

Why Do We Believe What We Believe?

By Jim Sayles

“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefields besides, is mere fight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.” Martin Luther

The battlefields are many within and without the church. Martin Luther knew both, and he didn't flinch.

* * *

I have been asked, “Why even engage in disputes about the interpretation of prophetic scripture? That only adds fuel to the fire of division in the body of Christ. Why not just let the main things be the main thing as we maintain our readiness for the return of the Lord?”

If our eyes are open to the true condition of the church in America and the western world with 1500+ known denominations, we will have to admit that the disputes about doctrine, practice, and the interpretation of scripture, including prophetic scripture, have grown to the point where we have become the full blown manifestation of Paul's condemning words, (we are)...***children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...***

Yet, there has never been a period of time in church history when we have not debated the interpretation of prophetic scripture as it relates to the future of the church. This fact is truer today than it has ever been, and many believers avoid biblical prophecy altogether in order to avoid the controversy. But the fact that we strongly and vehemently disagree with one another is not proof that we cannot know the truth. It is proof that the voice of the Spirit of truth who was sent to guide us into all truth, even revealing the truth about things to come, has not been heard by most. And if His voice has not been heard, whose voice has been heard?

In the past I viewed the paradoxes (apparent contradictions) and difficult prophetic passages in the Bible as being “problems”. Now I understand that the apparent paradoxes and difficult passages in scripture are deliberate. They are there so that we cannot come to an easy intellectual understanding of the truth,

even through an exhaustive, inductive, exegesis of scripture, unless the Spirit of truth “guides” us by revelation in the process.

“I am sending you the Spirit of truth, and He will guide you into all truth.” John 16:13

“ALL” the truth.

The truth thus discovered, though, will be in perfect agreement with the whole counsel of God and the complete fabric of scripture. And every believer who has been taken through this process will be of one mind and one judgment concerning the meaning thus revealed.

Scripture includes all kinds of literary devices too numerous to list. Figures of speech like metaphors, anthropomorphism, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, oxymoron, and paradox are common in our own language and speech whether we recognize what they are or not, and they are common in scripture. Other important literary devices used in scripture include typeology, allegory, and parables, and we must remember that all of these are used deliberately by the author, the Spirit of truth.

The Lord Himself explained the purpose of using parables to present scriptural truth, and we can extend this to the use of other literary devices and to difficult, seemingly paradoxical passages.

When the Lord’s disciples asked him why He spoke to the crowds in parables, Jesus said, ***To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.... Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*** (Matthew 13:13 NASB) (emphasis is the author’s)

What He told them (and is telling us by extension) is that the true meaning of the parables and many other literary devices used in scripture cannot be fully received or understood unless we can “see” with the eyes of our hearts (i.e. by revelation) and “hear” with spiritual ears what the Spirit is saying.

Intellectually it is possible to discern and identify the various figures of speech used in scripture, but the true meaning in many cases is not revealed apart from guidance by the Spirit of truth.

...when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13 NASB
(emphasis is the author's)

The purpose of prophetic scripture is to reveal what is to come in veiled parabolic language that cannot be accurately interpreted or specifically applied without guidance from the Spirit of truth whom God has promised will disclose what is to come. And the primary purpose of God in biblical prophecy is to reveal Christ and prepare God's people for what is to come.

It is, therefore, not to be avoided, but to be sought from the right source.

Thus, the debate about the rapture of the church and the immediate future of both the church and national Israel is not a mere dispute about the interpretation of prophetic scripture. It's about Satan's great deceptions of the end times church, particularly from the beginning of the nineteenth century forward, and his attempt to steal and becloud what is intended by God for our clear understanding and preparation.

It is not God who has confused and divided us. It is our own phariseical tendency to lean on and trust what others (our chosen authorities) tell us or to trust in our own intellectual understanding **apart from** the revelation of the Spirit of truth.

