

# How to Study the Bible, YD 2006

Young Disciple Camp

Deep Bible Study

July 2006

**Our Text: Psalm 91**

**Our Method: To be taught of God**

## BEFORE WE GET TO OUR TEXT

*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: Is 29:9-10.*

*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 Da 12:10 .*

What do these verses tell us? First, there are people that God will make to understand doctrine. These are individuals who have exercised their powers of investigation. And these are individuals who have begun searching for themselves. No longer are they like nursing infants that only receive nutrition when someone brings it to them. Those taught of God have been weaned from dependence on others and have understood the fundamentals of the Christian Faith.

Our second passage, Daniel 12:10, assures us that the wise will understand. This must be the same class as those that have been weaned from the milk. More than that, we are told that the wicked will not understand. Regardless of either the genius or the extensive researches of the Bible student, if he is yet a slave to his appetites and passions, he will not understand.

Supporting Passages: 1Co 3:1-2; Heb 5:12-6:3; 1 Pe 1:22-2:3; Ga 5:19-20.

Other conditions of being taught of God hinge on these same principles.

*When we are willing to do whatever God may desire He will teach us.*

**If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 17:7**

*When the spirit strengthens us we can understand deep meaning in apparently simple ideas.*

**That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Eph 3:16-19**

## **WHEN WE ARE READY TO APPROACH OUR TEXT**

Different prophets have written about the same ideas of God. Since the different prophets had different levels of education, different vocabularies, different writing habits and abilities, they have often chosen different words to talk about the same idea.

Here are some hints about how to find parallel passages that will help us understand the one we are studying.

1. Use creative word studies
  1. By computer or by Young's Concordance
  2. By using Strong's Lexicon
  3. By creative thought
2. By miracle – after depending on God's promise to teach you
3. By cross references, and especially by the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (or by computer)

And here are some pitfalls that lead to misunderstanding of the scripture:

1. Using a lexicon to find what you think are "hidden meanings" or to expose what you think is a "poor translation."
2. Looking for something new or odd or that might help you get attention
3. Speculating at answers to the wrong questions—questions whose answers have never been revealed (See De 29:29)
4. Using equal signs for statements of positive relation (i.e. "Jim is tall" therefore anywhere I find the word "tall" I can substitute "Jim")
5. Being hasty to make a conclusion

## **OK, NOW THE TEXT**

Lets practice. Read the chapter slowly two times with your pencil nearby. What do you observe? I will try to give you an idea of what I mean by sharing my observations from the first three verses.

1 ¶ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

Observations:

God has a secret place.

A man can dwell there.

God is the Almighty.

He has a shadow.

Verse one is present tense.

Verse two is future tense.

Verse three is future tense.

Verse one is about any man.

Verse two is about me.

Verse three is me talking to you about God.

There are things I can say about the Lord.

I can praise Him for things that He will do in the future.

I can speak of my commitment to trust Him even into the future.

Jehovah is a refuge to me.

Jehovah is a fortress to me.

Jehovah is my God.

I can trust Him.

I can share certainty about Him with others.

I am like a bird and fowlers have set snares for me that I can not see.

God will deliver men from snares they can not see.

God will deliver men from disastrous plagues.

During the observation stage I am trying only to note truths that are actually in the text. My next step, other than asking more help from God, is to start studying some of these observations. For practice I will study with you here the first two of these observations, both of them from verse one.

God has a secret place. My first thought is to wonder if the Bible ever mentions a "secret place" anywhere else using the same words. Using my computer I do a search for "secret place" and find seven results. Three seem to be relevant, perhaps, to our verse.

**He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. Ps 18:11**

**Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah. Ps 81:7**

**My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it. Eze 7:22**

Before I go on I must read the contexts of these three passages to see if they offer any idea of where God's "secret place" is. This is a good place to notice a common mistake made in deep Bible study. In our first verse God makes the darkness of storms his "secret place." I could

mistakenly conclude, from this passage, that every time I see "secret place" I should read "darkness of storms."

