

How To Study The Bible – Class 1

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

bible, manuscripts, read, old testament, god, new testament, word, question, study, copy, written, book, reliable, understand, translation, means, scripture, interval, dead sea scrolls, notes

Introduction

06:03

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for bringing many people to join us for our Christian Education Programme, so that we can together learn how to study the Bible. And we pray that you would even though it's afternoon after lunch, some of us may be a little drowsy, a little tired, yet give us the concentration we need in order to grasp the truth and the principles, the information that is going to help us learn more about your Word. We give thanks to You, commit this time into your hands we pray in Jesus name, Amen. Turn with me if you have your notes to the how to study the Bible schedule. If you don't have the notes, I will enlarge it for you here so that you can see what the schedule is going to be like for the next 11 weeks. Okay, this is the schedule. Section one. First things, we're going to look today later, what is the Bible and is it reliable. Since you're going to be learning how to study the Bible, this is very important. You need to know that it is worth really investing time in that it is a reliable Word of God that you can bank your life and your eternity on. But then we are going to go into the nuts and bolts in this course. So we are going to be introduced to the inductive study method. Okay, that's under section one of first things. And in section two, we are going to be looking, if you continue with us and haven't given up after the first one or two sessions, right? The anatomy of the Bible, you're going to get like very cheem, very deep. Okay, I'll explain to you later why it has to be this way. You're going to be looking at how you need to study the Old and the New Testament. So as a difference between the two. Then you're going to look at this word that you may not have encountered before called genres. Okay, now we're going to look at the genre one, which is narratives and histories. Then you're going to look at poetic and wisdom writings. Genre three, gospels, epistles, prophetic, apocalyptic literature. Some of you may be already thinking to yourself, Oh, no. What am I doing here? I can understand. So let me share with you a little of why we are going into such details. Now, most of you have found great benefit in just reading through the Bible. We call it devotional reading. It means that when you wake up in the morning, and you had your coffee or tea, you open your Bible as a devout Christian. And you'll begin to read where you left off yesterday until you find something that speaks to your heart. And then you thank God for it and you begin to pray and ask God to help you apply that truth in your life. Is that right or wrong? There is no right or wrong. Thank God, you're reading your Bible. Okay, thank God that God is speaking to you through your devotions. But you see, this is not a course if you have not realised on how to read your Bible.

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This is a course on how to study the Bible. Now, then some of you may be thinking, 'Now why is it so difficult?' Why don't you just give us some tips and tricks so that my Bible reading is more colourful and

I could get more truth out at a higher speed and that will be a real blessing. Well, that is good. That is good. Up to a point. Just like, just now over lunch, I understand that that is a instant noodle, instant cup noodle station. Right? And if you really, really can't queue up in time for lunch, you went to the cup noodle station and you pay like two bucks. And you have a cup noodle, it helps satisfy that hunger pang for a while, right. But if imagine every week, or every day you have instant noodle, that will not be very healthy, isn't it? So what happens? Somebody has to go deep into the Bible to get the, a bit of hokkien and the ho liao, you know, the hao liao, the nutritious stuff out from the Scripture. And that's where you are fed on Sunday morning. On Sunday morning, what happen actually, is that the pastor who is preaching spent a week or maybe weeks studying the Bible, not devotional reading. Studying the Bible, digging through all these things that you're going to be looking at, so that he can come up with a very nutritious meal for you on Sunday. That's why you could walk away and say, wow, I've been so blessed. The preaching is wonderful, thank God for Pastor Jason and how God use him to speak to our hearts because why? He studied the Bible, he didn't just read it. So you're coming for this course not to learn how to read the Bible. You're coming to this course to learn how to study the Bible. Is it clearer now? Okay, so it's going to be challenging. How challenging? Section three, interpretive tools. You will have to be looking into purpose and contexts. So you're like, okay, this is like going back to school already. And you know, it looks a little like literature, and I don't like that subject. Well, you know, you don't have to like literature. But if you love the Bible, you have to look at all this. All right. And structure and parallels. Linking words, you have to be looking into repetition. Then we will be sharing with you about using command trees and other resources. And finally, we'll end it off with studying difficult passages and familiar passages. So in a sense, what you're going to get out of this course is you stick with us and journey through it in this 11 weeks. It's like you're learning how to cook. Ok, you're learning how to cook. Now I remember years ago, I was at a coffee shop. And this auntie, when I ordered the half boiled egg, she gave me this plastic mug, and she put the lid on and say, 8 minutes later then take out to eat. 8 minutes later, take it out to eat. After I went home, I become a cook, hard boiled egg master. Because I'm very confident, having learned from the coffee shop auntie. 8 minutes in the hot water, the half boiled egg perfect. But then, I also learned a little bit like if you come from the fridge, it's not so good. So it has to be you know, room temperature, then the eight minutes work. So there's a little bit of tweaking, but it's quite simple. But could you imagine, if everything you cook, from fish, to beef, to lamb, to pork, to squid, to crab. You throw inside a hot water tub at eight minutes. Honestly, it's not going to taste very good. And it may not even be very well cooked. It may not even be healthy for you. And so, when you use the cooking analogy, you realise that different meat have different properties. And if you're going to learn how to cook, you must understand the properties of beef that is different from pork, different from fish. And therefore you need to understand how to cook it well and properly so that it will be tasty and nutritious. And that is why you have to look at all these. Because although the Bible is the Word of God, and it speaks to every heart. When you really want to study it, you're going to find out that every book have different properties. It is written differently. Now the question is, if I don't know all this but I've been a Christian, so many years, and I've read it and I'm still blessed my heart. Yes, thank God, He still speaks to our heart regardless of whether you understand all these properties. Just like

