

Dr. Ernest Martin's Home Study Course: Lesson 1

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These notes, composed from 2013 on, are based on taped Home Study Course made between 1977-98 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D. Former Head of Theology for the Worldwide Church of God; he resigned in January 1974 because of his unresolved doctrinal issues with the administration. Sadly Dr. Martin died in January 2002, a great loss to the world and to those who seek Biblical truth.

HOME BIBLE STUDY LESSON 1 FUNDAMENTALS OF SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE

The first and most important 'Key' to understanding the Bible and be able to grow in Grace and Knowledge before you even start is to ask God and Christ Jesus for Their help. You need the gifts of 'faith', 'open eyes' and 'open ears', and the help of the Holy Spirit, the Power of God, to understand the Bible and be convicted that it is indeed the Word of our Creator God.

Do not believe what any human being tells you what any section of the Bible means, ask Christ Jesus for His help.

Remember, Satan and his ministers can and do appear as 'angels of light'. Ministers of Churchianity do not have horns, they appear like 'good', sincere people. Indeed, they say that 'Jesus is the Christ', and claim to be doing God's work, but they are deceiving billions of people around the globe with a 'false' Gospel, exactly as Christ Jesus warned in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Ministers will tell you that the Bible commands you to 'work out your own salvation', but is that really true?

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

But even this often quoted verse is not actually a true representation of the thought Paul was teaching. Yes, we have to do the 'works' of reading and studying carefully, as well as all the other requirements of a Christian, but this quotation on its own is ***out of context*** and gives entirely the wrong impression of what we have to do.

It is **not** we who are working out our own salvation...

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

It is not we who can do the 'work' required, it is God, Christ Jesus who does the work, who gives us the 'faith', who 'opens our minds'. It is essential that we understand this right from the start!

Remember: There is only one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus who is alive in Heaven.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Jesus, the ROCK said, "I will build my church!" My ecclesia, my group.

We certainly do not need religious people who claim to have the authority of Christ Jesus, and claim to come to you in His name, and by His authority to teach us.

1 John 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, **and ye need not that any man teach you**: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

We most certainly do need the help of the Holy Spirit to open our minds.

John 16:13 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.

We need special information to enable us 'rightly to divide' God's Word.

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

There are some other essential practical keys to study the Bible effectively, 'rightly to divide' God's Word, and gain real understanding. Because most people do not apply these important keys when they read the Bible, they usually a) do not understand what they read b) do not comprehend the real meaning and c) frequently get the message confused and end up misunderstanding or misrepresenting the scriptures.

For instance, most Christians have the notion that Christ spoke in parables to make the meaning clearer to the public. This is completely opposite to what Christ actually taught.

Matthew 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

The disciples did not understand the parables, but Christ explained the meaning to them; but Christ did not explain them to the general public.

Anyone who sincerely asks God and Christ for understanding in this era may receive the gifts of an open mind, of a humble heart, and the direct help of the Holy Spirit to enable them to understand the Holy Scriptures.

Matthew 13:34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

Christ here makes it very clear, that He spoke in parables “all these things”, and “without a parable” he did not speak to them.

Matthew 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Yahweh (Jesus) had inspired the Old Testament prophets to explain this fact over and over again, that He would speak in parables to obscure the meaning, and secondly, He would reveal the way the Bible was written by God in a language that was simple in itself, but contained “secret” information. This “secret” information was not to be understood by anyone unless God opened their minds, their ears, and their eyes, and unless they had the help of the Holy Spirit.

People can read the words, the sentences, and they may understand what the words mean, but the real, true ‘meaning’ is hidden from them.

Why does God ‘blind’ people to the truth, and stop their ears from ‘hearing’ and understanding? This is the way God works with human beings, and it is His prerogative to do so. It must be the best way for our growth and development, all in His good time!

People do not always see this as ‘fair’. Who are we to judge God as unfair?? As the Bible says, “Does the pot say to the potter why have you

made me thus?" The earnest student will come to appreciate a different God than the counterfeit offered by sectarian churches.

Jesus dealt differently with His disciples than He did with the general public. When the disciples asked Him about the parables, He explained the meaning of the parables to them, yet they still did not always understand the deeper meaning.

Matthew 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. 13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Then Jesus explained how blessed His disciples were (and we are!) to be given the insights He was sharing with them. They were learning things from Him that many Prophets (and sincere believers) had wanted to understand, but it had not been their time to have the clarity and the new information the disciples were receiving.

Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. 17 For verily I say unto you, That many Prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Every word spoken by Jesus Christ while He was on earth was true. When the Pharisees questioned Him, He reminded them that the inspired scriptures cannot be broken.