Deception is the key to understanding the entirety of Satan's strategy of opposition to the plan of God regarding the Father's covenant creation, man. It was deception that caused the fall of man from covenant status. It is deception that causes men to reject the free gift of redemption to covenant status. It is deception that empowers the worldwide persecution and martyrdom of Christians. And it is deception that will bring about the great Antichrist one world government under which an "uncountable number" of Christian believers will be martyred and Satan, through the Antichrist, will be openly worshipped as "god."

Intelligence alone is not a cure or protection against deception. **Natural intelligence is the very chessboard upon which Satan works his effective strategies**, and by this you can infer that advanced seminary degrees in theology are not a cure or protection against his deceptions.

I am not against natural learning in any field, including theology, but we are confronted by an obvious fact. There has never been a point in the history of the church when we have had so many seminary graduates in positions of leadership in the church or as many Bible study resources available to all believers, and, at the same time, there has never been a time in the history of the church when we

have been more divided by “winds of doctrine and by the cunning and craftiness of men.”

Many of the fundamental questions we have about the future of the church in the end times will be answered completely and with Spirit-guided confirmation for the reader who approaches the subject with a pure heart devoted to the truth of God. But this is not about a mere controversy over the interpretation of prophetic scripture. It is about something much, much more important. It is about how the Lord both intends and commands for each and every believer to be “guided” into all truth, including the truth about things to come in order to overcome the deceptions of the enemy, especially now as we rapidly approach the complete fulfillment of biblical prophecies concerning the church.

But first we must come to an understanding of why we believe what we believe.

The Power of Tradition and Popular Belief

In 1517 a Catholic priest named Martin Luther pinned a document entitled, “95 Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences”, on the Archbishop’s door to protest the Roman Catholic practice of granting sinners pardons for their sins in exchange for money.

At the time, Martin Luther had no intention of leaving the priesthood or the Roman Catholic Church, but his theses offered scriptural challenges to the Pope-authorized practice in place at the time.

What followed, because of the stubborn refusal of the church to consider his challenges to the practice, was Martin Luther’s excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church, which, for them, was a sentence of death and eternal damnation. It also eventually sparked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Consider this. In 1517 there was no church outside of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church (a denomination that varied only slightly from Roman Catholic doctrine and practice).

When Martin Luther pinned his theses on the Archbishop’s door he was going against the entire known church in Europe at that time.

Imagine yourself in his position. What could possibly motivate a priest to challenge the traditions and teachings of the entire known church in Europe at that time? And, based on the results, what or who do you think motivated him?

In this particular instance one man was more right than the Pope and the entire authoritarian infrastructure of the Roman Catholic Church, and his protest against the doctrine and practice of “indulgences” was motivated, not by personal

ambition and rebelliousness, but by faith (i.e. truth as revealed by the Spirit of truth).

Almost every Christian believer in America and the western world has an opinion concerning the “rapture.” The most popular view held by evangelical Protestant Christians is that the church will be raptured away before the “tribulation” and before the coming of Christ on the day of the Lord.

The Roman Catholic church and the Orthodox churches, who heavily criticize the Protestant view that scripture can and should be interpreted by the priesthood of believers, hold to the Historic Pre-millennialism view of a single, last day resurrection of all the saints, living and dead..

I find this fact to be very interesting.

If evangelical Protestants are honest in self-evaluation, though, we will have to confess that we only give lip service to our belief that we are each a part of the royal priesthood under our High Priest and are, therefore, to receive the truth, promises, and commands of God directly from Him.

What is true for many Protestants at ground level is the attitude that only certain seminary trained denominational “authorities” and “experts” can really interpret scripture accurately. We are thus indoctrinated by the church we grew up in, or we are indoctrinated by those authorities and experts we choose to believe for one reason or other.

Definitions are in order:

Presumption is a faulty conclusion based on inaccurate logic or inaccurate information from natural and/or supernatural sources.

