

# GENESIS TO JESUS

## Lesson 1: READING SCRIPTURE WITH THE CHURCH



Have you ever struggled with understanding the Bible as you tried to read it on your own? The content is so dramatically different from our time, with ancient customs and culture in faraway places. It leads us to ask:

1. *Why* should we study the Bible?
2. As Catholics, *how* should we study the Bible?

The overall perspective of Scriptures emphasizes the covenant of salvation God has made with mankind. The Old Testament sets the stage for the unfurling of the world's most dramatic love story ever; that of Jesus Christ with His bride, the Church. Author Scott Hahn refers to the Old Testament as a "long probation period" of God offering five successive and simultaneously broadened (and broken) sacred oaths of sacred kinship covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. Mankind kept sinning, and God patiently expanded the focus of His relationship with His human family from Adam in a marriage covenant, up to David in a national kingdom covenant. Finally, because of all five of the previously broken covenants, Jesus offered His Body and Blood to bind together His one, holy, Catholic and UNIVERSAL church family. So how are we involved in the stream of salvation history, where God offers the perfect ending to be engraved upon our hearts for eternity?

Presenter Matthew Leonard explained the Word that was written in the Bible becomes the personal encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist (Luke 24). Just as Jesus caused the disciples' hearts to burn with His expounding of the Scriptures as they walked the road to Emmaus, He opened their eyes to His presence as He took the bread, blessed, broke, and gave it to them at the supper table of the home where they meant to stay. With this encounter, what was written in the Scriptures was made real in the Mass; He became the Living Word to His disciples, and to all of us.

When we attend Mass, Jesus does for us what He did for His disciples; He helps us recognize His presence in proclamation of the Biblical readings of the Old and the New Testament, and He extends His personal encounter to include His offering us His most

holy Body and Blood in the Eucharist! From the inception of the Church, believers heard the Scriptures being shared as our liturgical book: the content portrays God's followers praying and offering sacrifices to Him, and the purpose of the Scriptures is for them to be proclaimed in the liturgy of the Mass.

"Like Jesus Himself, the Bible is both human and divine" (Study Guide). Before the apostles were to evangelize the Word, they were to await enlightenment by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit empowered the Biblical writers by inspiring the writing of Scripture and by guiding the Church in interpretation and evangelization of the Bible. "Just as the Incarnate Word came into the world in a human nature without ceasing to be the divine Son, so the Inspired Word comes to us in human language without ceasing to be divine speech" (Study Guide).

Unlike secular history, which narrates human, political, technological, and military actions, biblical history bestows upon us God's perspective about His saving work through His divine words and actions. In the Old and New Testaments, the narrative begins with creation (Gen. 1:1), and in Revelation 21:1, the new heaven and new earth are foretold in the end of time. At the center of the Old and New Testaments, Jesus enters into the Word and changes it forever. "From a sinful, shameful couple cast out of paradise, to God's glorious, redeemed world-wide family of saints at home forever in heaven; this miraculous transformation is the covenant story of the Scriptures" (Scott Hahn). God wants ALL of us to be part of His heavenly family!



*St. Thomas* (detail) / Peter Paul Rubens / 1612-1613

## AN APOLOGETIC EXPLANATION OF **INTERPRETING THE BIBLE**

*How can we best interpret what we read in the Bible?*

**We also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (1 Thes 2:13)**



Sacred Scripture is one of the Church's greatest treasures, and she proclaims the written word of God at every liturgy: the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rite of Baptism, the Rite of Confirmation, the Order of Marriage, and in the celebration of all the other Sacraments. The Church also encourages the faithful to read Scripture for study, meditation, and devotional prayer.

In order to arrive at a proper and accurate interpretation of Scripture, we must pay attention first to the intent of each of the Sacred Authors, the literary styles each one employed, and the symbolic language each one used; second we must read every passage of the word of God within the context of Scripture as a whole, Sacred Tradition, and the doctrinal and moral truths taught by the Catholic Church.

The fathers of the Second Vatican Council identified three main criteria for interpreting Scripture: we should attend to the following:

- ✠ Keep in mind the “content and unity of all Scripture.
- ✠ Read Scripture within the “living Tradition of the whole Church.”
- ✠ Pay attention to the “analogy of faith,” which is defined as “the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of revelation.” (Cf. CCC 112–114)

The Tradition of the Church also recognizes that Scripture has both a *literal sense*, which forms the basis for understanding all the “senses” of Scripture, and a *spiritual sense*, consisting of the following:

- ✠ The *allegorical sense*, which views people and events in the Old Testament as a prefiguration of people and events in the New Testament.
- ✠ The *moral sense*, which examines the message or lesson for proper human conduct.
- ✠ The *anagogical sense*, in which concepts and events are seen as foreshadowing eternal life in Heaven. (Cf. CCC 115–118)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses this question in paragraphs 109, 115–117.

*Rev. James Socias, The Didache Bible, Midwest Theological Forum Press, Downers Grove IL, 2014, 2015*