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

Only the wise will understand. And who are the wise? Those who have knowledge are those who deeply respect, love and 'fear' God.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Knowledge, understanding and wisdom concerning what the Bible tells us and God's plan for humankind is a gift. This information can only come through our being given the gift of 'eyes to see' and the 'ears to hear'.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and Grace, which was given us (as a gift) in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Isaiah 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. 9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Here is an important key to understanding the scriptures. The first time a word is used in prose, or the first time a subject is introduced in the Bible sets the key. For more understanding of the word or topic, then go to the last mention of that word or topic, and you have the 'alpha and the omega' of it. Then you know where you have started, and you know what the conclusion of the matter is. Then one can select portions of scripture in between which shed more light on the subject.

For instance, in the beginning God said in Genesis, "Let us make man in our image". This "us" is a plural, but is talking about one God. One family of God, both male and female as is everything living. This concept is

expanded in many parts of the Bible and could be a study subject on its own.

Isaiah 29:10 For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the Prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. 11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is **sealed**, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: 12 And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

Isaiah was talking to the top people. So it does not matter whether someone is well educated, a 'scholar', or not well educated, they will not understand the deep meaning of the scriptures because they are 'sealed' up until it is their time to know. Also in our era, for many others too, until the knowledge of the scriptures is increased at the time of the end.

Isaiah 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

This is so true for the vast majority of people who think of themselves as Christian, or hold religious views. Most are controlled, guided, or rather misled by false ministers and false prophets, who like the Pharisees of Christ's day, put their own ideas ahead of God's teachings in His Word.

Isaiah 29:14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous (marvellous bad, not good!) work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. 15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

God sees all, but they, the religious people, do not really deeply believe in the One True God, nor do they respect His Word as the Truth. There is a veil over their eyes.

Isaiah 29:16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? 17 Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon (Jerusalem)

shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?

The Temple was made from Cedars of Lebanon, and the use of the word Lebanon in this context means Jerusalem, not the country.

The religions of the present evil world have indeed turned everything precious of God's truths upside down, and inside out. Most reject the fact of Creation, and that they are actually children of God. Instead the majority now believe or accept blindly the ridiculous, insane theory of Darwin, that everything came from nothing!

As a result, some of the inhabitants of the world will have to learn the hard way. When? When Christ returns to reign.

Isaiah 24:17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. 18 And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. 19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. 20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. 22 And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. 23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

There are some hard times coming for the inhabitants of this world. But Christ is going to remove the veil over everyone's eyes, and make a joyful feast for all people. Clearly this has not happened yet!

Isaiah 25:6 And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

Acts 8:26-31 The story of the Ethiopian Eunuch teaches that we need some man (Jesus Christ, not a human!) to explain the meaning of the scriptures to us. We certainly can seek help from earnest students of the Bible, but it has to be someone who has the Holy Spirit! Even then, we need to exercise great caution and pray we won't be deceived in any way.

Isaiah 53 foretells of the suffering and crucifixion of Christ in alarming detail. It was well known that it was the Jewish rulers and the priests who had instigated the crucifixion of Christ by the Roman officials.

Luke 24:19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

Paul said that if the rulers had really known who Christ was, and the truth of the mystery, they would not have crucified Him.

1 Corinthians 2: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a **mystery, even the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

This 'mystery', was the development of the Gospel which was revealed to Paul directly by Christ Jesus in or around 63 A.D., explaining the transition from the old way of looking at things to the new and more exciting 'good news' about our future: The banishment of the enmity between humans under the law and God by Christ's obedience, and Universal Salvation.

This is what some fundamental churches allude to, but never really explore, and they do not have any idea what they are missing! They keep Christ in the background as they insist on unnecessary obedience to the physical aspects of the old law, and demand illegal tithes from adherents and make their followers sin by paying them! This 'bondage' to (only some aspects of) the law actually denies Christ's sacrifice, and the gift of His Spirit and Grace.

Galatians 2:16 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. Verse 21 I do not

frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Those who put themselves back under any aspect of the Law, would have to keep it all. But this is not possible since there is no Temple, and no Priesthood. For instance, tithing of produce and animals was designed to provide those who operated the Temple with food and sustenance. When the Temple was destroyed, and the Priesthood was 'stood down' these laws were put into suspension. Ministers who insist on their parishioners tithing are making 'merchandise' of these hapless people.

2 Peter 2 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, **even denying the Lord that bought them**, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:* whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

So in attempting to practice parts of the Law to be 'obedient' to God, means that they do not really believe that Christ changed the Law by bringing Faith and His Spirit, and the New Law of Love. So in truth, they are not really Christians at all!

We are still struggling with many aspects of the '**mystery, even the hidden wisdom**', but as it promises in Daniel, God is going to reveal more truths to His children as the end time approaches.

