

Learning Bible Doctrine

Before getting started, there is something exciting that needs to be shared from the archeological digs in Herculaneum, an ancient town near ancient Pompey that was destroyed by an eruption from Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. It is near the city of Naples, Italy.

Here is the lead-in from the Guardian newspaper from March 15 (Ides of March) of this year:

“The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79 laid waste to Pompeii and nearby Herculaneum where the intense blast of hot gas carbonised hundreds of ancient scrolls in the library of an enormous luxury villa.”

“Now, researchers are launching a global contest to read the charred papyri after demonstrating that an artificial intelligence programme can extract letters and symbols from high-resolution X-ray images of the fragile, unrolled documents.”

“The majority of Herculaneum scrolls analysed so far are written in ancient Greek, but some might contain Latin texts.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/mar/15/contest-decipher-herculaneum-scrolls-3d-x-ray-software>

From the scroll challenge webpage” “What's more, excavations were never completed, and many historians believe that thousands more scrolls remain underground.”

Before you conclude that this is an easy task, look at what they have to work with:

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<https://scrollprize.org/>

The biggest challenge is to identify letters which were written on papyri in “carbon” ink. So the scrolls were carbonized and the ink was carbonized. How can you tell the difference between the carbon of the carbonized scrolls and the carbonized ink. No small challenge. And yet, there is a glimmer of hope. Just think of all the insight the scrolls might shed on ancient Greek and Roman society. It is almost like a fictional scenario in which someone rescued scrolls from the great library at Alexandria before it burned.

Thousands more scrolls!

In case you have gone through the American education system and don't know where in the world Herculaneum is, here is a map :

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The red dots indicate the locations of Naples, Herculaneum and Pompeii.



Both maps are from Wikipedia:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herculaneum>

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

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Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

Doctrine (promises) + Faith → His (Faith) Rest

The Christian life is doctrine plus faith. We walk by faith.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have exercised faith in the spiritual realm. Of course, in the human realm, faith is used daily by most people without realizing it. If you watch a TV newscast, you may believe what you see and hear. Yet, these days, the news can be manipulated. But we are here concerned with faith in the spiritual realm for now.

Doctrine also comes from hearing. Last week there were several words presented and Scripture read that proclaimed the importance of learning doctrine. There are degrees of learning. We know that simple, easy, doctrine for new Christians is called milk.

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food (a single word meaning “food” a solid, not liquid); for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

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1 Corinthians 3:3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Paul identifies easy doctrine as milk and more advanced doctrine as “solid food.” Literally, Paul uses a single word for “food.” Now the writer of the book of Hebrews says something similar.

Hebrews 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Hebrews 5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

The writer of Hebrews also makes the same distinction between milk and solid food. However, here in Hebrews, the writer uses two words instead of one. It is literally “solid food.”

Here is the Philips’ translation of the same passage. It gets down to something that is easily communicated.

Hebrews 5:12-14 At a time when you should be teaching others, you need teachers yourselves to repeat to you the ABC of God’s

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Revelation to men. You have become people who need a milk diet and cannot face solid food! For anyone who continues to live on “milk” is obviously immature—he simply has not grown up. “Solid food” is only for the adult, that is, for the man who has developed by experience his power to discriminate between what is good and bad for him.

Peter also uses the same terminology.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

1 Peter 2:2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

1 Peter 2:3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

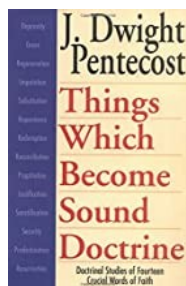
So we know from Paul, the writer of Hebrews and Peter, three different writers of Scripture, that there is a spectrum of doctrine going from elementary/milk to more advanced doctrine/solid food which aids in our spiritual growth.

It is the pastor-teacher’s task to provide both milk and solid food so that a congregation can grow. Here is a useful quote from Dwight Pentecost from his book “Things Which Become Sound Doctrine.”

“The average believer feels that doctrine belongs in the seminary classroom or on the shelf of the minister’s library, but it is not to be

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brought over into the pew or into the daily living of the child of God. Yet, apart from a knowledge of the doctrines of the Word of God, we will continue in spiritual immaturity and will be tossed about by every wind of doctrine. There are certain great doctrinal concepts in the word of God which every believer ought to know. He ought to be able to state the teaching of Scripture on such doctrines as grace, regeneration, substitution, redemption, justification, sanctification, and security, to mention but a few.”



