

Catford Lectures 2007-2008

Part 8

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[00:00:01] I have a number of scriptures to refer to, and we'll do that as the time progresses, but to begin, I'd like to refer to the first letter to the Conference in Chapter 2. This is a portion by way of introduction to our subject this afternoon, and I shall be expecting you to do some of the work in turning up the scriptures as we go through, but for now, welcome to Chapter 2, and we'll start at verse 9. But, as it is written, I have not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, knowing the deep things of God.

[00:01:03] For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of a man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now, we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, but he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

With the Lord's help this afternoon, I desire to say a little on two subjects very much [00:02:05] connected.

And those two subjects are the Bible, the Holy Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit. And as I trust, even in our hymn, we have understood something of the link between the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. And we just read this portion where Paul is speaking of the things that God has revealed. And very clearly it says the natural man can't receive these things. It takes the Holy Spirit to impart the truth to us.

I understand that these lectures at Catford, the Catford lectures, are especially intended to present basic truths of the Word of God, the basic teachings of the Scriptures. And very happily that's what we hear by and large as we come together. But I thought this afternoon it might be as well to go back to the very beginning and [00:03:03] to look a little at the source of our teaching.

And when we say that our teaching is Bible-based, it's a very good thing. But I wonder whether we have a proper appreciation of what the Bible is and how it came to us and how we are to understand it. And so I thought with the Lord's help we might look a little at some aspects of the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. And this first thing we must say, that to understand it properly we need to be taught by the Holy Spirit. The natural man cannot understand the Bible.

It is to him a closed book. And sadly we hear comments from those that do not know the Lord Jesus, that they're not interested in the Bible. They say it's too difficult, they don't understand it. And really we shouldn't wonder at that, because those that do not believe in the Lord Jesus, they cannot fully understand the teachings of the Bible.

[00:04:02] Now, having said that of course, we would encourage everyone to read the Bible. Because it's only there that we'll learn of and about the Lord Jesus. So I wouldn't want to suggest that unbelievers or those that do not yet believe in the Lord Jesus should not read the Bible, far from it. It's the best thing they could read. But we have to understand that until we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we will only have a very limited understanding of God's Word. And we need to depend on the Holy Spirit. And we've sung together, we've read together of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to an understanding of God's mind.

Well, the Apostle Paul, he said in verse 12, We have assumed, and in verse 13, which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. [00:05:02] And I want us to begin a look at the Bible by approaching it and understanding it for what it is.

If we open our Bibles with a sceptical mind, if we approach it from the point of view of so many that it's full of contradictions and errors, we're never going to get very far. And we need firstly to start at the beginning. We need to accept and believe that it's God's revealed Word and that it was inspired. And that leads us to our next passage in 2 Timothy.

You'll be very familiar with this, but let's turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3. And at the end of the chapter, in verse 16, it says there, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, [00:06:05] for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

So it's a very important verse.

We must believe and understand that all Scripture is inspired.

It's God breathed.

And let us be clear about what exactly this means. We accept and believe, of course, that the Spirit used different men to write different books.

And very clearly, we might say, their own personal style comes out. The writings of John differ from those of Paul, and so on. So, when we say the Bible is inspired, we mustn't get the impression that it's as if the Holy Spirit dictated the words as a boss might dictate a letter to a secretary.

[00:07:01] The Holy Spirit motivated holy men of old to put down things using expressions and phrases which were personal and reflect their own particular style. Nevertheless, we must insist that those men were inspired. That the thoughts and the truth that God gave them to put down were inspired by

the Holy Spirit.

And so, we have to believe this and accept this before ever we're going to make any progress in our reading of the Scriptures. And the Holy Spirit used these personal traits, we might say, of their author. Just as we might, in writing a letter, we might take up a pen, we might have different pens, and our style of writing might differ. If we were using a rather cheap biro, letters might look a little different from a very expensive fountain pen. [00:08:03] So, we have to understand that God took up holy men of old, just as we might take up a pen. And their mark, their impression is left in the Scriptures. But we mustn't ever dismiss such evidence as evidence that it's not of God and merely of man's making.

So, that's really my first point, that we must believe this word that all Scripture is inspired of God.

And then we've been given a list of things for which it's profitable. And for some of us, we might need reproof or correction.

For some of us, we might need to be encouraged. And all these things, the Scriptures are able to do as God takes them up. Well, another Scripture now, in 2 Peter. 2 Peter, chapter 1.