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if you have a nice meal, regardless of whether you understand how it came about, it's still going to feed your body. So that's the same when you read the Bible that way. However, however, you would not

know how to prepare that dish yourself. And if you try to, you won't have the confidence that you are accurate. And you also won't know if your conclusions are reliable. Therefore, we need to learn all this in this journey, so that as you try to study the Bible yourself, you will have a more accurate understanding. And you have the confidence that this is reliable. Because remember, we're not talking about devotional reading anymore. We're talking about something a little more serious, how to study the Bible. Okay, so that's my simple introduction, and in my little feeble attempt to scare all of you away so that you are prepared mentally for what we are going to go into. Are there any questions? Any questions about the course? Everyone clear. Good, all ready to know how to cook? All ready to learn about different properties of the Bible? All right, we have a very motivated member there. All right. Okay, well, if you're all okay, I'm going to move on now into the lesson for the day.

I. What is the Bible?

Okay, let's turn in your notes. We're going to look at the Bible whether it is reliable. What does it say for itself? What is the Bible. Okay, so if you have your notes you can refer to it there. And this is where we are going to begin. First of all, I want to highlight to you that the Bible is unlike any other books you have studied. In fact, there's one word in the English used to describe the Bible. It's the word inspired. The word inspired tells us that the Bible claims to be the Word of God. Although is altered by human authors, yet God spoke through men. The result is that what this man wrote, became perfect, reliable, authoritative Word of God without any errors. So if you have your Bibles, turn with me to Second Timothy, chapter three, verse 16. Okay, in this course, you will need your bible. It will be good if you have a notebook with you if you print out the notes or have a digital copy in which you can jot down your thoughts on and a reference like this. Second Timothy chapter three, verse 16. Now Second Timothy, chapter three, verse 16, tells us all scripture is breathed out by God. This is an ESV translation. If you are reading the King James, or maybe the New King James, it would say all Scripture is inspired by God. And that has been the reading for many centuries, until the modern translations came out and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work. The phrase breathed out by God literally means God breathed. And that's why we get the word inspired from the Old English translation. Turn with me now to another passage, First Peter, chapter one, verse 20-21. These two verses tells us what the Bible really is. Although written by human authors, yet God is behind it, making it a unique, distinct book that is very different from normal human writings. First Peter chapter one, verse 20-21.

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First Peter chapter 1:20,21, says, Knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but man spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Scriptures here, we are talking about prophecy, is talking about the Word of God. It is saying that nothing written in the Bible is because of the intention or will of men. Everything in your Bible that you hold your hand from Genesis, the first verse to Revelation, the last verse, is the will or the intention of the Holy Spirit to give to us. Over 3000 times, biblical writers claim to have received their messages from God. In the Old Testament, it's very common to read a phrase like, thus saith the Lord. This is the old English translation. In other words, the people who spoke, they knew that this is not their words. This is God's Word. They were merely the vessels, they were merely the instrument. They were merely the medium

through which the Word of God came. Now, what does it mean then to be inspired? What does it mean for the Bible to be inspired? It doesn't mean that God dictated every single word for men to write down. So that man is nothing more than a typewriter. Nothing more than a dictator, dictating machine. Well, God uses the creativity, uses the style, the vocabulary of the human authors. So you can actually tell that this is very Paulin, in writing, meaning this is written by Paul. Oh, that is, those are the words, that's the language of John the Apostle. This is like, wow, the Hebrew here if you know the language, this is so like what Moses would say. So you could detect their style of writing. You could detect the vocabulary they repeatedly use. You could detect their preferences and their images, etc. But yet, at the end of the day, they wrote exactly what God wanted them to write. So that what you read and hold in your hand, although it went through different human authors to come to us, they will still be the authoritative, reliable Word of God without error. The Scripture tells us in First Peter chapter one that men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Word carried along give us the picture of a ship that caught wind in its sail and begin to move in a certain course to reach a certain destination. And that is a picture of the inspiration of the God breathed Scripture, that has been given to us. So we see men and women, who come from different ages. They were men like Moses, in the Old Testament. Joshua, the Prophet, Samuel. I'm sure you have heard of the prophet Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hezekiah, and so on, and so forth, who were all carried along by the Holy Spirit, when the Word of God was breathed out. So that through their hands, through their minds, through their understanding, they wrote out the Word of God, yet the end product is the Holy inspired Scriptures. So this is what it means for the Bible to be inspired. This is what the Bible claims to be.

