

Food for thought

In much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase in sorrow.
(Ecclesiastes 1.18)

You must unlearn what you have learned. (Yoda, *Star Wars V: Empire Strikes Back*)

Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.
(G. K. Chesterton)

Te totum applica ad textum; rem totam applica ad te. [Apply yourself totally to the text; apply the thing totally to yourself.] (J. A. Bengel, 1734)¹

Basic questions and topics

- What is the Bible?
Variety of Bible books?
- What is its significance for Western culture, for the world, and for us?
What are some major themes and issues in the Bible?
- Exegesis and interpretation
Meaning(s) of Bible passages in their historical contexts (e.g., cultural, geographical, literary, political contexts)
as well as in relation to other areas of knowledge and to contemporary thought
Methodological issues involved in biblical interpretation
- Playing with the Bible

Recommended books (* = highly recommended)

a study Bible

* *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* or *The HarperCollins Study Bible* using the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The table of contents, introductions, essays, tables, glossary, maps, etc. are all very helpful.
other English translations, e.g., NIV; Bibles in other languages
Tanakh. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985 (5748).

* Achtemeier, Paul. *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999.

Brown, Michael J. *What They Don't Tell You: A Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

* Brown, Raymond E. *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine*. Wipf & Stock, 2002.

* _____. *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Whose Bible Is It? A History of the Scriptures through the Ages*.

Polkinghorne, John. *The Way the World Is: The Christian Perspective of a Scientist*

White, Heath. *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian*.

* Wright, N. T. *Simply Christianity: Why Christianity Makes Sense*.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: ² וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תֵהוֹ וּבְהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וַרְיֹם אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵף עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי-אֹר: ⁴ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאֹר כִּי-טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: ⁵ וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

Septuagint: Γένεσις

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ² ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος. ³ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. ⁴ καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σκοτούς. ⁵ καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκότος ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία.

KJV

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. ³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Tanakh

When God began to create heaven and earth— ²the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water— ³ God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

NIV

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

NRSV

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Genesis

Gen 7.1–5; 6.11–22
Gen 1.1–3.24 (cf. Ps 8, 136, 148; Prov 8.22–31; Job 38; Dt 32.8–9)
Gen 1.26–27 (cf. Ps 82; Ex 15.11; 1 Kgs 22.19–23)
Gen 22.1–19
Gen 37.18–36
Gen 38
Ex 2.11–14
Dt 17.14–20
Josh 2, 6 (cf. 2 Sam 6.17–19)
Josh 24
2 Sam 7
2 Sam 11.1–12.23 (cf. 1Kgs 15.4–5)
1 Kgs 22.1–28
Hos 11
Isa 6–9
Jer 31.27–34
Isa 53
Job 1–2; 42.7–17

Matthew

Mt 1.1–17 (cf. Lk 3.23–38; cf. 1 Chr 1[–9])
Mt 20.1–16
Mt 21.1–11 & ||s
cf. Zech 9.9 & Mt 21.1–7
Mt 25.31–46
Mk 5.21–43
Lk 3.23–38 (cf. Mt 1.1–17)

John

Jn 3.1–21 (cf. 17.3)
Jn 4.1–42
Jn 13.31–35
1 Cor 13: apostle of love (cf. Rom 13.8–10; John 13.34–35; Gal 5.14; Mk 12.28–34; Mt 22.34–40; Lk 10.27; Jas 2.8; Lev 19.18)
Gal 3 (cf. Rom 4): faith, grace, law
Rom 9–11: What about Israel?
Heb 2.1–4; 3.1–6; 5.7
Rev 5.6; 12.3–9; 13.11–18: portrait of good & evil

1. Find and read the following verses in different translations. E.g.:

KJV (King James Version)
 NIV (New International Version)
 Tanakh (the Jewish Bible)
 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)
 Bible in another language (highly recommended)

Also try paraphrases, e.g., *The Message*, *The Living Bible*, or even Clarence Jordan's *Cotton Patch* series.

2. Note your observations and questions as you compare the translations; also write down any possible explanations for the differences. Does the version or edition of the Bible you have used before or you are using now offer any explanations (check footnotes and annotations)?

Gen 1.1–3	Mt 18.11	Lk 23.17	Rom 16.24
Gen 46.13 (also see RSV)	Mt 23.14	Jn 3.3 (also see RSV)	1 Cor 10.9
Ex 22.1–5	Mk 7.16	Jn 5.4	2 Cor 13.12–14
1 Sam 10.27	Mk 9.44, 46	Jn 7.53–8.11	Phil 2.7 (esp. NIV & NRSV)
1 Sam 13.1	Mk 11.26	Acts 8.37	1 Tim 5.16
Hos 11.12 (esp. NIV & NRSV)	Mk 15.28	Acts 9.5–6	2 Pet 2.18 (esp. NIV)
Mic 4.13	Lk 9.55–56	Acts 15.34	1 Jn 5.7–8 (esp. KJV)
Mt 9.10 (KJV)	Lk 17.36	Rom 1.3 (esp. NIV)	

And if you have time . . .

3. Try the following passages in the NRSV or NIV and then see the KJV (the more literal translation). What do you think?

2 Kgs 18.27	1 Sam 25.22, 34	2 Kgs 9.8
Isa 36.12	1 Kgs 14.10; 16.11; 21.21	

4. Read the story of Balaam (Num 22.1–35) aloud in the KJV, then see how it sounds different in the NRSV or the NIV.

Christmas Quiz

Choose the correct answer(s) and provide Bible references wherever possible.

1. Which Gospel provides Jesus' genealogy?

- a. Matthew
- b. John
- c. Mark
- d. none
- e. Luke

(Bonus: Which one begins with a genealogy?)

2. The Gospel that does not have a birth narrative is

- a. Matthew
- b. John
- c. Mark
- d. none
- e. Luke

3. Jesus was born

- a. In a house
- b. Nowhere physical or material
- c. Perhaps in a stable
- d. "House of Bread"
- e. New Wilmington, PA

4. Jesus' grandfather's name is

- a. Jacob
- b. Heli
- c. Kris Kringle
- d. Mr. Claus

5. How was Joseph after finding out that Mary was pregnant?

- a. Planned to dismiss her
- b. We're not told
- c. Apparently upset but thoughtful of Mary
- d. What pregnancy?

6. In the story of Jesus' birth an angel visited

- a. Mary
- b. Joseph
- c. Shepherds
- d. Wise men

7. How many magi came to visit the newborn Jesus

- a. At least two
- b. Three
- c. Four
- d. No magi came to visit

8. Jesus' genealogy is traced back to

- a. Abraham
- b. Abel
- c. Santa Claus
- d. God

9. Who were there at the scene of Jesus' birth?

- a. Wise men
- b. Shepherds
- c. Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer
- d. Santa

10. Jesus existed before his birth.

- a. True
- b. False

Circle the correct answer and also provide the Bible reference wherever possible. Take this “quiz” before reading the biblical texts (1 Cor 15.3–10; Mk 15.40–16.8; Mt 27.55–28.20; Lk 23.48–24.53; Jn 19.25–21.25; Acts 1.1–2.4)

- The woman/women—where were the men?!?—who went to the tomb was/were
 - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary
 - Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome
 - Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna and other women
 - Mary Magdalene
- The time of the visit on the first day of the week was
 - toward dawn
 - when the sun had risen
 - at early dawn
 - while it was still dark
- At the tomb was/were
 - an angel
 - a young man
 - 2 men
- The reaction of the woman/women was one of
 - fear and great joy
 - amazement, trembling, astonishment and fear
 - fear and bowing to the ground
- From the tomb, the woman/women
 - departed quickly and ran to tell the disciples
 - fled and said nothing to anyone
 - returned and told the eleven and all the rest
- The reaction of the disciples at first was that
 - they did not believe her
 - they did not believe the women because their words seemed an idle tale
 - Peter and “the other disciple” ran toward the tomb
- After being resurrected, Jesus first appeared to the disciples
 - in Galilee, on a mountain
 - at table
 - in a room
- Jesus was with the disciples for the last time
 - on a mountain in Galilee
 - at table
 - in Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem
 - by the Sea of Tiberias
- The gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples
 - before Jesus ascended; in a room he breathed on them
 - after Jesus ascended, on the Day of Pentecost
- We have many details about the crucifixion and death of Jesus. Which Gospel gives the most details about the actual resurrection of Jesus from the grave? Which one best describes what happened when Jesus was raised from the dead?

בראשית	Septuagint: Γένεσις	KJV	Tanakh	NRSV	NIV
<p>בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים את השמים ואת הָאָרֶץ: ² וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתְּמָה תְהוֹ וְכִהוּ וְהַיְשָׁף עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וַיְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר: ⁴ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־ הָאוֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: ⁵ וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:</p>	<p>Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ² ἢ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος. ³ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. ⁴ καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σκότους. ⁵ καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκότος ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία.</p>	<p>In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. ³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.</p>	<p>When God began to create heaven and earth— ²the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water— ³ God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.</p>	<p>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.</p>	<p>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning— the first day.</p>

¹ J. A. Bengel, *Vorrede zur Handausgabe des Griechischen N.T.*, 1734.