And we'll read from verse 16. [00:09:16] 2 Peter 1 verse 16.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made moments with the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he was free from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him in the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the Holy Mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy.

Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. [00:10:03] For the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The Gospel accounts show us clearly that the disciples were with the Lord Jesus. And they were with him and they heard him preach publicly. And they were with him when he drew them aside and spoke to them privately. We also have in the Gospels a word which tells us that when the Lord Jesus was going to leave this scene, he would send another comforter. And that comforter, the Holy Spirit, he said would remind them and bring to mind all the things of which he had spoken. And it seems clear that in the beginning of the church age, [00:11:01] those who were raised up as apostles, those who had been disciples of the Lord, as the Holy Spirit inspired them, as we've read together here in Peter, they recalled to mind the things that the Lord Jesus had said. And they put them down in writing for us.

And you might say, well, Paul was an exception. He wasn't one of the twelve disciples who was with the Lord Jesus, but he was. The Lord Jesus appeared to Paul as a special case. And it's clear from Paul's letters that he had a direct word of the Lord himself. And he passed those things on to us. And they're preserved for us in his letters.

I mention this because some Christians approach the Scripture in this way.

They say, well, the Old Testament, we accept that.

And then the words of the Lord Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, we're happy to accept that. [00:12:03] But some of the letters, well, if we don't like what we read or what we hear, then we can dismiss those as only being the thoughts of men. And in particular, of course, this applies to Paul. And when Paul writes regarding church order and the distinction between brothers and sisters, there's a detail like that. Many Christians today, they decide that they don't like what they read. And so they try and place Paul's writings on a lower level. And they say, well, it's not actually what the Lord Jesus taught, so we don't need to accept it. Now, I suggest to you that's not a right attitude.

And if we approach the Scriptures from that point of view, again, we're not going to make any progress in the Lord's things. And Scripture's very clear that when Paul spoke, he spoke as an oracle of God.

And he very clearly says, I have received from the Lord that which I pass on to you. [00:13:04] And all the other writers, those who have been with the Lord Jesus, when they set something down, you can be confident that it's what they heard the Lord themselves teach. And we can have confidence in their words, just as we should in the words of the Lord himself. So that's one point that we need to make clear, that when Scripture says all Scripture, it means all, not just those books that we favour, that suit our way of thinking.

All Scripture, from the beginning to the end, from Genesis to Revelation. And then we have this matter in verse 20 of Peter, knowing this verse, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. And I think that's an important point for us to bear in mind when we read God's Word, that to understand the Scriptures properly, we cannot just look at one passage in isolation. [00:14:04] We need to have a proper overview.

And we have to say that Scripture will never present a contradictory thought.

If there's a contradiction, an apparent contradiction, then the fault lies in our understanding, not in the Scriptures. So this passage seems to teach us that in order to understand a Scripture, prophecy in particular, we can't just take something in isolation. It's not just of its limited interpretation.

And certainly this is very apparent if we take up the subject of prophecy. We really have to have an appreciation of all the prophetic Word to see how these things fit together. But there's another aspect I'd like to bring before us, and that's this. We should never use one verse to offset another.

And an example of this is to go back to Paul's teaching in regard to godly order when Christians come together. [00:15:08] He says of the sisters that the women are to remain silent. It is not permitted for them to speak in the assembly. And then elsewhere it says that they're not permitted to teach. But then there's a verse which refers to when women prophesy in regard to head coverings.

And then we might say, well, we can refer to Deborah in the Old Testament in the place of authority that she took. And then what about the daughters of Philip who prophesied?

And we may be tempted to set one of these verses against another and to say, and to say, well, if

women when praying or prophesying should have their heads covered, it's clear that they can pray and prophesy. And therefore we can completely ignore the verses that refer to the sisters being silent. [00:16:04] And we might say, well, if Philip had four daughters who prophesied, then clearly that contradicts the verses in regard to women teaching. Well, are we to approach the scriptures like that? If we are, I suggest we're taking a very childish view of it. Let me give you an example. Some of us may have children, and those of us who don't, who well want children. And if you were like I was when I was little, or you may be familiar with this scenario, sometimes your children, they want something.