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The collection of biblical books, in the history of the inspiration of Scripture began as men of God began to collect these inspired writings and put them in the Ark of the Covenant. If you remember the story, in Genesis going on to Exodus etc, you will know that God commanded Moses to put a copy of the law and put it into the Ark of the Covenant. Now, in the movies you watch, it was the 10 commandments. As a result, we are so educated by the movies that we think only the 10 commandments are put in there. But the Bible says put a copy of the what? Law. And as far as the Hebrews are concerned, the law would include the first five books of the Old Testament. Okay, so definitely more than just those two stone tablets. There are other inspired Scriptures that were collected by the Hebrews, by the people of Israel. And when Jesus came along in the New Testament, He validated the Old Testament Scriptures, because by that time, it was formed into two components. The law and the prophets. So the first five books of Moses, and then you have all the other prophetic writings. Today we have the Psalms, the Proverbs, the major Prophets, the minor prophets. First King, Second King, the historical books. All these under the Proverbs. And Jesus said that not a jot, nor tittle will be erased, because those are the reliable Word of God. So in other words, Jesus came along, and he confirmed that the Old Testament is the Word of God to us. He also prepared his disciples to write the New Testament when he told them about the coming of the Holy Spirit in John chapter 14 and in John chapter 16. That the things that they did not fully understand, the Holy Spirit will remind them and teach them and guide them into all truths. And so you read in the New Testament epistles, that Paul himself claimed that what he wrote is the Word of God. Peter recognised that some of the things Paul wrote were hard to understand, but they are part of Scriptures. So you see, every book of the Bible, every chapter of the Bible, every word in the Bible is equally inspired and authoritative. And this is something we need to keep in mind when we go into the study of the Bible. Any questions about what is the Bible?

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Okay, now, that's a bit here about your own experience. A bit about your own experience. I will say that, in my own experience, I have found the Bible to be an amazing book. I'll just share one little experience. You can't bet your life and salvation on it. But this is just my own experience. You know, when I grew up in church, there was always this joke that if you can't fall asleep, go read the book of Leviticus. I don't know whether you heard this joke before. You know, because everything was so exciting. And there's all these wonderful stories, so they keep you awake, right? If you can't sleep, read Leviticus. I remembered growing up with those jokes passed around. And when I was in my university days, there was one year they change. They made a lot of educational changes. But in my second year, they changed from the normal system to a modular system, which basically means you have to take two exams, and one of them is halfway through the year. So you feel a little stress. I remember feeling a little stress, because I got to study for all these papers and pass them before I move on to the second half. Whereas in my first year, I don't have to study for one year. Only at the end of the year then I study. So I found that I couldn't sleep. Because I was bracing myself for these papers I had to take in my second year, first half. And then I remember this saying. If you can't sleep, read Leviticus. So I took out my Bible, and I begin faithfully to read Leviticus. And I didn't want to skim through it. So I read every ox, every cow, every dog that was slaughtered. How to slaughter and this and that. And so I would faithfully read through because I really wanted to sleep. I wanted to allow these passages to, well, it sound very reverential, but to like, soothe me, bore me to sleep. But you know what happened? I found that not only did I not get bored, I got more and more alert. It was like 2, 3am in the morning I was ploughing through the middle of Leviticus. And I read it with the intention of being soothe, to sit by, got more and more alert. And the more I read it, the more my heart was filled with a piece that I could not understand. And when I finished reading about the Leviticus, although it has nothing to do with my exams, I felt rested and ready to take my exams. I don't know what happened. But I found that the Word of God is just amazing. Even the most boring book can have an effect on your soul and can refresh your spirit, even though you may not understand what really is going on. I remember when Jesus spoke to His disciples, and they didn't understand what he said to them in John chapter six. He said the words I spoke to you, they are Spirit, they are life. That is why the Word of God is so important and amazing. We need to understand that it's inspiring, it's reliable. And I'm sure that as you walk the Lord, you will have your own experiences. You may not fully understand everything that the Bible teaches, but it has an amazing impact on your life. Simply because it is the Word of God. That's why we need to study it. That's why we need to understand it and read it for ourselves. Look now at what the Bible says about itself. Okay, just now was just my little story. May not be true in your experience, but this is what the Bible says. Psalms chapter 12 verse 6, the words of the Lord are pure words like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. Psalm 18, verse 30, the Word of the Lord proves true. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him. Psalms 119, verse 89. Forever, oh Lord, Your Word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Matthew chapter 4, verse 4, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. So according to these passages, if you put it together, you find that the Bible says that the Word of God is pure.

