefer a Bible translation that has been translated by a committee of recognized biblical scholars such as the King James Version, the American Standard Version, the

²⁴ *Theology* derives from two Greek words, Θεός, *theós*, *God*, and λόγος, *lógos*, *word, discussion*, *Theology* is a discussion of what *sacred scripture*, *God's word* says about *God*. *Theology* is therefore a *discussion about God, man, and God's will for man*. *Scripture as sacred literature* is the *foundation of theology*, not *theology the foundation of Scripture.*

English Standard Version, the Douay Rheims Version, the Revised Standard Version, or later revisions of these excellent translations updated into current English or Latin/Spanish versions.²⁵

Karl Barth's theological "bombshell"

The prominent Swiss-German Lutheran bible scholar of the early 20th century, Karl Barth, shook up the conservative theological world, c.a. 1918, by proclaiming that the Bible is not the Word of God but *only contains some words of God!*

Unfortunately, the evangelical world was more concerned with defending the plenary²⁶ inspiration of the Bible than interested in what Barth was really saying!

Many evangelicals misread Barth's comments concerning the Bible not being God's Word. They accused Barth of choosing what he liked in the Bible and rejecting what he disliked. In the mindset of conservative evangelicals, Barth was "rejecting" the remainder of the Bible as *God's word*.

However, Barth was not denigrating the Bible as a message from God, for over his life he wrote over six hundred books and articles explaining and interpreting Scripture!

*Barth's purpose had been to challenge nineteenth century "liberal theology" which had overstressed the power of human effort in salvation and denigrated the NO/YES message of God in Jesus and Scripture. Barth believed that nineteenth century theologians, Friedrich Schleiermacher, G. W. F. Hegel, and others, had missed the crucial point of the Bible, **God's resounding dialectical NO/YES message in Jesus**. Nineteenth century theology had reduced theology and Christian faith to a human enterprise, pushing God to a distant perimeter of theology.*

Barth's theology claimed that *Jesus was the **word or central message** God spoke, which **message** had been recorded in Sacred Scripture, the Bible.*

In Barth's theology, the Bible *contained the real message from God which was a two-fold dialectical message in the person and life of Jesus, a resounding **No** and **Yes spoken in the life and death of Jesus!** God in Jesus was proclaiming that *man could not save himself, but God through Jesus would save fallen man. God spoke two "words" in Jesus, one a resounding **No** to man but a powerful **Yes** to man in Jesus.**

The Bible not only contained the real Jesus-word-message of God, but it was also for Barth Sacred Literature, the Word or message of God.

Biblical Theology and the Word of God

Moving on from Karl Barth, we travel to another era and theological concern. the Pepperdine University Lectureship and a discussion on *church unity* focussed on the presence of musical instruments in the church assembly, the formal worship service!

Three *Unity* gatherings had previously been held to discuss means of restoring some form of fellowship between *Church of Christ* churches, the *Disciples of Christ* churches, and *Christian Churches*.

*Biblical theology, drawn from the Bible perceived as Sacred Literature, guides church doctrine in some form, but as Dr. Slate would stress, this depends on **how** we read Scripture and **how** we do theology!*

In the Pepperdine colloque four scholars participated, Dr. Philip Slate, Dean of the Harding Graduate School of Theology, Dr. Ian Fair, Dean of the College of Biblical Studies at Abilene

²⁵ This is obviously a highly selective list of Bibles found in most English-speaking churches.

²⁶ Plenary means the *complete* or *full* inspiration of the Bible.

Christian University, representing *Churches of Christ*. Two scholars from the *Christian Church* fellowship, the Ozark Christian College, spoke for *Christian Churches*. The Churches of Christ and the Christian Churches have since their early formation in the 19th century been closely allied on many points. However, they have differed in that Christian Churches sing in *their formal worship assemblies accompanied by musical instruments*. Churches of Christ have rejected this view for over 150 years!

