

How We Study Scripture

Our Method, and Why Accuracy Matters

Every method behind the studies on this site, named, explained, and illustrated from scripture.

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Anchor Passages

Acts 17:11 *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

2 Timothy 2:15 *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Introduction

A. Why This Presentation Exists

Every study on this site reaches conclusions. Some of them agree with what most churches teach, and some do not. Either way, a reader deserves to know *how* those conclusions were reached — what was checked, what counted as evidence, and what was deliberately left open.

This presentation lays out the whole process: every method we use, what it means, why it is there, and an example of it at work. Nothing here is hidden machinery. If you want to check any study on this site, these are the tools to check it with.

B. You Are Invited to Check Our Work

The Bereans in Acts 17 were called “more noble” not because they believed Paul, but because they **“searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11)**. That is the kind of reader these studies are written for. We would rather you test a conclusion and find it sound than accept it because we said it.

C. The Short Version

If you read nothing else, here is the method in five sentences:

- Scripture is the final authority; tradition, scholarship, and popular teaching are tested by it, not the other way around.
- Scripture interprets itself — in the verse, in its context, and by how the same words are used elsewhere.
- Every claim is labeled honestly: is it something scripture says outright, something we are inferring, or outside corroboration?
- The opposing view is stated at full strength, including its best verses, before it is answered.
- Where a verse does not yet fit, it is held openly “in abeyance” — never forced, never hidden.

The chapters that follow explain each of these, and the many smaller methods that sit underneath them.

Chapter 1: Why Accuracy Matters

A. Because It Is God's Word, Not Ours

Scripture repeatedly warns against adding to or taking from what God has said.

Deuteronomy 4:2 *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

Proverbs 30:5 *Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*

Proverbs 30:6 *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*

A careless interpretation does exactly what these verses forbid. It adds a meaning God did not put there, or quietly subtracts one He did. Accuracy is not a scholarly hobby; it is a matter of faithfulness to the One who spoke.

B. Because Tradition Can Cancel the Word

Jesus told the religious leaders of his day that they were **“Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition” (Mark 7:13)**, and quoted Isaiah against them: **“in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9)**.

Those leaders were sincere, educated, and devoted to scripture. Their problem was not a lack of study but that inherited teaching had quietly taken the place of what the text actually said. Every generation, including ours, faces the same risk. The only safeguard is to keep going back to the text itself.

C. Because People Live by What They Are Taught

Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

What a believer holds to be true shapes how they pray, how they understand suffering, how they see God, and how they treat others. A wrong teaching is not harmless just because it is sincere. Jesus said, **“ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32)** — and freedom depends on the truth being actually true.

D. Because Teachers Are Held to a Higher Standard

James 3:1 *My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*

Anyone who publishes Bible teaching for others to read is taking on the responsibility James describes. That responsibility is the reason for every method in this presentation.

E. Because Accuracy Is What “Rightly Dividing” Means

Paul told Timothy to be “**a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**” (2 Timothy 2:15). A workman is someone who does careful, skilled labor and whose work can be inspected. The goal is work that holds up when someone checks it.

In short: accuracy matters because the words are God’s, because tradition can crowd them out, because real people live by what they are taught, and because teachers answer for what they teach.

Chapter 2: Our Starting Commitments

A. Scripture Is the Final Authority

2 Timothy 3:16 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

2 Timothy 3:17 *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Commentaries, creeds, denominational teaching, famous preachers, and scholarly consensus all have value — but none of them is scripture. On this site, every one of them is tested against the text. None is allowed to override it.

This is not a rejection of learning. It is a decision about which way the testing runs.

B. The Text First, the Conclusion Second

We try to hold a conclusion only as far as scripture itself, examined directly, actually carries it. Close study and a correct conclusion do not automatically go together — prior commitments shape how everyone reads, including us. So the working rule is simple: go to the text and the evidence first, and let the conclusion follow.

Paul’s instruction fits exactly: “**Prove all things; hold fast that which is good**” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Prove first; hold fast second.

C. The King James Version as Our Base Text

All quotations on this site come from the King James Version (KJV). We use it for practical reasons:

- It has the largest set of reference tools keyed to it — Strong’s Concordance, the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, Bullinger’s *Companion Bible*, and more — so any reader can check our work with widely available tools.
- It shows words the translators added in *italics*, so a careful reader can see where the English goes beyond the Hebrew or Greek (see Chapter 8).
- It is in the public domain in most of the world, so it can be quoted freely.

Using the KJV as the base text does not mean treating it as flawless. Where a word or phrase is difficult, we check the Hebrew or Greek directly and consult other translations (such as the ESV, NASB, or NKJV). When we do, we say so.