Assumption is the acceptance of someone else’s conclusion as our own. An assumption may be accurate or it may be inaccurate, depending on the source, but even if it is accurate, it cannot result in faith unless the Spirit of truth supernaturally confirms it to us.

And contrary to the Lord’s command as recorded in John 16:13-15 most believers **assume** truth from various “authorities” other than the authority of the “author.”

If we are probed to find out why we believe what we believe about any doctrine or practice, or what we believe about the “rapture”, our rationale will probably reflect that we have intellectually adopted or assumed the popular view of our chosen authorities and experts, and we have intellectually adopted or assumed the various deductive proof texts our chosen authorities and experts have given us to support their own presumptions and assumptions.

Some presumptions concerning doctrine and practice are arrived at without any direct demonic influence, but others, at times, have been subject to direct demonic deception.

Based on numerous personal encounters and correspondence I have been shocked to learn that the majority of born again Christians, especially born again Charismatic Christians who claim the advantage of either having or being ministered to by all the revelatory gifts of the Spirit (prophecy, word of wisdom, word of knowledge), believe in the pre-tribulation rapture simply because their chosen authorities, experts, and ministry leaders believe it and teach it.

This Charismatic “advantage”, though, is split. There are many Charismatic “authorities”, “experts”, and ministry leaders who do not believe it or teach it.

What can we say about this? Is the Spirit Himself divided on this subject?

If we have attended Dallas Theological Seminary and others that have adopted Dispensational theology, we have developed a complex theological rationale to support the Dispensational view of end time events and the distinctiveness of a pre-trib rapture even though we do not agree among ourselves on the details of Dispensational theology. Again, is the Spirit Himself divided on this subject?

If we are diligent or interested in prophecy we will dig deeper into the deductive proofs that our spiritual authorities have taught us to believe, and, if our “investment” in what we believe is big enough, if we have our own prophecy television show, if we have written books, or if we have positions of authority in a seminary that reflects our interpretive views, we will fight to the finish to defend our views just as the Papacy fought to defend its practice of “indulgences.”

This, of course, reminds me of the arrogance of the intellectual GIANTS of Israel in the Lord’s day, believing that they could interpret the truth, promises, and commands of God by intellectual examination alone. But Paul, who had been a “Pharisee of Pharisees” trained by the great rabbi and teacher, Gamaliel, before his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus, rebutted them by saying that the mysteries of God are appraised supernaturally as the Spirit “guides” us, “combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” so that we have a higher, Spirit-enlightened, revelatory understanding of the truth, promises, and commands of God.

Our conclusion, then, must be that whatever truth, promises, or commands the Spirit reveals to one He reveals exactly the same to all others who have received it.

Therefore, if any two disagree concerning any truth, promise, or command of the Lord, only two possibilities exist: 1) one is right and one is wrong; or, 2) both are wrong.

This leads us to a very simple, observable, and undeniable fact. Intellect apart from the “guidance” of the Spirit divides, and intellect that has been “guided” by the Spirit unites.

Each and every Christian, no matter how well educated or how great their ministry, believes a mixture of “truth” confirmed by the Spirit, truth confirmed only by the intellect, and truth assumed or adopted from other sources and authorities.

Therefore, we remain divided in any area of doctrine and practice that has not been confirmed to us by the Spirit of truth, but “we”, of course, are right, and “they” are wrong where this non-Spirit-confirmed truth is concerned.

If the Spirit of truth sent each of us a computer printout showing how much of what we believe has been received as a living word of faith and how much has been intellectually received by presumption or assumption, I think we would all be shocked

Yet, the common assumption of many Christian believers in the western world is that an advanced seminary degree and training is needed in order to understand scripture. Therefore, we have priests, pastors, and other authorities to tell us what to believe concerning doctrine and practice. And the evidence of this false assumption is that “we” (the entire church in America and the west) are still immature, divided, and blown around by “winds of doctrine,” including winds of doctrine concerning biblical prophecy.

