

I. The Importance of Personal Bible Study and Spiritual Discernment

Back in John chapter 3 today, remember last week we saw and developed one of the great salvation verses that really opened up an incredible study through a story in the Old Testament. John is such an incredible book for this. There are so many incredible stories found in this book, and we are going to look at each one of them. My goal is to try to get you to understand the best way for you to let that Bible work for you. It is a very simple process, but the key is learning it and then just disciplining yourself to it.

We looked at the story of the brazen serpent. The story of the brazen serpent is all the way back in Numbers chapter 21. But Jesus made a reference to Himself in John chapter 3, verse 14, and that was really the verse we looked at last week. I wanted to develop that for you. I am not interested in just teaching you the Bible; I am interested in showing you how you make the Bible open itself up to you. I may not always be around; you may not always have somebody to be able to spell it out for you. At some point in your life, you need to learn how to do that. My goal at this point is to not only just teach you the Bible and teach it right, but to show you how you get to that point.

So, we took a lot of time last week and we looked at that Old Testament story and saw how it was a very practical lesson for us when we take John 3:14 and Numbers 21 and put them together. No matter how we try to project ourselves—and God's people do it all the time—God's people are famous for wanting to pretend they are spiritual without ever spending any time in the Bible. That is the hallmark of Laodicean Christianity, and it is rampant; it is everywhere in Christianity today. You will find people that want to project themselves as some great spiritual person, but there is just no relationship with the Word of God in any way, shape, or form.

As I said, and we have looked at it, no matter how we try to project ourselves as really spiritual, the Word of God will always show us who we really are. It is that looking glass principle out of James 1:22-25 that we have talked so much about: looking into the Word of God and seeing who we really are. We saw how God's people will always blame the Moseses in their life. That was a great concept: people will always blame the people who are trying to help them because they do not want to do what is right themselves. But in truth, it is God with whom we really have an issue. That was a great lesson we saw in that, with how God Himself told us where the real problem was with the children of Israel.

This is why John, in 1 John 4:1, tells us as Christians that we are to "try the spirits." That sounds kind of spooky, but it is really not; it is a very sound biblical process. You try the spirits. He says, "try the spirits to see if they are of God," or if they line up with God's Spirit. The sad thing is that most of God's people do not have a clue how to do that. This is why they get caught up in all kinds of goofy stuff that really causes all kinds of issues in their life, because 1 John 4:1 tells us that not every spirit that we encounter is going to be of God.

When you come through the Bible, you will find that there are four spirits in the Word of God. Man can have three of them, and those three are the ones that you need to try, especially with God's people. Because God's people may be saved and they may have the Spirit of God indwelling in them, but that does not mean the spirit by which they operate is always the Holy Spirit of God. In Job chapter 26, verse 4, one of those great passages in the Old Testament, it asks us, "Whose spirit came from thee?" The spirit we project, you cannot hide that. You can dress nice and clean up nice and carry the 55-pound King James Bible and amen louder than a Chiefs football game, but at the end of the day, if your spirit does not line up with the spirit of the Word of God, then it is not real.

Unfortunately, most of God's people do not even know how to do that; they do not even know what to look for. We talked about developing a trained eye, did we not? We are going to talk about that a little bit more today: training your eyes to look for certain things in the Scriptures. "Eyes" in the Bible are an incredible study, and I do not have time to get into it all this morning, but it is an incredible thing. Training your eyes to look at certain things in the Scriptures. Most people, when it comes to the Bible, do not have the time or the patience to really do a study in the Word of God the right way. We are so busy in life. We think that we can pop on a guy and listen to him preach or something like that. There is nothing wrong with that. I know people do that while they are driving; you do that when you get ready for work in the morning. There is nothing wrong with that. But I am going to tell you this: at some time in your world, you have to have a time where it is just you and God in that Bible. If you do not do that, then you are just gleaning a lot of things that God has given some other people. God has to give you some things; that is part of the process of God training you to see things in the Bible. If you do not get in the Bible yourself, then the training is never there.

II. Six Steps for Effective Bible Study

I am just telling you, if you would just follow six basic little steps, things that, if you want to:

1. First of all, when it comes to the Bible, the first thing you want to do before you ever try to get anything out of it is you ought to pray over it. Luke 24:45

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. You have to get on the same level with the Holy Spirit of God for Him to open up those Scriptures to you. Most people do not have time for that. You are only going to give God 15 or 20 minutes in the Bible anyhow, and then you are going to get on with what you want to do. So, without you ever opening up and inviting God in and having Him to show you...

2. Then the second thing I would encourage you to do is when you read it, then survey the passage. Do not just read it and then jump in it with both feet. That is not the way you want to do it. You want to scan it. You want to survey it. You want to look at each word in whatever you are trying to read. You want to look at each phrase. You want to look at each term. You want to look at every aspect of it very carefully. You want to look at verses. You want to look at chapters. You want to look at complete books. You want to see how this book fits into the overall books of the Bible. Of course, you want to find things that match up, that you can run it back. It is what we did last week with Numbers 21 and John chapter 3. That is

an easy one. Jesus Himself gave you the key to that as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. All you have to do is find out what that is and you make the connection. They are not all that easy, but you start with the easy ones.