D. Testing Ideas, Not Hearts

These studies test teachings, not the sincerity of the people who hold them. It is possible to disagree firmly with a doctrine while respecting the faith of those who believe it.

In short: scripture is the authority; the text comes before the conclusion; the KJV is our checkable base text; and we test ideas, never hearts.

Chapter 3: Scripture Interprets Itself

A. The Principle

2 Peter 1:20 *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*

2 Peter 1:21 *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

If scripture did not come from private human thought, it should not be explained by private human thought either. The Bible has one Author behind its many writers, so it can be expected to explain itself. Paul describes this as **“comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:13)**.

B. The Three Ways Scripture Interprets Itself

We appeal to scripture’s own explanation in three places, in this order:

1. **In the verse itself.** Read it plainly. What do the words mean as they were used at the time? Does the reading fit the rest of the sentence?
2. **In its context.** First the immediate context (the verses right around it), then the wider context (the chapter, the book, the writer’s other books).
3. **As it has been used before.** How is the same word, phrase, or idea used elsewhere in scripture — especially its first use, and in earlier passages the writer and readers would have known?

Most questions are settled at step one or two. Step three is where the full word studies described in Chapter 7 come in.

C. Cross-References Are Tracked, Not Just Mentioned

Scripture interpreting scripture means following the connections: parallel accounts, quotations of one book in another, prophecies and their fulfillments, and themes that recur (Genesis’s creation-and-fall themes reappearing in Romans and Revelation, for example). We use the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, a classic nineteenth-century cross-reference work covering Genesis through Revelation, and log connections as we find them so later studies can build on earlier ones.

D. The Full Mention

Some subjects are touched on briefly in many places but gathered together fully in one. J. Edwin Hartill called this the “full mention” principle. When studying a doctrine, we look for the place where scripture

sets out its fullest teaching on it, rather than building from scattered single verses. First Corinthians 13 on love and Hebrews 11 on faith are well-known examples.

In short: the Bible explains itself — in the verse, in its context, and by its own earlier usage — and we follow its cross-references rather than importing an outside key.

Chapter 4: Context First

A. Why Context Comes Before Interpretation

A verse lifted out of its setting can be made to say almost anything. So before we ask what a passage means, we ask where it sits: who wrote it, to whom, when, in what situation, and in what kind of writing (history, law, poetry, prophecy, letter).

B. The Seven Check Questions

For any passage, we ask:

- **Who** is speaking or writing?
- **To whom** is it addressed?
- **What** is being said?
- **Where** is it happening?
- **When** — in what period, and under what administration (Chapter 5)?
- **How** is it said — plainly, figuratively, as a command, as a report?
- **Why** — what is the purpose of the passage?

C. An Example: “Line Upon Line”

Isaiah 28:10 is often quoted as a method for Bible study:

Isaiah 28:10 *For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:*

Read in its context, though, the line describes how God’s word would come to a people who refused to listen, and the passage ends with a warning: **“that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken” (Isaiah 28:13)**. Whatever else it teaches, it is not in the first place a Bible-study technique. That does not make careful, step-by-step study wrong — it simply means this verse is not the proof of it.

D. Genre Before Doctrine

The kind of writing matters. A greeting in a letter is not a universal promise, and an illustration inside an argument is not a stand-alone rule. For example, **“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2)** is the apostle John’s personal wish for one man, Gaius, written in the form a first-century letter would normally open with. It may express

God's heart, but it is not phrased as a guarantee for every believer. We apply this same test to verses that support our own positions, not only to verses others cite.

In short: find out who, to whom, what, where, when, how, and why before deciding what a passage means.

Chapter 5: Rightly Dividing — To Whom, and When

A. Not Every Verse Is Addressed to Everyone

Paul divides humanity into three groups: **“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Corinthians 10:32)**. A passage addressed to Israel under the Law of Moses is true and profitable for us, but it is not necessarily a direct instruction to the church today. Identifying the audience is part of reading accurately.

Romans 15:4 *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

All of scripture is written *for* our learning. Not all of it is written *to* us.

B. The Administrations of Scripture

God has dealt with people in different ways at different times. Paul speaks of **“the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward” (Ephesians 3:2)**. “Dispensation” here translates the Greek *oikonomia*, meaning the management or administration of a household. Our studies recognize seven such administrations:

1. **Eden** — life in the Garden before the fall.
2. **Patriarchal** — from the fall to the giving of the Law (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob).
3. **Mosaic Law** — Israel under the Law given at Sinai.
4. **Christ** — the period of Jesus' earthly ministry.
5. **Grace** — the present age of the church, from Pentecost onward.
6. **Day of Wrath** — the future period of judgment described by the prophets and in Revelation.
7. **Day of Judgment** — the future kingdom and judgment that follow.