But language is not like math. God could have several "secret" places.

When I read the context of Ps 18:11, I learn so much. Even though I set out to study Ps 91, I end up discovering Ps 18. Young Disciples, this is how Bible study works. We are taught of God. He directs the lesson. We may not find the very answer we were seeking for, but if we are seeking, we find the very answer He was seeking to give.

Here is the passage I noted from Ps 18:

**6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.**

**7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.**

**8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.**

**9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.**

**10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.**

**11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.**

## **NOW MEDITATION**

Incredible. The earth shakes, hills move, fires are ignited. And what is the cause? A distressed man trusting in God prays. And God, in heaven in His temple, hears and moves. The power of prayer is a large thought. It is too big to just pass by while I look for another discovery. I need to spend time thinking about it. I want it to change my thinking and to transform my day.

When I am ready to return to my study of God's "secret place" I observe that in Psalms 18 God is originally in His temple and when He leaves he makes the stormy darkness his "secret place." This leads me to wonder what His secret place was before He heard the prayer. Was it the temple that He inhabited in verse 6? To ask the question is good. To answer it before you have enough data is premature. Now we go on to look at the context of the second passage, Psalm 81.

**1 ¶ Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.**

**2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.**

**3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.**

**4 For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.**

**5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.**

**6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.**

**7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.**

It is apparent that this was written by a different person than David. This may not be very significant. But different authors sometimes use different words for the same idea, so it might help sometimes to notice this.

Asaph leads a praise session. Is it a joyful one? Or a solemn one? This is an example of a bad question. By limiting the answers to one or the other I may eliminate the option of the true answer. The true answer appears to be: both (verse 1 and 3). I can gain something from this idea—praise can be joyful and solemn.

I also note that the Feast Days were established for God's people when He took them from Egypt and freed them from slavery. This might be a helpful theological idea if I meet persons teaching that the Feast Days are like the Holy Sabbath, obligatory for God's people to keep today. I make a note of this and go on because I am trying to study Psalm 91.

The passage in Psalm 81 is similar, in ways, to Psalm 18. Man cried, when in trouble. God answered from His (perhaps new) "secret place" of storm. Added to this is an allusion to a story. I don't remember exactly what happened at the waters of Meribah, and I am afraid of missing an important thought by not knowing the story, so I go back and read it in Ex 17.

(I found it quickly by using the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, or TSK, on my computer. Cross references are often better for finding stories than concordances because names are very often spelled differently in different parts of the Bible.)

What I find there is that, after God delivered the people from Egypt, He allowed them to suffer thirst. They began to doubt He was with them (Ex 17:7) and they didn't know God was testing them. I stop to think about this. I am still studying Psalm 91, but I am discovering many other things while I study.

Now I come to the third passage that uses "secret place"—Ezekiel 7:22. The context this time is Ezekiel 7 to 9. The secret place here is certainly the sanctuary of Jehovah. God's people are pictured as desecrating the sanctuary and God destroys them for this activity. The passage is full of imagery and makes me want to study it. But if I am going to make much progress on Psalm 91 I will have to leave Ezekiel 7 through 9 for a while.

(But not for long. Ezekiel 9 describes the sealing of God's people. That is part of God's curriculum for this age. I must get back to it.)

What do I conclude? I put my ideas together like this—"It appears that where God dwells is His secret place. He is in the temple. That is His secret place. But He is not under house arrest. He can fly. He can ride upon chariots. He can make the darkness of storms into His secret place when in Divine anger He answers the prayer of His servant."

The word "appears" helps save me from pride problems. It may be that I will find more evidence in favor of this idea as I study. And it may be that I will find evidence that the idea is quite faulty. I want to be ready to rethink my ideas when I have more evidence.

I am ready to move to my second observation—namely that a man can dwell in God's secret place. [I could have spent a lot more time on the first phrase—looking up cross references and other similar words to "secret place." If this was my own study I would have done this even though I might have spent a whole day on half a verse.]

