

Scripture Comparison

Scoffers think that scriptural interpretation is subjective; that different meanings can be taken from the same text. To prevent this, God has interjected a back-up system into the Bible. This system can be accessed via scripture comparison.

THE FOGGED MESSAGE

Imagine my giving you a large, flat sheet of plastic. I tell you that within this square plastic sheet is a detailed gospel message. Place it under the light and you will see the gospel message shine forth. Puzzled by the remark, you begin a close examination of the sheet under a lamp; but see only a fog. You then analyze it with a magnifying glass or even a microscope, yet all you would see is fogged plastic.

That is what it is like to read the Bible with a human perspective. A literary student is able to read the Bible, yet all he would see is form and body. A scientist can study the Bible, yet all he would see is what is scientifically feasible or miraculous. Many so-called "scholars" have torn the scriptures apart, word by word, only to discover nothing of value.

... the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God (fogged sheet), for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. I Corinthians 2:12-14

Now suppose you were to give up on the sheet of plastic; hand it back to me and say that you cannot see a gospel message in it anywhere. I would then apologize and say that the message becomes visible only under the illumination of a certain *kind* of light— a laser.

I set up the laser to illuminate the sheet of plastic at just the right angle. At power-up, a three-dimensional object comes forth— it is a wooden cross. This three-dimensional object appears so real you can almost reach out and pull it from the sheet. This cross physically existed at one time for this photo (or hologram) to be taken. What you are actually seeing on this sheet of plastic is the visual information of the cross.

Consider the Bible as the same visual medium. Through the natural critical eye, it only appears as an interesting style of writing. When the light of the Spirit of God illumines it, there is a picture. Not just a flat picture, but an image so real that you can almost reach out and touch it.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God (laser illumined), that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God (the 3D of the cross). I Corinthians 2:12

VANDALISM

Suppose a vandal broke into our shop and destroyed our sheet of plastic by cutting it into small squares; stealing all the chips save one. We return to discover all that is left of our large sheet is a small two-inch square. You would think that our gospel message would be lost and all we could see, at best, would be a *part* of the wooden cross. If I were to set up this small square of plastic and illuminate it again with our laser light, we would see the entire cross exactly as we had seen it before. All the information needed to recreate the three-dimensional cross is spread over the entire sheet of plastic. Cutting the image into a two-inch square only decreased the size of the image and lessened its resolution.

The main message of the Bible is spread out and repeats through the pages of each book; be it Genesis, Psalms or Malachi. If you were to tear out a certain percentage of text, the image of the cross would still appear; only with a bit less detail.

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me [Jesus]." John 5:39

What Jesus is saying is that just reading the Bible or following its mode of living will not bring salvation. Just as looking at the fogged plastic through a microscope would not produce the desired image.

To understand the main prophetic message of the Bible, you need to become familiar with *attention flags* and *scriptural comparison*.

ATTENTION FLAGS

Within the pages of scripture are small flags that fly up and alert the reader to cross-reference this text with another. A good example of this would be when Jesus cried out a mournful phrase from the cross.

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46

This cry was more than an exclamation of grief, it was a "flag" to examine a more detailed description of this event in Psalm 22. This portion of Hebrew poetry was written 1,000 years before the event above occurred and reveals the thoughts of Christ while on the cross.

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?

... All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"...

... My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; The assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots. Psalm 22 (edited)¹

Being aware of "flags" in scripture will not only surface prophecy of the studied event, it will provide more detail and explanation of the very event it foreshadows.

THE BETRAYERS

Sometimes these flags mark the position of buried treasure and would require a little digging. One example would be the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. Jesus notes a prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures that foresees this betrayal.

"... I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.'

Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I AM." John 13:18 (Edited)

Jesus, in saying I AM, is disclosing His deity. To prove this, He "flags" a portion of text from Psalm 41:9 (which was a prophetic writing about to be fulfilled). At first, this may not appear to be a very detailed prophecy; that is, until we begin to dig below the surface.