The primary issue was not singing accompanied by a musical instrument but *doing so in the formal church worship assembly*.

Dr. Slate and I decline to worship with a music instrument in the worship assembly, and remain “declined” to, singing *accompanied by an instrument in the formal church worship assembly*.

In the discussion Dr. Slate made a comment that has resonated with me over the years. Always gentle and irenic in such discussions, Dr. Slate observed, in the process of the discussion:

*“The instrument is not what divides us! **What divides us is how we read Scripture!**”*
*WOW!*²⁷

“How we read Scripture” was a perceptive point we had been *skirting* during the previous Unity discussions!

In the first Unity meeting held at the Ozark Bible College in Missouri, each group had presented their favored method of Bible interpretation, but the second Unity meeting in Dallas had “degenerated” into an acrimonious debate on how one should interpret the Greek word ψάλλω, *psállō*. I know this was the case since I was one of the guilty parties!

But the point raised by Dr. Slate at the third Unity meeting at Pepperdine highlighted the more general question of how we read Scripture differently, and not the correct definition of ψάλλω, psállō.

It appeared from the discussion that the two scholars from the Christian Church favored a *deductive proof-text* approach to Scripture, while Dr. Slate and I adopted an *inductive biblical critical exegetical* approach to Scripture!²⁸

Deductive reasoning

Deductive reasoning is the process of drawing *deductive inferences* from an assortment of Biblical texts or human activities that are perceived to be important. Working *deductively* we begin with a *topic*, say *baptism*, and look for Scriptures which we believe to be important to that topic and that mention or discuss the *topic of baptism*. By selecting a topic to be researched we *have established a theological starting point*.

Using a concordance we identify as many similar *baptism* topic texts as possible.

We then *harmonize* the assortment of proof-texts and resources on baptism to arrive at a point that sustains or develops the *topic of baptism* we are researching. *Proof-texting* is a more common term expressing *deductive reading* of Scripture. *Proof-texting* does not reflect, or use, an *exegetical inductive* approach to Scripture.

Deductive proof-texting assumes we have identified the theology of baptism by aligning the texts in some sort of order.

The problem with this deductive proof-texting method is that baptism is used in several different topics not always related to topic we are researching.

²⁷ WOW is not an acceptable scholarly academic word or expression, but it defines the “shock wave” Slate’s statement has made in my rationalist mind!

²⁸ The meaning and relevance of *deductive* and *inductive* and their application in biblical interpretation will be discussed progressively through this study.

Proving from Scripture that *baptism* is an important concept to the Christian faith is relevant and important, but doing so through *deductive proof-texting* proves only what we already believe and not what a specific Scripture is teaching about the topic.

In the *deductive* model we begin with a topic and look for Scriptures or proof-texts to support our point of view.

Inductive reasoning

The *inductive exegetical* process works from within the context of the text we are researching to determine the *theological point the text is teaching*. We begin from within a text, examining the meaning of the text within its historical, sociological, and religious theological contexts to carefully draw conclusions through the *inductive* process. We make a sincere effort to not permit presuppositions to impinge on the process.

We are aware that we may have presuppositions regarding a text but by adopting an *inductive exegetical* method we begin from within its context to deduce what the *theological principles* or message that text is teaching.

Inductive study adopts a *biblical critical exegetical* model of examining the text within its various historical, literary, grammatical, sociological, and theological contexts to determine what the original writer or readers taught or learned from the text.

In *deductive* reading of a Scripture we look for texts that support our view.

In contrast to this in *inductive* reading of Scripture we seek to learn from within the relevant text what the text was saying to the original readers.

We will pursue these points below as we discuss what Scripture is, what role the Bible as sacred literature plays in our theology, and what God's intention for the Bible as sacred literature might be.

