



The G.E.M.

Volume 5 Edition 7

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July 2011

WALK WITH DISCERNMENT

They say that change is as good as a holiday. In some cases this is true as it helps you to refocus on what is important, to put your priorities in order. However, in other cases it is not, and one such case is when it comes to theology. All too often we allow what other people believe to influence our thinking too much instead of only allowing God's Word to be our guide. Therefore in our main article this month we look at the issue of discernment in relation to what we believe and how to test the many teachings we encounter.

We also look at the second last step in *Bible Study 101* – Interpretation. This step is important in itself when it comes to discernment, for bad interpretation leads to bad doctrine.

Bible Basics continues with the next book of the minor prophets, Nahum, while *Lesser Known Heroes of the Bible* looks at the life of Enoch, the first man in history that did not die. There is also the usual *Bible Library Card* to cut out an collect, as well as the ever popular Crossword on the *Back Page*.

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Until next time, keep on studying God's Word and enjoy this winter edition of *The G.E.M.*

Blessings,
Glyn and Linda. †

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

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BIBLE BASICS

Nahum

The Book of Visions

The purpose of the book is to encourage the faithful that God will deliver them and that vengeance belongs to the LORD. It reminds Judah that in the end, Assyria will pay for their evil, and that God will rescue those that trust and know Him.

Author & Date: Based on internal evidence, it appears Nahum was written after the fall of Israel in 722 BC but before the fall of Nineveh in 612. It is very likely, based upon the description of the relationship between Assyria and Judah, that Nahum prophesied in the early reign of King Josiah. Assyria was in the last days of its great power. They still controlled most of the Middle East. However, Babylon, Persia, and Egypt were all expanding in strength.

Content: Like the book of Jonah, the book of Nahum is almost completely concerned with Nineveh, with only two short speeches addressing Judah and Israel (1:15; 2:2).

Style and Structure: Nahum's poetry is masterful in its style and writing. You can see and hear exactly what the fall is going to be like. This detailed description is more than just good literature. Nahum description is evidence that these words truly are from God, for these details were fulfilled in great detail when Nineveh fell.

Chapters

God: Nineveh's Judge	1-2
Nineveh's Judgement	3-5
Nineveh's Total Destruction	6-7

Did you Know? Nahum means "comfort" and is related to the name Nehemiah which means "The Lord's comfort" or "comfort of the Lord."

Nineveh's wall was almost 13km long with 15 gates, and was surrounded by a moat nearly 46 metres wide.*

Nineveh's destruction was so complete that the decimated city was never rebuilt. Within a few centuries it was covered with windswept sand, leaving no trace except a mound that is known today as Tell Kuyunjik, "the mound of many sheep."*

Value for Today: According to Romans 11:22, God is not only kind, but also just. This idea is shown in Nahum in that God is "slow to anger" (1:3) and "a refuge...for those who trust in Him" (1:7), but will also not "leave the guilty unpunished" (1:3).

God's Kingdom and righteousness will ultimately prevail, and kingdoms built on wickedness will eventually fall. This is true not only for nations, but also the kingdoms that are established within our hearts.

Another very important theme in Nahum is the sovereignty of God. A topic that is often overlooked or ignored in many modern theological trends.†

* Taken from the NIV Archaeological Study Bible notes.

BIBLE STUDY 101

STEP 8: Interpretation

When you read a text, its meaning is often not so apparent. There are things that seem to confuse and boggle the mind, which can often make people think that the Bible is confusing and cannot be understood. However, by following all of the preceding steps the meaning of a selected text will more often than not become apparent at this point. By looking at what the text says, its background, context, word meanings, geography etc, you are now at the stage where you can now ask, and simply answer, the question: "What does the passage mean?"

There will however be times when the meaning is not so easy to discern directly from the Bible itself. Additional outside assistance may be required. If this is the case, then it would be prudent to consult a trusted Bible commentary that deals with the text, or even consult the notes in a good study Bible. The insight that they provide will often remove the confusion or misunderstanding that you may have with the text.