David wrote psalm 41 when he was betrayed by a friend by the name of Ahithophel. His council of betrayal is found in II Samuel 16.

¹ Ref. the fulfillment in Matthew 27:35, 42 & 43, 46

If we were to look up the names of these two historic figures, we would discover that Ahithophel's name means "brother of folly" and David means "Beloved". With our flags leading us to this point, we find that a more detailed prophecy comes to the surface:

"The *Beloved* is betrayed by a *brother of folly*"

Now as [the disciples] were eating, [Jesus] said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?"

He said to him, "You have said it." Matthew 26:21 & 25

Now let us dig a bit further and see if we can discover the eventual end of Ahithophel. The demise of this betrayer is recorded in II Samuel 17:23.

Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and *hanged himself*, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.

This act of self-destruction prophesied another betrayer's eventual end.

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and *hanged himself*. Matthew 27:3-5

A flag can do so much to show the specifics of prophecy. Sometimes it is obvious; like with Psalm 22. Sometimes it requires a little digging; such as with the previous example. Let us look at how a small phrase can be used as a "flag" to deeper understanding.

THE FINGER OF GOD

In the gospel of John, we see the scribes and Pharisees bringing to Jesus a woman who was caught in the very act of adultery. They reminded Jesus that according to the Law of Moses, this woman was to be taken out of the city and stoned to death.² The physical response of Jesus is rather puzzling.

But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. John 8:6

² Ref. Leviticus 20:10 - Note that the Pharisees did not bring the male to Jesus. This was an illegal setup.

I have seen several motion picture accounts of the life of Jesus that let us see what it was that Jesus had written on the ground. In one movie, Jesus had written down the sins of those holding the rocks, causing each person to drop his stone and walk away in shame. Another account showed Jesus drawing the picture of an eye with a beam thrust in the pupil.

Scripture does not record what was written in the sand. Not because it was inconsequential, but because what He wrote was not as important as *how* he wrote it! What Jesus is doing is sending up a visual flag that will cause us to cross reference His action with an event found in the book of Exodus. Let us look again at the physical reaction of Jesus and see if we can decode His actions.

But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

Later in this same chapter, the Pharisees were angry at how well He handled the adulterous woman situation. When they questioned Him, Jesus bore witness of His deity by calling Himself the "I AM" that preceded Abraham's birth.³ Looking at the above scripture, let us not be concerned with what was written in the sand, but *how* it is written— with His finger.

When Moses asked God what His name was, the voice from the burning bush said, "I AM"⁴ This same God wrote on earthen material the tablets of the Law which included the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery"⁵ For our prophetic flag, let us not look at *what* was written in the stone, but *how* it was written.

And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, *written with the finger of God.* Exodus 31:18

With His finger, the "I AM" wrote the Law upon an earthen medium. These tablets of stone were given to Moses who brought them down from Mount Sinai to the children of Israel. This was done, not just one time, but twice. In our flag, Jesus also performs the same writing upon an earthen medium with His finger; not once, but a second time as well.

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. John 8:7-8

Since Jesus was to be the lamb without spot—or without sin—only He would be qualified to throw the stone. By His actions we see that Jesus is saying to the religious leaders, "*Don't talk to Me about keeping the Law, I wrote the Law!*"

³ Ref. John 8:58

⁴ Exodus 3:14

⁵ Exodus 20:14

We have just seen how flags can alert us to other sections of scripture to find hidden nuances that support or detail events. These flags motivate us to compare one section of text with another. The next segment will deal with this technique in detail.

SCRIPTURE COMPARISON - THE WEB OF INTRICACY

I was fascinated at the beauty of a spider web that I found under a house in Northern California. There was an incredible symmetry in the spider's artistic device. Strands of barely visible thread stretch here and there, yet all commonly meeting in the center. Circles of support interconnect the strands, growing smaller until they reach the central point. To describe such a marvel to a blind man would be next to impossible. Yet for me to describe the interconnection of the Bible text would be just as difficult a task.