In his book “Things That Become Sound Doctrine” he covers the following doctrines which can be considered to be in the realm of basic doctrine or milk. Depravity, Grace, Regeneration, Imputation, Substitution, Repentance, Redemption, Reconciliation, Propitiation, Justification, Sanctification, Security, Predestination, Resurrection. Herman has covered them at one time or another already. But because they are basic to our understanding of our Christian status, it is necessary to repeat these. Repetition is most effective if each time it is repeated, it is presented from a slightly different perspective.

Last week there were passages that mentioned knowledge, understanding and wisdom. How we process doctrine determines how we can use that doctrine. Robby Dean adapted a quote from someone concerning information, knowledge and wisdom.

“We live in a world where we are now, some people say, we are now in the Information Age. And people have so much information, they are overwhelmed, they are drowning in information, just data. But we have to understand that there is a huge difference between information and

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knowledge. There is another big difference between knowledge and wisdom. OK? Information is knowing that an avocado and a tomato are fruits. Knowledge is not putting them in a fruit salad. Wisdom is putting them together with a jalapeno and making guacamole. That's skill. See, in Hebrew, wisdom is skill. It's taking the information God has given us and creating something artistic and of value." The underlines are mine.

In order to illustrate from a human perspective that there are different levels of learning, included below is a quote from an old Air Force training manual. It is itself adapted from "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives Handbook I: Cognitive Domain," ed. B. S. Bloom, et al. New York: David McKay, 1956. It may be old, but it is useful to illustrate that from a human perspective there are different levels of learning...just as in the Bible, from milk to solid food.

Level of Learning	Definition
Knowledge	Recall previously learned material (facts, theories, etc.) in essentially the same form as taught.
Comprehension	See relationships, concepts, and abstractions beyond the simple remembering of material. Typically involves translating, interpreting, and estimating future trends.
Application	Use learned material in new and concrete situations, including the application of rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws, and theories.
Analysis	Break down material into its component parts so that the organizational structure may be understood, including the identification of the parts, analysis of the relationships between parts, and recognition of the organizational principles involved.
Synthesis	Put parts together to form new patterns or structures, such as a unique communication (a theme or speech), a plan of operations (a research proposal), or a set of abstract relations (schemes for classifying information)
Evaluation	Judge the value of material for a given purpose. Learning in this area is the highest in the cognitive hierarchy because it involves elements of all the other categories, plus conscious value judgments based on clearly defined criteria.

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So whether we are operating in the human physical realm or the spiritual realm, information/doctrine is learned at different levels. Initially learning may include only the memorization of words and lists with little or no understanding. As a student becomes familiar with a concept and related terms, he or she may be able to use it with more skill.

Learning Bible Doctrine is complicated by the fact that believers have a human spirit which is our interface to the spiritual world. Logically, it is the repository for spiritual information.

Human Body ↔ Human Soul ↔ Human Spirit

R. B. Thieme Jr. developed an elaborate doctrine of the spiritual learning process he called “the Grace Apparatus for Perception” or GAP. That will not be explained here. The point is that there is a process of perception that starts with our human bodies paying attention to teaching. It is stored to and used from the human spirit by faith with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual perception requires spiritual resources. A believer has a human spirit. It requires the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to function properly. And all the while, the human soul which is in between our body and our human spirit, is the real you.

Just to refresh your memory about the human spirit. Human beings are born “dichotomous” meaning they have a human body and human soul. The soul is the real person. At death, the body decays but the soul continues. A believer received a human spirit at the point of salvation which makes him or her “trichotomous.”

1 Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

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So, how do we start to learn Bible Doctrine? Same way a child learns. First there are some words, vocabulary words, and basic concepts.

Have you seen a baby learning words. First words might be “mama” and “dada.” But soon they will learn “NO!” “I want...” “mine.”

In order to become a Christian, a person has to understand something about the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved (Acts 16:31). In some cases, a person may have learned about God, man and sin and the need to be saved. That righteousness which allows fellowship with God comes from faith in Jesus. In other cases, there may be additional information. For some, the evangelist has to start way back at creation and point to God as the creator, the perfect, infinite being who wants fellowship with a fallen imperfect unrighteous creature.

God is the creator of the universe.

God has an indescribable character which God found a way to describe in human terms even if it is limited by human abilities of comprehension.

God is:

Perfect Righteousness

Perfect Justice

Omniscient (all-knowing)

Omnipotent (all-powerful)

Omnipresent (always and everywhere present)

Sovereignty

Eternal Life

Immutability

Veracity

Perfect Love

Perfect Faithfulness

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There are no Scripture passages given for those at this time. That would be a study of several hours duration. In time we can look at a few passages.

Man is imperfect, unrighteous, sinful etc.

God wants to have fellowship with his creatures but man needs salvation. Something has to change man and enable him to have fellowship with God. Apart from that there is nothing.

Here are some additional concepts/vocabulary:

Grace is everything God can do on the basis of the cross (R. B. Thieme Jr.). Mankind does not deserve God's grace but because of His character, He provides. But God does not force men and women to accept His provision. As Thieme said, God is a gentleman. He does not save us apart from our free will (volition). I am paraphrasing here.

Sin is all that is in opposition to God's will. One way to look at it is

Romans 14:23b ...and whatever is not from faith is sin.

There are different ways to say this. Here are some taken from the "Doctrine of Sin" found on the kukis.org website.

"The Westminster Catechism's definition of sin is: "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of any law of God given as a rule to a reasonable creature.""

"Dr. L. S. Chafer's definition of sin is: "Sin is that which proves unlike the character of God.""

"Charles C. Ryrie defines it as: "Defection from any of God's standards. It is a lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state. It is anything in man that does not express, or which is contrary to the holy character of God.""

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At this point, I want to flow into the study of Isaiah and our study of the “Suffering Servant.” As we do this, we need to add an additional concept. How do we deal with the Word of God as we read it? Herman taught as others have that it requires three stages: a) Observation, b) Interpretation and c) Application.

The words we are looking for in our text are redeemed and redeemer which leads to the doctrine of redemption.

Read Isaiah 42:10 – 43:28. This moves us forward in the study of the Suffering Servant. But, it also identifies a basic doctrine with which a new believer needs to be familiar.

In particular, reread these two verses:

Isaiah 43:1 But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!

Isaiah 43:3 “For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place.

Isaiah 43:14a Thus says the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,

Observe some key facts given:

1. The Lord (Yahweh – the name of Israel’s God) is creator and is also the redeemer.

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2. Repeatedly in the Bible, Israel is said to have been established by God as His own people. Within that statement are several doctrines that will not be covered here.
3. The Hebrew word for “savior” is the same word for “deliverer.”
4. The redemption in this context clearly is focused on the nation Israel. Egypt was the payment for Israel’s redemption.
5. But, this gives us a concrete example of what a redemption was.
6. That leads us to the important word redemption in relation to salvation.

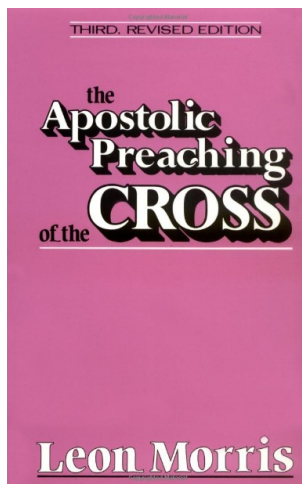
Here is L. S. Chafer on the importance of the doctrine of redemption:

“There is a justification for the fact that the two great doctrines—*sin* and *redemption*—go hand in hand. It is sin that has drawn out redemption from the heart of God, and redemption is the only cure for sin. These two realities, in turn become measurements of each other. Where sin is minimized, redemption is automatically impoverished since its necessity is by so much decreased. The worthy approach to the doctrine of sin is to discover all that is revealed about the sinfulness of sin and then to recognize that God's provided Savior is equal to every demand which sin imposes. It is one of Satan's most effective methods of attack upon the saving work of Christ to soften the voice which is set to proclaim the evil character and effect of sin. Apparently not all who are known as teachers of God's truth are awake to this satanic strategy. It is too often assumed that it is wiser to leave this loathsome monster called sin to lurk in the dark, and to dwell on the more attractive virtues of human life. Sin is what God says it is, and here human opinion and philosophy must bend to the testimony of the Word of God in which He declares the true nature of sin. Opinions of self-flattering men are of little value in a matter which

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can be determined only by revelation.” L. S. Chafer’s “Systematic Theology,” Volume II, page 224.