3. The third thing is you look for things that seem out of place. Most people, when they come to things in the Bible that they see that they do not think fit, their first reaction is, "Well, God made a mistake." Of course, that is not true. The greatest key to unearthing truth out of the Bible is the fact that God put things together that did not match up. You will want to see what is out of place. We saw that in John chapter 3 with the story of Nicodemus. Remember when I told you that Jesus said, "Except a man..."? I took a lot of time and showed you why He did not say to Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, you need to be born again." He said "a man" in a general context. We studied that, and we know why that is now. Another thing that you would check is, as He says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Well, that had to jump out at you. The kingdom of God is inside us; it is a spiritual kingdom. You cannot see it. But Nicodemus could; the nation of Israel could.
4. The fourth thing that I would encourage you to do, and we talk about this all the time, is look for key words that you can run back to other passages. These key words, most of the time, many times, will help you define what you are looking at.
5. Then the fifth thing is you want to ask yourself, "Who is He speaking to here?" You do not just want to jump in. I have told you many, many times you want to look at the passage, you want to look at the book, you want to look at the verse, and you want to ask yourself, "Does this take place before the cross or does this take place after the cross?"
6. It is these things that if you develop them, you will develop a context through the chain of biblical evidence that is right there in front of you. You do not have to make anything up. That gets some people into so much trouble, so many issues with the Bible. They see something, they think it could be this, so they make it that. There is no more ludicrous way in the world to do your Bible that way. You have to have an unbroken chain of evidence, biblically and historically. When you study your Bible, you dig out your Bible, you lay out something in your Bible, only on established truth. A trained eye will always look for things that are consistent, but a trained eye will always look at things that are inconsistent, too. This is why you ask yourself, "Why does not this match with this?" or "Why does this match with this?"

In whatever you do, however you open up the Scriptures, you never step outside the guidelines of the Bible interpreting itself. We are not in the business of telling God what His book means; we are in the business of letting Him tell us what it means. Let your Bible work for you. That Bible is the greatest workbook that you have ever seen in your life to help you. It is there to work for you. Most of God's people have a King James Bible their whole life, and they never, never, never learn how that Bible can work for them. Of course, you want that Bible not only to work for you, but once it begins working for you, it will open itself up to you.

I love the aspect that when it comes to the Bible, I do not have to suspect anything. I do not have to wonder about anything. I mean, I may wonder what this means, but I do not have to. The Bible will lay itself out. It is like the mushroom story I told you last week. They are right there all around you, but most people cannot see them. In the Bible, truth is dripping out of it. In every

verse, in every passage, in every word, in every story, it is all around us. But we become oblivious to it and can never, never make the Bible in our lives what it needs to be because we just do not see it. We do not develop our trained eye, our senses.

Back in the book of Hebrews, it talks about people that have to be taught the Word of God over and over and over and over again, that they have been saved 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 years, and all they do, they are still in the little salvation verses mode. It says, "the meat of the Bible, doctrine, belongs to them that by reason of use have exercised their spiritual abilities." That is what you have to do. One of the ways you do that is you ask questions. The reason why I do it at Thursday night Bible study for any question you want to ask, and I have done that from the day I started my ministry almost 50 years ago, is because I knew the importance of having a place where people can ask questions.

Not everybody asks, and I do not want to say this wrong, not everybody asks good questions. Sometimes people feel intimidated because you think your question is stupid. I have said it for years and years, there is no stupid question about the Bible. Some of my answers are probably stupid, but there are no real stupid questions about the Bible. But it is okay even if they were, because that is how you will learn. If you ask five questions about the Bible and three of them are goofy but two of them are good, you have made progress. There is nothing wrong with asking a question in the Bible that you are off base on. There is nothing wrong with that, because if somebody can teach you how to put it on base, then you learn something. You do not always learn things in life by knowing everything in life. You learn most of life by not knowing everything in life. The goofy mistakes you make or the questions you ask that somebody, you would think to yourself, "Well, that is not a very good question." Well, maybe it is not, but it is an opportunity to learn, and you learn how not to come up with those questions again. It is part of the process.

III. Understanding Biblical Types and the Pastor's Role

Now today, we are going to talk about the next two verses here, verses 15 and 16. You will remember that last week I read all three verses but wanted to establish verse 14 so we could better put 15 and 16 into a proper context. So I am going to read all three verses again today, and then we are going to try to put all three of these together for you. I want to show you again how you make the Bible work for you. I want to talk to you about training your eye, your senses, to look for things in the Bible. Do not just be somebody who comes to the Bible without really getting anything out of it.

John 3:14-16

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

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.

Verse 14 last week, we should now understand the brazen serpent as it applies in two areas: first of all, in the Old Testament nation of Israel, and then through the parallel that Christ made, how it fits into the New Testament church as a model, as a picture. The Lord clearly laid it all out as He tells us that on the cross He became for us what He was to Israel as that serpent was raised up. Of course, you know the "look and live" concept that they had to get bitten by fiery serpents, and that is a picture of Christ being lifted up on the cross.

From that story, and you know this, but I just want to tie it in here, another great way to study your Bible will be what we call types or pictures. I told you last week how the Bible is nothing more than a glorified picture book; it is just filled with them. Through an event or in a story, as you read it in the Old Testament, it will illustrate some biblical truth of the New Testament. The Old Testament is filled with them. Somebody said one time, and I heard this years and years and years ago, the Old Testament is like an art gallery with long hallways with hundreds and hundreds of pictures on the wall. When you walk down this corridor, you can look at all these pictures. But the problem is there was a power failure, and you are now in pitch black walking down this corridor, and you cannot see the pictures on the wall. But when somebody gives you a flashlight, you can hold it up now, and the flashlight allows you to see the pictures. Think of the Old Testament being an art gallery in the dark and the New Testament being your flashlight that shows you the pictures. That is the way it works. As you grow spiritually, you will learn them.

I have to say this, staying with the New Testament format and structure, here is the importance of having a Bible-believing church that actually teaches you the Bible. The job of a pastor is to teach his people the Word of God, passing on truth, as the Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:1, "committing to faithful men" and then keeping the heresy out. A lot of heresy goes on today in churches. The way that you keep it out is the pastor's job is you do not allow it to get in. Then the job of the pastor is to teach his people the Bible. Show them how to develop the Scriptures. This job is not to get up on—and I do not know where they got this—well, I do know where they got it. The idea of pastors today is they just get up and they just sprinkle the Bible out there and give you something nice, and you go home with it. Of course, you go on Sunday morning, and that is all you get. If they have a Sunday school before, that is all you get. If you have a Sunday night service, that is all you get. If you have a Wednesday night service, you probably do not even get that. But the bottom line is, that is not his job. It is a bigger format than that.

