

# How to Enjoy the Bible – Dave Garrett

First Baptist Church – February 8, 1981

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*This is an unedited transcript from a message that my dad, Dave Garrett, gave at First Baptist Church of Newbury Park while teaching the adult Sunday School class. In 2024 I recovered and remastered the audio from the original cassette recording and I make it and other recordings and transcripts available here for you to enjoy. The audio is available the Dwelling Richly podcast under the same title or here at [www.JenniferGRichmond.com/DaveGarrett](http://www.JenniferGRichmond.com/DaveGarrett)*

*This message explores how to enjoy the Bible by studying it inductively, rightly dividing the word of truth, and understanding its context. He emphasizes avoiding legalism and correctly interpreting scripture based on literary form, subject matter, times, and dispensations. A perfect word for us today as it was in 1981!*

*~Be blessed and be in the Word.*

*Jennifer Richmond*

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It is a lofty goal, I think, to try to take a whole group and teach them how to actually enjoy the Bible. From the point of view I've taken, we need to look at the very biggest picture possible and then begin to divide the picture up into several categories.

I talked to you about looking at the Bible inductively and not deductively. That simply means we don't want to come to the Bible with presuppositions, our own prejudices. We'd like to approach the Bible as the Bereans did, searching the Scripture to see if these things be so, taking all the information that we find in a subject in Scripture, gathering that information together, and coming to certain conclusions based upon what we've gathered together. Not doing it the other way around by taking a conclusion that we've already come to and then looking around the Scripture to find verses that seem to support our previously held conclusion.

I try not to do that and I will teach you not to do it, although I recognize that you will. As long as you know what to do, then your obedience is before the Lord.

People say it is difficult to interpret the Bible. I think this is because they approach it from the point of view that it's a book that needs to be interpreted. I think more accurately, God wants to speak to us. If it's God's desire to inform us about his plan, about his will, and about his way with man, then I think we have to approach this book with a certain amount of confidence that God has said precisely what he wanted to say.

When we approach the book as something we need to interpret or figure out, we lay the groundwork for a trap that we'll eventually fall into. One of the first things I wanted to bring up is that the subject matter of the Bible was Jesus Christ. The object was for God to interpret himself to us. The principle of interpretation laid down in Scripture is found in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

I took you back to Proverbs 3:6 and talked about that passage of scripture, which many of you have memorized. Deuteronomy was taking the pathway, and that same word in Proverbs 3:6 is found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, also found in 2 Timothy 2:15. I went to some length to talk about the New American Standard, how it translates that verse, handling accurately the word of God. While it is a proper translation, it doesn't take into account the other key scripture, which is Proverbs 3:6. Right division is key.

As I looked at the principle of right division, we saw that there were going to be four major areas in which we wanted to divide the Bible. We want to make sure we have this outline from which to work. I divided the outline into four major segments. We want them to divide the Bible according to its literary form. Secondly, we want them to divide the Bible according to its subject matter. Thirdly, we want them to divide the Bible according to its times and dispensations. And finally, we want to divide the Bible according to its dispensational truth and teachings.

I finished three subjects out of my four the last time I was here on Sunday evening, and tonight I want to finish the fourth, but I want to look at the other three. In terms of its literary form, the simplest division I mentioned this morning was the fact that the Bible is already divided into Old and New Testament for us, representing the Old and New Covenant. Testament is simply the word for covenant. One of the most confusing things to many

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people who try to understand the Bible, especially the New Testament, is the fact that the New Covenant wasn't instituted until Jesus died.

Therefore, the Old Covenant, which was established under Moses and which was expansive, given to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, held sway through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The incidents, those things which happened to the light of Christ and to the disciples, all happened while this old covenant was still in operation. When Christ died, he established in his blood what is declared to be in Jeremiah 31 a new covenant, and this covenant we are now under. The basic literary is built in between the Old and the New Testament.

We looked at the separate books of the Bible. I told you about how the Old Testament is divided, how we have the Pentateuch, and we have the writings and different things like that. I talked about how the versions are divided up into different chapters, verses, and subheadings. We talked about punctuation. I got involved in how you divide the Bible up literarily.

The second area I wanted to look at was how we divided the Bible up into subject matter. We found in 1 Corinthians 10:32 that we have three major subjects in the Bible: the Jews, the Gentile, and the Church of God. The Bible really can be divided depending upon whom is being addressed. To whom is this being written? Is it being written to you? Is it being written to Gentile? Is it being written to the Church of God? When you read the Bible, you must understand these things because oftentimes it's like reading a letter which wasn't addressed to you, someone promising you something that actually wasn't promised to you.

I was looking into the difference between interpretation and application. One of the two principles I talked about last Sunday night was that while the entire Bible is for us, it was not written to us all. It is for us all, but not written to us all. There we have to make a distinction between the application of every portion of Scripture. All Scripture is inspired by God. It is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and righteousness that the man of God and woman of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. That applies to each and every one of us. It's all applicable from Genesis to Revelation, whether or not it's fitting to the Gentile or the Church of God. However, by interpretation, we must understand the context in which it's written and to whom it's written so that we won't get different aspects of God's program confused.