Here is some comments by Leon Morris who in my opinion was very perceptive in his reading of the Bible. This is from the introduction to his book “Apostolic Preaching from the Bible.”



“REDEMPTION IS A TERM which is employed very loosely in much modern theological writing. It is often used almost exactly like ‘deliverance’. Or Christianity may be classed as ‘a religion of redemption’, i.e. one which promises man salvation from his predicament as a sinner, in contrast to ‘religions of law’, which look to man to bring about this desirable state of affairs by his own efforts. It would be going too far to say that there are as many meanings as there are users of the word. But there is certainly a bewildering variety of meanings for it in circulation. This wide use of the term ‘redemption’ is a modern development. We find it neither in antiquity in general nor in the Bible in particular. Indeed, when we consider how widely the term is used in modern theology we may well be surprised at the comparative rarity of its occurrence in the New Testament. And just as it is used less often in antiquity than with us, so also it is used with a narrower and more precise connotation. As we shall see, it does not mean deliverance in general, but a particular kind of deliverance. Another difference is that we use such

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words as ‘redeemer’, ‘redemption’, etc, as religious terms. Whenever we hear them our thoughts turn to religion. But when the man of the first century heard them he immediately thought in non-religious terms. Indeed, that was the reason words came to be used by the early Christians. Men in general knew quite well what redemption was. Therefore Christians found it a convenient term to use. It is our task to try to recapture this meaning and not simply to assume that redemption meant to the ancients exactly what it means to us.”

As you read your Bible, which I recommend doing daily, keep in mind that it was written in a different time, culture and language with some history attached to each word. Translators of the Bible can only go so far in explaining what is meant by individual words. People like L. S. Chafer, Leon Morris and Herman Mattox are needed to explain these words which will be illuminated by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Herman has given an in-depth, long (34 pages) version of the doctrine of redemption.

(<http://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Ephesians/notes/Doctrine%20of%20Redemption.pdf>) .

It is a doctrine a new believer would want to understand. It deals directly with the concept of salvation and the underlying concept of “atonement.” I will attempt to shorten Herman’s treatment of redemption but keep the salient points.

Under the umbrella of Salvation/Atonement there are three key words in the Bible that believers should be familiar with: redemption, reconciliation and propitiation. On the cross, Jesus Christ accomplished redemption, reconciliation and propitiation. This lesson will briefly deal with redemption.

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1. Redemption is the work of Christ **toward sin**. Christ redeemed mankind from sin. He paid the ransom which was His work on the cross, also known as the Blood of Christ. Reconciliation is the work of Christ **toward mankind**. Christ reconciled or bridged that gap between man and God. Propitiation is the work of Christ **toward God**. It satisfied the Justice and Righteousness of God. As a result, God is free to act in grace without perverting His righteousness.
2. As Leon Morris said, redemption started out as a non-religious word in Greek and Roman societies. The basic concept is paying for something.
3. In the case of salvation, Adam sinned and experienced spiritual death. That state, spiritual death, was inherited, or more properly was imputed to all in the human race. We start in the “slave market of sin.” We are in debt and unable to pay that debt. As a result God provided Jesus Christ to go to the cross to be judged for all sin resulting in the debt against us being paid. That debt required God judging sin in a perfect, sinless man, Jesus Christ. Someone who is in debt with no source of income cannot get out of debt. Jesus was not in debt and live a perfectly righteous life. He was the only one qualified to bear the sins of the world.

1 Peter 1:17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;

1 Peter 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

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1 Peter 1:19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

There are many concepts touched on in this study. Most of them are not covered in any detail here. So that is the task in the coming weeks.

Sin

Grace

Atonement

Redemption

Propitiation

Reconciliation

Blood of Christ

Nation of Israel (founding and God's people)

Essence of God

I will try to mesh study of them into the study of Isaiah.