And, because we accept this condition of being immature and divided as “normal” for the church, we all dig our heels in to support whatever cultural assumptions we have received from our denominations and authorities concerning Christian doctrine and practice, while we reject any attempt by others to indoctrinate us with their presumptions and assumptions.

Let me be quick to say that I am not against seminary training, or advanced training in hermeneutics IF that training does not hinder the guidance of the Spirit of truth in the one being trained.

Still, the greatest hindrance to truth is the **ARROGANT** and irrational confidence we have in our own intellects.

In the small Southern Baptist church where I first came to faith at the ripe old age of thirty-eight, we had an interim pastor who taught biblical Hebrew and Greek at the Baptist college in our town.

From the pulpit he used the original Hebrew or Greek texts, translating as he read, to “prove” his amillennial position. We were all very impressed with his intellectual achievement, but there was no life, and no light in what he taught.

Though he had us outgunned intellectually, none of us received by assumption what he was teaching, because our spirits did not confirm it.

Hearing without “hearing”, seeing without “seeing”, and understanding without “understanding” is a perfect description of what it means to examine scripture without being “guided” by the revelatory light of the Spirit in the process, and our division into 1500+ denominations in America alone, as well as our countless angry controversies over words, especially prophetic words, is absolute PROOF of our condition.

The questions all of us need to be constantly asking ourselves are: “Do I really know why I believe what I believe concerning the doctrine and practice of the Christian faith, and, especially, prophetic scripture? How much of what I think I believe has been received and confirmed by revelation from the Spirit of truth? How much of what I think I believe has been assumed as a belief from various authorities such as my denomination, my pastor, and my favorite Bible experts and authors, all of whom disagree about various doctrines and practices with other denominational authorities and Bible experts?”

And if you are one who teaches others what to believe concerning the truth, promises, and commands of God, how do you tell the difference between intellectual presumption and genuine revelatory truth?

How do you, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, tell the difference between what you have received and confirmed from the Teacher and what you have received and believe from other sources, including your own inadequate intellect?

The revelation of truth by the Spirit of truth, our only true authority

But you are not to be called rabbi...(teacher)...***for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.*** Matthew 23:8-11 ESV (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)

The words of the Lord clearly tell us that no man, whether apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher, and no institution of man, is to be our absolute AUTHORITY in regard to the truth, promises, and commands of God.

The word “denomination” means a distinct and separate set of beliefs and practices within the context of Christian religion, and the World Christian Database recognizes 1500 denominations in America alone.

Yet, we know that denominationalism is not the will of God.

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...Phillipians 1:27 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:1-6 (emphasis is the author's)

There are some beliefs concerning the nature of God, the birth, life, death, resurrection, and lordship of Jesus Christ, the sinfulness of man, and our need to be reconciled with God through our faith in Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, that are common to most “Christians” whether truly “born again” or merely nominal believers.

This has been commonly expressed through various “creeds” such as the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, but most of us find ourselves in some particular denomination or some particular fellowship within a denomination (which includes “non-denominational” churches that are also “denominations” by definition) either by cultural assimilation (i.e. the church we grew up in) or by choice for one reason or another.

The issues that have divided us are primarily based on doctrine and practice, which is based on the interpretation and understanding of scripture.

Some of this seems almost silly, such as the use of musical instruments in corporate worship, but others concern matters that can be heretical, such as the varying doctrines concerning salvation (the doctrine of soteriology). Others, like the dispute between “cessationists” (those who believe that some of the gifts of the Spirit ceased when the canon of scripture was complete) and “Charismatics” (those who believe that the gifts of the Spirit have not ceased) are major divisions within the body of Christ, while many are just a matter of culture or preference.

The Gordon-Cornwell Theological Seminary did a study to find out how many books have been written about Christianity, including various translations of the Bible, Bible commentaries, and all others, and they came up with six million.