We looked at subject matter. Then we talked about times and dispensations, and I described what a dispensation was. The word dispensation in English means a time in which something is dispensed. The Greek word is the word from which we get the English word economy, meaning administration. God administrated his plans towards man in different ways. In the first 11 chapters of Genesis, God was dealing with the Gentiles, the world in general. Then he began dealing with one man in particular, Abraham, and from Abraham grew the nation of Israel. There was a patriarchal administration during Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then there was the administration of law from Mount Sinai all through the book of the four Gospels.

We found that there was an administration of truth, the dispensation of the grace of God, which has pertained ever since the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost until the present hour. That's another 1950 years after Christ died, was buried, rose again, and ascended to heaven. I was hoping that we'd all be around in 50 years to make sure that my message was correct.

We looked at dispensations and times. Now we'll run into the final section, which will take up the rest of the time we have. I was kindly pointed out to me that I went 13 minutes over last time, so I'll try to get this in so that you can get back and make a choice between what's on television tonight.

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Let's rightly divide the word of truth as to its dispensational truth. I want to go over five major points. I'll give you the five points to begin with and you can go back and check if you've gotten lost or if I have. These are critical principles in terms of interpretation and need to be understood and applied.

Principle number one, one part of the past is not to be read into another part of the past. Point number two, the past is not to be read into the present. Point number three, the present is not to be read into the past. Point number four, the future is not to be read into the present. Point number five, one part of the future is not to be read into another part of the future.

Open your Bibles with me to Luke chapter 9. Luke asked me with tongue in cheek this morning, "Will I read my Bible this morning, Dave?" Yes, you will need your Bible this morning and this evening. Luke chapter 9, verse 3. This occurs during a period of time when a kingdom was being proclaimed. As Jesus proclaimed the kingdom, he said unto them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staff nor script, neither bread, neither money, neither have two coats apiece. Whatsoever house you enter into, abide and then depart. Whosoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them." They departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Now turn over to Luke chapter 22. "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, script, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his script, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me. And he was reckoned among the transgressors. For the things concerning me have an end." They said, "Lord, behold, here are two swords." And he said unto them, "It is enough."

When you look back at Luke chapter 9, verse 3, he tells them not to take certain things for their journey. Then in Luke chapter 22, he says to take them. Something had happened. Something was changed. This kind of change is also noticed in Matthew, found in Matthew chapter 12. Matthew chapter 12 talks about the rejection of the king. First comes the proclamation of the king, and then came his rejection. During the period of his rejection, the situations changed. If you took one part of the past and tried to read it into another part of the past, for example, the period of time from Genesis chapter 1 through 11 and the economy which prevailed at that time, and read it into the economy which prevailed from Genesis 12 through the Gospels, or vice versa, you would find discrepancies.

Some liberals have pointed out discrepancies in Luke and said there's a contradiction in the Bible. There is no contradiction. What there is is a different administration that prevails under the two different commands.

The past is not a major problem we have in terms of interpretation. The second area is reading the past into the present. Look at Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 25. "And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us." How was righteousness obtained? By observing to do all the commandments.

Keep your finger there in Deuteronomy. Turn over to Romans chapter 3, verse 20. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Look at Galatians chapter 2, verse 16. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

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We have the present dispensation which indicates that our justification, our standing with God, depends upon one thing only: the finished work of Jesus Christ. There is no other way to become righteous before God but by accepting the one who has the righteousness of God and placing faith in his finished work. That establishes my relationship with God. As stated in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Your righteousness, which is essential to fellowship with God, only comes by faith. The faith principle was at work from Abraham on, which Paul clearly talks about in Romans 3 and 4. However, the righteousness required under the law by observing it is not the righteousness required now. No one is justified by that righteousness.

If we take the standard of grace and bring it back into the Old Testament, and take the standard of the Old Testament and bring it into grace, we will have real trouble. The trouble generally boils down to what we call legalism—thinking we gain favor with God by keeping set rules. There is nothing wrong with keeping rules, but we don't gain favor with God by keeping rules. We gain favor with God by faith, because without faith, it is impossible to please him. So we don't want to read the law, the old dispensation, into grace.

Let's look at Isaiah chapter 30. Those of you who don't have a King James or an old-fashioned King James, if you've got a Scofield Bible, it won't count. Scofield won't work. Look at Isaiah chapter 30. At the top of the page, it says, "The people threatened for trusting in Egypt." The next page says, "God's mercy to his church." Someone was attacked in June. On the one page, it says, "The people threatened for trusting in Egypt." The next says, "God's mercy to his church."

Now, look at Isaiah 43, verse 1. "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." To whom is this letter written? To Jacob and Israel. That we can get comfort out of these verses, no doubt, but that God is comforting his church here, I have some grave misgivings about that. God is not comforting his church in Isaiah. God is comforting Israel. And Israel is not the church.