The pastor's job is to not only teach his people the Bible, but to find a way to help them develop the Scriptures and rightly dividing them. It is not enough for a Bible teacher or a pastor. You people who disciple people, you know this to be true. This is why when you start to disciple somebody, the lessons that we use are just a means to an end. You may take two or three weeks talking about some other issues in their life before you even get into the discipleship, or it will be sprawled through it. You know why? Because the Word of God, you are supposed to develop those things. You develop the Scriptures with your people. You take the time, not just to give them the Bible, which so many idiots out there do. You have to invest your own life with them to give them the time and show them how to actually develop the Scriptures. You have to set aside time to do that so they can ask any questions that they need to ask. That is what it is for.

At the same time, you set up time together for them to learn the Bible in depth, putting it together like we did in our Bible Institute. We started what, three or four years ago? Took everybody in this church that wanted to get to that level. Look what it has done for so many of you. The people ministry was another one, but it was on a different level that you could actually help me in ministering with people. You know that when you get somebody to work with, how I want it done, biblically. Of course, look what it has done. Our Bible studies on Thursday night are always a great time together because it is a time where we can have that relationship of asking questions about the Bible.

Sunday morning, I am not just up here preaching to you. I want to take every moment that I have, every moment that I can, and help you, those of you who want it. Now I get it, not everybody wants it, and that is okay. That is not my deal. That is okay. But I am telling you right now that for anybody that wants it, it is my responsibility as the pastor of this church to get you what you need, whatever that may be, and to always be looking for other opportunities. For me, that is really easy because I just do for you what I have done for myself. That is the value of me being so stupid when it comes to things in life in the Bible. I had to take the hard things of the Bible and break them down so I could understand them. That is for your benefit because I do the same thing with you. That is what we do.

I have learned this over the years, and this is so true. We say this all the time. I hear pastors say it all the time. They will get up in the pulpit and say that your children are a reflection of your parenting skills. Everybody likes to jump on that one and preach that one. But I am going to tell you something: churches are a reflection of the pastor's spiritual teaching skills. It is a two-way street. You will learn types by somebody laying them out for you. This is the importance of a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church. You are not just going to get into your Bible and spend enough time in there, and then suddenly you are going to get up in the morning and see all those things. Like you are going to live for 30, 40 years and wake up and speak French some morning. Somebody has to teach you. That is God's process.

The problem is nobody is teaching anybody today. Their main emphasis is not you learning the Bible. Their main emphasis is they are taking up an offering, building big buildings, building big temples, edifices, doing all these goofy stuff that they do. God's people get lost and trampled in the deal. It would be a terrible thing. It is always a terrible thing, but it would be a worse terrible thing if this was 100 years ago. The idea today is the fact that nobody really wants the truth anyhow, so they fit into that. Somebody said one time, "Well, so-and-so has got a church of 2,500 people." Well, who would not go to a church of 2,500 people that you can be a Christian and live like the world? You will pack that place out every Sunday. Try to have a church where you are held accountable with the Word of God that you have got to live a different life and see what happens for you. People are so stupid today; they do not get it. In time, somebody lays it out for you. That is the job of the church. In time, you will learn how to do it yourself if the pastor does his work with you, and then you do the work for yourself.

Types are one of the most incredible ways. Last week, you had a very easy example of a type. The first five years when I got right with the Lord, I jumped into the ministry pretty quick and started doing things. But when it came to my Bible, we had a Thursday night Bible study back in

Canton, just like we have Thursday night Bible study here. That is not the reason I have mine on Thursday, but just the way it worked out. The first five years I was there, I went every Thursday night. It started at 7 o'clock and went till 9. I never asked one question in five years. My goal was simple: there are a lot of other people asking questions that I needed to know. So I felt like instead of me asking one question, if I just kept my mouth shut and listened to eight or nine questions that somebody would ask and get it down. We did not have tapes back then. We did not have CDs. We did not have any of the stuff that we had. We did not have cell phones. We did not have... the calculator just came out. We did not have any of the stuff that you have got. We could not pop it into a thing and listen to it. There were no tape ministries per se. It was cassette, if you ever remember what those were. You just had to get it. I sat there for five years and never asked a question. But my goal was to get everything down that was asked, and then by next week, have it in my Bible, have it firmly understood in my mind, and then if somebody else would ask that question or ask me that question, I could teach it. If you go through five years with five or six questions a week, plus all the other stuff you are getting, you are going to learn your Bible. But it was a church that taught me those things, you see.

I learned that in the Bible there are 18 men who foreshadow and are a type of the Antichrist that is going to come. If you want a complete composite picture of everything he is, study those 18 types. I learned that there were 21 types of Christ. I learned that if you wanted a complete composite of who Christ was and what He did, study those types. Those are the easy ones. I saw the book of Job as a type of the tribulation. Somebody taught me that. I just did not get up one morning and see that. A Bible-believing church with a Bible-believing pastor who knows what his job is, it is his job to teach you those things. But it is your job to learn those things. At the judgment seat of Christ, you will never put your finger at me and say, "I did not teach you," but I will point my finger at you and say, "You did not do with what I gave to you." I have a pretty long finger.

I learned a type of David in Solomon. There are so many here, but in a generic way, David reigns for 40 years. Solomon reigns for 40 years. David in that scenario is a type of Christ. That is a second coming of Christ, and He wipes out all the enemies of Israel. When Solomon comes to the throne and reigns for his 40 years, there are no more wars. He is a type of Christ in the millennium. Those are easy ones. I have already told you that every story in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, will be some picture. That is an easy one. In the Bible, you have Abraham. He is a type of God the Father. You have Joseph. He is the greatest type of Christ. You have Daniel. He is the greatest type of the Holy Spirit of God. Those are easy. Thousands of them. We have seen it many, many times from 1 Corinthians chapter 10 that, in other key places, God's people in the Old Testament will be a picture of God's people in the New Testament. He tells you, "Therefore, our examples and ensamples for admonition," you learn from those pictures.

