

How to Read the Bible

“For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2nd Peter 1:21

Five types of Bible Literature:

1. **Historical Narrative**, or stories... (*Genesis through Esther, the four Gospels and Acts*)
2. **Wisdom**, or poetry... (*Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*)
3. **Didactic**, or coaching/learning... *New Testament epistles (Romans through Hebrews)*
4. **Prophetic**... *Five major (Isaiah through Daniel) and twelve minor (Hosea through Malachi)*
5. **Apocalyptic**... *part of Daniel, part of Ezekiel and all of Revelation*

Prophetic Literature:

Prophecy is proclaiming the Word of God both for the present, and also for the future.

1. There are five major prophetic books (*Isaiah through Daniel*) and twelve minor prophetic books (*Hosea through Malachi*). The only difference between a ‘major’ and a ‘minor’ prophet is the length of the book.
2. The primary message of the prophets was for Israel to stop sinning and return to the Lord. They predicted what would happen if the people didn’t heed the warning.
3. There are two aspects to prophecy:
 - a) Forthtelling ~ proclaiming the teachings of God to the people. Primarily, it relates to righteous living. Prophecy is very hopeful! *Isaiah 1:2-4, 7, 9, 10-20*
 - b) Foretelling ~ predicting the future. Jewish prophets had to be 100% accurate. *Deuteronomy 18:17-22*

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Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalyptic Books:

These books communicate truth through symbols.

Revelation (the last book in the Bible) is the only complete book like this. There are sections of **Daniel**, **Ezekiel** and **Zechariah** that are apocalyptic.

Moving Beyond Understanding

The Three-Step Process:

1. **Explanation:**

- a) Studying the text and uncovering the meaning it had when it was originally written.
- b) This involves understanding the genre (type) of literature, and applying the principles we have been learning so far.
- c) You must understand the text in its original context before you try applying it to your own context.
- d) God, the Holy Spirit, doesn't do our studying for us.

2. **Meditation:**

- a) Meditate ~ to focus your mind for a period of time for spiritual purposes, to think carefully about something.
- b) Now that you have studied the text and have an understanding of what it meant in its original setting, start asking yourself questions, like:
 - i. *What basic principle is being communicated here?*
 - ii. *Is the principle culturally bound, or is it universal?*
 - iii. *How could this principle apply to modern times – to my culture?*
 - iv. *How does this principle apply to areas of my life?*
- c) Memorize some of the scriptures. Let them soak deep into your heart.

Lesson 4

How to Read the Bible

Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature

Moving Beyond Understanding (continued)

The Three-Step Process:

3. Application:

- a) What is the issue in my life that God is illuminating?
- b) Am I dealing with the symptoms (of that issue), or the 'root cause' of the problem?
Am I rearranging the fruit or dealing with the root?
- c) What process must I go through to come into line with God on this?
What personal behavioral patterns must be recognized / addressed / changed?
- d) As I study to interpret (and apply) the Truth of God's Word, God's Word, through the Holy Spirit, guides and transforms me.
- e) It will take time; so allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in you.

**"Do your best
to present yourself to God
as one approved,
a workman who does not need to be ashamed
and who correctly handles
the Word of Truth."
2nd Timothy 2:15**

Lesson 4