

## BIBLE STUDY METHODS

### LIVING WATER FROM THE WELL OF GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

*The Bible is no ordinary book, and how you approach it is critical to understanding and receiving the truth it has to teach. We offer some helpful guidelines on this page.*

#### THE STRUCTURE OF OUR DISCUSSION

In this piece we will first define what covenant is. Then we will map out the key characteristics of each of the 3 major Biblical covenants. With all three in view, we can then discuss God's purpose for each, which also explains their differences and how to use them when interpreting different parts of the Bible. Here are the phases of our discussion:

- *Section One:* How to approach the Bible
- *Section Two:* Principals of Bible interpretation
- *Section Three:* Methods of Bible study
- *Sample Study:* What does "only begotten Son of God" mean?

#### *Section One:* HOW TO APPROACH THE BIBLE

Before we even open a Bible we would do well to know how to approach the Word of God. So here are a few helpful thoughts.

#### **The Bible is spiritual**

The Bible tells us that it is spiritual in nature, and therefore cannot be truly understood by our rational minds. Even though the Bible presents its truths very plainly, those truths can only be received by our spirits with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore important to approach the Bible knowing that we need God to teach us what His Word actually means.

*"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." – 1 Corinthians 2:12-14*

One of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to lead us into an understanding of God's truths. So when we come to God sincerely seeking to understand His truths we can expect to find His help leading us in the process.

*"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." – John 16:13*

#### **Our heart attitude**

Even though it is the Holy Spirit who reveals Biblical truth to us, we have a part to play as well. We must desire to know God's truth. Most of us are not aware that we do it, but we come to the Bible wanting it to prove a particular point for us. We already know what we want to believe, and we search out justification for our beliefs in the Word. Approaching the Bible this way will not lead us to understanding it. That method puts blinkers on our eyes and we only

see what we want to see. If we come seeking approval of our own wisdom, we will be led astray by our own desires. God answers the true desires of the heart. If you seek after your own wisdom, you will find it (even to your own destruction). If you truly seek God's wisdom, the Holy Spirit will respond by unfolding God's truth to you.

*“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” – Matthew 7:7-8*

*“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” – Hebrews 4:12*

### **The Bible shapes us**

The Bible is not to be read and studied for the purpose of knowledge and understanding alone. More importantly, it is a mirror, to show us our own hearts. It speaks truth and wherever we have dark spots in our hearts, the Word makes us uncomfortable. If we allow it to shine God's light in those places, by listening, responding in prayer and a willingness to be corrected, it will guide us into the depths of God and the treasures of His Word. If we resist its message, we resist God's will. Then our independence, pride and stubbornness will remain a wedge between us and God. To study the Bible then, is very much a process of allowing it to shape you – allowing it to tell you what truth truly is.

### **Increased revelation**

We should also realise that our understanding of the Bible will gradually deepen. The more spiritual we become, the more we allow God to shape us, the more capacity we develop to understand the scriptures. In other words, as we take the truth we already understand and apply it to our lives, it cleanses us enough to receive more and deeper truth – and so on. It is a living process, not an academic exercise.

*“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” – 1 Corinthians 3:1-2*

### **Section Two:**

## **PRINCIPALS OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION**

While there are many methods we can use to study the Bible, there is a fixed set of principals we use to interpret it. These help us to understand verses correctly and to see how verses relate to each other. So it is extremely important we keep these in mind when we study.

**First we will explain the principals and then we will do a sample study to show how these are used in practice.**

### **Principal One: The Bible alone**

Secure truth is found in the Bible and the Bible alone. We cannot take supplementary writings - whoever and wherever they may come from - and use them to determine doctrine or absolute truth. We cannot put anything else on par with the Word or we risk allowing ourselves to be led astray. Only the Bible has proven itself as the steadfast, inerrant guide of truth and Word of God.

*“The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever.” – Psalm 12:6-7*

This doesn't mean we can't read other sources or hear other people's understanding of the Bible, but it does mean that we should only take the things the Bible says as God-breathed truth.

## Principal Two **The Bible Interprets itself**

One of the beautiful things about the Bible is how perfectly God put it all together. If we look to the Bible to define its own terms, explain its own prophecies, and clarify its own doctrines, we discover just how intentional God was in its design. The answers are woven into the scripture itself.