Let that astonishing fact settle into your mind for a moment, and then imagine the Lord going into a gigantic bookstore containing a single copy of all six million books. How many of those would He pull off the shelves in righteous anger because they were neither inspired or authorized by Him, including some translations of the Bible itself, just as He did when He threw the moneychangers out of the temple?

Your estimation and mine may be different, but I believe the floor would be so littered with books that one would scarcely be able to walk down the aisles. Many

of those on the floor would include books that are partially inspired and partially authorized but contain parts that confuse and divide the body of Christ through uninspired intellectual presumption or, even, “doctrines of demons.”

What is our individual responsibility to the Lord in knowing the truth then? Logically we know that everything we believe intellectually is not correct, unless we assume that our denomination, out of the 1500 denominations recognized in America alone, is correct in all its doctrine and practice. Or that we, individually, out of millions of “Christians” worldwide, are correct in all our doctrine and practice.

The subject of Matthew 23:8-11, previously quoted, relates to the Lord’s concerns about the Pharisees and scribes who resisted and denied the revealed truth of who He was, and, as a result, He said of them, ***You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?***

The Pharisees and scribes were guilty of what can be called “religiosity”. They were religious, but they had no revelation. They were dedicated and fervent in their religiosity, but there was no life in it, no genuine faith response to God. And, because the people looked to them for spiritual guidance, there was no life in the dedicated and fervent religious life of the people, either.

Pay attention to this fact you apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Whatever you teach in an authoritarian manner without urging those to whom you are ministering to confirm the truth for themselves like the “noble” Bereans, you heap the criticism of the Lord as recorded in Matthew 23:13-33 on yourselves.

That is why James said, “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

This is a simple truth. To whatever extent you or I respond directly to the truth, promises, and commands of God revealed supernaturally by the Spirit of truth, our Counselor, who was sent to guide us into all truth, we walk by faith. But to whatever extent we respond by intellectual presumption (without corresponding revelation) to the beliefs of our denominations, our experts and other religious authorities that we seem to be so dependent upon, we walk according to the flesh, and our walk is less than worthless. It is frequently opposed to the revealed will of the One who loved us and gave His life for us.

This is a dilemma. It is a dilemma faced by each one of us individually and by the corporate body of Christ as a whole. And the evidence of our current status is plainly visible to the world and to ourselves.

Faith comes by “hearing” and “seeing”

First and foremost, let us examine the faith that we do have. Paul tells us that faith is believing in our “hearts”, our unique spirit-soul connection, and acting in obedience to what we believe in our hearts, which will frequently contradict what we “believe” in our intellects alone without the influence or revelatory insight of the Holy Spirit coming through our spirits.

To de-mystify this experience which should be a common experience for all believers but frequently is not, “revelation” (*apokalupsis* Strong’s #602), in addition to coming to us as the Spirit “guides” us in our study and meditation of the holy writ, also comes to us through our spiritual conscience, the still small voice of the Spirit, through our own spiritual gifts, through the spiritual gifts of others, through spiritual dreams and visions, through certain kinds of circumstances like answered prayer, through the discipline of the Lord, and even through angelic visitation.

The FEAR of even using the word, “revelation”, much less promoting it, by many denominational authorities is the fear that some, like Jim Jones, Maitreya, David Koresh, and others will claim to have been given new “truth” or new “scripture.”

This is not a false fear. Many who claim revelation and Spirit-guided insight do not have it. But are we going to deny and reject what God has given us to empower us to walk by faith just because some claim revelation and Spirit-guided insight who do not have it?

No one comes to faith in Christ without revelation, and no one walks by faith without daily, moment by moment revelation. It is by revelation, too, that the body of Christ can and will recognize false prophets, false doctrine, and false practice.

It is only through our intellectual arrogance that we will be fooled by false prophets, false doctrine, and false practice. As I said before, man’s intellect is the chessboard upon which Satan works all of his dialectic schemes of deception.