A word of warning here though: do not just take what the commentators say as being the only and 100% correct answer. If anything that they say seems to contradict the observations that you have already made concerning the text, then you will need to dig a little further. No commentator or teacher of the Bible is infallible, only God and His Word is, therefore be sure to test what they say with what is clear from the Word.

That said, by following the previous seven steps in order to determine the meaning of a passage has much benefit for you. You will be fully familiar with not only what the passage says (and maybe even to quote it verbatim) but its meaning will be deeply rooted in your mind. You will also be better equipped to teach on the passage, or to answer questions on it, should you be given the opportunity to.

Finally be sure to record your interpretation. This is simply done by using the reference as a heading, and then proceeding to write out in a logical order, all the relevant information that you have gleaned from your studies. You can then file this with the rest of your notes, or in suitable file where you can file all similar interpretation notes.

Next time we will look at the final step in basic Bible study, Application. †



LESSER KNOWN HEROES OF THE BIBLE

ENOCH

We don't know a lot about Enoch [EEnuch; "initiated"]. He lived long before the Genesis Flood, and all that Scripture tells us about him is that "Enoch walked with God three hundred years," and that "he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:21, 24).

The Jewish sages had an inventive interpretation of "God took him." They suggested simply that Enoch died. "God took him" because he lived in an evil time, and so the Lord caused his death before Enoch could turn to sin! Most Christian commentators believe that "God took him" indicates that Enoch, like Elijah, was snatched up into glory without passing through death.

What is more fascinating about Enoch is that at age sixty-five something happened to turn Enoch to the Lord. For the next three hundred years, faithful Enoch continued to walk with God.

This is what makes Enoch a hero: not that God took him, but that for three hundred years Enoch lived in a corrupt society and remained faithful to the Lord. Enoch walked with God for centuries. How challenging for us! Our life span is much shorter than Enoch's, and in Christ, we know God better and even have the support of our brothers and sisters in the Lord. In our few short years, let's emulate Enoch and walk with God.

"By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God." (Hebrews 11:5)

Next Month: Gedaliah

Quoted from Richards, L. (1999). *Every Man in the Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. †

CUT OUT & COLLECT

LAMENTATIONS 25

Key Idea: Lament for Jerusalem

Summary: An eye-witness account of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Key People: Jeremiah.

Key Places: Jerusalem.

Strange but True: Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet.

Tears running down like a river both day and night (2:18).

God ignoring the heartfelt prayers of His servant (3:8).

Precious stones regarded as earthen jars (4:2).

Houses occupied by aliens (5:2).

Lamentations is recited today by Jews at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

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LEARN TO DISCERN

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

We are living in an age where one is confronted with so many teachings and doctrines that it is becoming more difficult for the man on the street to recognise the difference between true and false doctrines.

Let us look at the issue of discernment relating to doctrine, what it means and how we should be practicing it.

What Discernment Isn't

Before looking at what discernment is in terms of the Bible, let us first look at what discernment is not. There are basically eleven criteria that many people are using today to test truth:

1) Experiences and manifestations – these can be from many sources; physical, emotional, mental, paranormal/demonic, or from the Lord. If there are so many sources, how then do we know if it is true at all? We first need to determine the source, and if we cannot determine that, then it can not be relied on.

2) Feelings and emotions – two hundred or so years ago, much of what people believed was based on thinking. Now it seems as though the buzz phrase is “I feel.” Emotions are a part of the realm of the flesh and the mind. They can be used both by God and the enemy. Feelings often cannot be trusted and are extremely fickle. They therefore can also not be relied on as a test of truth.

3) Numbers of followers - Many leaders have large numbers of followers, including Muslim imams, cultists and other religious gurus. In fact some of the most popular leaders, who have the most followers, are not Christian. Numbers of followers is not a good test of the authenticity of a leader or his teachings.

4) Number of people saved – As believers we can certainly tell if people are false prophets or heretics, but we are not able to determine whether a person is saved or not. Only God has that privilege. If we then do not know who truly is saved, how then can we use that as a test?