This is no exaggeration. In the last 17 years, I have probably laid all of this out and bucket loads more, probably 200, 300 times. I have done it on Thursday night. Many of the questions get redundant and asked over and over again, which is fine. The price of learning is repetition. I did it in Bible Institute. I have done it in the people ministry. I have done it on Sunday morning. I

have done it on Thursday morning. It is the old mindset that the more you hear it, the more it may stick with you. And yet many of God's people have been around, and they still do not have it. They still do not get it. If the Bible is a picture book like last week, then the types and the pictures will be the key factor in opening up what you read.

IV. Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding in Scripture

The Bible says that the entrance of thy word hath given life in Psalm 119:130. Proverbs chapter 2 says that we are to work at getting the knowledge of God, not the knowledge *about* God, the very same knowledge that God has, you and I should have. In the Bible, that is called understanding. When we taught it, we taught here again, when we want to study these books, here is the generic way to study them. When we studied the book of Proverbs, I told you that Proverbs represented the mind of God, and it did. We had a couple leave the church because of the fact that we had been in Proverbs, I do not know, 20, 30 years. They felt like that I had spent too much, too long in Proverbs. I asked them, I said, "Well, Proverbs is the mind of God. How fast would you like to go through God's mind?" That is really the problem today. You see the book of Proverbs as a book in the Old Testament. You do not see it as the mind of God. You do not see a book that God put in there that will show you everything that is in His mind. Now, if I really believe that and I want to have a relationship with God and I really want to know Him, where do you think I am going to hang out? And how quickly am I going to want to get through that? But you want to get through the book of Proverbs, the mind of God, like you want to get through your prayer very quickly. Like you want to get through church service. "Hurry up, I am hungry."

I have told you before that if you want to, the five wisdom books:

- If you want the mind of God, you look at the book of Proverbs.
- If you want to find the heart of God, then you look at the book of Psalms.
- If you want to find the sufferings of God, then you look at the book of Job.
- If you want to find out the mind of the Spirit, you get into the book of Ecclesiastes.
- If you want to find out what the mind of Christ, you go to the book of Song of Solomon.

You do not have to have an IQ of 120. My IQ right above sub-plant life will do just fine. You do not have to be a rocket scientist. The book of Proverbs talks about getting understanding. You are told in Job chapter 32, verse 8, that understanding has to come from the Holy Spirit of God. You do not get that by going to college. You do not get that by even going to seminary. You do not get that by becoming an honor student in school. Understanding from the Bible clearly tells us that it only comes from God.

In the Bible, in the book of Proverbs, you are going to find knowledge, you are going to find wisdom, and you are going to find understanding. Many, many people do not get those things. We have been through this a thousand times, but it is okay. Knowledge in the Bible is going to be the facts. You are going to get the facts of things. Wisdom, when you take those facts and you can apply them to whatever you are doing. An interesting aspect of that would be like an auto mechanic. He gets the facts of how a combustible engine runs, and when he can take it apart and

put it back together, then he has got wisdom. When I look at a carburetor, it means nothing to me. Nothing in an engine makes any sense, but a guy who has a trained eye and a trained ear, he can listen to it and almost tell you what is wrong with it. It is a thing where he has got knowledge and he has got wisdom about it. He has applied the facts, and now he has produced wisdom. That is true in everything in life. Somebody who knows a lot about chemistry, a lot about science, astronomy, math, whatever. I do not care what it is. It is based on the facts that they established the facts. They got knowledge, and then they turned that knowledge into wisdom as they applied the facts. Any unsaved man can do that.

Understanding no unsaved man has, and unfortunately, most of God's people do not have it either, because understanding will always be the final analysis of how God fits in whatever equation we are looking at. That is how God is dealing with it. Proverbs 28:5

Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things. An unsaved man, he does not see the death penalty. God does in Genesis 9. An unsaved man, he does not understand the great white throne judgment and die and go into hell. But if you are saved, you should understand it. He has got the facts and he has got the wisdom, but he lacks understanding. He cannot see God in anything. When you take that into government, and you take that into history, and you take that into everything and just make it facts and wisdom, then you can see how shallow you become and how you do not get a proper appreciation of what God is doing.

I always use the example of World War I and World War II. Of course, World War I was the war that was supposed to end all wars. It did not. It was not 30, 40 years later than we were in World War II. It is a thing where you can go to a library, you can get somebody to put a book back there. I think we found it yesterday. Anybody can have it. I think it is on the Vietnam War, "The Lack of Heroes" or something like that. Got a lot of good pictures of it. Take it if you want it. But it is a thing where we look at things like that and we see things and we read things and we watch documentaries and we see all the battles and we see all this and somebody talks about World War I, what a terrible time it was, and World War II, what a terrible time it was, and we look at all those things. A guy will take the facts and he will get wisdom. He can give you the date of Pearl Harbor, give you the date of the Battle of the Bulge, give you the date of the Battle of Midway, give you the date of the Battle of Wake Island, he can give you the date of the battle in Africa, in El Alamein. He can give you all that stuff and he can lay it out and you get it. But he has no understanding because when you back up and look at World War I and World War II from God's standpoint and understanding, World War I got the land ready for the Jew, and World War II got the Jew ready for the land, and in 1948 he becomes a nation.

Now it is hard for us to get that. You know why? Because we are so stupid when it comes to the Bible and so stuck on ourselves, it is hard for us to believe that God would kill 300 million people just to put His people back in the land. You see? You have no understanding. You are the same crowd that back in Noah's time, probably eight billion people on a planet in Noah's time? How many little babies that was? How many little kids that was? Had God rounded them all out. You know what your problem is? You do not understand. You do not get it.