I will begin by looking at the TSK for Psalm 91:1. Here is part of it:

**Ps 27:5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.**

**Ps 31:20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.**

**Ps 32:7 ¶ Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.**

**Ps 52:8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.**

**Ps 61:3 For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.**

**Ps 61:4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.**

**Ps 90:1 ¶ [Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.](#)**

**Isa 8:14** And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

**Eze 11:16** Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

**Ho 14:5** I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

**Ho 14:6** His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

**1Jo 4:15** Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

**1Jo 4:16** And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

**Ps 25:13** His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

Now this is exciting. I find confirmation of my conclusion. Ps 27:5 and 31:20 and 52:8 and 61:4 all have similar ideas. Men can dwell in God's secret place by dwelling in His sanctuary or tabernacle or pavilion. I can tell from other passages that dwelling in this sanctuary is a metaphor. God made Himself to be a sanctuary for those that could not travel to Jerusalem (Eze 11:16) and for those that saw Jesus (Is 8:14).

Then I remember that Jesus said of himself "destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days." Memory plays an important part in being taught of God. The Spirit that guides us into all truth often guides us by bringing back to memories things God has taught us previously.

This is good news for you. When you start studying the Bible the names of people and places, certain phrases, and new ways of thinking will be unfamiliar to you. You may get discouraged because you don't understand hardly anything you are reading. What we are learning here is to get started. The things you learn today will help you learn tomorrow. And it will not be too long before you feel that the Bible is a familiar book—if you search it as a man digs for hidden treasures.

OK, let's practice. Let's study the idea of dwelling with God. Use the tools you have learned here, whichever ones you can. Use a pencil or pen. Come back prepared to share whatever God teaches you, even if it does not seem to help answer the question, "How can I dwell in God's temple?" Remember, we do not determine what God teaches us. He is the teacher. We study the



Bible and He guides us.

## **AND NOW SHARING**

When we come back to share, remember that our goal is not to prove that we are smart, but to honor God for the gift of understanding He has given us through His Spirit.

### **How to study the Bible – An Outline**

1. Who to be
2. A man that is willing to do God's will
3. A man that is wise
4. A man that is single-mindedly believing
  1. What to do to be taught of God
  2. Earnestly pray for help in understanding—always
  3. Carefully read the passage in context, perhaps repeatedly
    1. Note observations
    2. Emphasize various words
    3. Be familiarizing yourself with scripture
    4. Make yourself a channel for God's blessings
    5. Use the best tools
      1. The Bible itself
      2. The Concordance
        1.
          - i. Not for etymology
        2.
          - ii. Not for translation correction
    3. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge
    4. Cross References and textual notes
    5. Brethren of experience
    6. Find parallel passages
      1. By using the tools in 5 a-d
      2. By miracle and open-eyed reading
      3. Explore contexts of parallel passages
      4. Meditate
      5. Find inspired commentary on the context
        1. NT on OT
        2. SOP on NT or OT
        3. Take copious notes
        4. Share immediately and repeatedly

1. What not to do
2. Use point 8b as a substitute for the work of digging. God will not cooperate.
3. "Strive about words"
4. Use forms of "be" uncritically as verbal equal signs
5. Treasure shock-value or oddity; or try to prove you are smart
6. Follow a man's development of a thought uncritically
7. Reject a man's development of a thought without giving it a hearing
8. Listen to teachers known to be causing divisions and problems by opposing the truth you have learned
9. Entertain foolish questions that require speculative answers
10. Search the Bible for evidence to support your position
  1. Rather, seek for evidence regarding your position
  2. Rather, take no position until the evidence is in
  3. Use a two-way passage, or an obscure one, to explain a simple passage
    1. How to conclude
    2. Write logically and simply
    3. Use the plain-practical clever
      1. If it passes, test it with the Brethren
      2. If it fails, store it for future use
      3. Express your thankfulness to God for teaching you.
        1. Privately