They ask one of their parents, can I have a biscuit, or am I permitted to do something? And if the answer's not what they want, sometimes if the opportunity presents itself, they'll go to the other parent and put the same question to them in the hope that they'll get the answer they want to hear. [00:17:02] Now, of course, as parents, it's one of those things we learn very early on, that if we're asked a question, you know, if my children come to me and ask me something, sometimes I say, what has mummy said? And we learn not to be caught out by that way, because if parents are working in the way they should, we would never want to contradict the answer we were given. It doesn't make for a happy family life. And really for children to try and get their own way in that way, we accept it's childish and immature, don't we? Well now, if we accept that the Holy Spirit has inspired the scriptures, and if the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write what he did, and the other writers to write what they did, can we imagine such a situation where the Holy Spirit would contradict himself, or would allow for such a thing to be possible? [00:18:03] Well, we have to say, no, it's not possible. God is a God of order.

And therefore there can't be any such contradiction in the scriptures. We have to believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the different writers in such a way that their teachings, their exhortations are in harmony. And of course, in the example I've given, there is a harmony. And we have to say, well, when Paul writes about the women praying and prophesying, it's referring to when prayer or prophecies are being made. When we come together for a prayer meeting, there might only be one brother praying, but we all say Amen at the end. And in that sense, we're all praying. And so that's the situation referred to.

And clearly, the sisters do not teach audibly in a public way in the assembly. So the daughters of Philip who prophesied, it must have been in a different setting. [00:19:04] And it's clear from the context that that was so. And then in the case of Deborah, well, we'll look at such a case shortly. We have to say, well, things were very different. It's an Old Testament situation, not a New Testament church situation. In any case, it really highlights the failure of the men round about her. So there's a harmonious way of interpreting the scriptures. And if we're not understanding it in a way of harmony, then the failure is with us. So that's a point I would like to make clear, that there must be one harmonious way of understanding the scriptures.

It's been suggested that often we say, someone might say to you, well, that's just your interpretation. Now, is there room for different interpretations of scripture? [00:20:01] Would the Holy Spirit give you to understand something in one way, and for me in another, and someone else in a third way? No, it's not possible.

There must surely only be one right way of understanding the scriptures. There might be some room in some circumstances, but fundamentally, surely when the Holy Spirit is conveying God's mind, he's conveying one right thought.

Well, let us suppose, is it possible for us to be absolutely certain that we understand the scripture correctly? Or should we always be in doubt as to whether, well, maybe that's just my own interpretation. Let's take, for example, that well-known verse in Romans, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

If we just take that simple verse out of context, it seems clear enough, doesn't it? All have sinned. You may say, well, all what?

[00:21:03] Is it all creatures, animals, sinned? And you may say, well, no, of course, it's all men, it's mankind.

Well, how do we know that? We don't know that from just that verse in Romans. We have to go back to the beginning of the scriptures in Genesis, and we read there of the fall, when Eve was deceived and Adam was disobedient. And we learn there that the fall, when sin first came in, that from that moment on, everyone descended from Adam and Eve, which includes us all, we are born in sin. And therefore, all men, all descendants of Adam and Eve, have sinned. So we can say, well, we know something of the meaning of that verse in Romans only because we have another verse in Genesis. And this is another example of where we have to say, no prophecies of private interpretation.

[00:22:01] In other words, we have to look at the teaching of the whole of scripture. So without Genesis, we couldn't really be absolutely definite about that verse in Romans. So it means all men, all men have sinned.

And then I might say, well, do you mean including the Lord Jesus? And you say, well, no, of course not. Well, how do you know? Does Romans tell you? Does Genesis tell you? No. But there are verses which teach us very clearly that the Lord Jesus was as much a man as we are, a single part. So in every way, he was a real man without sin. So then we have to say, well, there are verses of scripture which teach us that not all men have sinned. Of course, the Lord Jesus was an exception. So then we begin to understand exactly what the point of that verse in Romans is. Of course, in context, it's clear what it means.

[00:23:02] It's a general statement as to the condition of man with the Lord Jesus as an exception. So am I right in my understanding of that verse, all have sinned?

I think I can say with some certainty, yes, I'm sure that's what it means. All men, with the exception of the Lord Jesus, have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And there isn't really any room for any other way to understand that verse. And I suggest that's an example of how we should approach every scripture. What do other scriptures say about the matter? And without accepting that there can be a contradiction or differing views, we get to an understanding of the mind of God in every verse. Well, to be practical, if we're to take up the Bible and to learn from it, where should we start?