5) The size of a church or movement - Church size means nothing when it comes to discernment. God looks at quality, not quantity. The size of a church could be due to God blessing a ministry and people being truly saved or due to the leadership or preaching skills of a pastor. Church size is therefore no way to test truth.

6) Signs and wonders - these are a dime a dozen today and have been witnessed in other environments that are not Christian. Including within witchcraft, Hinduism and other false religions and cults. Just because someone is healed, does not mean it was God who did it.

7) People's testimonies - Testimonies are

often inspirational, but they can also be subjective. In other words, they are hard, if not impossible, to prove, unless absolute proof exists. In the same way that you would test a cake to see if it is done by manually inserting a toothpick, instead of relying on the aroma from the oven, we cannot judge truth by subjective methods.

8) Hearsay and rumors – We are living in an age where stories travel from one side of the world to the other faster than Superman ever could. As they travel, they often gain a little here and there until they have been blown out of proportion from the original account. Just because someone “reliable” passed on the information to you, does not make it truth.

9) How successful or rich a teacher is – given the right situation or tools, anyone can be successful. Man looks on the outside, but God looks at the heart. We should not allow the external trappings to prove the truth.

10) If a person speaks with authority - Many people are capable of speaking with authority. This can be a natural gift, a demonic gift or a gift from God, but it is no way to test whether a person is a true or false teacher.

11) Atmosphere - Beware of testing meetings by the atmosphere created there. If you attend any sports event, atmosphere can be generated or manipulated by cheerleaders or the success of the sportsmen themselves. Atmosphere is not a test for truth.

Biblical Discernment

We must therefore look at three basic tests in Biblical discernment:

1) Test all teaching for sound doctrine, and especially against the core doctrines of the faith as laid down in the Bible.

Notice I said ALL teaching. Why do I say all? Simply because that is what we are commanded to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “*But examine everything carefully.*” Though at times it may seem as though you are being hypercritical of things, it is something we are commanded to do.

But why do we test teaching against the Scriptures? Well if all the other tests mentioned above are unreliable, we therefore need something reliable to test things against. We know that God's Word is reliable because it comes from God, therefore it is the only thing that can be used as a proper measure of truth. In fact, Jesus Himself said that God's Word is Truth (John 17:17). What other standard can there be?

2) Test all prophecies to see if they are Biblical and if the predictions of a prophet all come true. Deuteronomy 13 tells us that if one prophecy from a prophet is proved wrong, he is a false prophet. A prophet of God is 100% true, 100% of the time. Why? Because God is 100% true, 100% of the time. If the prophecies are truly from God, then they too will be true.

There are a number of commands and

warnings throughout Scripture for us concerning false prophets. Here are the three main ones:

- We are to put them to death (Deuteronomy 18:20) - not literally, that was part of Old Testament law, but we must certainly distance ourselves from them.

- We are not even to listen to false prophecy (Jeremiah 23:25).

- Those who follow the false prophets will share in their judgement (Jeremiah 27:15).

3) Test their lives, words and actions for the fruit of the Spirit.

The final test is to compare the words and actions of any teacher with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:18-25. Are their lives marked with characteristics like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control? If none of these are present in their words and actions, then they are people that need to be avoided at all costs. Jesus tells us that those who do not produce these fruits will be cut off and face eternity in the fire (John 15:2).

Judge Rightly

Are we to judge? Yes, but we are not to judge hypocritically (Matthew 7:1), that is to judge someone while doing the same thing ourselves. Also, we are not the final judge of anyone's salvation. Within the church we are told by Paul to judge those inside the Church because God judges those outside (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). And we must learn to judge rightly, while here in earth because one day we will judge the earth and the angels with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Our responsibility therefore is to ground ourselves in the Word of God and pray for the Holy spirit to fill us with, and guide us in, the truth. All other tests are subjective and can not be relied on, but the Word of God is constant and is the only standard we can follow.