The presumptive claim of some denominational authorities is that once revelation came to us in the form of scripture, we are now to interpret scripture using our intellects alone. Therefore, it is necessary to have advanced seminary training in how we are to accomplish this interpretation for the benefit of the common man who will believe and practice what we “experts” have decided intellectually is correct for us to believe and practice.

But what are we to say then about the fact that all the seminary graduates disagree with one another about doctrine and practice?

What the protestant church, like Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, has done is to insert a priesthood between God and the people, which is not God’s

intent. His intent is that we would all be a royal priesthood in direct communion with our High Priest.

A great many of our protestant denominations are just as authoritarian as the Roman Catholic Church in that we see our pastors and prophets (our professional “priests”) as authorities and intermediaries between God and the common believer (i.e. “ministers” and “lay men”). Some even see the professional “priesthood” as a governing authority over the body, and many church fellowships are run more like corporations than local fellowships of believers operating as an organic body under the headship of Christ.

Let us clearly understand this one, simple truth: whatever the Spirit of truth reveals to one believer He will reveal to all other believers exactly the same. The Spirit is not divided against Himself. Therefore, division and disagreement, concerning the meaning of the biblical text, all doctrine and practice, and the truth, promises, and commands of God, is evidence that the revelation of the Spirit of truth who was sent to “guide” us into all truth, is lacking.

Let us also clearly understand that having a seminary education is not, in itself, proof that we have rejected the importance of revelation in receiving the truth of God, but it is not proof that we have it, either.

It is interesting to me that the underground church in China, Asia, and various third world and Muslim countries is almost entirely lacking in seminary trained leadership, but believers in the persecuted underground church experience a high degree of revelation, unity, and evangelistic zeal. There is almost no denominationalism, and the experience of believers is very much like the book of Acts.

I’m not idealizing the persecuted, underground church. Their circumstances, like the circumstances faced by believers in the book of Acts, are extreme, and all who come to faith in those places must be able to “hear” the voice of the Lord and they must obey by faith.

I fear, though, that they will be tempted by the desire for seminary trained leadership in the body of Christ in China and in other places where the persecuted, underground church is thriving.

Satan is definitely aware that imposing a “professional” seminary trained leadership on the body of Christ in China and other similar countries will likely have the same effect it has had on America and the western world.

Those of us in America and the western world who are currently (but not permanently) able to experience freedom of religion without overt persecution, tend to lean on authoritarian leadership (i.e. the Pope, our denominations, our pastors, and our chosen experts) to tell us what to believe and practice, even though we know that the innumerable differences in doctrine and practice coming to us from these authorities is contrary to the will of God.

Read Matthew 28:8-11 once again:

But you are not to be called rabbi ... (teacher) ..., for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. Matthew 23:8-11 ESV (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

If the disciple is asked, therefore, “What is your AUTHORITY (source) for believing this doctrine or that doctrine or this interpretation or that interpretation or following this practice or that practice?”, there is only one correct answer.

It is not “the Pope.” It is not “my pastor.” It is not “my denomination.” It is not “the prophet,” and it is not “the Holy KJV Bible.”

The correct answer is, “My authority is the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is the Spirit of truth, my Teacher and my Counselor, and He speaks His living word into my heart as I rightly divide the scriptures by thorough inductive study and meditation, waiting on Him to guide me into all truth appropriately as He pleases.”

All else is hearsay, and, sometimes, heresy.

This word from the Lord is for you, individually, and for me, individually. If you are an “authority” in the body of Christ you must, like Martin Luther pinning his theses on the Archbishop’s door, respond directly to the Teacher in what you believe and practice by faith, not by any arrogant intellectual presumption or assumption adopted in your seminary training.

If you are one who depends on authorities in the body of Christ to tell you what to believe, you must become like the Bereans, whom Paul said were “noble” because they examined the scripture to see if what Paul, who was an “authority”, was preaching was true.