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It's true. It's eternal. It's life giving. And so what's gonna happen to you is, even though you have to learn all these things that you have not considered before, and you'll find them maybe a little heavy, a

little challenging. Yet, as you use these tools you're going to get and begin to dig into the Word of God, you will experience for yourself the life giving true, eternal, pure power of God's Word in your life. So what's the point? Don't reduce your study of the Bible to an academic intellectual exercise. Yes, you will need brain power, you will need perseverance. Yes, you will need to chew on it, think very hard. Yes, you need to exercise your intellect and exercise your powers of reasoning, etc. But don't bring it down to just a matter of the mind. Because this is the word of God. It's going to impact your heart and your life in ways beyond our mental understanding, although it does not bypass our mental understanding. Are you with me on that? The study of Scripture will not bypass your intellect, bypass your reasoning. But it's going to impact you and your life way beyond. It's because it is an eternal life giving word. Okay, any questions at this point? Anyone? Kind of hard to ask questions is a big group, right? So if there are some mics that could be set up, it will help if they, oh, they have. Okay, so we have microphones. Now, you may not have any questions, but along the way, you may have a burning question. So when I asked if you have any questions, and you have a question, what you do is you raise your hand. And then you will see our AV personnel run like flash to you. You pick up the mic, you can speak into the mic, we can all hear and understand your question. All right. So that's what we're gonna do. So keep in mind, there will be a microphone made available for you.

II. Is Our Copy Of the Bible Reliable?

Let's move on. We're going to look at the second part. Is our copy of the Bible reliable? Now, of course, just now, when I talk about all these things, share my experiences, quoted to you scripture, it all sounds very spiritual, and very , you know, correct, devotional. But we still have to ask some hard questions. Because we need to base our faith on reason and on facts on top of faith in a God who has revealed himself. So I want you to understand that your study of the Bible is not going to be an entirely mystical experience. Some people think and talk that way, as if when they read, suddenly they have some dreams and some visions, and you know, nobody else has it. And this is mine. Okay. Now, granted, some may experience God that way, but I want you to know that, while that may be true, in some experiences, most of the time people wants to think and reason and know what is the basis that you say, the Bible is reliable. Because think about it. This is what we are saying about the Word of God. We are saying that it is perfect and without error, not a single mistake. We are saying that it is reliable and understandable enough for Christians to stick their eternity on it. Now, that's a pretty big claim. We're saying that it is sufficient for all matters of godliness. Basically, you're supposed to build your entire life on the Word of God. Now, if you're going to put such weightage on the Bible, you got to ask, is it reliable? So I'm going to give you 3 tests of the reliability of the Bible. 3 tests. Okay, so let's begin with the first one, quantity of manuscripts, quantity of manuscripts. Now, a lot of people think, ah, it's just what you say, the Bible is like any other book. But have you considered that the Bible has the most manuscripts as an ancient writing in the world, that there is no other book that you can claim

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to be true, historically, that has manuscripts beyond the reliability of the Bible. And now that is a very, very big, solid claim. Think about it. How do you know for example, Alexander the Great even existed? If you wish to be sceptical about life and history, how do you know that Qin Shi Huang existed? You said, oh because he built the Great Wall. Who told you he built the Great Wall? But the history book