So verse 14 last week helps us understand better the crucifixion. When you see the crucifixion, we do not preach an Easter message around here. We ignore Easter. But from time to time, if I am preaching on the crucifixion, I will clearly tell you that this is one of the areas where most of God's people, they have facts and they have wisdom because you have all been to Easter services and you all hear the nice little stories with the palm trees and the little lilies and the ducks and the rabbits and the chickens and all that stuff. But you have no understanding of that day. The most you ever get is Christ on the cross, a little trickle of blood coming down, and you never see it. If you really understood the crucifixion and Easter was really a spiritual day, you would all show up in sackcloth and ashes. But oh no. We put on our Easter bonnet with all of our frills upon it for our Easter parade. We bring in the Easter bunnies, which is pagan out of Egypt. We bring in Easter, the god of fertility for Easter, and we all have a wonderful time. You see, you have got facts and you have got a little bit of wisdom, but you have not got squat when it comes to understanding. God looks down at that mess, and you actually go to church thinking God is pleased.

You do not have any understanding with God and how He looks at things. In Hebrews chapter 12, the Bible tells us that we are to consider Him, and then gives us three things that we ought to consider Him in. It takes understanding to get these three things. He says:

7. First of all, consider who He was.
8. Second of all, consider what He endured.
9. Third, consider what He became.

Last week was a great key to this. Who He was: He was God's Son. He was God manifested in the flesh. What He endured: the shame of the cross. And what He became: He became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be getting the righteousness of God in Him. He became my serpent. John chapter 3 and Numbers chapter 21 helps lay out all of that so we can honestly and truly with understanding consider Him. Absolutely vital today, anyhow, probably all true down through Christianity, but certainly today absolutely vital to our survival as a New Testament Christianity today.

V. Dispensational Truth: "Believe In" vs. "Believe Unto"

Now let us move on to the next verse, shall we? Let us use our trained eye today. We are going to exercise ourselves a little bit. Let me show you what to look for, what not to look for, what ought to pop out to you. Maybe as I am reading these things, you can take yourself a little test and see if you can pick it out before I say it.

John 3:15

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Now, let us use our trained eye here a minute. What do you see? Let us compare. Let us step back and survey. Let us survey here and compare what John is saying here in verse 15 before the cross about salvation. Then let us see what Paul says in Romans chapter 10 about salvation after

the cross. These are things in time; I am not expecting you today. These are things in time you ought to catch.

Look at John chapter 3, verse 15, "whosoever believeth in Him." But in Romans chapter 10, verse 10, he says:

Romans 10:10

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Did you catch that? Before the crucifixion, dealing with the nation of Israel, John chapter 3, a man, they as a nation had to believe **in** Him, who He was to them. He was the Son of God. He was the Son of David. He was their Messiah. You see this all through the New Testament Gospels. You see it in Acts chapter 1 through Acts chapter 7. Peter is preaching, and everything he is saying to the nation of Israel is about who He was, and they needed to believe who He was **in** Him. But after the crucifixion, when the Holy Spirit of God comes, it all changes. Paul never confuses his doctrine. In the church age, we all know this, you can believe **in** Him and who He was and die and go straight to hell. The Bible says in James chapter 2, verse 19, that the devil believes and trembles. But in the church age, we have to believe **unto** Him.

Here is where, I do not want to turn this into an English class, but here is where the importance of learning English grammar. The word "unto" is what we call a function word, and it means to connect yourself to something. When we got saved, we just did not believe **in** Him, we got connected **unto** Him, the one body. Now that probably does not seem like a big deal to most of God's people, but to a Bible believer who watches every word and phrase, that will separate completely two different dispensations. In 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 15, we are supposed to "study to show ourself approved, rightly dividing the word of truth." For the nation of Israel, there was no connection **to** Him. He came as their Messiah, and they were to believe **in** Him that He was the Son of David. You in the church age can believe **in** Him all day long, all night long, and for the rest of your life, and you will split hell wide open. You have to connect yourself **unto** Him.

As I said Thursday night, you always want to note how Paul keeps his New Testament doctrine separate from the Old Testament doctrine. We looked at this Thursday night. He is very exact with what he says. I showed you the example of Romans chapter 1, verse 17 and Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 4. I also used the book of Hebrews as an example. This is why Paul never used the term "born again." We clearly laid this out Thursday night.

VI. Perceiving God's Love: John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16

Now let us look at verse 16.

John 3:16

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.

Without a doubt, this is the most recognizable verse in all the Bible to anybody. I remember years ago when I used to go make hospital calls, they have little parking lots for chaplains. You had to have a sticker to park there so they would know that you were a legitimate chaplain. Well, I did not have a sticker. But I was running late and I had hospital calls, and he said, "I am a pastor." So I parked in there, and as I am walking out, a guy, one of the security guys, came up to me and he says, "Sir, you cannot park there." And I said, "I am a pastor." He said, "You do not have a sticker." I said, "I am sorry, but I do not have a pastor." He says, "Can you prove you are a pastor?" I say, "Yeah, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him..." He said, "Okay, you can go on in." It works. It works.

Without a doubt, that is the most recognizable verse in the world today. It shows up everywhere. It shows up in bumper stickers. It shows up in yard signs. It shows up in the end zone at football games. It is a great verse. Every Christian on this planet should memorize it, should have it down and understand it. But it is a general statement of God dying for you and for me and the world. Incredible verse. Truly, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." What a classic statement that God makes about His Son coming down and dying on the cross for the world.

When it comes to your Bible, you need to be an investigator. You need to be an investigator of facts, much like a detective at a crime scene. Just as a detective at a crime scene does not let anybody touch the crime scene, does not want to compromise the evidence, he will go in, you put on those little booties. They all have the flashlights now. He will gather evidence that helps solve the crime. What he will do, if he is a good detective, is he will begin to build a chain of evidence based on what he sees. A police officer who becomes a detective usually takes a while to get there because it is based on his experience of being a street cop that does not necessarily mean he is a better shot or that he drives a car fast in a police chase, though those things are valuable. But what gets him to that point, or should, is the fact that after all those years of experience he has seen things. And now he knows what to look for.