In fact, this is so important that it is one of the points the enemy has targeted in the end times. The Lucifer worshiper, Alice A. Bailey, said that one of her masters plans to deceive Christians was to re-define known terms. In that way they could change Christian doctrine without the Christians even knowing it – because they would still be using the same words found in the Bible – its just that the words would have a different meaning assigned to them.

So we need to allow the text to define its own meaning, because if we bring our own interpretation into it, we open a door to deception. The Bible alone must tell us what faith, anointing, apostleship, atonement, righteousness, sin etc, all mean, since even from the beginning:

*“...untaught and unstable people twist [Paul’s letters] to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” – 2 Peter 3:16b*

## Principal Three **All scripture teaches a single message**

From the first to the last page, the Bible tells one single story and every piece fits together. The scriptures do not contradict each other, they compliment each other. For those who have question on this topic we present an in-depth study at the following link:

*Internal Integrity of the Bible*  
<https://www.godsessions.com/evidence-for-the-bible>

If we study a topic, we have to read all the scripture tells us about it, because each new passage adds an extra dimension to the picture, a slightly different angle, another facet to the same truth. When you put them all together you have the full picture. That is why a true interpretation of any Biblical teaching accounts for all the scriptures on the topic. Individual scriptures must therefore be interpreted in the light of all the other scriptures on the same topic, or we may have a half-truth on our hands. If a scripture contradicts our interpretation of a truth, then we don’t fully understand that truth yet.

This is also one of the tools we use to test our truth and to discover a false doctrine. A distorted doctrine will agree with some scriptures on a given topic, but will be in conflict with others. Only when our understanding fits perfectly with all the scriptures, do we know we understand that truth correctly.

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

## Principal Four **Read scripture in context**

Scriptures must be interpreted in keeping with their context. This means that the scripture must be read as a part of a greater passage (at least one or more chapters), before we can know what the specific verse is referring to. Taking verses in isolation (removing their context) can dramatically alter their meaning.

Have you ever walked into a conversation half-way, and heard something that gave you the “wrong end of the stick”? You misunderstood the message because you didn’t actually know what the topic was. The same thing can happen if we use verses in isolation. There are some people who will even intentionally use this method to distort the scriptures. So

take care to read a number of verses before and after the one you are studying, to get a better picture of what the writer is trying to say.

#### Principal Five

##### **A literal interpretation takes preference**

The Bible is a literal book, telling actual stories of historical events. For that reason a literal interpretation should be taken unless the context reveals that the passage is either: poetic, prophetic or a parable. For example, when the Bible says that Adam ate the fruit of a tree, or it tells us the walls of Jericho came crashing down, there is no reason to believe that this is anything but an accurate, historical account of true events. But sometimes it means to be poetic (like in the case of the Psalms), or prophetic (like the book of Revelations). In those cases it will show us that metaphors and symbolism are being used. Take for example Daniel chapter 8, when he sees a prophetic vision of a goat with a horn and an angel then explains to him that the goat is actually symbolic of an empire and the horn represents a king (see Daniel 8:21). The context is telling us that figurative language is being used. We obviously then shouldn't apply figurative passages literally or literal passages figuratively.

#### Principal Six

##### **Major on the majors and minor on the minors**

The weight of our personal focus must mirror the weight of scriptural emphasis. In other words, God gave us the scriptures to guide us in all things we need for righteousness and godliness. What God speaks often and loud about is more important than what He is silent about. For example, love is more important than dress-code. If our focus is all about a small handful of scriptures while we avoid the vast majority of its teachings – then we are not allowing the Bible to speak to us properly.

The occult and various false doctrines love to use this method. They search out tiny, unclear details in the scriptures and blow them into enormous theories. They focus on the little opportunities to find wiggle-room to sow doubt or confusion and flatly ignore the massive, clear sign-posts of scripture.

#### Principal Seven

##### **Clear teaching outweighs unclear ones**

Clear texts must have more weight than unclear ones. There are things taught very directly in the Bible. There are other things we deduce or assume by reading between the lines, or cannot say with certainty. We need to be very careful to place heavy emphasis on that which is clear and be extremely cautious with parts that necessitate our reasoning to fill in the gaps.

