

# How To Study the Bible and Enjoy It

## Lesson 5: Studying the Scripture In Its Own Context

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### I. Introduction

1. When we study a verse, a paragraph, a chapter, or even a larger section of Scripture, it is always necessary to examine the following important questions: (This has been examined in Lesson 3)
  - a. Who is the inspired author?
  - b. To whom is the writing addressed?
  - c. Who are the people, individuals, or groups mentioned in the text? For example, Herod the Tetrarch, Nicodemus, etc.
  - d. When was it written? What is the situation at the time of writing?
  - e. What kind of writing is it? Is it poetry, biography, parables, etc.?
  - f. What is the place of writing?
2. The word “context” literally means, “to weave together.” Therefore, the context of a passage refers to ALL the ideas “woven together” in that passage.
3. We must also examine very carefully the context of the passage of Scripture.
  - a. What is the subject being discussed in the chapter? Or in the book?
  - b. What is being said by the inspired author before the verses being studied?
  - c. What is being said after the verses being studied?
  - d. In other words, why did the inspired author write these verses in this section of Scripture?
  - e. A person should NEVER open a book, just pick out a sentence in that book, and place meaning on it without examining the sentences before and after that sentence.
4. Let us avoid, and flee from, the following approaches to the study of particular Scriptures:
  - a. Do NOT rely on just a dictionary for the meaning of words.
  - b. This may sound strange, but also, do NOT limit the study of the meaning of a word to the Greek Lexicon. Let God’s Word give the meaning!
  - c. Let us NEVER be satisfied with the explanation that a commentary has given concerning a passage of Scripture. Just

because something is written does NOT necessarily make it correct!

- d. Similar to this, let us NOT accept just what an older, gospel preacher has said about the Scripture. He may be passing on to you only what he has heard from another. Let us TEST what is said! He may be correct. But he also may be incorrect.
- e. Let us NOT approach a Scripture with our minds already made up on what we want to believe! We can always learn more about God's Word and the only way to do that is with a heart ready to be changed by the Word of God.

## II. An Examination of the Context of a Number of Scriptures

### 1. 1Corinthians 13:1-13

- a. This passage is the "middle" of a discussion on "spiritual gifts." Chapter 12 lists these miraculous gifts. Chapter 13 shows a "more excellent way," LOVE. Chapter 14 shows how to "regulate them" while they are still present.
- b. This is why Paul spoke the words, "If I speak with the tongues..." (*1Corinthians 13:1*), and the other "gifts" mentioned in *13:1-3*.
- c. That is why Paul mentions these same miraculous gifts in *1Corinthians 13:8-10*. They (the miraculous gifts) were to stop, but LOVE "never fails." "Prophecies," "tongues," and "knowledge" are miraculous! They are the gifts of *1Corinthians 12*.
- d. We should NOT separate chapter 13 from its context.
  - 1) The immediate context is the question of spiritual gifts.
  - 2) The remote, or far away, context would be the many problems of the church in the city of Corinth.

### 2. 1Corinthians 15:58

- a. The word "therefore" shows clearly that verse 58 is a conclusion to the whole chapter, and specifically the teaching of Paul that we will have a "spiritual body" in the resurrection.
- b. The subject of *1Corinthians 15* is the resurrection.
  - 1) Jesus was resurrected from the dead (*1Corinthians 15:1-19*)
  - 2) Because He was resurrected, Christians will also be resurrected (*1Corinthians 15:20-34*), and will have a glorified body (*1Corinthians 15:35-57*).
  - 3) The conclusion is *1Corinthians 15:58*. Because of all of this, Christians should be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."
- c. The context is:
  - 1) The immediate context is the resurrection.

2) The remote context again is the problems that plagued the church at Corinth.

3. Romans 14:23

- a. This verse is in the context of the “strong” and “weak” Christians.
- b. Some would consider certain meats to be “unclean” and would not eat them. Others felt that “meat” is “meat,” and had no problem eating it (*Romans 14:14*).
- c. But, do not cause your brother to “stumble” (*Romans 14:21*)
- d. If a man “doubts” that he should eat, and yet he is persuaded to eat, he violates his conscience and is “condemned” if he eats, for he does NOT eat with “faith” (*Romans 14:23*)
- e. So, what we do, that we do not believe we should do, it is SIN.

4. Acts 2:38

- a. This verse should NOT be discussed by itself. It is in the “context” of Pentecost.
- b. The first gospel sermon had just been preached (*Acts 2:22-36*)
- c. Peter had spoken of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.
- d. He had proved the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and had stated that “He is Lord and Christ” (*Acts 2:36*).
- e. The people were “cut to the heart.” This shows both their sorrow and their faith in the message (*Acts 2:37*).
- f. We are failing to give people the foundation of their faith when we do not put *Acts 2:38* into its proper context.

5. Hebrews 10:25

- a. The context is the Lord’s encouragement to remain loyal to the Lord (*Hebrews 10:19-31*).
- b. These Christians could turn away
  - 1) They could “drift away” (*Hebrews 2:1-4*)
  - 2) They could “depart” (*Hebrews 3:12, 13*)
  - 3) They could fail to enter the eternal “rest” (*Hebrews 4:1-13*)
  - 4) They could “fall away” (*Hebrews 6:4-6*)
  - 5) They could “fall into the hands” of the living God and be lost (*Hebrews 10:26-31*)
- c. Therefore, they should “draw near” to the Lord (*Hebrews 10:22*)
- d. They should “hold fast” to their “confession” (*Hebrews 10:23*)
- e. They should “stir up one another” to “love” and “good works” (*Hebrews 10:24*)
- f. The assembly was for great encouragement (*Hebrews 10:25*)

6. Acts 5:29

- a. The apostles had been placed in prison (*Acts 5:17, 18*)
- b. The angel of the Lord released them (*Acts 5:19-21*), and they preached in the temple again.
- c. They were brought to the council (*Acts 5:27*)
- d. They had been told not to preach in the name of Christ (*Acts 5:28*)
- e. They boldly said that they must obey God (*Acts 5:29*)

7. Acts 1:8

- a. Jesus appeared to the apostles during a period of 40 days after His resurrection (*Acts 1:1-4*)
- b. He told them that they would receive the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:5*)
- c. This was immediately before Jesus' ascension (*Acts 1:9-11*)
- d. They were to be eye "witnesses" of the resurrected Christ (*Acts 1:8*)
- e. *Acts 1:8* is an outline of the book of Acts
  - 1) The Gospel preached in Jerusalem (*Acts 1-7*)
  - 2) The Gospel preached in Judea and Samaria (*Acts 8*)
  - 3) The Gospel preached to the end of the earth (*Acts 9-28*)

8. John 16:13

- a. This is the night before Jesus was betrayed. He had already "washed the feet" of the apostles (*John 13*)
- b. John, chapters 14-16, contains Jesus' promise that He would send another "comforter," the Holy Spirit. This promise was given to the apostles.
- c. When the "Spirit of truth" had come, He would "guide them" (the apostles) into ALL truth (*John 16:13*)
- d. The context shows to whom this promise was given, and also what the Holy Spirit would do in revealing COMPLETE truth to these inspired men.

9. Luke 19:10

- a. Jesus was in the area of Jericho (*Luke 19:1*)
- b. It is in the context of the story about Zacchaeus, the tax collector (*Luke 19:2*)
- c. Salvation came to that house on that day (*Luke 19:9*)
- d. The Son of Man came to "seek" and "save" the lost! (*Luke 19:10*)
- e. The remote context of Luke shows that Jesus is the "Savior" of ALL who accept Him
  - 1) Savior of Samaritans who were hated by Jews (*Luke 10:25-37*)
  - 2) Savior of "publicans [tax collectors] and sinners" (*Luke 15:1, 2*)

10. John 20:28

- a. Doubting Thomas had not seen the resurrected Lord (*John 20:24, 25*).
- b. When he saw Jesus, he believed (*John 20:27, 28*).
- c. Jesus approved of what Thomas said concerning His Deity and Lordship.
- d. The remote context of *John 20:28* is the ENTIRE book of John which shows the Deity of Christ.
  - 1) He was with God in the beginning (*John 1:1*)
  - 2) He was “with” God (face to face) with God, and He Himself is “God.”
  - 3) All things were made through Him (*John 1:1-3*)
  - 4) He became “flesh” (*John 1:14*)
  - 5) He made Himself “equal” with God (*John 5:17, 18*)
  - 6) He came down “from heaven” (*John 6:38, 41, 51*)
  - 7) Before Abraham WAS, “I AM” said Jesus (*John 8:58*)
  - 8) He prayed that the Father would give Him the “glory” that He had with the Father “before the world was” (*John 17:5*)
  - 9) Thomas confesses, “My Lord and my God!” (*John 20:28*)