says so. Which one? The one I read in school. Who wrote it? Well, a professor do so. Did he live during Qin Shi Huang's time? So if you go down that path of reasoning, you realise that no matter how you trace, you have to come back to what we call manuscripts. Because those are the ancient copies of historical writings, that would increase the probability of what you claim to have happened in history to be true. Are you with me now? Or are you lost already? Okay, so the ancient manuscripts we're talking about, the more they are, the less likelihood their fate. The more they are, the less likelihood their fate. And so the first test of reliability is the quantity of manuscripts. That's number 1. We're going to look at that in detail later. Number 2, the quality of those manuscripts, the quality of those manuscripts. Now, you may have like 1000s of these manuscripts, but if every one of them tend to contradict themselves, then you will have some question like, you know, maybe that really didn't happen that way. Because A says this, but B says that. C says that, and they all contradict each other. This is what we mean by quality of manuscripts. Are they all in agreement? Are they good, sound, and reliable. And number 3, the time interval when the original manuscript was written, and the oldest manuscripts we have in our possession. For example, the Gospel of John. Now some claim that the Gospel of John is written later, in the second or third centuries, because they do not believe that is written by the Apostle. They think is a forgery? No, we say that the Gospel of John is written in the first century. So there is a very early eyewitness. John, therefore, live very close to the time of Jesus. He wrote all this down when he was still alive in the first century. Now, that's very good. But then our oldest manuscripts copies of John's original writing, how close is it to that era. The closer it is, the better the quality because we know that the chances of corruption down the ages would be lesser. Now, so those are the 3 tests. First, we will now look at the Old Testament, based on these 3 tests. Okay. Number one, quantity of manuscripts. Now, what we have to admit here is that we do not have as many Old Testament manuscripts as we do for the New Testament manuscripts. Why? Because they were made of animal skins that didn't last very long, so they were made out of animal skins. And what happens is this. The Hebrew people, when they made a copy, make a copy of the manuscripts, what they will do is they will actually burn and destroy the one that is considered flawed, meaning there are holes in it because the animal skin has corrupted over the years. And so, you will find that there are not that many copies of the Old Testament manuscripts.

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But here's the interesting thing. The quality, the quality of the Old Testament manuscripts, has an unparalleled quality because of the Masoretes, who copied the Old Testament between the fifth and ninth centuries A.D, So there's this group of Jewish people who faithfully devoted themselves to copy this manuscript, so when you read the Bible, and you study its development, you will constantly come across this phrase called the Masoretic texts. This refer to this group of people who have up to a very high quality of the manuscript and they are so devout and so careful. One scholar put it this way. The Masoretes had specifications not only for the type of skins to be used, and the size of the column, but there was even a religious ritual necessary for the scribe to perform before he wrote the name of God. Rules governed the kind of ink they were to use, the spacing of the words and also forbid their writing anything from memory. The lines and even the letters were counted methodically. And if a manuscript was found to have even one mistake, immediately it was discarded and destroyed. This is because of the devotion of this Jewish group of scribes called a Masorettes. That's why you will notice what I said just now, quantity not very high, but quality, extremely high. Extremely high, how high? Now we'll look at time interval for the Old Testament. In terms of the time interval, there is a remarkable archaeological

discovery in 1947. Some of you may have heard of this term called the Dead Sea Scrolls. What is so amazing about the Dead Sea Scrolls when it was uncovered? It unearthed more than 100 copies of the Old Testament that has been dated to 200 years before the birth of Christ to A.D 68. So that means in that time between Jesus came 200 years till after he came about 68 years, that was when these manuscripts were dated in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Remember, I mentioned the Masoretic text was written, copied by the Masoretes during the fifth and ninth century AD. So we are not quite sure whether what they copied was quite close to what Jesus said, this is the Law and the Prophets. Remember? Remember, when Jesus put his stamp of approval on the Old Testament, it means it's the Word of God if you believe Jesus to be the Son of God, right? The one who came from heaven to give His life for us. The one who is the perfect revelation of the Father, He knows what is the word of God. Right? So the question is, is this Masoretic text that we are using for our Old Testament today, the same as the Law and the Prophets that Jesus authenticated? What happened is the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947, which is dated all the way back to the time before Jesus. These Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic text match word for word. That was how accurate the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament is. In other words, there is no question of the reliability of the Old Testament. The bottom line is that the Dead Sea Scrolls give us a level of confidence that what we hold in our Bible as the Old Testament is as close as it can get to what Jesus referred to, and what the Jews have been reading throughout the centuries. Now, are there any questions on the Old Testament? Reliability. Any questions? Yes, we have 3 in front, let's have the microphone travel. Okay.

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Sorry, I can't quite get the question?

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You talked about time interval as a test of reliability, right? Yes. Old Testament, what are the time interval between the time of writing

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Between the what and what again?

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Between the incident and the time of writing between what happened and the time of writing?

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Between the incident and the time of writing? Okay, that's a good question. So if I understand your question correctly, is when Moses crossed the Red Sea, right? And then the incident was recorded. What was that time interval? Am I correct? And then from that very original manuscript, if you follow what I was explaining just now to the earliest manuscripts we have in our hands again, what is the time interval? The answer is we don't know. Because we're talking about about 3400 years, if you're dating all the way back to the Exodus. If you are dating it beyond the Exodus all the way to the creation of the world, we're maybe talking about easily another 5 to 10,000 years. So when Moses wrote, obviously, it was several 1000 years after the world was created, right? So we don't know. But you see, we do know that Jesus said that this is the Word of God. In other words, although we can't apply the time interval of the manuscripts to the Law, the Pentateuch and the other writings, you know, with this kind of liberty

because the Jewish people they copy and then there was destruction, and then they regathered the copy. So there was a lot of things happening. The Babylonian captivity, the Assyrian captivity, the burning down of the temple. But how would we know it, then gathered all the fragments, all the passages, all the scrolls? Could there be a missing one? We don't know. But we do know this, that when it eventually came to the time of Jesus, He said that your collection, the Law, and the Prophets, all the 13 books in the Old Testament, they are the Word of God. So that's why I say, If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, if you believe that He is the Word who became flesh, then you will have to accept His testimony because He put His stamp of approval and said, nothing wrong with those that 39 books. They are what is meant to be in our hands as the Old Testament today. Does that help? So very important for the Old Testament is the authentication of Jesus Christ. Got to keep that in mind. Because if I go by time interval, it's too far back already, it's too far back already. Okay, so the authentication of our Lord Jesus is very critical to the Old Testament. But we do know that our Old Testament based on the Masoretic texts, fifth to ninth century, is very reliable because of the Dead Sea Scrolls dated during the time of Jesus. So that's how you link the two. All right, so beyond that, it's Jesus word, you can count on it. All right, good. Good question. Yes.

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Thanks Pastor Chee Keen. My question is regarding the reliability of the Old Testament. I read a lot of articles and watch a lot documentary about this. And one of the question I was pondering was that the Old Testament has a lot of stories that is being referred to by even more ancient civilizations like Samaritans and Babylonians. Is the Old Testament been plagiarised by the Hebrews? Or are these events actually happened? And they just confirming the stories from an even ancient civilization to prove that the Old Testament is an overtime or?

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Okay, if I understand your question correctly, you're saying that the stories in the Old Testament has parallels with the ancient customs and practices? So who borrowed from whom? Is that the question? Okay, that's a very good question. If you go back into a lot of the stories in the Old Testament, all the way back, for example, to God, declaring to Abraham that as the stars in heaven, a sand in the sea, Genesis 15, so shall your descendants be and then he had a ritual in which he walked through all these carcasses that have been sacrificed the animals to say, basically, I'm making a covenant with you, Abraham. And if I were to break the covenant, then may I be chopped up or, you know, severed the way these animals are. So this is an ancient custom, close to the practices. It can be traced in the other ancient customs of that day. Okay, so what does that mean? Well, it simply means that when God engaged men in the Old Testament, He did not engaged Israel in isolation to the rest of the world. There is a lot of inter changes. So there are certain things that maybe Israel did, the other nations copied them. Maybe some practices like the way you conduct a covenant. Make a covenant that you borrow from other ancient customs. as well. Does that mean, then the next question would be this make the Bible something less reliable? Well, the answer is no. In fact, you should encourage us to know that the Word of God did not come to men, even in ancient days in a vacuum. It came to men and women who lived in those different histories and cultural right where they are, and there God spoke to them. Right, according to the way they could understand a covenant, understand a certain practice. But there are certain practices where they have corrupted themselves, like the Canaanites that are so wicked, and have such a ability to draw men into sin, that God said, you must not follow their custom.

That's why you separate yourselves from them. So certain customs, they are to be separated from. Certain customs, actually, there is a bit of a sharing. Okay, and all these tells us that God is engaging His people to live out their lives as witnesses for His glory, in a very real time and space of their time. So unless you are a very serious student of ancient history, if we go into those details, then we will have a lot of snoring and snoozing and stuff. But I think it's enough to know that the Word of God is not written to anyone in the Old or New Testament in a vacuum. Okay, there's a lot of interchanges. And even when Paul, for example, in the New Testament went up to Mars Hill in Greece, in Athens, he spoke of their poets, and he quoted from their poets, in order to draw their attention to what the Greeks claimed to be the unknown God. So there's all this interaction going on. Okay, so the nation of Israel, the people in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, they were not isolated from the culture of their times. I'm not sure whether I understood your question and replied it, but I just want to stress that it doesn't make the Bible less reliable. It should make us more encouraged to know that the Bible is very relevant. Okay, because it is speaking to people who lives in very real time and space of their culture in their day.

