

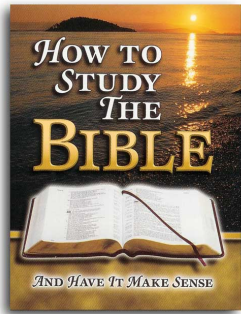


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Can We Know the Mind of God? (Part I)

Ephesians 1:9: (NASB) *He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention, which He purposed in Him.*

God is Almighty. He is all knowing and all seeing. We believe He is the very embodiment of wisdom, justice, love and power. As our Creator, we believe He has a plan - a detailed plan - that He will see accomplished for the good of all mankind. How do we think we know these things? The Bible. We believe that His Plan and its details are revealed in the Bible. Now, depending upon our brand of Christianity, we will come up with several contradictory interpretations of that plan unless we are willing to subject our understanding to a rigorous series of tests that will point us to truth and not tradition. There are five rigorous tests, five ways of finding the mind of God in Scripture! Are you ready?

There is a lot of baggage starting with the Dark Ages of error up until today. There are a lot of challenges with the ceremonies, translations and traditions. We are going to reveal all of our study secrets! We will discuss five different testing grounds of bible study and how we implement them. We will discuss how to study the Bible and have it make sense. In fact, there is a booklet titled, "How to Study the Bible and Have it Make Sense," and this is where we get our five testing grounds of understanding the Scriptures. We did not write this booklet but we have adopted these testing grounds and use them on a regular basis.

FIRST TESTING GROUND: Exhaustive Topical Examination - Examination of every Scripture on a given subject. The Information Age in which we live makes this test far easier than ever before.

What do we need to pass our personal scriptural understanding through this test? We need an exhaustive, unabridged Concordance of the Bible (Strong's and Young's are examples) and a *willingness to weigh the evidence*. The key is to have that willingness to weigh whatever the evidence is to figure it out even if the outcome is not what we thought. We need to look into it ourselves. 2 Timothy 2:15-16: The word of truth could be wrongly divided. Our mission as Christians is not only to be footstep followers of Christ in our character, which is a big responsibility, but also it is to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Let's begin with the Old Testament. We will use the concept of hell as our example. We will see that there is only one word translated "hell":

Sheol: Strong's #7585 she'owl (sheh-ole'); or sheol (sheh-ole'); Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates AV-grave 31, hell 31, pit 3; 65

Let's look at some of the uses this word: Deuteronomy 32:21-23: (KJV) ²¹*They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those, which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.* ²²*For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest **hell <7585>** (sheol), and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.* ²³*I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.* (This text quoted in Romans 10:19-21 relating to the Gentiles coming to favor, verifies that the language here is symbolic - please see the Full Edition Bonus Material)

Psalms 9:17: (KJV) *The wicked shall be turned into **hell <7585>**, and all the nations that forget God.* Psalms 55:15: (KJV) *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into **hell <7585>**: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.* Proverbs 27:20: (KJV) **Hell <7585>** and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

The above texts can have preconceived ideas by many Christians. These texts talk about hell, but there is no fire, no torment - just the threat of sheol.

So far "hell"/"sheol" seems to be for bad guys - is there more to it than that?

The next texts also have the threat of sheol - so what is the difference? Genesis 37:35: (KJV) *And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, for I will go down into **the grave <7585>** unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.* The word grave here is the same word for sheol.

1 Samuel 2:6: (KJV) *The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to **the grave <7585>**, and bringeth up.* This gives us the idea of resurrection. This is the same word that



was translated hell. Most Christians do not believe that anyone is going to be brought up from hell, but it is the exact same word. Job 14:13: (KJV) *O that thou wouldst hide me in **the grave <7585>**, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!* If we want to know the plan and mind of God and we believe it is revealed in the Bible, then we have to be willing to approach that. We need to take away all our preconceived notions and ask *what is the Bible really trying to tell me here* that I may not be listening to.

Job is actually praying to go to sheol but asked to be remembered later! He's saying, "God hide me in the grave (same word as hell) but remember me later in the resurrection."

Psalms 49:14-15: (KJV) ¹⁴*Like sheep they are laid in **the grave <7585>**; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in **the grave <7585>** from their dwelling.* ¹⁵*But God will redeem my soul from the power of **the grave <7585>**: for he shall receive me. Selah.* There is a consistent picture here of death and resurrection.