In a world where everything is relative and there is little or no regard for the absolute truth of God's Word, now more than ever before in history, we need to LEARN TO DISCERN! †

**We need to
LEARN TO
DISCERN!**

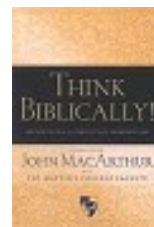
**Test all
teaching for
sound doctrine**

LEARN MORE ABOUT GOD

Think Biblically Edited by Dr John MacArthur

Written from a conservative, evangelical, Baptist perspective, *Christian Theology* is a technical/semi-technical work, designed for use in seminaries. However it is appropriate for educated lay-readers as well. Scriptural quotations are generally from the NIV, though it does refer to the original languages.

It offers incredible detail with meticulous analysis of the major issues in theology. This is a valuable tool for pastors, students and church leaders.



R 190

THE BACK PAGE

BIBLE TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Complete the verses below from the book of Nahum. All verses are from the NIV.

ACROSS

- 1 "The warriors are clad in ____" (2:3)
- 4 "Look at all your troops - they are all ____" (3:13)
- 5 "O king of ____, your shepherds slumber" (3:18)
- 9 "The Lord is ____" (1:7)
- 11 "The ____ gates are thrown open" (2:6)
- 13 "I am against ____, declares the Lord Almighty" (2:13)
- 15 "The Lord is slow to ____ and great in power" (1:3)
- 17 "Lots were cast for her ____" (3:10)
- 20 "The Lord is a ____ and avenging God" (1:2)
- 21 "Draw ____ for the seige" (3:14)
- 22 "Hearts melt, ____ give way" (2:10)
- 24 "like locusts they ____ the land" (3:16)
- 26 "His wrath is poured out like ____" (1:6)
- 28 "All who see you will ____ from you" (3:7)
- 29 "Nineveh is like a ____" (2:8)
- 30 "You too will become ____" (3:11)
- 31 "Celebrate your ____, O Judah" (1:15)

