

KEY POINTS IN CHURCH HISTORY

Chapter 9

Alexandria and Early Biblical Understanding

When I was in my twenties, I occasionally visited a neighborhood church that had tremendous worship. The worship leader had a real gift for writing songs and the congregation sang heartily and with spirit. The service brought me into the presence of God in special and moving ways. I left different than when I had arrived.

The teaching was generally solid, but one series stands out in my mind 30 years later. The preacher was working through some Old Testament prophets. In the particular sermon I remember, he said, “Now remember, every time in the prophets we read X we need to understand and translate that as ‘the church.’” I cannot recall what his symbol for the church was, but I do remember sitting there thinking, “Well, that is a novel way to read the Old Testament!”

If we are honest, occasionally there is a bit of juggling that goes on when New Testament Christians try to integrate the Old Testament into the theology we have from Christ and the apostles. After all, most Christians readily accept the binding authority of the Ten Commandments, yet who truly keeps the fourth commandment as strictly as the sixth? The fourth commandment is to keep the Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset). The sixth is refraining from murder.

This struggle led some to discount the Old Testament, heralding in a kind of “Gnosticism” like we have seen previously in the second century heretic Marcion. Marcion taught that the church wrongly used and supported the Old Testament. For Marcion, the God of the Old Testament was clearly different than the God of the New Testament and Jesus. Using Luke 5:36-38 (the parable of the wineskins) and Luke 6:43 (“no good tree bears bad fruit nor does a bad tree bear good fruit”), Marcion argued that Jesus’ message was totally new and apart from Judaism and the Jewish scriptures. Marcion wrote a list of proofs that the Old Testament God was different from that of the New Testament.¹ For example, The God of Genesis could not find Adam and Eve, having to call out, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9), whereas Jesus knew even the thoughts of man (Luke 5:22). A similar “proof” for Marcion was the God of the Old Testament saying, “an eye for an eye” (Ex. 21:24) where Jesus said, “If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also” (Lk 6:29).

¹ This publication was called, *Antithesis*, and is lost. What we know of it today comes mainly from Tertullian’s writings against Marcion from about 200AD.

Marcion considered the God of the Old Testament as a vengeful and hateful God, contrasted to the loving God of the New Testament. Similarly, the Old Testament God was centered on legal-minded justice while the New Testament God and father of Jesus was merciful. The Old Testament God worked through his faulty creation; the New Testament God came into that creation to save mankind.

How to read and understand the Old Testament is not a new problem for the church. Neither is it a problem exclusive to Christianity. Even Jews in antiquity pursued a variety of approaches to understanding the Old Testament.

All passages do not always seem to make immediate sense, leaving open the matter of “interpretation.” Some dismiss difficult passages as simply wrong. Many do not believe in a clear and inerrant inspiration of Scripture. For these people, sometimes the easiest explanation is to declare a passage is a mistake. Others probe for a better understanding of the passage out of a conviction that the Scripture is true, but hard to understand. While still others approach Scripture in a non-literal fashion, using allegory and symbolism to explain difficult passages.

An example is the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2. Some readily dismiss the account as fictional mythology that is contrary to the evidence of science and archaeology. Others see the story as literally true and not at odds with the true history of earth, whether the science *de jour* of the day is consistent or not. These might note that science itself seems to change its view of true history on a regular basis. Still, others might see the account as a poetic restructuring of localized mythologies in a way that teaches fundamental truths about God, nature, and the basics of life. These would see the creation account as appropriated under God’s divine hand not for a history lesson, but to teach the principles that God is the designer behind humanity, that humanity was made in God’s image for fellowship with Him, and that man sinned and fell from the purity of that relationship.²

How we read things literally, figuratively, and symbolically is not a 21st century question only. It is one that has existed in church history dating back to the earliest days of the church. We see that in a specific school of thought that came out of Alexandria, Egypt, that is a key point in the annals of church history. That is our focus here.