Hosea 13:14: (KJV) *I will ransom them from the power of **the grave <7585>**; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O **grave <7585>**, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

So, what are the differences between the two sets of texts?

- First set uses the word *hell*
- Second set uses the word *grave*
- First set generally refers to people considered evil
- Second set refers to those considered good. In both evil and good cases, the exact same word is used - where does that lead us? When you are reading a translation, sometimes the translator has a bias toward the way things are. *Sometimes there is a contradiction not in the text but in the translation.*

Consider three points: 1. Genesis 37:35 is the first use of "sheol" in the Old Testament, and it is used as *grave* three more times in Genesis. The Deuteronomy Scripture use of the word is the first use of the word where translators assigned *hell* as its meaning; so precedent for the concept of *grave* was first set, long before the translation idea of hell came in to place.

2. The word is also translated *pit* three times. Numbers 16:33: (NASB) *So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to (KJV "the pit") Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished (were destroyed) from the midst of the assembly.*

This translation helps us to better see the true meaning - essentially to be buried, to be covered over. It is a neutral idea. It is not referring to a good or bad person going into a grave. It is literally a pit or hole in the ground. This scripture refers to the earthquake with the sons of Korah when literally the earth opened up and they fell in and the earth closed up over them and killed them. They were buried and covered over.

3. We know that God has judgment clearly in hand. Romans 2:5-6: We can easily understand the true meaning of the word to refer to the state of the dead as being a state of "oblivion."

This New Testament scripture is talking about judgment. Many Christian denominations look at a concept of a burning hell as judgment. What Romans 2 is saying is that God has judgment already in hand without mentioning or having a need for a burning hell. It is for each person, good or bad. So, it is customized for each person according to his or her deeds. It is important to understand topical exhaustive examination of the Scriptures. The booklet "How to Study the Bible and Have it Make Sense" really helps us to understand. It teaches us how to study the Bible and it introduces five ways of going through scriptures to really try to figure out what the mind of God is and how it is revealed in Scripture.

While we do not have the time to do an exhaustive review of the New Testament, we will look at the New Testament primary word for *Hell*: *Hades*

Hades: Strongs #86 haides (hah'-dace) properly, unseen, i.e. "Hades" or the place (state) of departed souls: KJV-- grave, hell.

Based on the scriptural evidence that we found in the Old Testament showing there is no torment in "sheol;" can we draw an exact parallel to the New Testament? Old Testament - sheol (hell/grave/pit) = New Testament - hades (hell)



Let's start with an Old Testament text with sheol: Psalms 16:10: (NIV) *because you will not abandon me to **the grave <86>**, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.* That is a prophetic utterance about Jesus. So, it says in the Old Testament you will not abandon me to the grave. Now look at the same scripture in the New Testament. It is quoted from the Old Testament. That is a great tool! When you find something quoted from the Old Testament you know that they will use the same description.

Now, that same text in the New Testament from three different translations:

Acts 2:27: (NIV) *Because you will not abandon me to **the grave <86>**, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.*

Acts 2:27: (KJV) *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in **hell <86>**, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

Acts 2:27: (NRSV) *For you will not abandon my soul to **hades <86>**, or let your Holy One experience corruption.*

What does this test tell us? Two things:

1. *Hades = Sheol* as proven by its use in the Greek language to replace the Hebrew word.
2. Translations may NOT be a reliable final authority!

Translations are valuable tools, and we need translations since we do not speak Hebrew or Greek. We also have to try to discern where a translation can be a personal bias or a denominational bias.

Many people have gone to the Scriptures to prove them wrong. Their conclusion is that it is nonsense. Another may go to the Scriptures to prove that it is the mind of God. It is all about your attitude in which you approach your subject matter. If you are looking to find harmony in the Scriptures your mind will be open to see its connection. If you're looking to find disharmony in Scripture and fault, you're going to find disharmony.

