

## How to Interpret Scripture

### Lesson - 12 — Dealing with Difficult Passages

#### Memory Verse

**2 Peter 3:15, 16** (NKJV) *“And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures”.*

*“The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.—Fundamental Beliefs, #1*

**Pure mountain spring water will still have microscopic particles of clay sodium minerals plant material and some bacteria. Even highly purified filtered water allows some particles through.**

**The KJV has 783,137 words and 3,116,480 letters.**

#### Possible Reasons for Apparent Contradictions

**2 Timothy 2:10–16** (NKJV) *Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. <sup>11</sup> This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. <sup>12</sup> If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. <sup>13</sup> If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. <sup>14</sup> Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. <sup>15</sup> Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. <sup>16</sup> But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.*

**Psalms 139:6** (NKJV) *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.*

**Proverbs 26:4–5** (NKJV) *Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. <sup>5</sup> Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.*

**Exodus 20:13** (KJV 1900) *Thou shalt not kill.*

**1 Samuel 15:3** (NKJV) *Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”*

**Exodus 20:13** (NKJV) *“You shall not murder.*

**Luke 18:20** (NKJV) *You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ”*

**Acts 8:30–31** (NKJV) *So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”*

<sup>31</sup> *And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.*

*“Some discrepancies in Scripture might be due to minor errors of copyists or translators. Ellen G. White has stated: “Some look to us gravely and say, ‘Don’t you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?’ This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God.” —Selected Messages, book 1, p. 16.*

#### Deal with Difficulties Honestly and Carefully

**1 Chronicles 29:17** (NKJV) *I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You.*

**Matthew 13:19** (NKJV) *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.*

**Proverbs 2:7** (NKJV) *He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;*

**Psalms 147:5** (ESV) *Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.*

**Isaiah 55:9** *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

**Romans 11:33** (NKJV) *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*

**1 Timothy 4:16** (NKJV) *Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*

**2 Samuel 24:1** (NKJV) *Again the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."*

**1 Chronicles 21:1** (NKJV) *Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.*

**Acts 2:22–23** (NKJV) *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—<sup>23</sup> Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;*

**Ecclesiastes 7:29** *God made man upright.*

**Psalms 51:5** *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity.*

Looking at the contexts of both verses removes the discrepancy. In Ecclesiastes 7:29, the writer is talking about Adam and Eve, stating that we were originally created upright. In Psalm 51, David is speaking of the fallen state of man and his personal situation as a sinner. Thus, there is no contradiction between these passages.

### Deal with Difficulties Humbly

**Psalms 25:9** (NKJV) *The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way.*

**James 4:6–10** (NKJV) *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."<sup>7</sup> Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.<sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.<sup>9</sup> Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.<sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

**Zephaniah 3:12** (NKJV) *I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the Lord.*

### Numerical Problems

#### One Man Or Two?

**Matthew 8:28** *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*

**Mark 5:2** *And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,*

**Mark 10:46** (NKJV) *Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.*

**Matthew 20:29–30** (NKJV) *Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him.<sup>30</sup> And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"*

#### God sent Gad, to threaten David with how many years of famine?

**2 Samuel 24:13** SEVEN years of famine.

**1 Chron 21:12** THREE years of famine.

The Hebrew characters for 7 and 3 are very similar. Like 7 and 2.

#### How many stalls for horses did Solomon have?

(1) **Kings 4:26**: FORTY THOUSAND

(2) **Chron: 9:25** FOUR THOUSAND

#### The Temple contained how many baths?

(1) **Kings 7:26** – TWO THOUSAND baths.

(2) **Chron. 4:5** – THREE THOUSAND baths

It had the capacity for 3000 but they typically filled it with 2000. We know the Babylon cubit was less than that of the ancient Hebrews, it might be the same with measures of capacity; so that 2,000 of the ancient Jewish baths might have been equal to 3,000 of those used after the captivity.

**Errors in a typical novel** – A professional editor said "A book that's been hastily proofread by just one proofreader may display 1 typo per 1,000 words. This is not unusual among published books I've been sent to read and review. I'm more comfortable with 3 typos (single-letter errors or two letters, transposed) per 10,000 words.

#### How old was Jehoiachin when he became king of Jerusalem?

(2) **Kings 24:8** – EIGHTEEN years of age

(2) **Chron. 36:9** EIGHT years of age

**2 Samuel 15:7** (NKJV) *Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the Lord.*

**Probably a copyist mistake, of "arbaim" for "arba", forty for four;** It is generally admitted that an error has here crept into the text, the Syriac and Arabic versions, and Josephus, "four years.

### Determination and Patience

**Galatians 6:9** (NKJV) *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

**Mark 4:16, 17** *"These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;" and they have no root in themselves, and so **endure only for a time**. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.*

**1 Corinthians 13:7** *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

- By perseverance the snail reached the Ark. —Spurgeon

**Matthew 24:12, 13** *"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*

### Children Dying In Heaven?

**Isaiah 65:20** (NKJV) *"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.*

**Genesis 5:6** *Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begot Enosh.*

**Genesis 5:9** (NKJV) *Enosh lived ninety years, and begot Cainan.*

**Genesis 5:12** (NKJV) *Cainan lived seventy years, and begot Mahalalel.*

**Genesis 5:15** (NKJV) *Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot Jared.*

**Genesis 5:18** (NKJV) *Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch.*

"Were somebody to die at 100, they would still be considered a child." child ... die ... hundred years — that is, "he that dieth an hundred years old shall die a mere child"

### Deal with Difficulties Scripturally and Prayerfully

**Acts 17:11** (NKJV) *These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*

**Acts 8:34–35** (NKJV) *So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?"<sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.*

**Acts 15:15–16** (NKJV) *And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up;*

**Matthew 27:37** (NKJV) *And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS*

**Mark 15:26** (NKJV) *And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS*

**John 19:19** (NKJV) *Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*

**Luke 23:38** (NKJV) *And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS*

**Mistaken Letters.** The confusion of similar looking letters caused some scribes to make errors as they copied scripture. An example: In Genesis a group of people called the "Dodanim" are called the "Rodanim" in Chronicles. This error doesn't invalidate the Bible.

**Homophony.** This error results in the substitution of words that sound familiar. If we were to use a modern example, we could go with "its" for "it's," or "there" for "their." This error doesn't invalidate the Bible.

**Haplography.** In this case, the error is caused by the omission of a letter or word. This, we know, from our own copying of class notes or grocery lists, can easily happen when our eyes skip ahead to another word or line with the same word or letter. *This error doesn't invalidate the Bible.*

**Harmonization.** Here, scribes modified a passage for the purpose of bringing it into line with a parallel passage. A biblical example: Genesis 14:14 states that Abraham pursued his nephew Lot's captors as far as the city of Dan. However, according to Judges 18:29 and Joshua 19:47, the city would not have been known as Dan until much later. So it is evident that a scribe updated the city name to Dan, from its older names Laish and Leshem, to ensure his readers would recognize the city.