As we had learned earlier with the analogy of the hologram, the main message of the Bible is spread throughout the text. My analogy of the symmetric spider web describes how all the strands of prophetic passages lead to a central point. This message and central point is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, through His sacrificial death on the cross.

A prominent part of this redemptive plan is the eventual removal of the church. This removal is necessary to transfer the focus of God's plan back on to the Jewish people.

... hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. So all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

"The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." Romans 11:25-28

What Paul is saying here to the Roman church is that Israel has a destiny to fulfill. That destiny is to proclaim the message of God's redemptive plan to the whole world. This destiny was interrupted by their rejection of the Messiah. Consequently, this responsibility was passed to the Gentiles in the form of the church. Upon close examination of the above scriptures, we see that God's calling of Israel is irrevocable.

To simplify what Paul is saying, let me phrase it another way, *"I don't want you to miss this point, brethren. The Jewish people have hardened their heart toward the idea of redemption through Jesus Christ until the Gentile church is taken out of the picture. At that point, Israel will recognize their Messiah and complete their original promised destiny."*

Now that we understand the purpose of the removal of the church, let us use our technique of scriptural comparison to understand how this is to be accomplished.

THE RAPTURE

One of the most complicated subjects to understand in the prophetic calendar is an event called the *rapture of the church*. Like describing the web to a blind man, it is difficult to explain the symmetry and purpose behind such an event. In the previous section I have tried to layout an important part of this plan. That is, the removal of the Gentile church to transfer God's plan of redemption on to the nation of Israel. This removal of the church has been given the title of the rapture.

The word "Rapture" is Latin for the verb to be "caught up". The Biblical references that refer to the Rapture say that at some unknown time, those who have trusted in Jesus Christ will be supernaturally taken from the planet earth. Now for those who do not see this idea through the proper light, it would only appear as a foolish notion or a fogged sheet of plastic. It is the asking of God for faith through prayer that shines the proper illumination upon His writing. If the following explanation confuses you or appears ridiculous, you will know that the wrong light is being used.

THE HARPAZO

Our first step will be the defining of our word "rapture" or "caught up". The main Scriptural reference to the Rapture can be found in the New Testament epistles.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be *caught up* together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. I Thessalonians 4:16–17

The term "caught up" is the Greek verb *harpazo*. The definition of this word means to "take away by force". Another form of this verb is the word *haireomai*, or to take for one's self. If we place these two descriptions side by side, we find that the actual definition for "caught up" is a verb to "take by force for one's self". Sounds almost like a thief or pick-pocket doesn't it?

THE THIEF

Now let us start a scriptural comparison regarding a thief. You can find these scriptures using your average concordance. One of scriptures found with the word thief is the following:

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the **thief** would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him. Matthew 24:43

Here the Jesus is pointing to an unknown time in the future when One will come like a *thief* to take a possession from the master's house. Who is the thief? The second half compares it to the Son of Man. The command here is to be ready—ready for what? For *the thief* who will come to take by force a possession for Himself.

Notice the one that is not ready for the coming of the thief—the master of the house. If the house is the world, then who is this master of the world? According to the text, it is those who are *not* ready. Let us now compare this with another "thief" scripture.

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a **thief** in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a **thief**. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. I Thessalonians 5:2–5

Now we see plainly through scriptural comparison that there are two categories; those of the darkness [We are not of the night nor of darkness] and those of the light [You are all sons of light and sons of the day]. One group is looking at scripture as if it were a fogged sheet of plastic; the other is looking at scripture with the light of God's Spirit. Those who are in the light have seen the message of the cross and have applied it to their lives. These are the treasured people who will be taken with force by the thief. Those who are the masters of their own lives and masters in their own world will be caught off guard by the break in.

IN CONCLUSION

It is an understatement on my part to say that I have only scratched the surface. It is my hope that you will not listen to any teacher or outside source concerning Bible interpretation without having the ability to double check these teachings on your own. Do not take my word at face value, search the scriptures daily and see if what I say is true.