A second test of the *hades/sheol* connection: **First, two Old Testament texts that describe death and sheol: Isaiah 25:8 Hosea 13:14 Now, the New Testament rendering of portions of both Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 **Hades = sheol** This is yet another proof of the value of exhaustive topical examination! **Again, we have assurance of scriptural judgment - everyone is accountable!** John 5:28-29:**

SECOND TESTING GROUND: *The Study of Symbolic Language - Examination of Scripture with an eye for separating those things literal from those things symbolic.*

The parables of Jesus and his occasional explanation of them help us understand the concept that biblical symbolism is not only present but also common: **Regarding the Parable of the Sower: Mark 4:13-15**: Jesus is telling them, "If you don't understand this parable you're not going to be able to understand the others." He's saying this parable is a key to unlocking the picture language that I'm going to be using in all of these other stories. He is teaching them the formula for understanding parables. Then he goes on to explain it. The sower sows the word. He is saying the seed equals the word of God. There were four categories in this particular parable. He's saying that the ones beside the road, this is whom they represent. I told the story, now I'm going to tell you what the story really means. Now you have this sense of picture language, symbolism meaning something different in reality.

Regarding the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares: Matthew 13:36-39: He told the story but they didn't get it. They now had the courage to tell him that they didn't understand. Jesus then explained and laid the parable out for them. They now could connect the symbolism to reality and understand the parable. Many times things mentioned in the Bible (and in life) can have literal and symbolic meanings.

Biblical example: **Does the Bible say the earth will be destroyed? Yes!** Matthew 24:35: (NASB) *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* Zephaniah 3:8: (NASB) *Therefore wait for Me, declares the LORD, for the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal.*



Does the Bible say the earth will abide forever? Yes! Matthew 6:10: (NASB) *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* Isaiah 45:18: (NASB) *For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), I am the LORD, and there is none else.* **Does the Bible say that there will be a new earth? Yes!** 2 Peter 3:13: (NASB) *But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* Revelation 21:1: (NASB) *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.* Can all three be right? **Yes!** All three are correct, but we need to determine which are literal and which are symbolic. The search for biblical understanding is like following a trail of hints like breadcrumbs. **Earth abiding forever texts - these seem VERY literal:** Ecclesiastes 1:4: (NASB) *A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.*

To find the answer, let us apply a literal meaning to all texts that show the earth as abiding.

What would the earth symbolize in the other texts? The Bible itself gives us the answer: Psalms 33:8 Psalms 66:4: The earth itself doesn't actually worship God. The inhabitants of the earth will sing to Him. Humanity is an earthly creation. We have to figure out which Scriptures are symbolic and which ones are literal. The earth is very symbolic and symbolizes the people, the structure of mankind. Micah 1:2: It is the people who listen and not the literal earth. The earth is a picture. **EARTH = the social structure of man, the stable portion of mankind.** A further symbol to clarify the conclusion of this symbol: Isaiah 57:20 **SEA = the restless masses of mankind.** This looks like a very clear symbolism - let's test it! 2 Peter 3 uses "earth" in several ways: 2 Peter 3:3-13: So, what was actually destroyed by the great flood? Not the literal heavens and the literal earth, but the world (a combination of both), the corrupt and sinful social structure. What about the heavens? **Yes, the heavens were literally created by God and they are also a symbol (just like the earth) of something else:** Ephesians 6:12: **HEAVENS = Higher or spiritual controlling powers.** Present heavens and earth imply a previous (already mentioned) and possible future heavens and earth. We can see how important it is to grasp the symbols to unlock the understanding!

What is this saying so far? The first world (social and spiritual order) met with a destructive flood. The present heavens and earth (social and spiritual order, not the physical heavens and earth) are reserved for the destruction and purifying of fire. Social order was destroyed once and will be destroyed again and the social orders are going to be replaced with a new social order. The plan of God unfolds in pieces over time. It is not the time for all to understand.

2 Peter 3:3-13: (NASB) ⁸*But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.* ⁹*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.* A strong literal reminder in the midst of a symbolic prophecy that God has very long vision and that His plan is for complete repentance! **Now back to symbolic language:** ¹⁰*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.* ¹¹*Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?* Highly symbolic - exhaustive study of the above terms reveals a clear consistency in meaning! The earth, the world, the social order will come crashing down. That social order will never rise again. This is something to rejoice in. ¹²*looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!* ¹³*But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* The new heavens and earth are really a new spiritual controlling power to rule over the new social structure of man here on earth once the old is purged away! We have to be willing to look into scriptures with our minds open and hear what the scriptures really say and not what we want them to say. Sometimes we look at verses like this and the question may arise as to why we would think that the scriptures mix literal and symbolic language. This is the way humanity communicates! We easily understand this.

**So, can we know the mind of God?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...Think about it...!**