E. W. Bullinger set out a similar sevenfold scheme, and our own *Seven Administrations* study explains how each one is marked out in scripture. Asking which administration a passage belongs to is one of the first steps in understanding it.

C. Interpretation Is One; Application Can Be Many

A passage has one correct meaning — what it meant in its setting. It may have many applications to our lives. But an application must never contradict who the passage was addressed to. For example, the Law's detailed food and sacrifice regulations teach real lessons about holiness, but they are not re-imposed on the church as commands.

D. Doctrine and Practice

We also distinguish doctrine (what is true) from its practical application (what to do about it). Keeping these separate prevents a personal practice from being turned into a universal rule.

In short: all scripture is for us, but not all of it is to us — so we identify the audience and the administration before applying a passage.

Chapter 6: Literal First, Figures of Speech Second

A. Take the Words at Face Value Wherever Possible

Our default is to read scripture literally — to take the words to mean what they plainly say. We read a word or phrase figuratively only when the literal sense cannot be true to fact.

B. Figures of Speech Are Not Guesswork

When Jesus said “**Go ye, and tell that fox**” (Luke 13:32) of Herod, no one thinks Herod was an animal. When he said “**I am the door**” (John 10:9), no one looks for hinges. These are figures of speech — metaphor, in these cases — and every language uses them.

The important point is that figures of speech follow recognizable patterns. E. W. Bullinger’s *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (1898) catalogs more than two hundred of them with thousands of examples. Using a catalog like this keeps “that’s figurative” from becoming a way to escape any verse we find uncomfortable. If we call something a figure, we name which figure and show why.

A few examples:

- **Metaphor** — one thing is said to *be* another (“I am the door”).
- **Simile** — one thing is said to be *like* another.
- **Idiom** — an expression whose meaning is not the sum of its words, often reflecting Hebrew or Eastern ways of speaking.
- **Hendiadys** — two words joined by “and” to express one idea.
- **Hyperbole** — deliberate exaggeration for emphasis.
- **The Hebrew idiom of permission** — where scripture says God did something that, in context, He permitted rather than caused.

C. Eastern Customs and Idioms

The Bible was written in the Near East, among people whose customs, manners, and ways of speaking differ from modern Western ones. Some phrases that puzzle a modern reader were plain to the original audience. We check the cultural background before deciding what a phrase means.

In short: read literally unless the literal sense cannot be true — and when a figure of speech is in play, name it and show why.

Chapter 7: Back to the Original Languages

A. Why the Hebrew and Greek Matter

The Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew (with some Aramaic) and the New Testament in Greek. Every English Bible is a translation, and every translation involves choices. When an English word is ambiguous, theologically loaded, or disputed, we go back to the original word.

B. The Tools We Use

- **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance** (1890) — assigns a number to every Hebrew and Greek word in the KJV, so a reader can find every place the same original word appears.
- **Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon** — deeper detail on New Testament Greek words.
- **Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon** (1906) — the standard older Hebrew lexicon.
- **Interlinear Bibles** — showing the Hebrew or Greek text with a word-by-word English gloss.

All of these are widely available, many of them free, so readers can check our word studies themselves.

C. Word Studies: Every Occurrence, Not One Proof-Text

A single word can carry several meanings, and context decides which one applies. So a proper word study collects every place a word or phrase occurs in scripture and builds its meaning from how it is actually used, rather than from one favorite verse or from a dictionary alone.

An example. The Hebrew word most often translated “bless” is *barak* (Strong's H1288). Its basic sense is “to kneel.” It branches two ways: people bless God by bowing before Him in adoration, and God blesses people by, as it were, bending down to give them good. Knowing this adds depth to every “bless” and “blessed” in the Old Testament.

D. A Caution: A Word's Roots Are Not Its Meaning

The origin of a word (its etymology) is not the same as its meaning in a given sentence. English speakers do not think of “butterflies” when they say “butter.” Usage decides meaning. That is why we collect every occurrence rather than resting an argument on a word's roots alone.

In short: when the English is unclear or disputed, we check the Hebrew or Greek, study every occurrence, and let usage — not etymology — decide.

Chapter 8: Knowing What Was Added Later

A. We Have Copies and Translations, Not the Originals

No original manuscript (autograph) of any book of the Bible survives. What we have are thousands of copies, and translations made from them. Most differences between copies are minor and well documented, but it means that a careful reader compares scripture with scripture, word with word, and English translation with English translation.

B. Chapters and Verses

Chapter and verse numbers are helpful for finding things, but they are not part of the inspired text. The chapter divisions used today go back to Stephen Langton in the early thirteenth century, and the New Testament verse numbers to the printer Robert Estienne in 1551. Sometimes a chapter break falls in the middle of a thought. We read across these divisions freely.

C. Punctuation

The original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts had no punctuation as we know it. Every comma, period, and question mark in an English Bible was placed by editors and translators. Occasionally a verse's meaning depends on where a comma falls. A well-known example:

Luke 23:43 *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

With the comma before "To day," Jesus promises paradise that same day. With the comma after it, "Verily I say unto thee to day," he makes a solemn statement *today* about a future promise. Both punctuations are grammatically possible in the Greek, and readers differ on which is right. The point here is not to settle that question but to show why we never let punctuation alone decide a doctrine — the question has to be settled by the wider testimony of scripture.

D. Italics

The KJV translators printed in italics the English words they supplied to make a sentence read smoothly, where no word stands in the original. For example, in **"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God" (1 Corinthians 14:2)**, the word "unknown" is in italics — it is not in the Greek. Many modern reprints drop the italics, which hides this information. We watch for them.

E. Capitalization

Capital letters, too, are an editorial choice. In the KJV, the same Greek phrase meaning "by the spirit" is printed with a lowercase "spirit" at Acts 11:28 and a capital "Spirit" at Acts 21:4. That difference is the translators' judgment, not something in the Greek. We note such choices rather than building on them.

F. Words Whose Meaning Has Changed

English has changed since 1611. A few examples:

- “**Prevent**” meant “go before,” not “stop”: “**we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep**” (1 Thessalonians 4:15).
- “**Conversation**” often meant “conduct” or “way of life,” not talk.
- “**Let**” could mean “hinder,” the opposite of its modern sense.

We check older meanings before drawing conclusions from a KJV word.

G. Is the Text Secure?

For the few places where copies of a verse genuinely differ, we check the manuscript evidence. The best-known example is the phrase in 1 John 5:7 about “three that bear record in heaven,” which is absent from the early Greek manuscripts and is widely recognized as a later addition. Cases like this are rare, but where they exist, honesty requires saying so.

In short: chapters, verses, punctuation, italics, and capitals are later human helps — useful, but never the authority — and we check old English meanings and the manuscript evidence where it matters.

Chapter 9: Letting the Structure Speak

A. Repetition Is Deliberate

The Bible’s writers used repetition on purpose. When something is repeated, it is being emphasized or used to organize a passage. We pay attention to these patterns, drawing on Bullinger’s catalog of repetition-figures and on Jon O. Nessel’s more recent work, *Repetitions: A Key to Understanding the Heart of Scripture* (2025).

B. Bookends (Framing)

When the same word or phrase appears at the start and end of a passage, it marks the boundaries of a unit and usually signals its main theme. Scholars call this an *inclusio*; Nessel calls it *Sumplēxis* (“framing”). Finding the bookends tells you where a thought begins and ends, which is often more reliable than chapter and verse divisions.

C. Refrains Mark Divisions

A recurring phrase can act as a divider. In Genesis 1, “**And the evening and the morning were the first day**” (Genesis 1:5) and its repetitions close each day of creation. In Psalm 136, “**for his mercy endureth for ever**” (Psalm 136:1) ends every one of its twenty-six verses.

D. Clusters Reveal the Theme

When a word or its synonyms appear unusually often in one passage, that concentration shows what the passage is really about — sometimes something different from its surface subject. “Faithful” and “faithfulness” run through Psalm 89; words for cleansing crowd Psalm 51. If a repetition feels heavy or awkward to a modern reader, that is itself a signal: it is emphasis, not clumsy writing.

E. Structure Is Evidence, Not Proof

Structural patterns help show what a writer is emphasizing. But a pattern can be seen where none was intended, so structure is used to support a reading that the words themselves already point to — never as the only argument.

In short: repetition, bookends, refrains, and clusters show how a passage is built and what it stresses — and we treat them as supporting evidence.

Chapter 10: Harmonizing the Whole Record

A. Scripture Does Not Contradict Itself

1 Corinthians 14:33 *For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*

If God is the Author, the Bible will not truly contradict itself. When two passages seem to conflict, we treat that as a sign that we have misunderstood something — a translation, a context, a word — not that scripture is in error.

B. Parallel Accounts Add, They Do Not Contradict

Where an event is recorded more than once, each account may include details the others leave out. Putting them together gives the full picture. The sign above Jesus on the cross is a clear example:

- **Matthew 27:37** — “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS”
- **Mark 15:26** — “THE KING OF THE JEWS”
- **Luke 23:38** — “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS”
- **John 19:19** — “JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS”

None of these contradicts another. Each gives part of the wording, and together they give the whole — “This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” Luke and John also tell us the sign was written in three languages, which may itself account for some differences in wording.

C. An Accurate Record of an Untrue Statement

The Bible accurately records things that are not true. “**And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die**” (**Genesis 3:4**) is a true report of a lie. “**The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God**” (**Psalms 14:1**) contains the words “there is no God,” but the Bible is reporting what the fool says, not agreeing with it. So we always ask who is speaking, and whether scripture is endorsing a statement or simply recording it.

D. Make a Distinction Where Scripture Makes One

Things that are similar are not automatically the same. When scripture uses different words, different audiences, or different settings, we do not merge them just because they look alike.

E. Types and Pictures, Judged One by One

The Old Testament contains many pictures that foreshadow Christ. But each one has to be judged on its own merits. Sometimes “is” means literal identity; sometimes it means “represents.” We do not assume a type where the text does not support one.

In short: scripture agrees with itself — so we assemble every account, notice who is speaking, keep distinctions scripture keeps, and judge each type on its own merits.

Chapter 11: When a Verse Does Not Fit

A. The Clear Verses Carry the Weight

Sometimes a position is supported by many clear, direct verses, while one or two harder verses seem to point another way. In that case, the many clear verses carry the weight. A handful of unclear verses does not overturn what a large body of clear ones plainly teaches.

This is the same principle the Law applied to testimony: **“at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15).**

B. Holding a Verse “In Abeyance”

We do not force a difficult verse into a reading it will not bear, and we do not quietly ignore it either. Instead we hold it *in abeyance* — set aside, openly, until further study resolves it.

Deuteronomy 29:29 *The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

Every verse held in abeyance is written down in a running list, with what is unresolved and why, so it can be revisited later. Nothing is dropped out of sight. Where a study holds a verse in abeyance, the study says so.

C. The Four Checks

Before we propose any resolution for a difficult verse, we run it through four checks, in this order:

1. **Translation** — Is the KJV the best rendering of the Hebrew or Greek, or is there a real, defensible alternative?
2. **Transcription** — Is the verse textually secure across the manuscripts, or is there a genuine variant to weigh (as with 1 John 5:7, Chapter 8)?
3. **Punctuation and clause division** — Does the verse’s force depend on where later editors placed a comma or a break (as with Luke 23:43)?
4. **Context and grammar** — What do the immediate and wider context, and the grammar itself, require?

D. A Guardrail Against Convenient Answers

A proposed resolution must be one we could defend to someone who does not already share our conclusion. If the only reason for a reading is that it rescues our position, it is not a resolution — and the verse stays in abeyance. This guardrail exists because it is easy to explain away any verse if nothing is allowed to count against you.

E. Independent Corroboration

Where outside scholars from different traditions and methods independently reach the same reading of a difficult verse, we count that as real corroboration. Where they disagree, or are silent, the verse stays flagged rather than being settled by a vote among secondary sources.

In short: clear verses carry the weight; hard verses are held openly, checked four ways, and resolved only when the answer would convince someone who does not already agree.

Chapter 12: What Scripture Says, What We Infer, and How Much Weight It Carries

A. Three Kinds of Claim, Never Blended

At every step, we mark which kind of claim is being made:

1. **Direct scriptural statement** — scripture says it in so many words.
2. **Inference** — a conclusion we draw from what scripture says.
3. **Outside corroboration** — history, Jewish or early-church tradition, archaeology, or science.

These are never quietly blended. Outside material can support a point, but it is never allowed to masquerade as scripture.

B. What the Text Necessarily Implies

Sometimes scripture establishes something without stating it in one verse. For example: Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran (Genesis 11:32); Abram was 75 when he left Haran (Genesis 12:4); and Stephen says Abram left “**when his father was dead**” (Acts 7:4). No verse gives Terah’s age at Abram’s birth, but together these require that Terah was at least 130 — even though Genesis 11:26 lists Abram first among sons born from Terah’s seventieth year onward.

We count a conclusion like that as established only when the text genuinely forces it. If it is merely a reasonable guess, we call it an inference.

C. The Five-Step Weighing Scale

To show readers how strong each argument is, our full studies rate it on a five-step scale:

- **Direct statement** — scripture says it in so many words; the only question is what the words mean.

- **Strong inference** — follows closely from what scripture says; the alternative has to strain against the text.
- **Reasonable inference** — the more natural reading, but an honest, careful reader can take it otherwise.
- **Corroboration only** — consistent with our position, but roughly as consistent with the opposite one. It may be mentioned, but not leaned on.
- **Neutral** — often cited by one side or the other, but it settles nothing.