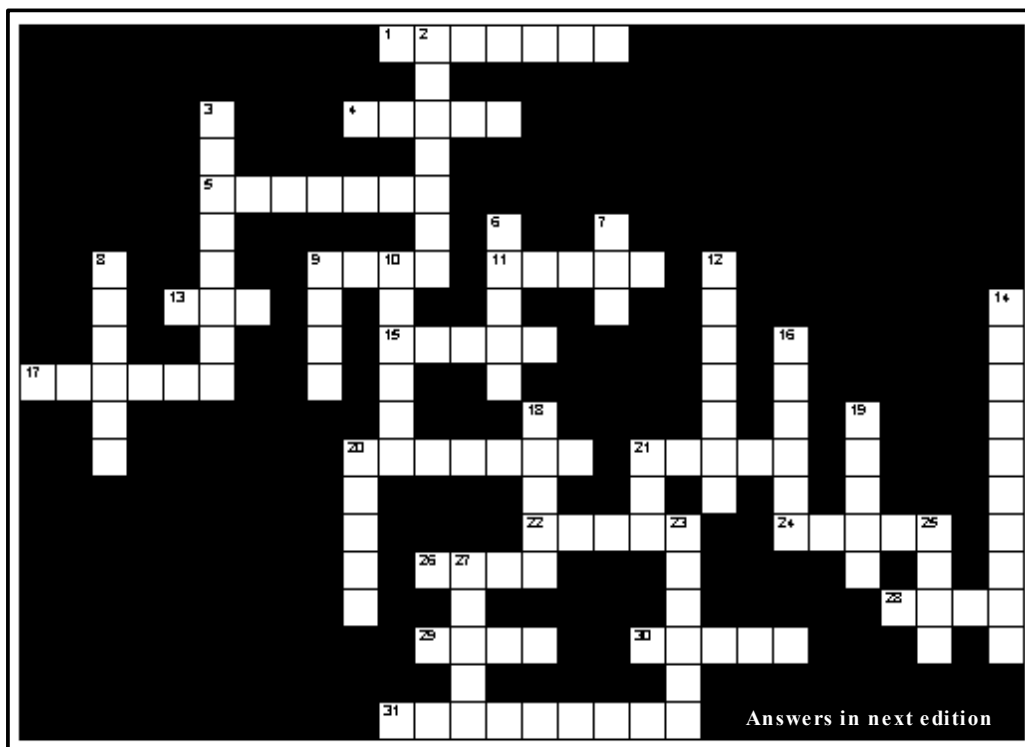
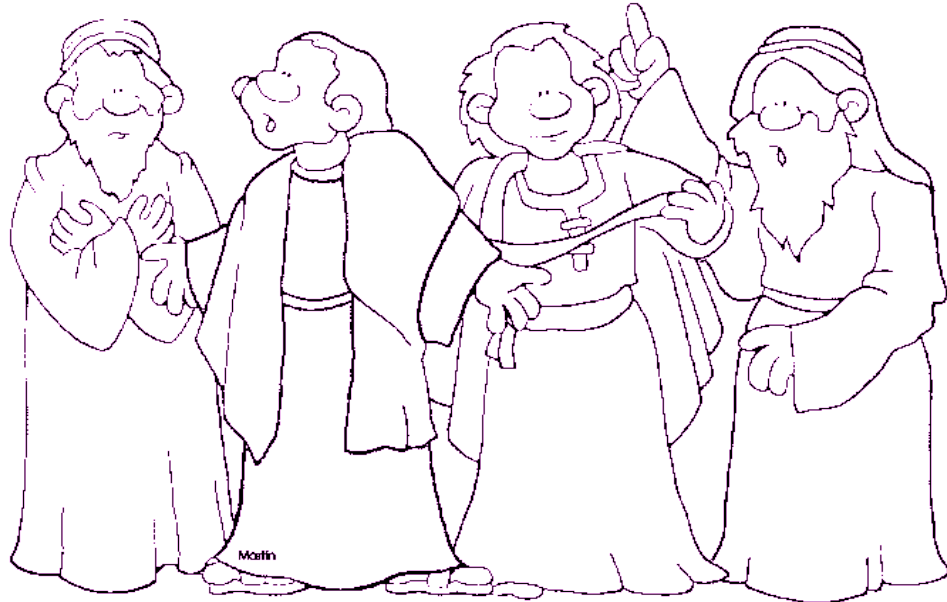
DOWN

- 2 "The Lord has given a ____" (1:14)
- 3 "The ____ storm through the streets" (2:4)
- 6 "He rebukes the sea and ____ it up" (1:4)
- 7 "Where now is the Lion's ____" (2:11)
- 8 "Are you better than ____" (3:8)
- 9 "Plunder the ____" (2:9)
- 10 "An ____ concerning Nineveh" (1:1)
- 12 "Multiply like ____" (3:15)
- 14 "All you ____ are like fig trees" (3:12)
- 16 "Your ____ are like locusts" (3:17)
- 18 "The mountains ____ before Him" (1:5)
- 19 "the ____ will devour your young lions" (2:13)
- 20 "The Lord will restore the splendour of ____" (2:2)
- 21 "____ to the city of blood" (3:1)
- 23 "I will lift your ____ over your face" (3:5)
- 25 "I will ____ you with filth" (3:6)
- 27 "I will destroy the carved images and cast ____" (1:14)

COLOUR US IN

THE MINOR PROPHETS

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi



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10. Egypt 12. Iniquity 14. Jacob 15. Sins 17. Staff 18. Dwelling 19. Price 22. Hope 24. Carved 25. Sheep 29. Hide
26. Friend 27. Seers 28. Gath 30. Israel 33. Power 34. Leaders
Down: 2. Mountain 3. True 6. Light 7. Love 8. Angry
Across: 1. Remnant 4. Vine 5. Evil 9. Lane 11. Zion 13. Thresh 16. Assyria 20. People 21. Show 23. Lachish 25. Samaria
Last Month's Answers

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