Another problem in terms of bringing the past into the present is found in certain psalms known as the imprecatory psalms, which contend, bring the judgment down upon people. For example, Psalm 137:8-9, "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." We don't have any right to pray that psalm for anyone else, but in the time in which it was written, that psalm is extremely applicable.

The Sabbath is another clear example. The Sabbath was a command. Failure to keep the Sabbath resulted in stoning. The Seventh-day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists argue that since God rested on the seventh day, we need to keep the Sabbath day and keep it holy. I appreciate that principle of scripture—work six days and rest the seventh. It's a good principle of scripture. But when you begin separating different aspects of the ceremonial law and picking the ones you want, saying that applies to me and I should obey that but that part of the law doesn't apply to me and I won't obey that, then who's God?

Look at Galatians chapter 4, verses 9-11. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

Turn to Romans chapter 14, verses 5-6. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." This is a lot different than stoning the poor character.

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The Sabbath day is not binding upon us in terms of a ceremonial law. I would recommend it to you if anybody's out there working.

One of the problems of reading the past into the present is not understanding the mystery found in Romans 16, Ephesians 3, and Colossians 1. Look at Romans chapter 16, verse 25. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."

Look at Ephesians chapter 3, verses 3-5. "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Look at verse 9. "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."

Colossians 1:26, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." There is a mystery which was not revealed in the Old Testament but was hidden in God and revealed through the Apostle Paul. The mystery is that the Gentile and the Jew, these two, would become one new man. This mystery was committed to the Apostle Paul.

Look at John chapter 16, verses 12-13. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." Jesus anticipated the revelation of the mystery, but it was not available to the saints under the old dispensation until the revelation was given to the Apostle Paul.

Now, open your Bibles to Luke chapter 9. Yes, you should have brought your Bibles. Luke chapter 9, verse 3. Luke chapter 9 occurs during a period of time which is called the kingdom proclamation. Jesus said unto them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece." But in Luke chapter 22, he said, "He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." Something had happened. Something was changed.

The same change is noticed in Matthew chapter 12, which talks about the rejection of the king. First comes the proclamation of the king, then his rejection. During his rejection, the situations changed. If you take one part of the past and read it into another part, such as the period from Genesis chapter 1 through 11 and try to harmonize it with Genesis 12 through the Gospels, you will find discrepancies.

Some point out these discrepancies and say there's a contradiction in the Bible. There's no contradiction. There are just different administrations under the two different commands.

Another major problem in interpretation is reading the past into the present. Look at Deuteronomy 6:25. "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." How was righteousness obtained? By observing all the commandments.

Now, turn to Romans 3:20. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Look at Galatians 2:16. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." We have the present dispensation indicating our justification depends on the finished work of Christ, not the deeds of the law.

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Reading the Old Testament law into the present grace results in legalism. Keeping rules doesn't earn favor with God—faith does. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him.

Another issue is the Sabbath. Look at Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5. Failure to keep the Sabbath resulted in stoning. Seventh-day Baptists argue for keeping the Sabbath holy, but separating ceremonial laws to pick what applies is not right. Look at Galatians 4:9-11 and Romans 14:5-6. We are not bound by the ceremonial law of the Sabbath. Observing the Sabbath was clear in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, Paul teaches not to judge others regarding sabbaths.

Next, consider the mystery in Romans 16, Ephesians 3, and Colossians 1. Romans 16:25 speaks of the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began. Ephesians 3:3-9 reveals the mystery of Christ, which was hidden in God and revealed to Paul. This mystery is the unity of Jew and Gentile as one new man in Christ. It was hidden in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament.

Reading church truth into the Old Testament or even into the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John can be confusing. Look at Romans 15:8. Jesus came as a minister to the circumcision. He came to His own, but His own received Him not. Only after His rejection was the message of salvation made available to us.

Regarding future into the present, consider the tribulation. Look at Jeremiah 30:7. It is called the time of Jacob's trouble. Daniel 12:1 also speaks of a time of trouble for Israel, not the church. The tribulation has nothing to do with the church, which is a mystery. The church will be taken out before the tribulation.

Matthew 24:38-41 speaks of those taken in judgment, not raptured. It refers to Israel and the tribulation, not the church.

Psalm 2:8-9 is often misapplied by missionaries, but it refers to ruling with a rod of iron, not the Great Commission.

Finally, the doctrine of reward is often forgotten. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 speaks of rewards for faithfulness. Paul, in Philippians 3:8-14, speaks of pressing toward the prize of the high calling. There is an out-resurrection, a better resurrection for those who are faithful. The bema seat of Christ is for rewards, not judgment.

Four judgments: the bema seat of Christ for the church, the judgment of nations at Christ's second coming, the judgment of Jews at the throne of His glory, and the great white throne judgment for unbelievers.

Understanding the proper division of Scripture helps avoid confusion. God moves in different ways at different times, and recognizing these divisions is crucial.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the word of God. We thank you that it is alive, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Give us men and women who desire the prize, who study the word to show themselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth. Thank you for each one who comes in Jesus' name. Amen.