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Instead of taking another question, allow me to finish up on the New Testament. Okay. And then we'll open up for question if we still have time. And you can always stay behind the check with me if you have further questions. All right. So we'll just stop here for the question and answer part. I'm so glad you're thinking along with me. New Testament, okay, remember the three tests of reliability, three tests of reliability. First, we're going to look at a quantity of manuscripts. Now, this is why we can be very, very happy to inform everyone that we have over 5700 Greek New Testament manuscripts ranging from the early 2nd century to the 16th century AD. Okay, so 5700 manuscripts. When you include the early Arabic, Latin, Coptic translations, we have over 25,000 manuscripts. So just now 5700 is all Greek, all Greek translation. I mean, all Greek manuscripts. Arabic, Latin, Coptic translations, add that up together, you have 25,000, early manuscripts. Just looking at the Greek manuscripts, 10 to 15 of them date to within the first 100 years after the original was written. And about 50, to the first 200 years. And this is a very large number when you compare the New Testament to other ancient texts. For example, when you consider the famous annuals written by the Roman historian Tacitus, we only have one copy dating to About the ninth century, 800 years after he wrote. Now this is all very technical, but I just want you to see in contrast to other Greek manuscripts of that era, that what we have in the New Testament, large number of quantity narrow in time interval. So think of it this way, the New Testament has not just 10 times, or 100 times. It has a 1000 times as many manuscripts as classical Greek writings. In other words, we have so many New Testament manuscripts to compare with that we can come to a very accurate reading of the New Testament, in our Bible today. Now, let's do, next at the second test, which is the quality of the manuscripts, quality of the manuscripts. Regarding the quality of the manuscripts, I like to quote 2 scholars, Gary Phillips and William Brown. It is true, they said, however, that the quality of the New Testament manuscripts is less than that of the Old Testament. Okay, so quantity, Old Testament don't seem to be very high, New Testament, very high. Quality, Old Testament, very high, New Testament, compared to the Old, not as high. More variant readings do exist. That's why when you read certain translation of the New Testament, sometimes you read the ancient manuscripts have this reading. NIV will say something like the better manuscript says this. Okay, so I actually don't quite like NIV reading, because sometimes you make you feel like you're reading some inferior texts. Because they say better manuscripts, right? But the ESV and other

translators say they are variant readings, they are, there's this ancient manuscripts that have this, that is slightly different. But we need to know this. The variant readings, that means something of conflict or difference, are usually matters, or spelling or word order, not matters of doctrine. But because there are so many manuscripts of the New Testament, when you bring them all together, the truth is, less than 1% of this inconsistencies really affect the reading of the New Testament. So what does this mean? It means that, although there are variant readings, that means there's a bit of conflict, is this the right letter here? Is this the right letter there? Is this what this word means, etc, less than 1% of it really affect anything at all in the way you read your New Testament. So the conclusion is the quality of the New Testament is also extremely high.

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Just that not as high as the Old Testament. But compared to anything else, there is no question of doubt that we do not have the Word of God. So why are there so many copies? Because the New Testament contains the good news. So what happened is, you know, when they received the Gospel, they copied it and they distributed it. They translate it, they distribute it. And so the Gospel spread through all these ways and means, and they wanted to get the word out. And that is why we have so many New Testament manuscripts. Just as you know, our Bible is actually the all time worldwide bestseller in the world. So great a bestseller that nobody will put it up on their bestseller list, because it wins every year. Why? Because the Bible contains the Gospel and is constantly distributed, so in different languages, handed out free, so that people can know the way of salvation. Now, the third test. Time interval. Remember that the time interval between the original manuscript was written and the oldest manuscript we have today is actually unusually short for ancient writings. Some of our manuscripts are from the third and fourth centuries and others date to the very century in which it was written. So, if you look at this little chart here in your notes,

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what do you see? What you see is that compared to other ancient writings, the other ancient writings of that day. Caesar time interval, 1000 years 10 copies. Plato, 1200 years, seven copies, Telitus or Tacitus, actually, the one I mentioned earlier, 1000 years 20 copies. Pliny 750 years, seven copies, Tusede 1300 years, eight copies. And when you look at the New Testament, hardly any time interval, and you have over 5000 manuscripts. So what does this mean? It means that God has not only breathed out His Word, He has preserved the manuscripts of both the Old and New Testament, pass all the three tests of quantity, quality, time interval, so that you and I today can have the Word of God, know the Gospel, and we can study it for ourselves, and have those pure words, eternal words, life changing words, in our lives today. And that is why we need to study the Bible, because God gave it to us that we can come to know Him. So the very Bible you have in your hand is actually, honestly a miracle in the history of manuscripts and writing, that is unexplainable. Because if you think of the history of Israel, and the amount of captivity, wars and destruction that they are faced. If you think about how the Gospel has spread throughout the world, and in some cases, you know, like in North Africa, and in Turkey, they have actually been snuffed out the Gospel weakness and have converted, yet the New Testament continue to be passed on. The Gospel continues to spread. You see that the hand of God is in preserving, in preserving the Word of God to us. There was a time in history, when no one was allowed to read the Bible in their own language. Do you know when was that? It's called the Dark Ages. The only language you're allowed to read the Bible in is in Latin. And that's the Latin translation

called the Vulgate. In fact, anyone who tried to translate the Bible into their common tongue, they will be burned at the stake.