Well, I would say, as a practical point, get yourself a translation.

[00:24:03] You may say, well, don't you mean get yourself a good translation? Well, I mean that as well, but let me make myself clear. Some Bibles are a translation and other Bibles are just a paraphrase. So, as a start, I suggest, I recommend that you get yourself a translation. Unless you are familiar with the original languages of Greek and Hebrew and Aramaic, then all of us, whether we speak English or French or German, we all have to rely on a translation. Make sure your Bible is a translation, one

that translates word for word, as far as possible, rather than a thought for thought translation.

There are many Bibles, especially popular modern Bibles, which aren't so much a translation of words, of word for word, but they try and convey the general thought of each passage. [00:25:04] Now, I'm very happy for anyone to take up any Bible of any description.

It's much better than any other book. And I'm happy when our school children are reading, we might say, from the Good News Bible. And many schools have such a Bible as their school book.

Of course, there are better versions, but it's far better that our children read such a version of the Bible than no Bible at all. But if we're serious about our study of the Scriptures, we need to have a reliable translation. I'll give you one example of a verse where it comes out clearly, Genesis chapter 22.

The Holy Spirit has enabled the truth of God to be set out often in different levels or layers.

[00:26:02] And there's wonderful depth in many of our passages. It conveys a meaning on different levels, which we don't want to lose. If the Holy Spirit has put it there, we want to have it available to us. Now, if we think we understand the verse, and we convey that truth in not a very exact way, we may well present that level of understanding, but we might make it impossible for it to be understood in any other way. My example is in chapter 22 of Genesis, and verse 17, a word to Abraham, the angel of the Lord.

And he said, that in this blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore. And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice. [00:27:08] Now, in the version that I'm reading, the King James Authorized Version, we have this word seed. And the translation is conveying this thought on two levels.

Firstly, it's saying that Abraham's descendants will be as numerous as the stars of the heaven and the sand on the seashore.

That's one level on which we can understand this blessing. But there's another very vital understanding or level, and that's that it's a reference to one particular descendant of Abraham, the Lord Jesus himself. And so we need to see that, at the end of verse 17, thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

You can put a capital S in that word seed. [00:28:03] The Holy Spirit is conveying to us in this verse the wonderful prophetic truth that a descendant, a particular descendant of Abraham, shall possess the gates of his enemies. It's a reference to the Lord Jesus. So, we have in this verse two layers. A general reference to all Abraham's descendants, but a particular reference to the Lord Jesus himself.

Now, in the version that we've read together, it's possible for me, and for you as readers, to read this verse and for the Holy Spirit to teach us that both layers of truth are in that verse. But, if you take another Bible, and just as an example, I'll read what the Good News Bible says.

This is how it's written. I promise that I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the seashore. [00:29:03] Your descendants will conquer their enemies. All

the nations will ask me to bless them as I have blessed your descendants. Well, as I said, I'm very happy that children are reading the Bible.

And if it's such a version they're reading from, we should be very thankful for it. But, if this is the only Bible we have, when we read those verses, it's only possible for us to understand one level. We can only understand the reference to Abraham's descendants in general. There's no way we could see a reference to the Lord Jesus. And in both verses 17 and 18, in translation, proper translation, it's very clear from the words used that it's a singular person.

Thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies. That's just one example. The New International Version similarly loses such a distinction. [00:30:05] So it's very important that we use a translation, not a paraphrase.

And now I can say what perhaps you thought I ought to have said. Get yourself a good translation. Because there are translations and there are translations. And generally speaking, the men, the learned men that God used to give us the King James Authorized Version, they're very faithful in wanting to convey word for word, as far as possible, the scriptures of the original languages.

Bear in mind, of course, that there are different manuscripts. There are not whole original manuscripts preserved.

And so there are some areas of doubt and scholarly debate.

But we can say very plainly that in the areas where there's doubt as to the genuineness or otherwise of the manuscripts, [00:31:06] it touches on no fundamental truth of Christianity. No vital truth is affected by such difficulties of manuscript.

So we can have complete confidence in the translations that rely on those manuscripts.

Sadly, in modern times, some scholars have approached translation with a much more liberal view. And they've not always reliably translated what the manuscripts say. Or they may have given undue weight to some spurious manuscripts or copies which have been adulterated for not really genuine purposes.