Whether you know it or not, the Bible is a crime scene. You did not know that, did you? Oh yeah. A crime was committed against God in Genesis chapter 3. Two people died out of that, out of Genesis 2:17, that "the day you eat thereof you shall surely what? Die." Seemingly somebody got away with the crime. As you study your Bible, you will see this crime scene completely lay itself out for you. You are going to find out who did it. You are also going to find out through the chain of evidence who his accomplices were, who helped him get away with it. One of the big things in crime and solving crime is you are going to see what his motive was behind this crime. Then you are going to see how he is finally apprehended, why the Bible even gives you his court date and the judgment, and even tells you what weapon he used to commit the crime.

A good investigator will not just see like the detective at a crime scene, like you with your Bible. He just does not see it. He learns to observe it. He learns to scan it. He learns to step back and see what he really has here instead of just a little tunnel vision of what he is reading. Back in the 1950s, I am sure it was in the 50s, you kids will not remember that. Actually, there was one on television yesterday. I watched a little bit of it, but I did not watch the whole thing because I fell asleep. But back in the 1950s, there was the movies, the old series of the old Sherlock Holmes.

Basil Rathbone, who you do not even know who he is, was an English actor who played Sherlock Holmes. Neville somebody played Dr. Watson, and you know the story. Sherlock Holmes is a great English detective, and Dr. Watson is his assistant. They were the early runners of what you like today, NCIS and Criminal Minds. This was the early version of it. After they went off the scene, you had Andy Griffith, you know he was Matlock, and he always did those, and then you had Columbo, remember him? Columbo. And then you had Joe Friday, Dragnet, "Just the facts, man, just the facts." And then I watched one the other day, Monk. All these guys came along after Sherlock Holmes. You do not get that. They are all just a spin-off.

I used to love the Sherlock Holmes when I was a kid. I learned so much about the Bible from movies because every movie plot has to go back to the Bible. I remember watching, this is years ago, I did not make the connection at the time, but years later when I got saved, I do not forget much things like that because when I hear a statement that is a profound statement, I usually stay with it. I even know the name of the movie. It was, I just forgot it. It was, oh, "Scandal in Bohemia." Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes were investigating a crime scene. He always had the big, the too floppy hat with the front and the back, and the scarf and the trench coat with a big loop pipe. And his favorite saying was to Dr. Watson, "Elementary, Dr. Watson," in other words, "Do not worry about it, I will solve the crime." Watson always came off as a goofy guy, a doctor, but he could not see what Sherlock could see. So they are looking at his crime scene, and Sherlock is looking at it, and Dr. Watson makes a statement about the crime scene. Sherlock Holmes makes one of the greatest statements you ever heard in my life, and I have followed it in the Bible, and I give it to you today. He said to Dr. Watson, "Dr. Watson, you see, Dr. Watson, but you wonder why. You must learn to observe because the two are not the same." Boy, when it comes to your Bible, you do not just see, you need to learn to observe because the two are not the same. You just do not see things, you observe them.

We talk about patterns of human nature, how people will always do the same thing. You do not necessarily learn that just from studying the Bible. You know how you learn that along with the Bible? Watching people and their patterns for 30, 40 years. You observe. You observe churches. You observe pastors. You observe Christians. You observe people. Want a good afternoon? Just go to the airport in its busiest time and do not take a plane. Just get a cup of coffee and sit there and watch the people. You observe.

Now, we just read John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son." Okay, Sherlock, what do you see in that verse? Back up. When you read that, when you observe it, not just read it, not just see it, but when you back off and look at it and you observe, what do you see? So obviously, the first thing that you would see, and this is not my point, now we have got another great crime scene, do we not? The crucifixion of Christ. Here in this crime scene, He was set up totally and completely. He was innocent and framed. Then you ask yourself, "Who did it, Rome? Was it the scribes and the Pharisees?" That is what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will lead you to believe. But when you back up, the plot thickens. When you go back to Psalm 50, verse 8, I think it is, then you see what the real problem was, because you observe some things.

When I observe John 3:16, I get all my facts together. I do not want to limit myself to what I have right here, because I have learned from studying my Bible, first of all, John writes five books of the Bible. Four of them bear his name. One of them is opposite of the book of Revelation. You have the Gospel of John, you have First John, you have Second John, you have Third John. Now, I am an investigator. I am reading John 3:16. I do not just read it and just make my little mamsy-pamsy little thing about, "For God so loved the world." There is more to that here. I am not going to just see it, I am going to observe it. So I am going to back up and I am going to say to myself, "Whoa, John wrote four books with his name on." Then I come down through the investigative process of elimination. Third John has one chapter. Second John has one chapter. First John has five chapters, and the Gospel of John has 21 chapters. Based on my investigating skills and my observance, I now come to the conclusion that based on the Gospel of John and First John, now I see I have two John 3:16s in the Bible, not just one.

I wonder what the greatest picture of a Christian that ever lived in a complete picture of the New Testament, the Gospel of John, the Apostle John, who bridges the Old Testament and the Gospels into the 90 A.D. Book of Revelation. Would not that kind of spark your imagination? Knowing the Bible the way you do, knowing God does things the way He does them? That we just read John 3:16, and now, oh my goodness, we just find out that there is a second John 3:16 in the Bible? Would you think maybe there is any connection between those two? I mean, I am just asking, would you not at least want to investigate that? Would you not at least want to have seen that? I mean, what do you, when the Bible says "search the Scriptures," what does that mean to you? Does it mean, "Okay, I am done"? What does it mean when He says "search the Scriptures"? Do you ever read the two and compare them? Again, this is not hard. This does not take an IQ of 120. Just a trained eye and a mind. Using what you know about the Bible and following the rules of observing.

Now watch this. Everybody knows John 3:16; it is put out by everybody that can. It is everywhere. In most cases, when somebody sends me an email with it in or somebody this or that, I just laugh. This is why God's people know John 3:16, but they never really do anything with it. Let us observe them together. John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16, and then compare them, shall we?

John 3:16

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.

That verse gives you the fact that He died for you in the world and tells us what He did for us. Now let us look at 1 John 3:16.

1 John 3:16

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Ah, where John 3:16 tells you the love, 1 John 3:16 tells you how to perceive that love. How did you miss that? How does anybody miss that? "Hereby perceive we the love of God because he

laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." You see, John 3:16 tells us what God did for us. The second one tells us now that we should perceive what He has done and what we should do for Him. In other words, 1 John 3:16 defines the first one. Now how did God's people miss that? I am telling you right now, your Christian life is not complete without both John 3:16s in your world. That is what God's people do. They love John 3:16 because it is a general statement, but when it comes to perceiving, another whole matter, is it not?

I have said it many, many times, one of the greatest keys to God in your Bible is the word "perception," to perceive. "Perceive" means you understand. It not just understand, but understand in depth. Everybody can quote John 3:16. Nobody can quote 1 John 3:16, never even stop to look and see if there was two. In one of the greatest books by one of the greatest types of the church that every aspect of his life is a model of something we ought to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not even have time to get into it today. Everybody perceives you the love of God, do you? Do we? You see, when you really understand and perceive the love of God's word, then you do something with it. You certainly get into the Bible with it. What God did for you in John 3:16 and what, when you understand it, you perceive it, then what you are going to do for Him. He laid down His life for you. Now you are supposed to lay down your life for others.

Let me just explain this here. He is not saying that we all ought to go out and die for each other. He is not saying that if somebody runs in here with a gun, God forbid, and our security guys do not get him before he gets down the steps, and if Dave Phillips or Steve Brackings here, he would never make it in the front door. But it is saying that those guys are sick, and he gets down here, and he is going to start popping off some rounds, and he points at somebody sitting next to you today, and you know he is going to shoot them. It is not saying that you need to jump in front of them and take that bullet. Not saying you do not, but that is not what He is saying. It is not saying you grab the person and put them in front of you, either use them as a shield. But what I am saying is He is not just... I mean, there may be times when you have to lay down your life for somebody. I mean, if you were all in a jam here, almost without, everybody here, if you were in a jam and it was a, if your car was burning and you were trapped in it and it was on fire and a gas tank was going to explode and I was there, I would order some marshmallows and get some long sticks. I would try to get you out. I would break a window, I would crawl in, and if we died, then we would die together. I would not leave you there. Now obviously that is probably not going to happen because, you know, I do not look at people's cars burning on the side of the road because it might be you. I just keep on driving straight.

But I am telling you this, that is not just what it is saying, though there may be times, there may be times coming up once this country is going into a police state very quickly. They are going to orchestrate in everything that you do, and pretty soon, I am just telling it right now, if somebody, we may get to the point where it is illegal to do what we are doing and you cannot believe what you have to believe and it really becomes tough. Then they start rounding everybody up and they start doing this and doing that. History always repeats itself. Somebody comes to my door and says, "Do you know so and so?" I would say, "Yeah, I know so and so." "Well, we are going to arrest them. They went to your church to preach another Bible to pass in tracts. I need to know

where they live." I do not have a clue. You say you lied on them, you bet I would, just like Rahab the harlot did, just like the women did back there. You do not get things like that. You know why? I love you, but you know why? It is stupid when it comes to the Bible. You never got that verse, that lying is an abomination in the sight of God, but a very present help in a time of trouble. It is a joke. It is a thing where I would not turn you in, and they say, "Well, if you do not turn them in, we are going to kill you." Well, then you know what? I am the body president of the Lord. Can I let the dog out first before we do this?

But it is not talking about that. So, it may come a time in life where somebody has to lay down their life for somebody, obviously, but that is not His point here. The point is that when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He became a dead sacrifice for you. In Romans 12:1-2, it says, "Now that you perceive the love of God, you become a living sacrifice for Him." He died on the cross for you. The real understanding of John 3:16 is not only found until you get into the perception of 1 John chapter 3, verse 16. Him dying on the cross for you, you dying to self for Him.

The Bible says in Matthew chapter 10, verse 39, that "he that finds his life, you got saved, you shall lose it." Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. It means that you give up your life here for yourself. He became the sacrifice for God so loved the world, He became the world's sacrifice. Once you perceive that love, why do you not become the sacrifice for Him? For you are dying to self, giving up your desires, my desires, our passions, our goals, our purposes in life and embracing His. It does not mean you become a monk and show up with a tambourine at the airport. It means that you realize that He has begun a good work in you and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. As you perceive His love for you, John 3:16, more and more every day, our perception of that love grows, and we get closer to what He wants us to be and do every day.

God's work on the cross, John 3:16, God's work of love in your life based on your perceiving that love as you work through the Bible and as you observe and watch and learn and perceive the price that really was paid for our salvation. You see that is the real problem. We live in a world where we have everything where we want, even the people that are at their worst. We were driving down the street the other day and pulled up to an intersection, and here is a guy sitting out in the cold, homeless, saying, "I am homeless, I am poor, I do not have anything," puffing on a cigarette. Cigarette cost you what, \$10 a pack? You see, even the worst people have it better than other people throughout the world. Because in America we have so much and we get all we want and we seemingly just do not need anything including God, we lose sight of the real price that was paid. You know why? Because with all we have and all we get, we lose what it costs. When it comes to Christianity and God's people, when you do not perceive the love of John 3:16, then you do not perceive the love in 1 John 3:16. Two of them in your Bible. God's work on the cross working through our lives as we work through the Bible, as we observe, watch and learn, we perceive what price He really paid. God does His perfect work in every one of your lives. The work that He started Philippians 1:6.