#### Principal Eight

##### **The many outweigh the few**

Multiple scriptures on a doctrine must outweigh single ones. So if we have one verse that appears to teach one thing and a hundred verses which appear to teach the opposite, we must follow the guidance of the weight of scripture (the 100 verses) until God reveals to us how that one curious verse fits in. We cannot follow the one uncertain verse at the cost of all the clear ones.

#### Principal Nine

##### **The New Testament outweighs the Old Testament**

The Old Testament was given to guide Israel in the Jewish religion. The New Testament (though it rests on the shoulders of the Old), was given to guide Christians in their faith in Christ Jesus. There is an enormous shift of covenant which takes place between the Old and New Testaments. This affects how we deal with scriptures from each era. So in short, scriptures must be interpreted within their covenantal context, because the Old and New Testament doctrines differ from each other. This is a crucial point and the one which trips most people up. For that reason we have dedicated a study to help explain the difference between the Old and New Covenants and how that affects our

understanding of scripture. We highly recommend this as a must-read for everyone:

*For our in-depth discussion on this crucial subject, please go to:  
The Covenants  
<https://www.godsessions.com/covenants>*

Now let's take a look at a few practical methods of Bible study.

### **Section Three:** **INTRODUCTION TO STUDY METHODS**

Whichever method of study you use, its a good idea to pray before you begin, and pray any time you get stuck as well. The Holy Spirit is ready and willing to guide you through the process. Also, if you want help in understanding something, don't be too determined to force an answer to your question right now. Often we need to grow up into spiritual answers. Which means that once we have asked the Lord to teach us what a passage means, He begins a process that will finally bring us to the answer. That answer could come only moments after you have asked Him or months later. Trust that the Lord is busy working out the answer in your life. You may understand it once you've done a full study, or you may need to experience one or more things that will begin shaping you and preparing you as a person to understand. God knows what we are lacking. If we are sincere in our search for His truth, He will begin answering us.

Finally, we would like to mention again that the purpose of Bible study is to prepare our hearts to be changed by the Lord. Every truth we discover should find its way into our belief systems and finally be actioned out in our lives. The Holy Spirit not only reveals the truth to us but **He forms the truth in us**. He will do that if we present our lives to Him and come with a pliable heart. After you have read a passage that has spoken to you or challenged you, He will give you an opportunity in every-day life to walk it out. The more this happens (the more you experience the truth instead of just reading it), the more at home you will feel in the Word of God, because the Spirit moving in you is the same Spirit moving within its words.

With that said, let's take a look at three methods of Bible Study:

- *Method One:* Feeding on the word
- *Method Two:* Studying a theme
- *Method three:* Studying a passage

#### Method One FEEDING ON THE WORD

The simplest method, and the method we suggest for those new to Bible study, is to start with a book in the **New Testament** and read it **slowly and thoughtfully**, taking note of every - single - word. Don't try to rush to the end just to get it done. The moment a verse jumps out at you, stop, read it again. Ask the Lord what He would like to show you about that passage. You probably won't hear a booming voice from heaven in reply, but know that God has heard you. Then keep going until you have read a chapter or two.

Do the same the next time you sit down to read. You can keep doing that from the book of Matthew all the way to Jude. What you are doing is going through the text carefully enough to allow it to sink in, and to allow the Lord to point something out to you. Also you are planting scriptures in your heart that the Lord may use at some unexpected moment when He wants to speak to you. just the trust the process, and within a few weeks and month you will begin to experience the change it is creating in you. Finally, be prepared to put what you read into action, because until you experience it for yourself, that truth will never be fully yours.

When you feel like you want to delve deeper into the Bible, say for example understand baptism, how to pray, what it means to walk in the Spirit, then its time to begin using the second method of Bible study.

## Method Two STUDYING A THEME

Studying a theme is a very different way to approach the Bible than “Feeding on the Word”. With this method we are trying to understand concepts of Christianity. This is a far more technical process, but the results can be very rewarding.

To begin with, let’s take a look at the tools you will need (all of these can be found online for free):

### A Concordance *(A kind of cataloging system)*

A Concordance is a list of all the words found in the Bible. It links a number to every word, and that number tells you what the original Greek (for the New Testament) or Hebrew word (for the Old Testament), was in the original text. Once we know that catalogue number we can use a Lexicon for the definition of the word. The other useful thing about a Concordance is that it shows us every time a word occurs in the Bible. So if you are doing a study on heaven, for example, a Concordance will show every verse in the Bible which contains that word. Many Bibles have a mini version of this in the back, so they will offer just a few sample verses to get you going.

### A Lexicon *(A kind of dictionary)*

A Bible Lexicon is a dictionary of the meaning of ancient Hebrew and koine Greek words. They give us the definition of the words used in the Bible, as they meant to those who used them thousands of years ago. So even you and I can go have a look at the original text and see what it says.

### Cross References *(A list of related verses)*

While the Concordance and Lexicon are based on a science, cross-references are more subjective. They are however an extremely helpful tool when trying to research a theme. They will take a verse and point you to other verses which discuss the same topic. The verse they reference may not use the same words but there will be a connection of theme. In a Bible, these are usually placed in a margin in the middle of the page, or sometimes in the footnotes.

*For our help on how to use these tools please go to:  
Using Study Tools  
<https://www.godsessions.com/study-tools>*

These three tools also form the three main phases of our study method. So let’s put them to work in a sample study, to see how it all fits together.

## SAMPLE STUDY

We begin by deciding on a topic or theme. We have chosen the phrase, “the only begotten Son of God”, used to describe Jesus. We want to understand what that word ‘begotten’ means.

Let’s assume for this example that we are already familiar with the fact that the Bible often uses the word ‘begat’ or ‘begotten’ when a human father produces offspring (a son or daughter). As in this next verse:

*“And the days of Adam after he had **begotten** Seth were eight hundred years: and he **begat** sons and daughters:”  
– Genesis 5:4*

Let's also assume that we have been taught that Jesus is co-eternal with the Father. He has no beginning or end, and was not a created being. So then coming across the following verse has caused some confusion we want to clarify:

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” – John 3:16*

Our gut reaction on what this means may be one of three guesses:

- Either this verse is telling us Jesus was the only Son God ever made by immaculate conception (virgin birth).
- Or maybe it means that Jesus was created by God, which would suggest He was God's first creation.
- Or does 'begotten' maybe have another meaning altogether.

This is where we apply interpretation principal number 2 listed above, “The Bible Interprets itself.” So exactly how do we let the Bible do that?

### Phase 1 Use a Concordance

Our first step will be to go to a Concordance to look up the word 'begotten.' When we do, we get 24 resulting verses (in the KJV) that include the word. By reading each of the verses, immediately we can discard those which are talking about human fathers and their children because our question is what it means in relation to Jesus Christ. That narrows our list down to 9 verses.

The next thing we do is look up the catalogue number in each case. Every occurrence of 'begotten' is linked to a number, so we check if they are all the same. We discover there are 3 different root words translated as 'begotten' in English. We are left with 3 numbers H3205, G3434 and G1080. The “H” stands for “Hebrew” and means the original text was written in Hebrew (thus the Old Testament). The “G” stands for “Greek” and means the verse comes from the New Testament. So at this point we have a list of 9 verses and we know which root word (catalogue number) is being used in each case.

Now let's look at our resulting verses. The first time the Bible uses this word 'begotten' to describe Jesus appears in Psalm 2:7. **In this Psalm, David is given a prophesy about the coming Messiah.**

*“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, **Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.**” – Psalm 2:7*

So already the verse tells us 2 things. God the Father is the one who calls His Son 'begotten'. And there is a particular day on which this happens. Now we need to apply interpretation principal number 4, “Read the scripture in context.” So let's take the whole Psalm to try and see what's going on here.

*“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Christ, saying, ‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Even I have set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, **‘Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.** Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.’ Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”*

Let's make a short-phrase (shortened paraphrase) of that, to make it easier to see what's being said here:

*Why do the mighty men of the earth conspire to throw off the authority of God and His Christ? God in heaven is amused at their futile efforts. In anger He declares that He is the One who set His King (the Christ) in authority over Zion. He has declared to Him, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask it of Me and I will give You authority over all the earth.” Therefore be wise you conspiring men, fear the Lord with trembling. Kiss the Son so*

*that He will not be angry with you. Blessed are those who trust Him.*

The context suggests that God's declaration, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You," is a stamp of authority God has given Jesus Christ. So let's go ahead and see what the definition of that word 'begotten' is here.

## Phase 2 Use a Lexicon

The Hebrew word "yalad" is translated as 'begotten' in Psalm 2:7 and is assigned the Strong's catalogue number H3205, and can mean either:

1. To cause or help to bring forth
2. To bear (figuratively), stir up
3. To beget (to conceive a child)
4. To declare one's birth

The results fall into two groups:

- Numbers 1 & 2 are more figurative, a bringing forth or stirring up.
- Numbers 3 & 4 are the more literal idea of birthing a child.

We should mention that not every possible meaning of a word is an accurate interpretation of the meaning in the context of the verse. Just like one English word can have many meanings, but not all appropriate in a given situation. For example I could tell you I am going to fly to New York next week. The word "fly" clearly cannot mean the insect because of the context. So to know which definition of 'begotten' is appropriate here, we need to continue our study process.

So far we can understand this in one of two ways:

- Either God was saying, "Today I have brought You forth."
- Or He was saying, "Today I have given birth to You."

The context shows God was endorsing Jesus Christ's authority as King over the whole earth. This fits better with bringing Him forth than giving birth to Him. Let's now look at the other two words translated as 'begotten' in the New Testament, to see if they shed more light. In the following 5 verses, the whole phrase "the only begotten" is a translation of a single Greek word, "monogenēs."

*"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father,**) full of grace and truth." – John 1:14*

*"No man hath seen God at any time; **the only begotten Son**, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." – John 1:18*

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." – John 3:16*

*"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of **the only begotten Son of God.**" – John 3:18*

*"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that **God sent his only begotten Son** into the world, that we might live through him." – 1 John 4:9*

"Monogenēs" used above is assigned the Strong's catalogue number G3439, and can mean:

1. Single of its kind, only:
  - a. used of only sons or daughters (viewed in relation to their parents)
  - b. **used of Christ, denotes the only begotten son of God**

So the above definition says this word is used to show how something is the only one of its kind. But there are two variations of this, a) the only son or daughter of a person. Or b) Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God. **In this**

case the definition itself tells us that when the verse is about Jesus we must use the second variation. So with this definition we now know that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God of His kind. But our original question is not clearly answered yet. Maybe more definite meaning will come from the last group of verses which are translated from the Greek word, “gennaō.” Here is the first verse using that word:

*“God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” – Acts 13:33*

In this verse Peter is quoting the verse we found in Psalm 2. If you read the passage in context you will discover that Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost and proving to the crowd that Jesus is the Messiah the Jews have been waiting for. And he uses as evidence of the fact, that God has raised Him up from the dead – and tells them that this is the fulfilment of Psalm 2 – this is the day God begets His Son. So what does the root word mean in this case?

Strongs Number G1080:

1. of men who fathered children, to be born, to be begotten  
Metaphorically:
2. to engender, cause to arise, excite
3. of God formally showing Christ to be His Son, the Messiah, by the resurrection.
4. in a Jewish sense, of one who brings others over to his way of life, to convert someone
5. of God making men his sons through faith in Christ's work

This dictionary definition tells us that when the verse is referring to Jesus as the ‘begotten’ of God, then you take the meaning in number 3. To be clear, the definition of the word then is that God has formally showed forth that Jesus is His one, unique, Son, the promised Messiah. And God shows this by the act of the resurrection.

So the meaning of all three root words we have looked at for ‘begotten’ begin to fit together then:

- To show or bring forth – (H3205).
- The only Son of His kind, the only begotten – (G3439).
- Of God formally showing Christ to be His Son, the Messiah, by the resurrection – (G1080).

By the divine act of the resurrection, God has showed forth His Son Jesus, to be the Christ (or Messiah), God's one and only Son of His kind. Now lets' see how the last two verses in our study follow the same theme.

*“[Jesus] when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, **this day have I begotten thee?** And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?” – Hebrews 1:3-5*

See how the word ‘begotten’ is linked to the fact of Jesus' death, (resurrection) and resultant seat at the right hand of the Father. And once again the word is used to defend His claim to authority, as is the case in our last verse:

*“So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto him, Thou art My Son, **today have I begotten thee,** gave it Him.” – Hebrews 5:5*

We seem to understand the meaning of the word is a stamp of approval or authority, signified by the resurrection. Now it's time to see if our understanding actually fits with the rest of scripture as well. That is where the process of Cross-referencing comes in.

### Phase 3 Use Cross-references

The simplest way to find cross-references it is to use a cross-reference tool (or a variety of them). Of course if you know there is a Bible passages which discusses a theme you are studying, go take a look. What you are looking for is verses which talk about the subject you are studying, to see if they shed more light on the topic and if they support your understanding of the topic or not. If all the verses you find support your understanding, then you might be on the

right track. But if there are verses that heavily contradict your understanding, then you need a fair amount more study and prayer. In essence we are applying interpretation principal number 3, “All scripture teaches a single, harmonious message”.

Let’s take a look at the cross-references we found for this study. In the beginning of the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul tells us by what miraculous evidence God showed Jesus Christ to be His Son.

*“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; **And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead**” – Romans 1:3-4*

So we have strong Biblical support here that God did use the resurrection to formally show forth that Jesus is His Son. So instead of Paul saying, “Jesus was the only begotten Son of God”, he explained ‘begotten’ by saying, “Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection”.

Now look at the next interesting verse:

*“And from **Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood**” – Revelation 1:5*

The above verse comes from Revelations where the Apostle John is declaring in what way Jesus is shown to have authority. Again he mentions the resurrection. But look how neatly that connection between ‘begotten’ and ‘resurrection’ is made for us. Jesus is the ‘first brought forth from the dead’, the ‘first resurrected’ – or as John chooses to say – the ‘first begotten’.

Clearly then, the meaning of the word ‘begotten’ is not that God at some point in time gave birth to or created His Son. Instead it is that at some point in time (the resurrection to be sure), the Father declared supernaturally that Jesus Christ **IS** His “one of a kind” Son.

As our last phase of this study, we check our interpretation from the opposite direction. Now that we believe the word ‘begotten’ is **NOT** telling us Jesus was created, we look to see if the Bible does in fact teach that Jesus has eternal origins. In other words we are now trying to see if the Bible dis-proves the possible interpretation of ‘begotten’ which would say Jesus was created by God the Father before creation.

Let’s take a look at a few cross-reference verses:

*“I am Alpha and Omega, **the first and the last**” – extract from Revelation 1:11*

Jesus declares He is “the first”. This means that He could not have been created after the Father already existed or He would no longer be the first, but the second. Yet some may argue that possibly He means the first that was created. So let’s keep looking. Again in Revelations we find Jesus saying:

*“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, **the Almighty.**” – Revelations 1:8*

By calling Himself “the Almighty”, Jesus tells us He has all the same claims of authority as His Father. There can only be One who has all power. If the Father is Almighty and He creates His Son, then the Son cannot also be Almighty because He is less powerful than the One who formed Him. No created being can make the claim of being all-mighty. This is confirmed by the next verse which tells us Jesus had every claim of equality with His Father:

*“..Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it **not robbery to be equal with God**” Philippians 2:5b-6*

Then again in the book of Hebrews we find this verse which tells us that Jesus Christ had no beginning of days:

*“Without father, without mother, without descent, **having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made***

*like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” – Hebrews 7:3*

In the above verse Melchizedek is compared to the Son of God, sharing the same claim of no beginning. We won't go into Melchizedek here, but we will point out that this verse makes it clear that Jesus Christ has eternal origins. This topic is well worth a full study of its own. It often happens that one study will lead you to tangent studies.

For our purposes, the four verse we have cited above all confirm that Jesus Christ is not a created being of lesser standing than His Father. So the word 'begotten' then cannot mean He is a created Son. Instead it means what our study has proven, and what the definition says – He is the singularly different Son to all the others, marked out as the one with all authority by the fact that God raised Him from the dead.

We hope that you can see how we have used the Bible to interpret itself. First we used the original language to discover the word's definitions. Then we checked if the verses taught the same thing the definition said. And finally we checked if other verses supported that same understanding of the scripture.

How easy it would have been to jump to the conclusion that Jesus was created by the Father because of how we've seen that word 'begotten' used before. This is why this type of Bible study is so important. It truly helps us discover what the Bible really means and creates links between terms we don't see in a superficial reading.

### **Summary of method 2**

For quick reference we will list the steps of the process here again:

1. Decide what topic you will be studying.
2. Use a concordance to find all the verses which include the word and/or phrase you are studying.
3. Read the resulting verses (and their greater context) to see what they teach.
4. Look up the catalogue numbers of the key words in question.
5. Read the definition of those original Greek or Hebrew words.
6. See if one clear interpretation has formed through all of the above.
  - a. If yes: move on to step 7.
  - b. If not: look for new key words and supplementary studies which need to be completed before you go on. If that still does not resolve the interpretation, move on to steps 7 & 8 before circling back to step 6, (sometimes a broader search of scriptures is helpful before you can settle on an interpretation).
7. Look for cross-references on the topic to check if your interpretation agrees with the rest of scripture. Search out as many scriptures as you can at this point – the more thoroughly you do this, the more trustworthy your results are.
8. Finally, put your conclusions to the test by trying to “disprove” them through scripture. If your interpretation still holds up, you are likely to have a true understanding of the topic.

### Method 3

## **STUDYING A PASSAGE**

This is an advanced study method which will require us to be quite comfortable with the Bible, with sensing the leading of the Holy Spirit and with theme studies, before we will effectively be able to use it. For that reason we suggest it for experienced Christians rather than beginners. Before we begin, we should mention that this study method is best suited to doctrinal books like the letters of the apostles in the New Testament.

### **Introduction**

With this study method we combine methods 1 and 2, but go deeper into the scriptures than before. It is a very time-consuming process. Here we take a whole book of the Bible (or a good sized portion of one), and follow along with the writer to discover what he wants to tell us. Every time we find a rich, or tricky section, we stop, pray and do a theme study (as we discussed in study method 2). Then, once we grasp the point the writer is making, we keep going to follow his whole argument. We also need to stop every time the writer changes direction in order to discover why he is linking two thoughts together. By the end of it we should have a deep understanding of what the purpose and message of the book is.

## Phase 1

### *Prayerful careful reading*

We begin reading the book following the pattern explained in study method 1. We are not just reading the words but we are following the thinking pattern of the writer. Each time he makes a statement we are connecting it to his greater point. Why does he say things? Why does he use certain evidences to support his point? Why does he connect certain thoughts together? These are the questions we ask ourselves as we read. Also, the writer is likely to make rich statements along the way, like:

*“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” – Ephesians 1:17-18*

Whenever we feel we have been left behind and haven't kept in step with the writer, then we slow down, think, pray and read again. If we know we are missing something, then its time to apply study method 2 and do a study of the words or thoughts in the verse or two that we don't understand yet. Sometimes the very deep spiritual truths need to be a matter of prayer and 'meditation' for days, weeks or even months before we feel the clarity forming in our spirits.

Those who are used to Bible study will know what we mean when we say that our spirits can sense if we are near to understanding a truth, or if it is still far out of reach. If we can sense it is near then we linger there in study and prayer to hear what the Lord will reveal. If it is still far off we can make the subject a matter of longer-term prayer, but for the moment simply skip to the next point were we can follow the writer's thoughts again.

## Phase 2

### *Make a short-phrase*

Once we have read through and feel we have followed the writer to the end of the book, it's time to make a short-phrase (shortened paraphrase) of each chapter of the book. We do that by going back and capturing the writer's argument in roughly 5 - 10 sentences which retain the core message of each chapter. This is extremely helpful to summarise all we have studied because it immediately exposes the writer's flow of thought. At this point we should be able to see each puzzle piece he lays down to finally form one big picture.

We should mention that as a study tool we have also made short-phrases of many of the Bible books which you can reference on their respective 'background' pages, found here:

<https://www.godsessions.com/bible-books>

## Phase 3

### *Big-picture perspective*

Once we have the short-phrase we can see the big picture of the book at a glance. Now we can ask ourselves how well we have understood it:

- Did we get the main point of the book?
- Can we trace the main arguments used to prove the point, and understand why they were used?
- What doctrinal principals are established by this argument?

With all of that done, the book should be fairly well formed in our mind's eye. This will help us remember where to find verses when we need them. Say, for example, there is a prophecy about the end-times you want to find. Immediately you short-list Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, 2 Peter and Jude in your mind's eye. Then you run through the argument each one uses and you will either know where the verse can be found or have maybe two or three options to check out. In other words, using this method you no longer need to memorise hundreds of chapter and verse combinations. You will instinctively develop a sense of where most any verse can be found in the New Testament.