There's not a lot of time now to go into the subject in detail, even if I were able to do so. But suffice it to say, get yourself a translation where the men involved were faithful God-fearing and believed that it was God's word, [00:32:09] not just an interesting literary work, which sadly many modern editors view it as.

So we can leave that matter there as a brief suggestion.

Well, the next point I'd like to mention is the use of types.

And this is something that, when we get hold of the thought that the Bible uses types to convey truth, then we can begin to make some progress. You may say, well, what are these types and where do I read about them? Well, the Greek word from which we get the English word typos is translated in a number of different ways.

[00:33:01] In John, it's used and translated as print.

And it's where Thomas says to the Lord Jesus that he wanted to see the male prince in the Lord's hand. The word there for the mark that the males had made is the Greek word typos.

It means type or print.

Other words used to translate this word is figure, form, pattern, or similitude.

And a verse that I want to read, he wants us to read 1 Corinthians 10. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 11. It says, now all these things happened, answer them for examples.

And they are written for admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. There's another variation on the English word used to translate the Greek word typos. [00:34:02] These things which happened to the Old Testament, God's earthly people, the Old Testament saints, were told that what happened to them happened as types or examples. And, more than that, it says they were written for our admonition.

So, we have here in this verse a scriptural reference to, or a scriptural approval for the use of types.

Now, those of us of my generation and older will perhaps be familiar with real fashion typewriters. Nowadays, of course, no one uses typewriters. We print out on the computer, probably a laser printer or inkjet. And we may not, the younger ones, may not be so familiar with what a type is. But when I was younger, and even newspapers were printed in such a way, [00:35:05] you had keys which, when you pressed down on them, they pushed a lever and a little metal form of a letter hit the paper and hit an inky strip and left an impression on the paper.

And you could write letters by typewriter.

Now, if you looked at the little metal heads, you would see the letter in your verse, a mirror image of the letter.

And it would be a raised type and it would leave an impression on the paper. And I hope you can visualize such a thing if you've never seen it. Another example would be a signet ring. In the olden days, long before even I was a boy, letters would be sealed, not by licking the envelope, [00:36:02] but by folding them over, melting a little globe of wax and pressing with a signet ring. It would make a special pattern. It would seal the letter and it would indicate that that letter came from one particular person who had this seal on his signet ring. Now, the impression made on the wax would be a mirror image of the design engraved on the ring.

And so we have this idea of a type and an anti-type. One is the thing that makes the impression and the other thing is the impression itself. And the scriptures really use such a means to convey truth. All through the Old Testament, we have things which are intended to make an impression of us. And they're intended to make an impression of some real thing. So we have the type and the anti-type.

And it's the anti-type that's the real thing and it's the type that's just the pattern or form. [00:37:05] And there are many things which are types.

And I don't need to go into them now because other brothers were speaking and have spoken of such things. But I want us to accept that the Bible uses such things.

It's replete with types. In the very beginning, all through the Old Testament particularly. And in the New Testament, we're given the reality, the anti-type, and in the Old Testament, we're given the type. Well, in addition to types, the Bible uses symbols.

Now, I wonder if you're one of those people, if you pick up a book, you turn to the last few pages to see how it ends. To see whether the book's worth reading. Well, I'm not like that. I don't like to have my surprise spoiled. You know, many Christians approach the Bible like that. [00:38:01] They can't be bothered to read it. They just want to look at the end and see how it finishes. If they do that, they'll be thoroughly perplexed. Because the last book of the Bible is full of symbols. And in Revelation, there are two different sorts of symbols.

There are those symbols which are explained, and there are those symbols which aren't. And the reason the symbols aren't explained is that the explanation has been given already. It's been given in an earlier book. So, if you want to understand Revelation, you can't just go straight to it and expect to understand what it's all about. You need to have done your homework, and it's hard work, but enjoyable hard work. You need to have studied other books in which Revelation is based and built. So you need to have read Daniel, and you need to have read Ezekiel. [00:39:01] And really, you need to have read all through the Bible. Not necessarily literally every word, although that's not a bad thing to do. But you need to have spent some time and effort. Start at the beginning, or at least ensure that you cover the early books as well as the books in the middle and the Gospels. And then you'll have a fair chance of being helped in your understanding of Revelation.

Now, the thing about symbols is that the Bible uses them consistently. And we need to be clear about this.

One example is the use of birds.

We might just look at that. If you turn to Matthew's Gospel. Chapter 13.

Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 13, and verse 3.

[00:40:05] But he spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, and so on.

We know this parable of the sower. Well, the fowls, the birds of the air, are being used symbolically.

And we don't need to imagine what the answer is, because we're told, verse 19, When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and captiveth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.

So, the Bible uses a symbol, and it gives us the symbolism.

It gives us the answer.

But the birds that eat the seed that's fallen on the path, is a representation of Satan, who snatches away the word, the Gospel.

[00:41:04] So, bearing that in mind, if you go on a few verses in chapter 13, and then, verse 32.

The kingdom of heaven, like a grain of mustard seed. Verse 32, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. If you want to know what is the meaning of these birds, is it a good thing that they come and lodge in the branches? Well, you know, many Christians think so. They say, oh, it means this and that. But, if we're consistent, and we understand the way in which the Holy Spirit uses symbols, we won't be misled.

Only at the very beginning of that chapter, we're told, quite clearly, that the birds represent something evil, Satan himself. [00:42:04] And clearly here, it's not a good thing at all that these birds have found their lodging in a tree. So, we have to say that symbols are used consistently. If you want to know what they are, this brings us on to another good principle, the principle of first mention.

If you want to know what does leaven refer to, you very easily learn that leaven is a bad thing. And so, in this chapter, when leaven is hidden in the meal, it's a bad thing. But what does leaven refer to? Well, you go back to the first time it's mentioned, and we read there that leaven is not something that's permitted in the burnt offering. And so, the principle of first mention is very important, and it refers particularly to every symbol that's used, and every reference to something. If we want to know what's the Apostle Paul talking about when he talks about speaking in tongues, [00:43:04] in Corinthians and Acts, well, you go back to the first mention of tongues. And there's a reference, it's really a judgment against Israel. By people of strange tongues and stunning looks, will I speak to this people? So, you make sure you understand what something means the first time it's mentioned, and then you stick to that, you use that consistently, and God will bless you in the study of His Word. Well, time is almost gone. I just want to make two final quick points.

The first is, get a dispensational view of the Scriptures. Understand that God has dealt dispensationally, it might be a difficult word, it simply means an administration of a house. It's a way that the government's trying to administer the economy in the world. Well, God has administered His people, man, in a different way all through history. [00:44:05] And if we see that, we'll get a little help in our study of His Word.

I have the highest authority for making such a suggestion. If we turn to Luke chapter 4.

Luke chapter 4, verse 15, we read the Lord Jesus, He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for it to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, [00:45:01] to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And He closed the book and gave it again to the minister.

That's a reference to Isaiah chapter 61.

And if we turn very quickly there, Isaiah chapter 61, you'll see what the Lord was reading.

I'll read from verse 2.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. So, the Lord Jesus, He closed the book halfway through verse 2 of chapter 61 of Isaiah.

And the reason is that there's a dispensational difference, a dispensational gap between coming to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and coming in a vengeful way.

Isaiah 63, verse 3 reads, [00:46:01] I have trodden the winecrest alone, and of the people there is none with me, for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of mine redeemed is come. So, the Lord Jesus, He's making clear that there's a period of time in between those two different aspects of His coming. And if we want to understand the scriptures in a right way, we need to get a grasp of such a truth, such a fact. So, try and understand the different ways in which God has dealt with men on earth in different times of history. And understand that not every verse is relevant for us today.

Think of the way the Lord sent out His disciples. He told them to go into every city, not to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans. And if their word wasn't heard, to shake the dust off their feet and never go there again. [00:47:07] Well, that's not how we deal with people today, is it? We're permitted, indeed we're encouraged to go to the Gentiles to preach the gospel. And if no one listens to us, can we turn our back on them and give up on them? No. We keep on.

So, it's clear there, there's a difference in dispensation. That's just one example of many.

Well, time has gone, and I trust that maybe just these few basic hints will be of help to us and quench our appetite to learn more of what God has written for us, for our admonition, for our learning. The Holy Spirit inspired this precious word, and we have it available to us here. In words we can understand how thankful we are for the variety that we have. Many dear Christians don't have a Bible in their own language. They may not have all of it, but we're so richly blessed in this country, [00:48:02] and yet we don't make as much use of what we have as we ought to. May God bless us and help us in the study of His word.

Let me close with Hymn 423.

God and Father, we, thy children, would in meekness hear thy word. The Holy Hymn 423.