How to Read Scripture Inductively for Theology

Inductive versus deductive

The primary difference between *inductive* researching of Scriptures, and a *deductive* approach to Scriptures lies in that in the *inductive approach* the researcher is asking the Scriptures to tell the researcher what the Scriptures are saying. The researcher begins with a Scripture and seeks to determine by asking the five contextual questions what the Scripture is saying historically, sociologically, linguistically, or theologically to the researcher. The researcher does not seek to determine how the Scripture fits into the researcher's scheme. *Inductively the researcher seeks to understand the theological principle the Scripture is teaching*.

In one sense the inductive method makes use of deductive principles by finding parallel Scriptures, but it differs in that before using that Scripture the researcher adopts an *inductive exegetical* method of study to determine the theological principles of the Scriptures.

The method followed in developing an *inductive theology* of a Scripture is a series of *inductive exegetical* studies in which the *theological principles of the texts* are discovered and articulated.

Over time, through several inductive exegetical studies, the theologian gathers the theological principles of the studies and arrives at a *theological conclusion that defines the theological direction of the texts exegetically studied*.

If the results of several inductive exegetical studies point in the same direction one can assume that a possible theological valid principle has been discovered that can and will be

evaluated over time by inductive exegetical studies to determine whether the theological principle, or theological hypothesis we have arrived at is valid.

A critical inductive biblical exegetical approach

In this process of examination the *exegete* examines the text through at least *five critical contexts*.

The term *exegetical* itself needs some explanation! It is built around two Greek words²⁹, ἐκ, *ek*; a preposition governing a genitive noun, primarily meaning *out of, from*,³⁰ and ἄγω, *ágō*, a verb, *to lead, lead along, bring, carry, to remove*³¹. Combined as in the word *exegetical* it implies a *meaning or explanation of a text being led out of the text*; that is, the meaning being *led out from within the text*.

The Greek word for exegesis, *exēgētikos*, is in turn related to the Greek word *exēgeisthai* meaning *an exposition or explanation of, or critical interpretation of a text*.

In biblical study circles, *the opposite of exegesis (to draw or lead out) is eisegesis, to draw into, to read into the text, or introduce into the text an understood in the sense of a commentator "importing," or "drawing into"*. It implies *introducing* into the discussion a *subjective interpretation*.

Deductive reasoning falls into the trap of not being supported by the text itself but having a meaning introduced from an external source. Deductive reasoning as eisegesis in biblical exegetical circles, is viewed derogatively. Terms like exegete and exegetical are relevant only within an inductive approach of the text. In a deductive proof-reading examination of a text the term exegetical is an oxymoron. Exegesis makes a nonsense approach as it is fundamentally opposed to introducing the meaning of a text from an external source!

The term *exegesis* as a principle of *inductive study* is a concept common across all literary translations and interpretations, both secular and religious literature.

For example, *how* do we commonly read the fascinating “children” narrative? Gulliver’s Travels³²? *Possible as an interesting story of a man surrounded by several opposing forces. A good point! However we seldom pause to ask why Jonathan Swift authored the story, what were the historical, physical, sociological, or religious points Jonathan Swift was addressing in 1726 when he authored the satirical novel in four parts, and what he was arguing in his story.*

Establishing the reliability of the manuscript being translated or interpreted

An important first step in the critical biblical *exegetical* approach to Scripture is an initial attempt to verify the *reliability or validity of the text being studied*. Scholars recognize that all biblical manuscripts and biblical translations have a history of transmission and translation in which a text has passed through a history of manuscript study, manuscript transcriptions, and

²⁹ The terms *exegete* and *exegetical* are relevant only within an *inductive* approach of the text. In a *deductive* proof-reading examination of a text the term *exegetical* is an *oxymoron*, makes a no sense approach.

³⁰ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*.

³¹ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*.

³² *Gulliver's Travels* is a satirical story written by Jonathan Swift, ca 1726, involving several voyages of Lemuel Gulliver, a ship's surgeon. Due to a series of mishaps, Lemuel ends up on unknown islands with people and animals of unusual sizes and behaviors. After each adventure, he returns to England to recover before setting out on a new voyage The novel satirizes English attitudes of superiority and introduces strange and fantastical cultures, such as the Lilliputians to demonstrate the folly of English attitudes. *Gulliver's Travels* has been described as a children’s story to make a major satirical sociological point.

scribal copying. In one sense, all bible students follow a similar practice of selecting a translation such as the KJV, the RSV, the Jerome Bible, the NASV, or the ESV that they consider a reliable translation of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts available for critical bible translation. All serious bible scholars survey and evaluate the Hebrew and Greek bible texts that are used in translating the original languages of the text into usable English or favored translations or Bibles.

An initial step in translating or interpreting a text

An *inductive* reading of the text requires care in permitting the text to speak to the reader. It is here that one must exercise care to not read individual opinions or traditions into the text, but to seek to determine what the original writer was saying to his original readers.

This requires research into *the history of the text* through an examination of all the real-life factors involved in the *historical era of the text and of its assumed readers; their conditions and the circumstances* prompting the *original writer to write the document*.

The inductive historical approach is careful to let the text speak (who wrote it, when and why was it written), and its *history of reproduction* through the centuries of *its religious impact on people* (the many manuscripts of a book or document that have come down to us through the centuries; the reliability of the manuscripts of textual criticism, *what the early church said about the book/document, how it impacted their lives—religious church history*).

Five Exegetical Principles

Historical context

All literature was written at some historical point in time, addressing some historical context, or some point of interest to a community or individual. The point of interest may have been a birthday, the ascension of a king, a romantic point in some person's life, a political point of interest such as a change in leadership, the rise of some political or religious challenge to the community.

Research into the historical context of a community can add a religious, political, or personal framework for understanding the text recording the event.

The historical religious setting and the sociological and political contexts of the community are important foundations to inductive exploration of the text.

Words and theological expressions often shift in meaning during their historical journey. The historical setting of the text is important to the application of a text in each historical context.

Literary context

All literature adopts its own literary style. Poetry for example is different from the prose of a historical novel or fiction. Historical literature often includes "signs" which identify the intended genre.

In the biblical field citations from the Old Testament tell much of the style or intended purpose of the literature. The difference between a gospel literary style and the apostolic epistolary style is clearly discernable. Within both literary pieces eschatological and apocalyptic references are indications of authorial interests and purposes.

Before the exegete explores too deeply into the text, time should be devoted in identifying the literary genre and its unique contribution to the meaning of the text and its contribution to the author's style and purpose.

The theological purpose of citations in the New Testament from the Old Testament should be explored and respected.

The meaning of words in different historical and grammatical contexts is vital to an inductive study of the text.

Grammatical context

Knowledge of the grammatical structure and relationship of parts of speech to a sentence is essential to correct biblical interpretation. Greek parts of speech do not follow the normal sentence structure as in English. The exegete must be sensitive to Greek word order.

The relationship of prepositions to nouns and their various functions, the meaning of pronouns with different noun cases, all have impact on the meaning of biblical texts, notably in the Greek New Testament.

Sensitivity to the function of different noun cases is imperative to the meaning of a text.

The meaning of noun cases such as the locative, instrumental, and dative case can be vital to understanding a Greek sentence or paragraph. Knowing how context helps the scholar choose which one of these three possibilities to use is imperative to appropriate interpretation.

The relationship of nouns in the accusative case in sentences following verbs indicating activity is important. The relationship of such nouns to the verb form is imperative in appropriate interpretation and can be significant to exegetical function. Nouns in the accusative case following the preposition εἰς, *eis*, *for*, point forward to an intended result or purpose, not back to a previous verb!

Acts 2:38 is a classic example of this. “*And Peter said to them, “Repent, and **be baptized** (aorist passive imperative verb) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for** (εἰς, *eis*, *for*) **the forgiveness of your sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Peter clearly wrote that baptism was *for the forgiveness of sins*, not *because of the forgiveness of sins*. It is noteworthy that all the major English translations translate εἰς, *eis*, as “*for the forgiveness of sins*,” not “*because you already have forgiveness*”! Peter clearly states that baptism is εἰς, *eis*, “*for the forgiveness of sins*.”

Furthermore, genitive nouns may be *possessive* genitives, *subjective* or *objective* genitives, or *descriptive* genitives. Context, clause, and sentence purpose indicate how to determine meaning.

Being aware of the numerous genitive noun functions is vital to understanding what genitive nouns contribute to interpretation. They function as *adjectives describing* some noun construction.

Knowledge of the flexibility of verbs that demonstrate *continuing active*; *past*, *present*, and *future (not time)* is vital to New Testament exegesis. Greek verb *tenses* have little to do with time, past, present, or future. Greek tenses indicate *type of action* such as *continuous action*, *punctiliar action*, or *repetitive action*. The present and future tense of verbs on their own simply indicates a kind of action anticipated, *not the time of the action*! When coupled with a different mood such as an *indicative* mood, the *subjunctive* mood, or the *optative* mood, verbs merely address some kind of action, either *certain* action, *possible* action, or *probable* action. This can indicate some kind of future action. The *aorist* tense indicates one of several types of *punctiliar action*. The *present* tense indicates a *continuous action*. The *past tense* indicates an *action that began in the past but continues in the present*.

The exegete must be able to identify the *kind of action implied in the tense, not the time of the action*. The German term that describes this kind of action is “*Aktionsart*.”

Sociological contexts

All biblical texts record events that took place in some *sociological*, *economic*, *political*, or *religious* context. The religion of Israel as well as the language of the Proto-Phoenician “Aramaic/Hebrew” of Moses’ dispensation obviously morphed through the years of contact with

the Canaanite peoples, and later through the Syrian and Babylonian periods of captivity, and “*assumed*” or “*gathered*” meaning forms within the sociological environment of the text.

Moses apparently wrote in some form of script identified as “Hebrew,” but it would have been significantly influenced by the Egyptian dialects of Moses’ day, as would the “Hebrew” of Daniel or Ezra’s day have been influenced by Akkadian Babylonian dialects or loanwords.

The “Aramaic-Hebrew” language of Israel after the restoration of Israel to Judea under Ezra would have faced radically different challenges from those which Moses faced during the flight of Jacob’s descendants from Egypt.

The classical Greek language used by Luke in his two major New Testament writings would have been strikingly different from that used by “John” when writing his Gospel, three Epistles, and Revelation! Scholars of Revelation understand that the Greek of Revelation is heavily influenced by Old Testament Greek references in the Septuagint.

A simple “proof-text” deductive cross reference between Mark’s Gospel and Revelation will fail to enrich an exegesis of Revelation conducted by an exegete two thousand years after Revelation was written! An awareness of the radically different contexts of the Old and New Testaments is vital to understanding the new world which the different writers were addressing.

We know that words have different meanings and emphases in different ages and different world cultures. English expressions vary in foreign world-wide contexts and linguistic cultures.

The meanings and strengths of some words in the same language contexts change over time. The meanings and applications of English spoken in Texas in 2024 is significantly different from the English spoken in 1787 when the American constitution was written and signed into law!

Greek and Hebrew words in 1000 BCE often have radically different meanings in 100 CE. Sociological studies help the exegete understand how words and phrases have mutated over time and have different impact in diverse cultures even in the same language.

As an example, some engaged in a study of the Greek word *ψάλλω*, *psállō*, often miss the difference in how the word was used 800 years BCE in “Homeric classical Greek”, then seven hundred years later in 260 BCE in the Alexandrian Septuagint, and then later in the “Koine/Biblical” New Testament church ca 50 CE.

Cultural and sociological awareness assist the exegete in understanding how theological concepts function among different peoples in different ages, and how they have different implications in diverse cultures.

Religious/theological context

An awareness of the religious or theological contexts or problems a writer was addressing is critical to understanding the meaning of much of our biblical writings.

For example, scholars are aware that Jewish Synagogue religious issues Matthew was facing, ca 70 CE, in northern Galilee or Saria were “globally” different from those faced by Jesus in his Judean ministry, or by Luke in his classical Greek/Gentile Gospel and epic narrative of the growth of the church among the Gentiles in Acts, or by Paul’s Roman/Graeco Epistle to the Corinthians, or Paul’s Imperially centripetal Epistle to the Romans.

The differences between our three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John’s Ephesian/Gnostic Johannine Gospel, and the several Gnostic northern Egypt Apocryphal Gospels of ca 150 CE indicate the considerable difference in the Greek found in these regions and works. Were the authors of these deeply religious writings intending to correct some error perceived in the other sources, or to affirm some authentic sound contextual biblical or theological practice?

It is obvious that the differences in the Greek religious language found in these writings, and the different religious emphases addressed, requires a separate set of questions to be asked of these astonishingly rich religious literary works.

A “proof-text” *deductive* approach to this vast array of literature will miss the richness ensconced in each of these theologically loaded writings.

Determining the theological principles of the text

Since our contemporary exegete’s context is 2000-3000 years later than the original biblical writers and is obviously culturally, sociologically, and religiously different from that of the original writer, the theological principles the original writer was making in the text or literary piece must be determined and described from within the text through an *inductive* exegesis in clear statements, and not through a *non-contextual deductive proof-text* approach to Scripture.

The conclusion of the exegetical study may not line up with the exact cultural or religious context of the exegete. The theologian in the exegete must *seek to identify the theological principle the original writer was making* to make a contemporary application of the original text.

The exegete, having completed a careful biblically critical exegetical *inductive* study of the text, *must ask the text what theological principle the original writer was seeking to achieve* with his literary piece.

After several exegetical studies of associated topics has been inductively determined to where the exegete feels that all the relevant texts have been inductively studied, an attempt must be made to *explain the various theological principles* arrived at from several inductive exegetical studies.

It is the responsibility of the theological mindset of the exegete to carefully attempt to express what the collected biblical texts say of the topic inductively studied.

“So, how do you read Scripture”?

It is obvious that the answer to this question can be daunting, challenging, tedious, and time consuming!

A quick answer! *You either read it inductively or deductively!*

When doing biblical theological studies, we should primarily read the text with a Biblically Critically *inductive exegetically* eye!

The concept here is determining what the *original author* intended the *original readers* to understand *in their own context*.

When the *original meaning has been inductively, exegetically determined*, only then should we read the text with a *theological eye!*

Only when the assumed *original writer* and *the original recipients* (church or individual), and the *theological reason* for the *original writing* have been researched through an *inductive exegetical* study, *can the researcher or ministry leader refer to Scripture as normative an authoritative instruction or guidance*.

Only after the reader, researcher, instructor has applied an *inductive exegetical theological* research process to the text may the researcher or study leader claim *that the text is Scripture, having biblical normative meaning*.

At 2 Tim 3:14-17, Paul makes the definitive claim for **Scripture, the sacred writings**, “¹⁴ But as for you, continue in **what you have learned and have firmly believed**, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with **the sacred**³³ writings which

³³ Zōthiatis, Sacred, ἱερὰ, holy, sacred, related to the temple; *hieroprepēs*, that which is appropriate to a priest or a religious profession, office, quality, or rank and ministry of a priest.

are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ *All scripture is inspired by God (Zodhiates, θεόπνευστος, theópneustos, God breathed, prompted by God, divinely inspired, given life giving power, God inspired) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*

Peter adds these words regarding **Paul's writings, scriptures**, 2 Pet 3:14-18, "Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵ And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. **So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,** ¹⁶ **speaking of this as he does in all his letters.** There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, **as they do the other scriptures.** ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

2 Pet 1:16-21, "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and **the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"** ¹⁸ we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word made more sure. **You will do well to pay attention to this** as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ **First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,** ²¹ **because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."**