Daniel 12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased... 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth (God's power) is come, he (it - God's Power) will guide you into all truth: for he (it) shall not speak of himself (itself); but whatsoever he (it) shall hear, that shall he (it) speak: and he (it) will shew you things to come.

God's Holy Spirit is not an entity or a person. The Holy Spirit is the Power of God that He uses to perform His Works. The doctrine of the Trinity is a false teaching.

There is a coming restoration and expansion of Bible knowledge and Christianity before Christ returns. However, God does not pour it into our minds through a funnel, so we have to study! Salvation is not by works, but there is still 'work' for a Christian to do, the work of using the gifts of Belief, Confidence, Faith, Repentance that He gives us as we study His Word.

Romans 11:4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Are there seven thousand 'reserved' by God in the world today who are given the gift of eyes to see? Who knows? Christ says 'few there be that find it'. Nobody can 'see' unless God removes the scales. Why does God blind? That is His prerogative, and we need to use His faith to trust that this is the best way.

Seven thousand will become 144,000 of Israel who are sealed, and an innumerable multitude when Christ returns.

Romans 11:6 And if by Grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more Grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Grace is an amazing gift, as the song says, and all people will receive it in the end.

2 Corinthians 3:13 And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

People think they are worshipping God when they opt to put themselves under any part of the law of Moses in this era, but in fact they are ensuring the blinkers and blinders stay on! The whole of the Jewish people and their nation, as well as many 'Christian' denominations are still in bondage to their adherence to the Law which Christ came to fulfill.

How to study and rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Key No. 1 As stated at the beginning of this lesson, the vast majority of humans cannot understand parables and other key principles in the Bible because their eyes are blinded, and their ears cannot hear.

Key No. 2 The information needed to understand any word or topic is rarely in one place in the scriptures, but clues to the complete meaning are usually scattered throughout the Bible, here a little and there a little.

We need to understand how the Bible is constructed and put together. Here is the next crucial key that we need. Many have preached this key without really understanding it, and they have not used it to help people study with purpose.

Instead many ministers have used the principle incorrectly, and have 'cherry picked' those scriptures from here and there which appear to support and give validity to the false teachings of their counterfeit gospel.

Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. **10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:** 11 For with stammering lips and another tongue (language) will he (God) speak to this people. 12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. **13 But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;** that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Note the repetition for teaching and for emphasis. God really wanted those who are open to His word to understand this principle. Also note, that God speaks to His students with "stammering lips" (hesitantly? Needing our patience?), and in "another language", or in 'dark' sayings which only the Holy Spirit working in our minds can enable us to understand in terms of thoughts, ideas, knowledge and understanding of God's thoughts for us.

Proverbs 1:6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

It is God's own language that we have to be familiar with, it is His method of teaching us. Precepts are built up from fragments, a line here and there.

Key No.3 Usually the first and the last mention of a word or topic show the start and conclusion of the topic, or the 'alpha' and the 'omega' of the subject. The other occurrences through the scriptures fill in additional information.

For instance, the word "Adam" is mentioned first in Genesis 2:19. Consulting a concordance we might come up with 31 other mentions of the word. The last mention is in Jude quoting Enoch regarding Christ's second advent and linking the word Adam to Him.

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

One of the other references refers to Christ as the "last Adam" revealing more information for us. Other mentions put more detail into the subject.

The topic of 'baptism' is mentioned in many places in the Bible. In the Old Testament it originally referred to 'washings', or 'cleansings'. So to track the meanings of 'baptisms' it would be good to start with the first references to 'washings' and check to the last mention of 'baptism'. This will help clear up the many apparent anomalies concerning the various 'baptisms'. Then we will learn that there is actually now only one baptism. Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, which was performed by Christ as part of His Work of cleansing us when He was baptised by John the Baptist.

Key No. 4 Learn to recognize when the scripture is in straight 'prose', ordinary descriptive language, and when it is allegorical, figurative, or poetical. Those who do not have this key will find the Bible baffling, and think it is full of nonsensical things. The Bible is full of figures of speech common to the writers in their time, as indeed is the English language in common use today.

Figures of speech usually appear to be nonsense if taken literally. The phrase "out of sight, out of mind" simply means when something is not currently in our 'mind's eye' we are not thinking about it. One translation of this statement by a person not adequately educated in English interpreted this phrase as "invisible idiot". Out of sight = invisible, out of mind = insane!

This type of mistranslation can be the result when people who are not familiar with this important principle look superficially at the scriptures.

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Using these and other keys wisely, the earnest student will be more able 'rightly to divide the Word of God'.

Please be sure to listen to the original lesson one of the Home Study Course recorded by Dr. Martin at:

<http://www.ernestlmartin.com/ask.htm#elmlectures>