III. Translations

1:01:53

That was during the time of the Roman Catholic persecution. So you heard of men like Tyndale, Wycliffe, you know, who lost their lives. But eventually the Reformation broke out under Martin Luther. And what happens is that the Bible began to be translated into many, many different languages. But what happens is this. A bit of extra historical fact for you. Just before this happened, Constantinople in Turkey fell a few centuries earlier, and the Greek scholars fled Constantinople, and they brought all the Greek manuscripts to the western part of Europe. And so although they do not know Latin, and they did not know how to read the Bible, in those languages, the early Christian scholars were able to refer to the original Greek and begin translating the New Testament out of it into their common tongue. Why did God allow this kind of synchronisation of time, synchronisation of major historical events, just so that we can have the Word of God in our language today. So that we can know the Gospel, know Him and know His Word. So, before I close, a final word on translation. So we were talking about earlier, Greek, Hebrew, but most of us don't study the Bible that way. Are translations reliable? Just now I mentioned about some translations in the common tongue beyond the Latin Vulgate. Well, yes, you can trust and study the Bible in the English language, simply because the faithful accurate translation in any language will represent the meaning of the origin texts. So we have to select a good faithful translation, rather than think that you have to go to Bible seminary and learn Hebrew and Greek. Otherwise, it may take you three to five years before you can study the Bible. Right. So what are good English translations? Well, we recommend the English Standard Version to be a good solid translation as a starting point. Okay, because it has a word for word equivalent principle behind its translation. Some of you may come from churches where you have this attachment to the King James Version. Not an issue. If you prefer the King James Version, just be sure to check on some of the old English so you do not misread the meaning in the King James version for some modern text meaning. For example, you may want to check on what are victuals, if you have heard of that term for King James Version readers. You may want to find out whether nephew means nephew or nephew means son. So these are the English usage 500 years ago. And in order for to know what the English is talking about in the King James, you need to make sure that it means the same thing when you hear it today. So that's just for the King James. Now, there are some translations that are, you know, maybe not so ideal. I highlighted the NIV. There's also the Holman, Christian Standard Bible, which is the one by the Southern Baptists. They tend to go for the thought for thought translation. What happens in our thought for thought translation of the English Bible is this. You don't get the word for word equivalents. For example, Chinese name Ren Shan Ren Hai. Correct? What does it mean? Excellent. Word for word translation. What is a thought for thought translation?

1:06:10

Many, many people, a lot of people, right? Now, in this case, it's okay. But if you study the Bible, and every thought is translated for you, you miss some of the nuances or some of the insights behind the original. So a good faithful translation is a word for word translation. That is something you can use with confidence. If you use that thought for thought translation, you need to be aware that some of the

details may be lost from the original, because they were translating the thought, not the word. Okay, on the extreme for word for word, that is the NASB, or the New American Standard Version. Okay, the New American Standard Version is very, very strict in the word for word. Okay, very strict on the word for word. So when you read it right, it doesn't feel like English. It feels like you're reading Greek or Hebrew in English. And so you really have to labour through it. If you want to have something very close to the origin, try the NASB. It may actually help you to sleep if you are having difficulty doing so. Unlike the Book of Leviticus. All right, so that's the NASB. So are our translations good enough? Yes. If they are faithful to the original Greek, and Hebrew. What are some of these versions? The ESV is good. The King James, New King James, you can use. As long as you use something that is word for word rather than thought for thought, you are ready, good to start off studying the Bible. Okay, so that's all I have for you today. What is the Bible and we are looking at what is the Bible and is it reliable? Next week, we will begin on the inductive study method. Okay. This week, actually, there are some stories, some historical facts. Next week, you got to come really prepared. So have a very good lunch. Enjoy your lunch. Have nice coffee and tea, come with a refreshed mind, notebooks, Bible all ready. And then we will grapple with what is Inductive Bible study. Okay, so that's all I have for you this afternoon. Before we close, okay, anyone who has a question you can stay behind, I'll be happy to address it. But because the time now is ready 2:37, I'm going to pray for all of you and dismiss and not to hold you back for the question and answer session. But do feel free to stay behind if you have questions. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for today. Thank you for everyone who came to learn how to study the Bible and see for themselves that it is reliable. We want to pray that You would give us that hunger and that thirst for righteousness found in your Word, so that we can know Your truth and that Your truth can help us to walk with You in the light of who You are. May our study of the Bible draw us into a deeper understanding of the God, revealed for us in Your Holy Scriptures. So help us on this journey. Give us the determination, the perseverance to do so. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Thank you very much. You all may go. But if you like to have any questions you can stay behind. I'll be here, happy to answer them.