2. Individually when sharing with another
3. Publicly, making efforts not to exalt self

### **Additional Thoughts:**

1. Study when you are alert
2. Start with appropriate material – incrementally challenging
3. Memorize – your arsenal for quick advancement
4. Keep the mind uncluttered by wicked and vain thoughts
5. Find a private place
6. Give yourself sufficient time
7. Remember that pay-day in research is later rather than earlier
8. Reread Stories for new meaning
9. Do your homework in your Father's Home-School
  1. Revelation 3, 7, 12-14; Daniel 7-9, 12
  2. Isaiah 53, 58; Righteousness by Faith
  3. Master the fundamentals early
  4. Study passages rather than verses
    1. Think of passages as connected
    2. Recognize sections
    3. Pray interactively as you read; ask God what a phrase means; ask for help; repent of evil thoughts
    4. Carefully use faith-based commentaries
      1. Like those from [www.onlinebible.net](http://www.onlinebible.net)
      2. Like those from SDA Pioneers
      3. Treat commentaries as friends; not as teachers
      4. Know your computer program. Here are hints related to "online Bible."

1. I can search for unordered words or phrases
2. I can search several versions of the scripture and other books simultaneously
3. I can copy or "append" to the clipboard
4. I can toggle between showing Strong's numbers and not, and between showing marginal readings and not. Typically, I keep marginal readings on.
5. When I want to look up a word in the lexicon, I toggle to showing Strong's numbers and then hover over the number.
6. I can search for a Strong's number. I can mix numbers and words in my search.
7. I can view, in one window, the texts of TSK by showing "cross references."
8. The best commentaries, when I need to use one, appear to be "Clarke", "Henry," "Gill," and "Jamieson, Fausset and Brown." None are SDA and the closer you get to material that was once sealed, the less helpful they are.
9. Know that God uses curiosity to make assignments. When you wonder "why?" it is often because He arranged for you to wonder it by writing something out of the ordinary. (See Ex 12:26; 13:8; Josh 4:21.) Do your assignment.
10. In complex passages try this: Start with the last phrase and work backwards. If a verse said "read truth for it will help those who for the love of God are giving their lives for the benefit of others to see them saved" you would read it like this "To see people saved is the benefit that is worth dying for. The love of God motivates us to that kind of giving. Those that are motivated like that are benefited from reading truth." Hebrews tend to write "effect, cause, cause, cause." Englishman tend to write "cause, cause, cause, effect." Reading "backwards" will simplify many long sentences.
11. Use a Bible dictionary for unfamiliar words like "buckler."

## **DEEP BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENTS**

**Monday:** *In class*, read Psalm 91 twice with pencil making observations. Share some observations.

**Monday:** *Homework*, each unit take one and study it and bring something back

Ideas:

God hearing and answering prayer

Lions and snakes and treading on them

Time of trouble, God with us

Angels charge over thee

Keeping thee "in thy ways"

Reward of the wicked

Loving God

Being honored of God

Shield and buckler of the believer

The habitation of the believer

"surely" and "verily"

The idea "safety" (like "no evil shall befall thee")

satisfaction

**Tuesday:** *In class*, share result of previous study. Trade topics.

**Tuesday:** *Homework*, each unit take the new topic and bring something back

**Wednesday:** *In class*, share results of previous study.

**Wednesday:** *Homework*, Every individual study: Ezekiel 7-9. Find parallel passages. On Thursday we will take a break from Psalm 91 to explore our assignment from heaven—to study the Seal of God and the purification of God's church.

**Thursday:** *In Class*, share results of previous study. Take careful notes of today's lecture. I am going to give a study for you to evaluate critically. I will try to tell only the truth, but it will be controversial truth and you will have to use all you have learned in this class if you will come to a right understanding and not just follow me or your parents or a pastor.

**Thursday:** *Homework*, Critically evaluate today's deep lesson from Rev 18; 2 Thes 2; Jer 51; Is 1;

Jer 23; Mal 3; Num 14, 16, 20; Ps 106; Eze 14, 22; Joel 2; etc.

**Friday:** *In Class*, Sharing. No further homework except to use what you have learned for the rest of your life.

For the Word Document, click here: