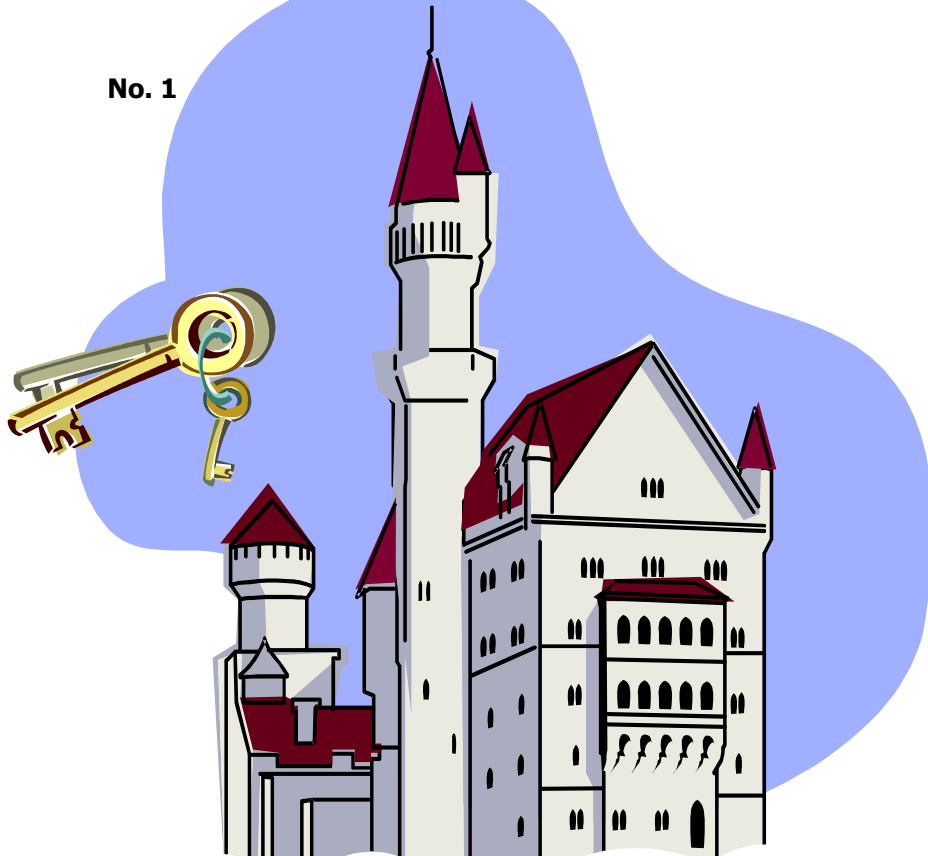


# KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

No. 1



***Home Bible Study***

**KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING:**

**The Word of God • Basic Bible Interpretation • Bible Salvation**

## – INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered why there are so many different churches and belief systems within Christianity, particularly when most use and believe in the same Bible? The reason is that different Christian groups interpret the Bible differently.

For example, some make the common mistake of simply taking verses out of context, while others read into the Bible what they want it to say. But sometimes, mistakes are complex and difficult to explain. The objective of this Bible study is to help you understand some of the rules of interpretation so that you will have the ability to ascertain which belief system is correct and why.

### The Importance of Understanding the Bible

Reading the Bible is very important, but that doesn't mean that everybody understands or interprets its message accurately. If we want to attain eternal life, we must seek to understand its true meaning. For example, in Luke 10:25, a certain lawyer (a teacher and expert of the law) tempted the Lord by asking, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded by saying, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The Greek word "readest" includes meaning "to know accurately." That's what we must strive to do.

### Historical Perspective

When reading the Bible we need to be aware of the following:

- 1) The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic and the New Testament was written in Greek. These languages are far more complex than the English language. Therefore, there will be times when we need to search the original languages for clarification.
- 2) Before we can glean any meaning for ourselves, we must first seek to understand what the author originally conveyed. For this, it would be helpful to know about the writer and his audience, and the history and events at the time of the writing.

### The Ethiopian Eunuch

The Ethiopian eunuch was reading a passage from the book of Isaiah when God had Phillip draw near and ask him, "Understandest what thou readest?" He said, "How can I except some man guide me?" The eunuch was asking for help in interpreting the scripture. The Lord honored his sincere desire by sending him a man that had a clear understanding of the Word of God. In this Bible study we hope to guide people into the truth of God's Word by following some of the rules of interpretation.

## SECTION #1 – THE WORD OF GOD

Before we begin laying the foundation of Bible interpretation, we must first have faith in the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, complete, and authoritative truth from God to man. The Bible itself is clear on this subject.

### Facts about the Bible

**A) The Bible declares itself to be the pure truth of God, preserved forever:**

*Psalms 12:6-7* The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.

*Psalms 119:160* Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever.

*Psalms 119:89* Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

**B) The Bible declares itself to be inspired by God:**

*2 Timothy 3:16* All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

**C) The Bible teaches that the Word of God *is* God:**

*John 1:1* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**D) The Bible teaches that man needs God's Word:**

*Luke 4:4* And Jesus answered him, saying, *It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*

**E) The Bible states that obedience is required of all men:**

*Ecclesiastes 12:13* Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

*Hebrews 5:9* And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

*James 1:22* But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

**F) The Bible states that salvation (eternal life) can only come through God's Word:**

*Psalms 119:41* Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word.

*James 1:21* Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

*2Thessalonians 2:13* But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

**G) The Bible warns of the danger of rejecting the truth of God's Word:**

*2 Thessalonians 2:11-12* And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

**H) The Bible warns us that we will be judged by God's Word and what we do with it:**

*2 Thessalonians 1:8* In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

*Daniel 7:10* A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

*Revelation 20:12* And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

## SECTION #2 – BASIC BIBLE INTERPRETATION

### Getting the Correct Interpretation

In this section, we will examine some basic, but essential guidelines or “keys” of sound biblical interpretation. These “keys” are important principles that we must consider if we are to arrive at the correct interpretation of the Bible. They will also help us avoid some of the common mistakes made by many religious groups who have ignored these principles and have strayed from the truth. The goal of accurate interpretation is to understand the actual or intended meaning of the author’s words, as opposed to what we want them to mean or think they should mean. God is a tremendous communicator and the Bible is how He chose to communicate His doctrine or teachings.

*2 Peter 1:20-21* Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The following keys are examples of how to carefully interpret the Word of God:

**Key #1** ↪ The Bible is to be taken literally unless the Bible is using figurative or symbolic language. Example:

*Hebrews 10:12* But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.

The expression above, “right hand of God” must be figurative language since John 4:24 tells us that God is a Spirit and Jesus said that a spirit does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Therefore, God cannot have a literal right hand as we do. The Bible never contradicts itself, and that is why it is so important to *know* the Scriptures!

**Key #2** ↪ To establish sound doctrine, always use the Bible to answer all your questions. Example:

*2 Corinthians 4:13* We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak:

In this passage, the apostle Paul tells us we have unity in faith because our faith is based upon what is written; this being what we believe, is also what we speak.

*Luke 4:4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*

Jesus' answer was, "it is written." If you have a Bible question, you need to get a Bible answer!

**Key #3 ← Never add to nor take away from the Word of God!**

*Deuteronomy 12:32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*

*Proverbs 30:6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*

*Revelation 22:18-19 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

**Key #4 ← Rightly divide the Word!**

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

We are to rightly divide God's Word. For example, there are 27 books of the New Testament and most agree that they can be separated into four major divisions. These divisions are as follows: (1) the Gospels, (2) the Acts of the Apostles, (3) the Epistles, and (4) the book of Revelation. Each of these divisions has a different focus and is addressed to a specific audience. In this study, we will examine the first three.

**1) The Gospels: The focus here is on Jesus' life and ministry. God's people were still under the Law, and there was no church established yet.**

*Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

Jesus was born under the Law (the Old Covenant) and died under the Law. No one received New Testament salvation during His entire earthly ministry; we should not read the Gospels expecting to find anyone experiencing New Testament salvation. Unfortunately, many churches have made the fundamental error of failing to see that the thief on the cross is an example of one who lived and died under the Old Testament plan.

**2) The Book of Acts: The focus here is on how to be saved. In this book, the church is established.**

*Acts 2:38* Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Here we see the New Testament salvation message preached for the first time. People acted upon the message and the church was born. Acts is the primary source of information on how sinners are converted into saints of God by being born again. We can know how to be saved.

**3) The Epistles: The focus here is on how to stay saved. These letters were written to saints to clarify the doctrine and serve as a guide for Christian living for people who have already obeyed Acts 2:38.**

Many modern church denominations have made the mistake of interpreting some passages in the Epistles incorrectly. An example of this common doctrinal error that has been widely incorporated into denominational church teachings is the usage of 1 John 1:9 to support salvation.

*1 John 1:9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hence they have wrongly divided the Word, teaching sinners that they can use this verse to receive salvation, but this scripture is addressed to people who have already been born again.

**Key #5 ↪ Elevate the Word above tradition, philosophy, and emotion.**

As we attempt to understand the Bible, we must be very careful to exclude certain influences which might distort or confuse God's intended meaning. Some of the common influences which have birthed many errant doctrines are:

### **1) Tradition and Philosophy**

*Mark 7:5-9* Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, *Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for exalting the traditions of men above the Word of God and thus making the Word void. We must reject what we've been taught and what we've been doing if it goes against what the Bible says.

*Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

One major denomination today claims it has the power to overrule Scripture with its own traditions, philosophy, and hierarchal authority. This denomination has twisted and manipulated the Scriptures to conform to its traditions. These traditions have been ingrained in the minds of their followers for centuries and have even been used to justify torture and murder. The apostle Paul wrote of those who turn from the truth to another gospel:

*Galatians 1:6-7 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

## 2) Emotions/Feelings

Someone might say, God would never send good people to hell. Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't say that good people are exempt from the biblical requirements of salvation. God's Word is always true, even if it goes against our feelings or what we want to believe. God's ways are above ours.

*Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*Romans 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar . . .*

If there is a discrepancy between our words and God's words, God will always be true and man a liar. Those who teach other "gospels" are accursed by the Word of the Lord.

*Galatians 1:8-9 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again . . . let him be accursed.*



**Key #6** ↪ **Sound doctrine must be built line upon line and we must use Scripture to interpret Scripture.**

*Isaiah 28:9-12* 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. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 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.

**Doctrine is formed by putting all the pieces together like a puzzle. We cannot take a single verse out of context—doing so could change the intended meaning of the passage. Many churches today proclaim we must be born again. This they say we do by “accepting Christ.” Jesus did say we must be born again, but two verses later he explains that this is done by being “born of water and of the Spirit,” not by “accepting Christ.”**

We must also allow the Bible to interpret itself, and not assign private meanings to words and verses. A common mistake made in many modern denominations is to read a passage correctly, but then assign incorrect or incomplete meanings to the words. Again, this can completely change the intended meaning of the text. When Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8 that we are saved “by grace through faith,” many churches define “grace” as the unmerited favor of God. But before we can truly assess what Paul was talking about in the aforementioned passage we must take the time to compare other verses that use the word “grace” to get a clearer picture. We must use Scripture to define Scripture. For example, Paul defines “grace” in Titus 2:11-12:

*Titus 2:11-12* For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Saving grace is also a *teacher* that teaches us to live godly in this present world. There is nothing found anywhere in the Bible that states “grace” is only God’s unmerited favor. It’s much more than that.

## SECTION #3 – BIBLE SALVATION

**Biblical salvation consists of three essential parts:**

### **A) Repentance**

**The Bible stresses the importance of repentance—the first step to God:**

*Luke 13:3,5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

**Repentance is godly sorrow—a turning away from one's ignorance and sin to obedience to God's Word.**

*Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*

*2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

### **B) Baptism**

**Baptism is not an option, but rather a required component of salvation:**

*Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

*1 Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

**Biblical baptism follows repentance, with full immersion in water, and always in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission (or washing away) of sins:**

*Acts 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*Acts 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)*

*Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

### C) Receiving the Holy Ghost

**Receiving the Holy Ghost is also required for New Testament salvation:**

*John 3:5* Jesus answered, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

*Romans 8:9* But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

*Acts 5:32* And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

**In the Bible, those receiving the Holy Ghost spoke with tongues. Jesus declared it would be a sign to those that believe.**

*Mark 16:17* And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

**Later, we see the fulfillment of His words in the book of Acts. When people responded by repenting, they were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke with tongues, just as Jesus said!**

*Acts 2:4* And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

*Acts 10:45-46* And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.

*Acts 19:6* And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

**Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost is not the same as believing or baptism—it is a completely separate event. Some people in the Bible received the Holy Ghost before baptism and some after. (Before baptism: see Acts 10:45-48. After baptism: see Acts 19:1-6 and Acts 8:14-17.)**

**The apostle Peter summed it all up on the day of Pentecost after preaching Jesus Christ crucified in the very first church message:**

*Acts 2:38-39* Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

## REVIEW SECTION #1

**What are some things the Word of God declares about the Word of God?**

1. The Word is truth.
2. The Word endures forever.
3. The Word is able to save your soul.
4. The Word is to be obeyed.
5. The Word will judge us.

## REVIEW SECTION #2

**What does the Bible teach about establishing the correct interpretation?**

1. God commands us to study to show ourselves approved and to rightly divide the Word of God.
2. Anyone (even an angel) teaching false doctrine is accursed.
3. Adding to or taking away from God's Word will result in one's name being taken out of the Book of Life.
4. The Bible warns of being deceived by tradition, philosophy, and the teachings of men.

**Why do we need a correct interpretation?**

1. To receive salvation.
2. To avoid judgment.
3. To discern truth.

## REVIEW SECTION #3

**What are the three prerequisites of biblical salvation?**

1. Repentance.
2. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.
3. Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost with the sign of speaking in tongues.

**What is repentance?**

1. Godly sorrow.
2. A change of heart—a turning away from sin.
3. A commitment to follow and obey God according to His Word.

**What is baptism for?** Remission of sins.

**How is baptism applied?** In the name of Jesus Christ.

**What is the sign of receiving the Holy Ghost?** Speaking in other tongues.

**Finally, let's get out our Bibles and read about people actually being born again of the water and the Spirit. Read Acts 19:1-6. You've just heard the truth and have seen people being saved in the Word of God. Now it's time for you to decide for yourself—what will you do with the truth?**