The Thessalonians believed Paul and received the message by Spirit-confirmed faith, but Paul said the Bereans were more “noble” than the Thessalonians, because they did not merely receive the truth by revelation, they examined the scriptures to confirm it. Both the Thessalonians and the Bereans received the truth from the Teacher by revelation, but the Thessalonians were willing to receive it on the basis of Paul’s authority alone.

Others came later to the Thessalonians teaching that the day of the Lord had already come, and the Thessalonians received those “authorities” and believed them just as they had believed Paul. In doing so, what they heard was not combined with “faith”, because the Spirit did not confirm what they were being taught by these “authorities.” Yet, they believed.

This is what Paul instructed those Thessalonians to do as a result of their error, and these are our instructions as well:

Do not spurn the gifts and utterances of the prophets [do not depreciate prophetic revelations nor despise inspired instruction or exhortation or warning]. But test and prove all things [until you can recognize] what is good; [to that] hold fast.

1 Thessalonians 5:20,21 Amplified (emphasis is the author's)

Paul even told the church at Corinth that they were not to merely take what he said as being true because of who he was, but that there were to “judge” (examine and agree) what he said.

I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. 1 Corinthians 10:15 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

Even the prophets are to be judged by other prophets regarding what they say, so that everything is confirmed by two or three witnesses.

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others ... (other prophets) ... pass judgment. 1 Corinthians 14:29 NASB (insert is the author's)

There are prophets, pastors and teachers who are gifted by God to help us “see” the truth, but there are also false prophets, false pastors, and false teachers who cause us to “see” the lie, just as the serpent caused Eve to “see” that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was “good” and “desirable” to make one wise. And, because she was deceived, she acted on the deception of Satan instead of the truth of God.

The flesh is easily stirred to imagine that what we are receiving is from the Spirit, but we are to test and prove all things before we hold fast to them and accept them as being from the Spirit.

It is, therefore, every believer's responsibility to first, examine ourselves as we acknowledge that much of what we have received from our chosen authorities and traditions and believe, has not been tested and confirmed to us by the Spirit of truth who was sent to “guide” us into all truth.

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth... John 16:13 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

ALL the truth.

Secondly it is every believer's responsibility to rightly divide the word, not merely seeking deductive "proof texts" to confirm what they already believe and have received from "authorities" other than the Teacher but seeking the Truth (deliberate capital "T") with a pure heart and a pure mind that is free of any motivation other than a desire to know the truth no matter what that means or what that costs.

This is accomplished through an inductive examination of scripture, allowing the text itself to suggest meaning that can then be confirmed and applied by the Spirit.

Definitions are in order:

A deductive examination of scripture is related to "isogesis" (reading meaning into the text). The most common form of deductive Bible study is to seek "proof texts" that support that which we already believe, and, if we are incorrect, we are unlikely to discover the true meaning.

An inductive examination of scripture is related to "exegesis" (extracting meaning from the text). The purpose of exegesis is to clearly understand the meaning of the text in context so that we are positioned to receive insight and confirmation from the Spirit of truth who was sent to guide us into all truth.

And, as we "hear" Spirit-inspired teaching and preaching or receive inspired teaching and preaching by "seeing" it in written form, we also allow the Spirit to confirm what we have "heard" and "seen" by examining scripture to test what we have received.

But we must do it inductively, not deductively seeking only "proof texts" that will intellectually confirm what we want to believe.

We all begin our Christian walk at the same place as we confirm by faith the basic tenets of the Christian faith such as those found in the Apostle's Creed. These are the corner pieces of the jig-saw puzzle called "Truth". Then we add the important doctrines with a single straight edge so that we have a complete framework.

From there we work inward, building on what we have received and confirmed, and, in all of this, the Lord has provided us with the gift of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, chosen and empowered by Him to "equip" the body of Christ for works of service (through faith). This "equipping", though, is not by authoritarian intellectual indoctrination. It is through the gifts of the Spirit operating in them to facilitate our individual response to the revelation of truth from the Teacher.

And woe to those who are false apostles, false prophets, false evangelists, false pastors and teachers, when they insist that we believe what they tell us to believe, causing us to assumptively force pieces of the puzzle into places where they do not belong, and thus preventing us from receiving additional truth from that part of the puzzle.

I have even learned that the apparent paradoxes and contradictions in scripture (not including errors in translation) are deliberate devices of the Spirit of truth, to force us to seek revelatory insight. And, once revelatory insight is gained, the secrets of the paradox are beautifully revealed, which is an awesome confirmation to the one who is thus enlightened.

Something very interesting happens when any “born again” believer who has accepted the basic tenets of the Christian faith, by faith, but has received his/her beliefs about most other doctrine and practice by assumption from authorities other than the Teacher, begins this quest of inductively examining scripture to discover the truth, knowing that the truth may conflict with what he/she already believes intellectually.

The truth begins to be opened up to the one who is seeking it, and those puzzle pieces that were forced into places where they did not belong, begin to be removed, so that we can be “guided” by the Teacher as we put the appropriate piece in its place. And not only will the written word of scripture begin to unfold beautifully without conflict or confusion, but the exciting, empowering, faith-filled, life-changing process of participating in the divine nature of Jesus Christ Himself, glorifying Him and manifesting His love, His truth, and His life to others, by grace through faith, will also be magnified.

Matthew 7:7,8 is frequently quoted in relation to our prayers for “things” we want and “circumstances” we need to overcome, but the deepest application concerns the gift of God in terms of our expanded revelatory understanding of scripture and our corresponding faith walk.

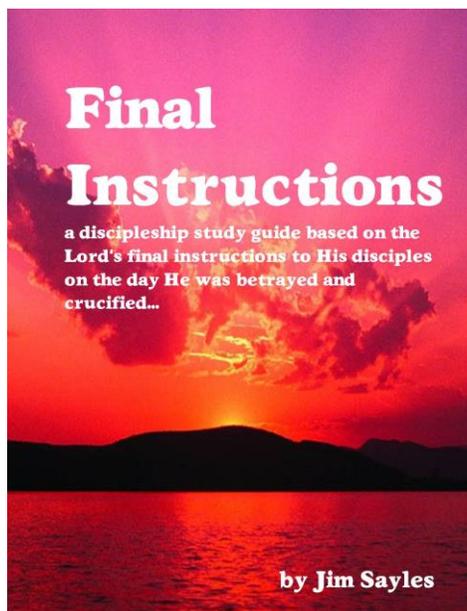
Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Matthew 7:7,8 NASB

The author’s paraphrase, then, is: “Ask (and keep on asking) for wisdom and revelation concerning His truth, promises, and commands, and it will be given to you. For everyone who asks for wisdom and revelation also receives, and he who seeks (and keeps on seeking) wisdom and revelation finds it, and to him who knocks (and keeps on knocking), the door into truth will be opened, and the light of His glory will illuminate that one’s path and his understanding.”

Closing Statement:

Deception is Satan's tool. Satan's deception is implemented spiritually (demonically) on the chessboard of man's natural intellect. God's weapon against deception is also implemented spiritually, through revelation, by the Spirit of truth, and God's revelation checkmates all the deceptions of the enemy.

May you be counted among the "noble" in spirit as you examine scripture with a pure heart determined to know and respond to the truth at all costs, and may God grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you are "guided" into all truth, even the truth about things to come so that you will be in unity with all others who have received and believed the truth and are prepared for what is to come just as He has intended.



A Bible study guide utilizing the full range of inductive Bible study techniques to reveal the depth of the Lord's instructions to His immediate disciples, and subsequently to us who are His disciples today.

Available on AMAZON or as a free print-it-yourself PDF on the author's website.

[The End Times Church](#)