D. “Weighing It” Notes

In our research studies, each section ends with a short “Weighing it” note. It says how strong the point is, which way it points, and what the opposing reading can fairly answer. A summary table at the end lists every argument with its weight — including arguments we have withdrawn or downgraded in earlier versions, so they cannot quietly come back.

Some presentations on this site, written for easier reading, leave these notes out. The weighing is still done behind them.

In short: we label every claim as scripture, inference, or corroboration, and we publish how much weight each argument carries — not just the conclusion.

Chapter 13: The Hebrew Record and the History of Interpretation

A. Hearing the Old Testament on Its Own Terms

For Old Testament passages — especially those the New Testament later builds on — we check how the Hebrew text itself was read and understood, before and apart from later Christian interpretation. This includes:

- **The Targums** — early Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew scriptures (Onkelos, Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti).
- **The Midrash** — classical Jewish commentary, such as Genesis Rabbah.
- **The Talmud.**
- **Medieval Jewish commentators** — Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Radak (David Kimhi).
- **Modern Jewish scholarship**, including writers who explicitly dispute Christian readings. We present these fairly, not only where they support our view.

B. Dates Matter

The written form of a Targum or Midrash is often later than the tradition it records. When a study leans on one of these sources, we note when that source was actually written, rather than assuming it reflects the first century.

C. The Early Church

Early Christian writers help show what believers taught and practiced in the first centuries — and where teaching began to change. We treat them as historical witnesses, not as scripture.

D. Using a Source Without Adopting Its Conclusions

A source can be excellent on facts and method while reaching doctrinal conclusions we do not share. Bullinger is a good example: his work on figures of speech, structure, and word studies is invaluable, and we use it constantly, but his own theological conclusions are weighed separately on their merits. The same goes for every source we use. We take what is factually and methodologically sound, and we test each author's doctrine for ourselves.

In short: we listen to the Hebrew record and to history as real witnesses, note their dates honestly, and use every source's facts without automatically inheriting its conclusions.

Chapter 14: Hearing the Other Side at Full Strength

A. The First Speaker Always Sounds Right

Proverbs 18:17 *He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.*

Any case sounds convincing until the other side is heard. So in our studies, the opposing view is stated fully and fairly — in its own terms, with its own best verses — before any answer is offered. A study that leaves out the other side's strongest verses has not answered it.

B. What Would Change Our Mind

Where a study takes a position on a contested question, it tries to state what evidence would overturn that position. This is not a rhetorical flourish. It is written so that a reader could actually go and look for that evidence.

C. Outside Review

Some of our studies are reviewed by an outside Christian research scholar before publication. Every point raised is reconsidered on its merits, not defended by reflex. Where the reviewer is right, the study is changed.

D. Correcting Our Own Errors

Proverbs 12:1 *Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.*

When Apollos was teaching accurately but incompletely, **"Aquila and Priscilla... expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26)**. Being corrected is part of learning. When we find an error

— whether we find it or a reader does — we correct it in writing and issue a revised version. Each study carries a version number so readers can tell which edition they have.

In short: we state the opposing case at its best, say what would change our mind, welcome review, and publish our corrections.

Chapter 15: Guardrails Against Common Errors

Outside review of our own work has taught us specific mistakes to watch for. These are now standing rules for every study.

A. Check Every Word Before Calling Two Verses Parallel

Two verses that look alike in English may differ in the Greek or Hebrew — a missing preposition, a different verb form. Before claiming two verses use “the same construction,” we compare every word in the original.

B. A Writer’s Own Habits Beat a Single Word-Match

Showing that a writer consistently uses a phrase in one way is strong evidence. Finding the same word in two unrelated places is weak evidence. We build on the writer’s demonstrated patterns.

C. Never Say “Nowhere” or “Always” Without Checking Every Case

A claim that a word is “never” used a certain way can be overturned by a single counter-example. We check every occurrence before making such a claim — and we name the nearest counter-example ourselves, before a reader has to.

D. Outcomes Do Not Prove Obedience — in Either Direction

“Good things followed, so the action must have been right” is not sound reasoning; scripture shows God bringing good out of wrong choices. The reverse is also true: “hard things followed, so the action must have been wrong” fails for the same reason. We hold this rule in both directions.

E. Arguments From Silence, Done Properly

“Scripture never says he was wrong” proves little on its own. It becomes meaningful only when the same writer, in the same passage, freely records faults elsewhere and records none on the point in question.

F. Name Exactly Who Is Being Spoken To

A promise made *about* someone to a third person is not the same as a word spoken directly *to* that person. We check who is actually being addressed.

G. A Warning Is Not a Verdict

Scripture often gives a verdict after the fact when a servant of God did wrong — for example, Paul says of Peter, “**I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed**” (Galatians 2:11). A warning given before an action is not the same thing as a verdict given after it, and we do not treat it as one.

H. Compare Like With Like

When one “all” is set against another (“all turned away” against “all heard”), we check whether both are being used in the same way — one may be literal and the other a general statement. We also look for the exception in the next few verses.

I. Verify, Don’t Recall

Every scripture quotation and every Greek or Hebrew form in our studies is checked against the text, not quoted from memory. Several errors we have found in our own past work came from reasoning over unverified details, not from misreading the verses themselves.

In short: we check every word, count every case, apply our rules evenly in both directions, and verify every quotation.

Chapter 16: Five Questions for Better Understanding

Alongside the who / to whom / what / where / when / how / why questions (Chapter 4), we ask five more of any passage:

1. **What isn’t it saying?** Many errors come from reading into a verse something it does not claim.
2. **What is the opposite of what it’s saying?** Stating the opposite often makes the actual point sharper.
3. **What is unusual about the way it’s said?** A figure of speech, an idiom, an unexpected word order, or an Eastern custom often signals emphasis.
4. **What did it mean to believers in the first century?** The original readers are the first test of any interpretation.
5. **What does it mean to us today?** Application comes last, after the meaning is settled — and within the limits of who the passage was addressed to (Chapter 5).

In short: these five questions guard against reading in, sharpen the meaning, catch figures of speech, anchor the text in its first readers, and only then apply it.

Chapter 17: From Question to Published Study

A. The Steps, in Order

Here is how a study on this site typically comes together:

1. **Frame the question.** State plainly what is being asked — often as an open question rather than a conclusion to be proved.
2. **Gather the verses.** Collect every relevant passage, using concordances and cross-references, not just the familiar ones.
3. **Establish context.** Author, audience, administration, setting, and genre for each key passage.
4. **Check the languages.** Word studies on any key, ambiguous, or disputed term.
5. **Consult the library.** Lexicons, Bullinger, the *Companion Bible*, cross-reference works, Jewish sources, and history — local reference works first, the open web only for what they do not cover.
6. **State the opposing case.** In its own terms, with its best verses.
7. **Draft and weigh.** Write the study, label every claim, and rate each argument.
8. **Log what remains open.** Any verse that does not yet fit goes on the abeyance list.
9. **Verify.** Check every quotation, reference, date, and fact.
10. **Review and revise.** Outside review where possible; every revision gets a new version number.
11. **Publish with sources.** Each study lists the sources consulted and, in most cases, a Scripture Index.

B. About Our Research Tools

Research on this site is done with the help of an AI research assistant, which is credited on each study's title page. It helps gather verses, check Greek and Hebrew forms, search reference works, and draft. Every method in this presentation applies to its work as much as to ours: nothing it produces is accepted without checking against the text, and the conclusions are the author's responsibility.

In short: every study moves from an open question, through the verses, context, languages, library, and opposing case, to a weighed, verified, versioned, and sourced conclusion.

Chapter 18: An Invitation to the Reader

Proverbs 25:2 *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.*

The methods in this presentation are not a secret craft. They are the same tools any careful reader can use: a Bible, a concordance, a willingness to read in context, and the honesty to let scripture say what it says.

We hope our studies help you. But we hope even more that you will do what the Bereans did, and search the scriptures to see **“whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11)**. If you find something we have missed or gotten wrong, we want to hear it.

Appendix A: The Method at a Glance

Method	What It Means	See
Scripture is the final authority	Tradition, scholarship, and teaching are tested by the text, never the reverse	Ch 2
KJV base text	Quoted from the KJV; other versions consulted and noted for hard passages	Ch 2
Scripture interprets itself	In the verse, in its context, as used before	Ch 3
Cross-references tracked	Parallels, quotations, and themes followed and logged	Ch 3
Full mention	Build a doctrine from where scripture teaches it most fully	Ch 3
Context first	Who, to whom, what, where, when, how, why	Ch 4
Genre before doctrine	A greeting or illustration is not a universal rule	Ch 4
To whom addressed	Jew, Gentile, or church of God	Ch 5
The seven administrations	Identify which administration governs a passage	Ch 5
One interpretation, many applications	Application may never contradict the audience	Ch 5
Literal first	Figurative only when the literal cannot be true to fact	Ch 6
Figures of speech named	Identify the figure (Bullinger) and show why	Ch 6
Eastern customs and idioms	Check cultural background before interpreting	Ch 6
Original languages	Check Hebrew and Greek for unclear or disputed words	Ch 7
Complete word studies	Every occurrence, not one proof-text	Ch 7
Usage over etymology	A word's roots do not fix its meaning	Ch 7
Later additions recognized	Chapters, verses, punctuation, capitals are editorial	Ch 8
Italics watched	KJV italics mark supplied words	Ch 8
Old English meanings	"Prevent," "conversation," "let"	Ch 8
Textual security	Check manuscripts where copies genuinely differ	Ch 8
Structure and repetition	Bookends, refrains, and clusters show emphasis	Ch 9
No contradiction	An apparent conflict means a gap in our understanding	Ch 10
Parallel accounts assembled	Each account adds; together they give the whole	Ch 10
Accurate record of untruth	Ask who is speaking and whether scripture endorses it	Ch 10
Distinctions kept	Similar is not identical	Ch 10
Types judged individually	Each foreshadowing judged on its own	Ch 10
Clear verses carry the weight	Many clear verses outweigh a few unclear ones	Ch 11
Abeyance	Hard verses held openly and logged, never forced or hidden	Ch 11
Four checks	Translation, transcription, punctuation, context and grammar	Ch 11

No convenient rescues	A resolution must persuade someone who disagrees	Ch 11
Independent corroboration	Agreement across different traditions counts; a vote does not	Ch 11
Three kinds of claim	Scripture, inference, and corroboration never blended	Ch 12
Necessary implication	Counted only when the text forces it	Ch 12
Five-step weighing scale	Direct, strong, reasonable, corroboration, neutral	Ch 12
Hebrew and Jewish record	Targums, Midrash, Talmud, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Radak — dated honestly	Ch 13
Source facts, not source doctrine	Use a source's facts; test its conclusions	Ch 13
Opposing case at full strength	Its own terms and its best verses, first	Ch 14
What would change our mind	Stated so a reader could check	Ch 14
Review and correction	Outside review; errors corrected in writing; versioned	Ch 14
Guardrails	Word-by-word checks, no "never" without counting, outcomes rule both ways	Ch 15
Verify, don't recall	Every quotation checked against the text	Ch 15
Five questions	What it isn't saying, the opposite, what's unusual, first century, today	Ch 16

Appendix B: Reference Works We Use

Work	What It Is	Used For
King James Version (1611)	English translation; our base text	All quotations
Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (1890)	Every KJV word, numbered to its Hebrew or Greek original	Finding every occurrence of a word
Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon	New Testament Greek lexicon	Greek word meanings
Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon (1906)	Standard older Hebrew lexicon	Hebrew word meanings
Interlinear Bibles	Original text with word-by-word English	Seeing the Hebrew or Greek behind the English
Treasury of Scripture Knowledge	Classic cross-reference work, Genesis to Revelation	Scripture interpreting scripture
E. W. Bullinger, <i>Figures of Speech Used in the Bible</i> (1898)	Catalog of over two hundred figures of speech	Identifying figurative language
E. W. Bullinger, <i>The Companion Bible</i>	KJV with notes and appendices	Structure, word notes, chronology
E. W. Bullinger, <i>How to Enjoy the Bible</i>	Principles of Bible study	Administrations and "to whom"
J. Edwin Hartill, <i>Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics</i>	Classic interpretation handbook	Full mention and related principles
Jon O. Nessel, <i>Repetitions</i> (2025)	Study of repetition as structure	Bookends, refrains, and clusters
Targums, Midrash, Talmud; Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Radak	The Jewish interpretive record	How the Hebrew text was read

Appendix C: Glossary

Abeyance — Holding a difficult verse aside, openly and on record, until further study resolves it, rather than forcing a reading or ignoring it.

Administration (dispensation) — A period in which God deals with people in a particular way; from the Greek *oikonomia*, the management of a household.

Autograph — The original manuscript of a book of the Bible as first written. None survive.

Corroboration — Outside evidence (history, tradition, archaeology) that supports a point but does not carry the weight of scripture.

Etymology — The origin or root of a word, as distinct from its meaning in use.

Figure of speech — A deliberate departure from the ordinary use of words for emphasis or effect, such as metaphor or hyperbole.

Full mention — The place where scripture gathers its fullest teaching on a subject.

Inclusio (bookend) — The same word or phrase at the start and end of a passage, marking its boundaries.

Inference — A conclusion drawn from what scripture says, as distinct from what it states directly.

Lexicon — A dictionary of the words of an ancient language, such as Biblical Hebrew or Greek.

Midrash — Classical Jewish commentary on the Hebrew scriptures.

Targum — An ancient Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew scriptures.

Transcription (textual variant) — A place where manuscript copies of a verse differ.

Type — An Old Testament person, event, or thing that foreshadows something later, especially Christ.

Weighing it — A short note in our research studies stating how strong an argument is, which way it points, and what the other reading fairly answers.