VII. A Call to Diligent Bible Investigation and Personal Growth

The key is learning to observe the Bible, investigating the stories, investigating the people in the Bible, the places in the Bible, the principles in the Bible, piecing together the chain of evidence, the facts that will always lead to the truth of God's word. As you study to show yourself approved, He will perfect that work in you. Now this is what you call serious Bible study. My goal for each of you is to make that Bible work for you. That is my job. I understand some of you will never want that and never do that. That is okay. It is all right. But you have to get honest with yourself. You have to look into that looking glass mirror of the Word of God. You have to ask yourself what you are going to do with the book that God gave you. Now that you know that there are two John 3:16s, brother, the first one is wonderful, praise the Lord. But it means nothing without the second one. You can quote it every day of your life and never perceive that love and never be that living sacrifice for Him. That is why we are always making excuses.

I have said it many, many times, and I say it today: I am not going to baby you in this. I am not going to coddle you like a little baby and bring you along. You are grown adults. You made some bad decisions in your life, and you have all made some good decisions in your life. But you know what? They are your decisions, and I am willing to help you through anything, but I am not going to let you blame your problems on somebody else or just say, "Well, this is there," or "I am this," or "I am that," and "I cannot." No, no, no, no, no. You have got the same Holy Spirit of God in you that everybody has here, and you have the same ability unless you are brain dead on a life support system. You are something to work with. But it comes down to you. I am not going to baby you. I am not going to treat you with kid gloves. I am going to train you. I am going to build you, young men and young ladies, one man and woman at a time, if that is what it takes. One doctrine at a time. I am going to take the Word of God through people ministry and institute and the times Thursday night and times together we have, and I am going to mold you. I am going to build you. I am going to stretch you. I am going to exercise you. I am going to develop your senses. I am going to refine your understanding, and I am going to fine tune your perception. You are going to have to do the work. Nobody gets a free ride here. You earn your way.

I will tell you something else. I am doing it your way. After almost 50 years, I know what works and I know what does not work, and I am not wasting my time with people who just want to go around in a circle chasing their tail. I am 70 years old, soon to be 71. I do not have a lot of time left. The time I do have left, I am going to pour myself with everything I have into those who want it. More and more I really understand and see the people who in this church helped me. My family. The people who have gotten in and you have gotten it. I understand, but I am not going to be able to do this forever. I have more time on the other side than I have left on this side. I know that. And with the times that we have today, who knows how long this is going to be or if we can do this in another year. It may come, but it all comes down to the individual investment in every man and woman in this church. From the Timothy group back there to the Bible Explorers back there, to the people who are being disciplined, I am going to do everything that I can because that

is my job. I am going to take the best and dump the rest. I mean, I do not know what else to tell you.

God's people have come to this church. They come. They get in a little bit. They leave. You can play your silly games all you want to do. You can waste every aspect of your life pumping yourself up like you are something spiritual. If that works for you, that is fine. But that is not where I am at. I am here to help you. I am here to take every man and every woman in the last years that I have and pour everything I have to you, that when I am off the scene, the things that I have committed unto you to faithful men, you can commit to others. You have to make the commitment. You have to come to that place in your life where you get honest with God and yourself, and I will help you. I will be there for you. I have said it many, many times. I do not care where you are from, what you have done. It does not matter to me. All I care about is where you are at right now. But we are not going to do it your way. We are going to do it God's way.

We will build you. We will give you steel in your backbone. We will give you perception. We will give you discernment. You will see how that Bible will teach you the patterns. I will lay every aspect of it I can. You are going to have to get it. Adopt the same philosophy that I had. Every Thursday night Bible study, go home. Learn what I said. Have it in your Bible. Get into your Bible. Study your Bible. Bring your questions Thursday night. Let me help you with that. You say, "Well, it is a dumb question." It may be. It is okay. That is how you learn. You do not learn by asking always good questions. You learn by asking dumb questions. But then you learn how it is really supposed to be. Nothing wrong with that. Hey, I can tell you the dumb questions I ask in my life. But that is how I learn. But you have to make the commitment. I have done everything in my power that I humanly possibly can to give you everything that I have. I cannot be responsible for you not taking it. Everybody has to take it on their own level. I am okay with that. I really am.

I know that we have a lot of fire eaters in this church. A lot of young guys and young gals all the way up to your 40s and even into your 50s. You have the ability to be everything that God wants you to be. God puts you in a Bible-believing New Testament church and giving you a pastor who believes the Bible and will teach you the Bible and give whatever you need. What is your problem with that? Why are you not taking advantage of that? Why are you flitting around out there doing your own stupid thing and never getting what you really need to get? Because I will tell you what. You need to learn to observe. You need to train that eye. You train that mind. You need to be able to see that Bible as it unfolds and then sit back and just look at it. Two John 3:16s in the Bible. I will be honest with you, I saw that probably what, 20 years ago? Maybe longer than that. How did I do that? I was studying John chapter by chapter, verse by verse, book by book. When I got that, the Lord just put it into my head. "You know what? John wrote some other books in the Bible." Yeah, he did. "Oh, 1 John has five chapters. I wonder what the..." This was my question. "I wonder what the 1 John 3:16 has to say in the Bible." Wham! That is how you do it. It does not take intelligence. Look at me. It does not take being smart. It does not take an IQ. In fact, the smarter you are, the worst problem you have got. God wants you as dumb as a stump. He can teach you something then, see? We all have that great quality. That is what makes... It is a hallmark of this church. When you come in here, we give you a stupid test. You

have to pass it before you can come in. So you are all stupid this morning. Praise the Lord. It is the way God wants you to be. You are so dumb, you do not even know anything. You do not even suspect anything right where God wants you. Because then you will believe whatever He tells you.

A lot of educated people out there do not believe that King James Bible is the Word of God. You know why? Because they are educated. You know why you believe it? Because you are stupid. It is every reason I believe it. I am just so stupid that I believe, honestly believe childlike faith that God could write a book and put it out and preserve it and give it me perfect. I am good with it. The fact that you cannot figure it out, out there doctor so and so, is the fact that you have no understanding. I get it. God wants you, every one of you, in these last days of what is coming. The only thing that is going to hold your glue together is the book that I am trying to give you right now. All right, let us have a word of prayer. Do not forget the...