



Lesson #8

**Reading the Bible:
Keeping Things in
Context**

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When it comes to interpreting the bible, one thing that many modern-day Christian doctrines do not take into account is the context of certain scriptures. As Christians, we are taught to read the bible and apply the texts to our own lives. This is good when you are dealing with moral messages, encouraging texts and certain codes of conduct. However, it can alter the final prophetic picture when we assume that all “end time” prophecies are meant for our own current day and age. By removing a prophetic text out of its intended place in time, it can affect the placement of future bible prophecies.

The enemy of God uses a certain strategy to disorient God’s people. Read Daniel 7:25 KJV to find out what Satan has in his tool belt

The enemy’s strategies have not changed. When you read the bible, then look at what the world today believes as truth concerning the signs, times and seasons of mankind, it’s clear that Satan has done some meddling in the way certain bible messages are being taught. For instance, when reading prophetic bible texts, you will often come across phrases like: “the time of the end”, “the last days”, “the last time”, or something along those lines, which is often interpreted today as pertaining to the end of the literal world. But as you continue to read the bible for yourself, it becomes clear that those phrases used to denote the end of an age, or the end of a certain way of life; not the end of literal life here on Earth.

In fact, “the end”, “the last day” and “the last time” phrases are more often used when referring to the end of the “old covenant world” (in the first century) and less often when talking about the end of the “secular world” that we are living in today. Certain clues in the bible can help you place the prophetic text in the proper time frame. Words like: “these”, “now”, “today” and “at hand” tell the bible reader that the event will happen within the same generation that the words are being used in. On the other hand, phrases like “latter days” and

“latter times”, put the prophecy in a distant generation from the time the words were first spoken in, or that the prophecy was being revealed in.

Read the following texts and use the context word clues to determine if the prophecy has passed or is still to come:

Hebrews 1:2 KJV _____

John 4:35 KJV _____

Acts 2:12-20 KJV _____

1 John 2:18 KJV _____

Daniel 10:14 KJV _____

1 Timothy 4:1 KJV _____

Many Christians today believe they will be taken up to heaven in the future, mainly because Jesus’ words have been taken out of context.

Consider again the second coming of Christ and the end of the old covenant world. In what generation did Jesus tell His disciples it would take place in? But what do people believe today? Read: Matthew 24:34 KJV

As we mentioned in the previous lesson, some people say that the word “generation” holds a more symbolic meaning, but no verse in the bible supports that idea. If we allow the bible to speak for itself, we can see that Matthew chapter 24 is a foreshadow of things that were to take place later in the disciple’s/apostle’s generation; according to Jesus’ words in verse 34 of Matthew 24.

Notice the words of imminence that are used in texts relating to the second coming of Christ. Keep in mind that during the second coming, Jesus was returning to take the saints to heaven (symbolic term: harvest), not to set up the kingdom of heaven here on Earth during that time.

How long did the apostles tell the 1st century church it would be before Jesus returned to take the saints to heaven? Read Hebrews 10:37 KJV

Read Revelation 1:1 KJV

The word “shortly” is used today, just as it was used back in that generation long ago: to mean something is going to happen in the near future. In this case, that “something” was the Second Coming of Christ. This is backed up by Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:34, and in these other texts: **(Matthew 4:17, Matthew 10:23, Matthew 16:28).**

Needless to say, much of the Christian world believes another narrative concerning the timing of Christ’s second coming. But again, as we touched on in the last lesson, the bible foretold what will be said when Christ returns for the final time, with the saints, to judge the world, and to establish the kingdom of heaven here on Earth...

Read Jeremiah 16:19 and Isaiah 24:23 KJV

As you read the bible, look for additional clues in the text that will help you keep the message in the proper context and in the intended time frame. Let’s look even closer at the texts concerning the events surrounding when the saints were to be taken to heaven at Christ second coming. The following are two excerpts from letters that the apostle Paul wrote to the people of the early Christian church...

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 (KJV)

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Thessalonians 4 :13-17 KJV

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

In the texts above, the apostle Paul is talking to the people in his own time and generation. If you keep the texts in context, you can see that the apostle Paul is revealing to the people that some of them would not die before Christ returned for the second time. The word "sleep" is often used symbolically for the word "die". The bible says that people "rest" in the ground until they are resurrected to face a time of judgment. Those of the Old Covenant world, the Hebrew/Jewish people, who had passed away while living under the rules and laws of the Old Covenant, were raised during the First Resurrection, at Christ's second coming (**Revelation 20:5-6**). The rest of the people in the world, who passed/pass away, will be raised during the time of the Final Judgement; when Christ returns to Earth with the kingdom of heaven (**Revelation 20:12-13**).

From what you have learned in this entire bible study so far, which resurrection is being spoken of in Daniel 12:1-3 KJV?

We know that the verse above is talking about the First Resurrection, which took place at Christ's second coming, at end of the Old Covenant world, because the prophecy is being addressed to Daniel and the people of his nation. Also notice, it mentions the saints being taken UP to heaven; heaven is not being established here on Earth as it will be in our future.

When we take passages from the Bible out of context, contradictions in the word of God are created. When contradictions are found, it's good to question what you may have "heard" in the past and look to the Bible to supply the truth. For example, as we saw in the previous lesson, how can "heaven and earth" be destroyed in the future, but yet it is written that Christ will return to be King over all the Earth?

Zechariah 14:9 KJV

And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name One.

Again, how can heaven up above be the forever home of all believers, if the kingdom of heaven (New Jerusalem) will be set up (by Christ) down here on Earth in Jerusalem?

Revelation 21:2-3 KJV

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Isaiah 2:2-3 KJV

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain* of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills*; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Be careful not to use texts that are taken out of context, to fix contradictions that arise when prophecies are taken out of context. A good example of this can be found in 2Peter 3:8...

Read 2 Peter 3:8 KJV

If that text is taken literally, you would have to say that an eternity would pass before the return of Christ, because that is what 1000 years for each day literally means. That is in direct contradiction to what Jesus said in Matthew 24:34. Instead, 2 Peter 3:8 should be taken figuratively to show that God is not limited by time; not to dispute Jesus' words in Matthew 24. As a rule of thumb, if the interpretation of a text results in contradictions in the message, further study is needed. Consider the context of the verse in question and the symbolic meaning of the words used in the text.

It is evident that when it comes to context, we must consider the time period in which the text was written. Outdated ideas and beliefs often arise when the culture of the times is not taken into account. A popular example of this can be found in 1 Corinthians...

Read 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 KJV to find out what the apostle Paul said concerning women speaking in church: _____

1 Corinthians is often taken out of the generational context, when denominations restrict what women can do and say in their church. There are many valid rules that the apostles outline in their writings concerning the positions that men and women can hold within a church and how they should carry themselves in general, but it is important not to take things too far out of context.

To put the apostle Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 in the proper context for today, we must consider the times in which the apostles were living in back then. In those days, women were largely regarded as property by most men in society and not given much regard; therefore, the apostles' writings reflected that culture. In addition, as stated in the text, the instruction concerning women keeping silent in church was derived from something that was found in the Old Covenant laws.

Remember what the bible said concerning the old covenant and its laws?

Read Hebrews 8:13 KJV

Read Colossians 2:14 KJV

For several reasons, women speaking and expressing themselves in church may not have been permitted in the Jewish synagogues and 1st-century churches. Reasons include old customs, culture, and biases in society. When the text is taken to the extreme, it contradicts how Jesus related to women and what God thinks regarding the topic. Times have changed, but God remains the same.

Does God inspire women to prophesy? Read Luke 2:36 KJV

Who was the first to share the good news "the gospel" concerning Jesus' resurrection from the dead? Read John 20:16-18 KJV _____

Does God regard men and women differently? Read Galatians 3:28 KJV