In order to understand the issues, we first consider Alexandria and its own religious heritage, especially looking at the Jewish philosopher Philo (c20BC-

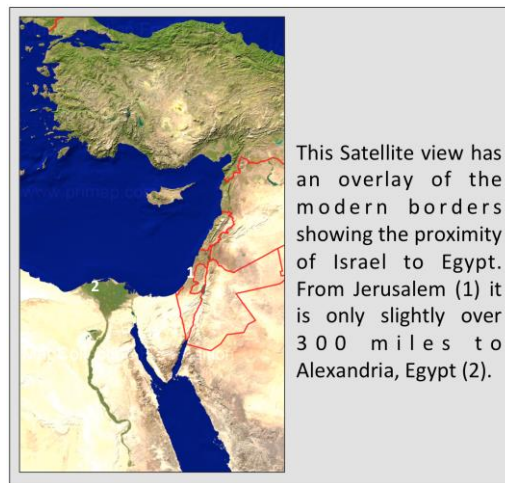
² These lessons of Genesis are also points that can be made and are usually made with the literal view of Scripture. The difference being emphasized here pertains to whether Genesis is claiming the creation account to be literal as a historical science/archaeology lesson or simply a narrative that is included for the force of its moral and religious lessons.

c50AD). We will then focus on an early Christian writing (*The Epistle of Barnabas*) and two early church fathers, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. These focus points give us a good idea of what many scholars call the “Alexandrian” approach to scripture.

ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria was a large city at the mouth of the Nile where it dumps into the Mediterranean Sea. As a port city, it thrived with a large international population. Founded by and named after Alexander the Great, Alexandria had grown into the second largest city on earth by the first century, behind only Rome.

Among the masses of the Alexandrian population were a great number of Jews. Egypt had been a refuge for Israelites at various times throughout history going back before Abraham had his name changed! (Gen 12:10) A good map illustrates why: Egypt was relatively close to Israel. History and the Bible consistently show that many times Jews went to Egypt to avert a crisis. When the Babylonians were taking Israel into captivity, a large number of Jews escaped by fleeing to Egypt. Over time, the Jewish population in Egypt grew quite large. By the time of the New Testament, most of the Jews in Egypt had concentrated in Alexandria.



It was not just the Jews that found a home in Alexandria. As a cultural and literary center, Alexandria was home to adherents of many Greek philosophies as well as eastern religions (yes, Buddhism had followers in first-century Alexandria). There was often an effort by scholars to find interrelations between the various philosophies and teachings. In that regard, Philo of Alexandria stands out.

Philo, a prolific Jewish philosopher and commentator of the Old Testament at the time of Christ and Paul, lived in Alexandria. Philo is not mentioned directly in the Bible, although some believe his relatives are. Philo wrote in Greek and is our best example of a first-century “Hellenistic Jew.”³ He was well educated, from a

³ The term “Hellenistic Judaism” references the Judaism practiced outside Israel in the Greek speaking lands after the dispersion. Alexandria was the Greek city credited with producing a Greek translation of the Old Testament commonly called the Septuagint.

wealthy family, and while he lived his entire life in Alexandria, he made at least one visit to the temple in Jerusalem.⁴ Philo's brother Alexander was a financier for aspects of Herod's temple, and managed to marry off his son Marcus to Bernice, daughter of Herod Agrippa I (mentioned in Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30).⁵ Well studied in Greek philosophy, Philo sought to find consistency between the Old Testament and those Greek philosophies prevalent in his day. One way he did so was by using a symbolic/spiritual approach over a literal approach to understanding the Old Testament. This did not mean that he threw away literal injunctions of the Old Testament, but more that he saw the greater meaning in the allegorical or symbolic understanding. So while he would write about the symbolism inherent in the teaching about circumcision, he still believed it an important junction to follow.

A good example of Philo's Old Testament approach is found in his writings on the sevenfold vengeance of Cain from Genesis 4:15. Philo believed the passage must be understood as a spiritual allegory. The passage itself reads,

Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

Of this, Philo wrote,

And God says, he "who slays Cain shall suffer sevenfold." But ... he has not said what is to be sevenfold, nor has he described the sort of penalty, nor by what means such penalty is excused or paid.

Therefore, one must suppose that all these things are said figuratively and allegorically; and perhaps what God means to set before us here is something of this sort. The irrational part of the soul is divided into seven parts, the senses of seeing, of smelling, of hearing, of tasting, and of touch, the organs of speech, and the organs of generation. If, therefore, any one were to slay the eighth, that is to say, Cain, the ruler of them all, he would also paralyze all the seven. For they are all confirmed by the vigorous strength of the mind, and they all feel weak simultaneously with any weakness exhibited by the mind, and they all endure relaxation and complete dissolution in consequence of the destruction which complete wickedness brings upon them.

⁴ Philo, *On Providence*, 2.64.

⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 19.276-277,

Now these seven senses are unpolluted and pure in the soul of the wise man, and here also they are found worthy of honor. But in that of the foolish man they are impure and polluted, and as I said before, punished, that is, they are worthy of punishment and chastisement.⁶

In every day terminology, one might present Philo's argument/exposition of the Genesis passage as follows: "Don't read Genesis 4:15 literally. It is symbolic. Cain represents the mind. So when God says, 'If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold,' God is talking about anyone who kills the mind. For the mind governs the seven parts of material man. These seven parts are the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, along with two more aspects of physical man, speaking and procreating. So when one damages the mind, which rules over these seven aspects of man, one brings about a sevenfold punishment, for seven parts of man are affected."

While there is no substantive evidence that Philo was a Christian, there can be no doubt Philo heavily influenced Christianity. As the church moved into the second century, certain leaders and teachers of the church attempted to marry their faith with the Greek philosophies that held sway. This certainly followed the footsteps of Philo who sought to marry the Greek philosophers with the Old Testament and its teachings. Philo's approach to Scripture itself, as we see throughout this lesson, similarly affected a number within the church. Some scholars speculate that Philo also affected Paul, John, and the writer of Hebrews.⁷

As a thriving international center, Alexandria was soon home to Christianity as well, although we do not know exactly how the early church was established and grew there. Acts 2:10 indicates that there were some Jews from Egypt in Jerusalem hearing the apostles at Pentecost. We also know that in the range of 50AD, Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos, an Alexandrian in Ephesus. Acts 18:24-25 reads,

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

⁶ Philo, *The Worse Attacks the Better*, 167-169.

⁷ See, e.g., C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge 1963), Part I, §3 "Hellenistic Judaism: Philo of Alexandria," pp. 54-73; Part II, §12 "Logos," pp. 263-85; H.W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Fortress 1989), p. 29.

In addition to those biblical references, we have insights from *The Epistle of Barnabas*, which was likely written in Alexandria.

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

This epistle is one of the earliest writings beyond the New Testament that bears significantly on how parts of the early church interpreted the Old Testament in light of their faith in Jesus as Messiah. Thee, which Lightfoot asserts was written between 70 and 79 A.D.,⁸ uses the allegorical approach to the Old Testament much as Philo did.⁹

Some of the allegorical approach of the epistle does not seem so strange to us today. For example, when God tells Moses in Exodus 33:3 to “Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey,” the epistle asserts that the real meaning of the passage references Christians as entering the Promised Land. The milk and honey is seen as illustrating the nourishment of infants, which applies to Christians as the food of our faith that nourishes us (6:13-17).

Similarly, in chapter 7 of the epistle, there is a great deal written about Jesus as the real meaning of the scapegoat in the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) regulations written up in Leviticus 23, among other places. Much of this might be found in any Christian work or sermon today.

Still, some of the allegorical insight in the epistle seems out of sync with teaching today. For example, in chapter 9 of the epistle, we read something that seems almost as if we have found an early edition of *The Bible Code*! In talking about Abraham instituting circumcision, the author draws an interesting allegory from Genesis 14:14 and Genesis 17:23-27. From Genesis 14, we read that Abraham had 318 trained men born in his household.

⁸ J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (McMillan 1926). Chapter 16 of the epistle indicates it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. The question for scholars is, *how soon after?* The epistle indicates it was likely written before Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem in 132-135 A.D. So, the authorship is somewhere between 70 and 132 A.D. Because of this early dating, *The Epistle of Barnabas* is included by scholars in the collection of works known as the “Apostolic Fathers.”

⁹ Some find this same allegorical approach employed by Paul to some degree. For example, in Galatians 4:21-31, Paul writes of the two children of Abraham born to Hagar and Sarah. Paul writes that the mothers “may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants.”

When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

The Genesis 17 passage indicates that Abraham circumcised these men born in his household. The *Epistle of Barnabas* breaks down the 318 number as “10 and 8” plus 300.¹⁰ This much is valid from the Hebrew of Genesis. The author of the epistle, however, is not working with the Hebrew! He is using a Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament that, historically is accorded as translated in Alexandria.¹¹ The author notes that in the Greek, the letter “I” is used for the number “10,” while the letter “H” is used for the number “8.” The letter “T” is used for “300.” The epistle puts all this together as a profound message! The author asserts that the numbers 10 and 8 are ordered as such in the Old Testament because they are the letters “I” and “H” which are the first two letters in the Greek form of “Jesus” (IHΣΟΥΣ). This would have been a common abbreviation of the name Jesus, allowing the writer to assert,

“Observe that it [Genesis 14:14] mentions the ‘ten and eight’ first, and then...the ‘three hundred.’ As for the ‘ten and eight,’ the I is ten and the H is eight; thus you have ‘Jesus’” (9:7).

And, for the 300? This the epistle explains is the Greek T, which is “shaped like a cross.” This leads the epistle author to conclude:

So He reveals Jesus in the two letters, and in the remaining one the cross (9:7).

So, we see in this part of the epistle an allegorical approach to scripture that goes beyond any apparent meaning and instead claims to discern a secret spiritual messianic message in an otherwise innocuous passage.

The epistle takes other Old Testament passages on dietary laws and explains them in a spiritual sense as well. Where Moses wrote that the Jews were not to eat pig

¹⁰ The Hebrew text itself does not give the number as “318.” As would be expected, the text sets out the number as “8, 10, and 300.” This is translated 318 by the ESV because it is the normal way to write that number. But, the epistle makes a point out of the way the number is broken down in Hebrew as well as the order of the breakout (e.g., 8 first, then 10, then 300).

¹¹ At the risk of bogging this down unnecessarily, accuracy dictates the additional note here that the ordering of the numbers, which is a big deal to the epistle is found in the Hebrew, but not in the Septuagint copies we have today. So, it seems that the author uses the Hebrew for the ordering of the numbers, but uses the Greek for the actual numbers and their allegorical meaning.

(Lev. 11:7-8), the epistle asserts “Moses spoke spiritually.” The real meaning of this passage is seen as indicating that one was not to associate with men who acted like pigs! (10:2-3). The epistle spends several chapters explaining the allegorical thrust of dietary laws for eating everything from eagles and hyenas to shellfish and eels. After doing so, the writer concludes, “You now have the full¹² story concerning food!” (10:10)

Over and over in the *Epistle of Barnabas* we read interpretations of the Old Testament in allegorical terms. Perhaps the most important offering of the epistle in this regard concerns the nation of Israel itself. In chapter 13, the author asserts that the true nation of Israel, the true heir of the promises of Abraham, are not the Jews themselves, but rather Christians. The epistle asserted that the Jews were not worthy of God’s everlasting covenant, illustrated poignantly by the sin that compelled Moses to throw down and break the tablets with the Ten Commandments. Christians received God’s promised inheritance through Christ. Similarly, though Jerusalem’s temple was destroyed at the time of writing, God himself built the *real* temple of God in the Christian believer (16:1-8).

To some, this message might seem consistent with the apostolic message of Paul and the book of Hebrews about the church being the Israel of faith and the temple of God, but it is not! Paul teaches that the true Israel includes those who were not only descendants of Abraham, but were also those who set their hearts on God. The church does not replace this Israel. The church is grafted on and considered spiritual offspring and heirs of Abraham along with the true spiritual Israel. This is why Paul sets out in Romans 9-11 that God is not yet finished with Israel in his plan.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Clement of Alexandria¹³ is an interesting individual about whom we know a lot, in some ways, and in other ways little to nothing at all! The fourth century church historian Eusebius explained that Clement was the head of the catechetical School of Alexandria (read that “the Alexandrian Seminary!”) at a time we can reasonably date around 200AD.

¹² The pun on “full story about food” is not there directly in the Greek. The Greek word translated “full” was used, however, in the sense of fruit ripening to maturity, so perhaps a bit of a play on words was intended.

¹³ This is not the “Clement” who wrote 1 Clement that we looked at early in this class. That letter from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth was written by “Clement of Rome” distinguished from “Clement of Alexandria.”

While much of Clement's personal history is lost to us, we still have five of his books today. Clement seems to have written these five as instruction books for those aspiring to be Christian leaders.¹⁴ Clement took the Old Testament scriptures, interpreted them in the best Alexandrian method of allegory, and sought to reconcile those scriptures, the teachings of the church, and the best of the philosophical teaching of his day. Clement used philosophy vigorously, teaching, "All truth is God's truth wherever it may be found." Clement would go so far as to write that certain philosophical insight was "a work of divine providence."¹⁵ He saw philosophy as God's preparation for Greeks to receive the gospel in the same way that the Old Testament was God's preparation for Jews.

Clement appreciated the aspects of Platonism¹⁶ that sought one ultimate reality and religious truth shunning the pantheon of multiple gods that were part of Greek and Roman legend (and still worshipped by many in his day). In this sense, Platonism was not just an ally of the church against paganism, but was even a breeding ground for potential conversions.

Clement also liked the logical precision of philosophy. Using philosophy's dialectic (or approach) of critical examination was key for Christian faith. To Clement, faith and reason worked together as important cogs that purified the church from heresy and propelled it into truth.

Clement's embracing of Platonism led him away from certain apostolic and biblical truths in ways that have affected the church today. For example, while the Gnostics believed that all matter was evil, a position shunned by Clement, Plato taught that matter was certainly lesser in value than reason and spirit. Clement embraced this Platonism, teaching that the body and matter in general was a "lower nature" in contrast to the "higher nature" of the soul.

Why do we say this is contrary to the apostolic teaching on this matter? To Paul and others in the Bible, the human (body, soul and spirit) was altogether God's creation. The entire person, material and spiritual, was made by God to be with God. The fall did not affect body only; the spirit and soul also fell from sin. The "flesh" or "sin nature" that Paul writes about was not referencing Plato's lesser nature of the physical body. For Paul, the "flesh" or "sin nature" was the entire fallen man: body, soul and spirit. Once man is regenerated and born again, a process starts again toward the purity we have finalized upon the day of glory.

¹⁴ Olson, Roger, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Apollos 1999).

¹⁵ Clement, *Stromata* 1:1.

¹⁶ By this, we include not just the teachings of Plato, but those who took Plato's basic premises and expounded on them.

The purification process applies to all aspects of our humanity. Our minds are being renewed, even as we apply ourselves to living in purity with our bodies.

Some would argue that Clement and Platonism also affected the church's view of the eternity of the soul.¹⁷ For Clement and other early church adherents of Platonism, the soul was seen as indestructible. There is a purification of the soul through God's all consuming fire, but the soul itself is purified and eternal.¹⁸

A fair reading of Clement demonstrates his philosophical embrace and allegorical approach to Scripture as dictating a fairly rigid asceticism. For Clement, we grow in godliness as we abandon our bodily desires and passions. Clement viewed God as passionless and thereby set out the Christian goal accordingly. Clement achieved this view of God and man through his combination of consolidating philosophy with faith and allegorizing the Old Testament.

In this sense, we find a ready danger for the allegorical school of interpretation. Once one abandons the ready and apparent meaning of a text, all sorts of doctrines can be "unearthed" and justified. It is the difference between truly reading Scripture for the original message and taking a current message and thought and transporting it into Scripture.

This same danger exists in a less apparent form today. We have all listened to sermons and teachings that take current philosophies and principles of parenting, for example, and transport those ideas into some rendering of an Old Testament story. That is not to say that the principals are not valid. But, we should certainly recognize the dangers of what we are hearing or doing!

ORIGEN

After Clement of Alexandria came another early church leader named Origen. Origen left an imprint on the church that caused a great deal of trouble. This legacy pertained to the "full" divinity of Jesus. These errors are more properly dealt with in considering the church's development and understanding of the doctrine of the trinity.

¹⁷ Fudge, Edward, *The Fire that Consumes* (Cascade 2011).

¹⁸ Clement's teaching is rather complicated and foreign to our modern thoughts. For Clement, the soul was distinct from the mind and body, even though actions of the body could leave an impression on the soul. Clement saw evidence in this of dreams, which he considered actions of the soul somewhat independent of the mind or body. Clement thought that once death occurred, it freed the soul like a dream, but to an even greater and non-body tethered sense. See the excellent discussion at Itter, Andrew, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria* (Brill 2009), at 188-196.

For this lesson, we focus on Origen's teachings on Old Testament interpretation. Origen was born around 185AD in Alexandria. He lived until around 254 or 255. He was a prolific writer with over 800 books to his name. He watched as his father was imprisoned and martyred and was devout from an early age. He always wanted to share in his father's martyrdom, and eventually did, though at a much later date (his father was martyred when Origen was just 16). Tradition teaches that Origen's mother hid his clothes so he could not go outside and join his father). At just the age of 18, Origen was asked to lead the Alexandrian Catechetical School (again, read that seminary!).

Origen taught that there were three layers of interpretation for scripture. He related these three layers to the three aspects of a person, "body," "soul," and "spirit." The "body" was the literal interpretation. Origen admitted that for some scriptures, this was a useful, if somewhat limiting, understanding of the passages. For example, the Ten Commandments are useful when understood on this level.

The second and more substantial layer of interpretation was that of the "soul." This layer sought to establish the moral lesson or ethical principle behind the text. In this sense, for example, Origen followed the Epistle of Barnabas on the issues of the Old Testament's prohibition of certain foods as really meaning one should not associate with certain types of people.

The third layer of meaning, the highest layer, was that "of the Spirit." This spiritual layer was most mystical. It was at this layer that the Old Testament passages were related to Christ or the Christian's relationship to God.

Origen was combating skepticism and mockery by certain thought leaders of his day who ridiculed and mocked Scripture as absurd. Passages that spoke of God's "jealousy," for example, did not fit within Origen's philosophical understanding of God. While later theology would provide alternate understandings for the Biblical anthropomorphisms (passages that use human terms and attributes to describe God and his actions), Origen was relegated to re-interpreting those passages out of a literal meaning into a spiritual and allegorical one.

CONCLUSION

Praise God the core message of scripture and our redemption – God coming to earth in Jesus Christ, his death for our sins, his resurrection to glory, and our salvation by faith and trust in him and his death – is simple enough and clear enough for a child to understand. There are, however, other parts of scripture that are much more difficult to understand.

In this point, we come full turn to where this lesson started. When confronted with passages of scripture that are difficult at best, what do we do? How do we understand those passages? And those that may not be so difficult, do we take our own views of life and put them into the Bible and its verses or stories? Biblical scholarship is important. It is the Lord's Word that we seek to understand. We should delight in our chances to study and do so with diligence.

POINTS FOR HOME

Second Timothy is written near the end of Paul's life. In it, we have his admonitions for Timothy, his son in the faith who was going to be shepherding the church through a second generation after Paul's departure. Paul wrote Timothy a number of important instructions for how Timothy was charged to handle Scripture. Those admonitions are no less important to the church in the generations succeeding Timothy and as such, serve as our points for home.

1. *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15).

This passage not only encourages “rightly handling” Scripture, but also teaches it as an important aspect of presenting oneself to God as an approved worker. This passage should encourage and exhort us all to take serious the idea of studying Scripture fairly and properly to adduce its application and teaching on matters of faith and practice.

2. *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work”* (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In this passage, Paul emphasized to Timothy that Scripture is not simply a set of spiritual musings of holy writers, but is something breathed out by the one God. God did not do so out of boredom, but to place into [our mind](#) the divine perspective on living life. How often we cry out for God to write a message of guidance or instruction on the walls so we can discern what to do or how to live. Yet in truth, we have divine instructions that govern 90% of the choices in life we make. As for the remaining 10%, these same Scriptures give us insight into how to approach making those choices as well. In the Bible, we have a tool that should draw us into its chapters and verses to instill in our lives the direction that aligns us most closely to God's will and purposes.

3. *“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”* (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Paul charged Timothy to be a serious and patient teacher of Scripture. There is always a tendency of people to read their own beliefs into Scripture rather than letting serious study of Scripture mold their beliefs. This is the challenge all believers and serious students of the word face. It is one that needs to move us to careful and deliberative study. From that will come much good fruit.

HOME WORK

To recap, we are memorizing 1 John this year in the English Standard Version. That amounts to two verses a week. To be current, we need to have memorized 1 John 1:1-2:12. This week we add 1 John 2:13-14. We provide all verses below for your help!

1John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we

confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. **3** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **4**Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **5** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. **7** Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. **8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **9** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. **10** Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. **11** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children,
because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children,
because you know the Father.

14 I write to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God abides in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.