

LESSON 10

**Using the Principles for Understanding Scripture (1)
Background Information for the Teacher**

Objectives:

1. The student can list the ten principles for understanding scripture.
2. The student can use the ten principles for understanding selected passages.

Preparation:

1. Have ready to distribute Written Review No. 9.
2. Have ready to distribute Worksheet No. 10. (Fill in one for yourself.)
3. Have sufficient Bibles and pens.
4. Have access to a chalkboard or overhead projector.

Lesson Plan for the Teacher

Introduction: (15 minutes)

1. Call the role and plan contact with those who are absent.
2. Make necessary announcements.
3. Songs and prayer as desired.
4. Give answers to Written Review No. 9. 1—Read the list of ten principles so students can check to see how many they got. 2—reasoning. 3—Sabbath Day, not women elders, baptism by immersion, belief should precede baptism, infants cannot be baptized since they cannot believe, since baptism is “into Christ,” those not baptized have no promise of being “in Christ.”
5. Discuss Acts 20:6-12. No commands in the passage but they were following the command Jesus gave to take the Lord’s Supper. Example--Meet on the first day of the week. Meet to take the Lord’s Supper. Hear from the inspired word when they meet. Inference—they met each Lord’s Day. If Paul waited 7 days so he could meet with the brethren to have the Supper with them, they must have met each first day. The use of the expression “first day” suggests which day of a period and the term “week” indicates what period. Had they met the first Sunday of the month, the wording would have been “on the first Sunday of the month.” Exactly the same expression occurs in 1 Corinthians 16:1 about the contribution which all take to be weekly.

Learning Experiences: (about 25 minutes)

(Note to teacher: As a way to practice the ten principles, study Acts 2:1-13. You can do this in several ways. The approach should be to ask what each of the ten principles can contribute to understanding this passage. (1) You may assign in advance each of the principles to



someone to report to the class about. (2) You may divide the class into ten groups of two or three (depending on size of the class) and ask each to work on one principle for a few minutes and then report to the class. Other groupings may work better for you: five groups with each having two principles, two groups with each group getting half the principles, or some other plan. Since “conditions” has several sub-headings, it could be assigned to among more than one person or group. If you use the group approach, you can have some study tools available in the room for the groups to use—concordance, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, reference Bibles, topical Bible, computer with software up, commentaries, etc. (3) Or, you may wish to use the question/answer method of the previous lessons in which you lead the study and let the entire class participate and suggest ways each principle could help with the study.

The material that follows shows how each of the ten principles can yield something to the study of these verses, and, thus, will provide helpful information for whichever method you choose. If, for example, the report of some group does not mention something shown below under one of the headings, you could add that following their report. Since some of the ten principles have a greater value in the interpretation of this passage than others, you may wish to select only the ones with stronger value here to pursue for reports and discussion. Be sure to involve students as much as possible in the learning process. Expect some overlap from the use of the various principles. Show this to be a good thing, not a bad one.

A worksheet is provided to give students a place to write down something learned from each principle as you, and the class, talk about it, or as there are reports from individuals and/or groups.)

1. Conditions—

- a. Situation—The apostles have been waiting in Jerusalem as Christ had told them (Acts 1:4-5). The Day of Pentecost was a Jewish feast day fifty days after the Passover. It always fell on Sunday. On this feast day of the Jews, the city would have been filled with many Jews from all over the world because male Jews were supposed to attend the feast.
- b. History—The Feast of Pentecost, instituted in Leviticus 23:16, was also called the Feast of Weeks because it was seven weeks after Passover. It was to celebrate the beginning of the harvest. Special offerings were given. This date was probably April 6, 30 AD, based on what we know of when Pentecost would have fallen in that year.
- c. Geography—The story takes place in Jerusalem where the apostles have stayed after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection in that same place.
- d. Archaeology—We cannot know for certain where the events described in Acts 2 take place. The apostles may have started in a home and have moved to the temple courts or the entire event may have been in the courts.



In verse 2, a word is usually translated “house,” but it does not necessarily mean the home of an individual. It can mean “building.” (Lapping over into Word Study.) Since a large number of people gather, it is a fair assumption that by the time they were speaking in tongues, they were in the temple courts. If that is the case, archaeology has revealed several important things about the temple and its courts. Herod had built a magnificent complex with the temple building surrounded on all sides by porticos. These “porches” would have afforded plenty of space for a large crowd. Archaeologists have determined where the temple stood and the outline of the area of the courtyards. They have also discovered 48 ritual baths at the south end of the temple area where Jewish people could perform their rite of purification before they came on the temple grounds. While we have no way of knowing for sure, this is the likely place for baptism of the 3,000 who responded to Peter’s call.

- e. Culture—The Jewish customs of that feast day and of their culture generally would have prevailed. The people would have been off work because no work was to be done that day. They would have been gathering in the area of the temple for the sacrificial events. Peter, in his sermon, makes reference to its being 9 a.m., third hour of the day as they counted time, and, according to their culture, no one would be drinking early in the morning.

2. Genre—

- a. The book of Acts is primarily narrative, although sermons are sprinkled through it. The passage being studied is the account of an event on Pentecost. It is an inspired account of a very important event. It gives a number of important details such as the nationalities of those present and something of what was said. It even reports on the reactions of people to various events. Since there is little use of any figurative language, and since the passage speaks of people by name, of a specific feast day of the Jews, and of actual events taking place, there is no reason to take this as anything other than a historical account of a real event.
- b. This event is the fulfillment of a prophecy given in the previous chapter where Jesus says, “in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). It is important to link this prophecy with the events of Acts 2.
- c. The passage is a narrative which has no commands given to the people of that time or to use today, but it is very useful in our understanding that the apostles were given the baptism of the Holy Spirit that allowed them to speak in tongues.



3. Context—Acts 2:1-13 comes at the first of chapter 2. Chapter 1 told how the apostles and others gathered in Jerusalem. They chose Matthias to replace Judas, indicating they were expecting to move forward to carry out the commission the Lord had given. Because of what Jesus said in Acts 1:4-5, 7-8, they were in a mode of anticipation. The first 13 verses of chapter two are the first segment of that chapter. Following that segment is Peter’s sermon and the results from it. This portion of the chapter tells about the occasion of the baptism of the Holy Spirit which Jesus had promised to the apostles. Following their receiving the Holy Spirit, they were empowered to speak in tongues and were guided by Him in what they said. A study of these verses must be within the context of the time of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the utterances made possible by that gift.
Another question with which context helps is in the nature of the tongue-speaking. Some look at the words “each of us hears them in his own native language” and conclude that the miracle was one of hearing. Thus, they say, the apostles spoke in their own language and a translation occurred in the air (UN like) and then people heard the message in their native language. Prior to that, however, the context says, they “began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” This statement makes it very clear that the miracle was in the speaking not in the hearing and the statement about hearing must be taken in harmony with the earlier statement. Thus, the apostles actually spoke in the other languages and people who knew that language heard them.
4. Speaker/Audience. The writer of the passage is Luke. He writes Acts as a follow-up to his gospel of the life of Christ, the book of Luke. His audience is Theophilus, a man who seems to be a well-placed individual, but we don’t know more about him. Theophilus seems not to be a Jew, and so Luke writes in a style that takes into account that the receiver would not know all about Jewish customs and laws. There also is a speaker/audience situation in the narrative. The apostles speak in tongues to those assembled. The assembled group were all Jews by religion who had come for the described feast from a wide variety of nations. They all knew the language of their home countries, which were quite diverse, and they would, for the most part at least, have known the Jewish tongue of that time—probably Aramaic. It is useful to note that although fifteen different places are mentioned, some of these spoke the same language so that the actual number of different languages spoken was actually only six: Persian, Syriac, Greek, Coptic, Latin, and Arabic.
5. Words. Several words are due close study. “House.” This word may mean a person’s home or it may mean a public building. When Jesus, for example, spoke of the “house of



God" which He was cleansing, He used this word (Matthew 21:13). "Speak in other tongues." The word tongue, of course, literally means the part of the body used to shape sound into recognizable words. It is used here in the common usage of "language," much as we speak of a "mother tongue" to mean one's original language. For a person to speak in "other tongues," then, means to speak in languages beyond the languages one has learned growing up or by study. The context supports this definition of "tongues." "Galileans." All of the apostles were men whom Jesus had met and called when He was in Galilee. The expression here means that those speaking in tongues were all from the province of Galilee, the northernmost of the three provinces of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Those from this area were thought of as the "rural" people and usually not as well educated as those from Judea. Thus, the people say, these men are all Galileans meaning they would not expect them to be able to speak in this wide range of languages.

6. Syntax. An interesting question arises as to the antecedent of the word "they" in verse 1. Does "they" mean the entire one hundred twenty of 1:15 or just the apostles. The general rule for finding antecedents is to look for the closest preceding noun. In this case it is "apostles" in 1:26. This would mean "the apostles" only were endowed by the Holy Spirit. This would also seem to fit with the fact that the apostles had special powers to bestow the Holy Spirit on others (Acts 8:17-18; Acts 19:6; Romans 1:11. Also, it was only to the apostles that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised (Acts 1:2-5; John 14:16).
7. Figures. As discussed under the heading of "words," the term "tongue" is used here in a figurative sense. It is a metonymy—one word in place of another. Here the "tongue" as an instrument of creating various sounds is put for the language it creates. So "tongue" means "language." We speak of the "mother tongue" or "my native tongue." These mean, of course, the language we learned growing up. Understanding the meaning of tongues here is very important because this is the only passage in the Scriptures which actually describes an event where tongue speaking took place. Other passages say it happened but this is the only description of what happens when people "speak in other tongues." The text says they "began to speak in other tongues." So the miracle was one of speaking in real languages they had not learned.
8. Theology. This event needs to be put in the larger picture of the story of the Bible. James Bales wrote a book about Acts 2 entitled The Hub of the Bible because all before that time points to this event and all after it points back to it. Jesus had promised the apostles the Holy Spirit would come to guide and



- comfort them after He left (John 14:16; 16:13). He had commissioned them to take the message about salvation through Christ to all the world (Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:18-20). But he had told them not to start on this mission until they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 7-8). Peter, in his sermon, even points to the events of that day as being the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-21). Some ten years later, Peter referred to this day when the Holy Spirit came on them as “the beginning” (Acts 11:15-16). The events of Acts 2:1-13, then, mark the beginning of the new era. Prior to this, God’s plan was to use the Jewish nation as a people through whom to bring a Messiah and through whom to teach the world about Him and about sin and about the need for salvation. Now the moment has come to move to a new stage. The Messiah has come, has died for the sins of the world, and now Christ sends the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (Acts 2:33) to allow them to begin carrying out the mission He gave them. Now the message of salvation through Jesus Christ can be proclaimed by inspired men empowered to deliver the message. In the later sections of this chapter, the proclamation of that message begins.
9. Other Passages. In the preceding discussions, many other passages have been mentioned. And this demonstrates an important point. There will always be some overlap between our ten principles as we study. Some other key passages that have been mentioned are Acts 11:15-16; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 1:4-5; 7-8. Other related passages would deal with tongue-speaking at other times: Acts 10:46; Acts 19:1-7; 1 Corinthians 14. Even though these occasions of tongue-speaking took place in other locations, Caesarea, Ephesus and Corinth, it was the same type of event—people speaking in real languages they had never studied. That is what happened in Jerusalem, and there is no reason to believe that tongue-speaking was different in different places. Other passages could also involve those dealing with the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit such as John 14:16 and John 16:13. Since Peter links this event with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius, a study of Acts 10:44-48 and 11:15-16 could be helpful. In 1 Peter 1:1, Peter addresses Christians scattered throughout many regions, some of which are listed in Acts 2:9-10—Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia.
10. Application. What application can we make of this passage? There are no commands in the passage for us. The example of these men, however, is that they indeed followed the command of Christ and stayed in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit baptism. Notice there is never a command for us to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Only two occasions in the New Testament are called “Holy Spirit baptism” and these are in Acts 2 and Acts 10 (explained in Acts 11:15-16). So we should not expect, as some do today, a baptism of the Holy Spirit. (We can have the indwelling mentioned in Acts 2:38, however.)



We also see in this passage another instance of inference. When the people of many nations heard the apostles speaking in the language of their own home country and knew they had not learned the language, they were amazed and wanted to know what this meant. This miracle opened an opportunity for preaching just as Jesus' miracles opened opportunities for His, as with Nicodemus (John 3:2). We also learn that there will always be skeptics such as those who said they were drunk. The apostles did not escape critics, Jesus didn't, and we won't either. We may also learn from this event that Jesus keeps His promises. He had told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit and within ten days, He sent the Spirit to them.

Application: (3 minutes)

1. The day of Pentecost marks the beginning of the Christian era, the first gospel sermon. **Q:** When did God start planning for this event? **A:** Before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4). **Q:** What was God's first statement to human beings about this plan? **A:** To Adam and Eve and the serpent in Genesis 3:15 where He speaks of the offspring of woman bruising the head of the serpent. **Q:** How long did God take to work out this plan to the point that it could begin to be preached? **A:** We don't know but it was certainly several thousands of years. God sometimes takes a long time to "work His gracious will," but He will do all He promises.
2. If the plan of God was worth such a special effort from God, we should certainly study it and respond to it.

Assignment: (2 minutes)

1. For next class period, again be prepared to write out from memory the ten principles.
2. For class next time, be prepared to discuss how some of the principles can help us as we study Acts 17:22-34. Read all of Acts 17.



**UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE
WORKSHEET NO. 10**

Below are listed the ten principles we have studied. Note beside each of them something in class that is suggested as useful in studying Acts 2:1-13.

1. Conditions
 - a. Situation

 - b. History

 - c. Geography

 - d. Archaeology

 - e. Culture

2. Genre

3. Context

4. Speaker/Audience

5. Words

6. Syntax

7. Figures

8. Theology



9. Other Passages

10. Applications

FOR THE NEXT CLASS SESSION, STUDY ACTS 17:22-34. LOOK UP INFORMATION ON SOME OF THE TEN PRINCIPLES SO YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE CLASS DISCUSSION. READ ALL OF ACTS 17.



**WRITTEN REVIEW NO. 9
(For use with Lesson No. 10)**

1. Write as many of the ten principles for understanding Scripture as you can remember.

2. An inference is a conclusion drawn through _____.

3. An example of some conclusion from Scripture drawn through inference is:

