

6. **Try not to impose your theological system** on the text (whether dispensational, covenantal, etc.).
7. Be alert for certain **reoccurring and sweeping themes**, especially those that bear on the relationships between the testaments (e.g. eschatology, temple, marriage, spiritual adultery, and new birth).
8. Consider **how the New Testament authors employ your passage**, or at least your book.

B. Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature

- Understand background
 - Looking and longing
- Understand genre
 - Multiple genres
 - “Unveil”
 - Symbolic language
- Understand purpose
 - To help churches face persecution
- Understand structure
 - Seven visions
 - Hearing turns to seeing
Rev 5:5, 6
- There is some debate

How to Study the Bible **Class 6: Gospels, Epistles, Prophetic, & Apocalyptic Literature**



“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Col 3.4 ESV)

I. The Gospels (and Acts)

A. Genre

B. Chronology

C. Harmony

D. Distinctives

1. Matthew

Central Concerns

- How Jesus fulfills the Messianic prophecies given to Israel
- Israel’s rejection of Jesus as the Messiah

2. Mark

Action and authority

3. Luke

- the sovereignty of God (God's will)
- joy at the arrival of the Messiah
- Christ's role as prophet
- Miracles that validate Jesus' claims

4. John

- concerned with showing Christ's divinity
- responses to Jesus range from rejection to openness

5. Acts

The story of the Gospel penetrating the Roman Empire, despite stiff opposition, through the boldness of witnesses drawing on God's Spirit.

Speeches: Missionary and Defense

II. Epistles

A. Structured in three parts:

- Opening
- Body
- Closing

B. Studying Epistles:

- We often only have one side of the conversation
- Balancing original audience and modern audience

III. Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature:

A. Interpreting the Prophets

- Prophets **forth-tell** and **foretell**
 - Salvation / Judgment

Numerous literary forms:

Allegories (Isa 5:1–7)

Proverbs (Ezek 18:2)

Lamentations (Amos 5:1–2)

Prayers (Hab 3)

Narratives (Isa 36–39)

Writing style diverse:

Jeremiah's lamentations (8:18–9:1)

Ezekiel's shocking statements (20:21–26)

Habakkuk's questioning (1:12–17)

Amos' sarcasm and irony (3:12)

- Often multiple levels of fulfillment

1. Discern the immediate **context** –structure and flow
2. Discern the kind of **oracle** employed (judgment, salvation, or something else).
3. Study the balance between **forth-telling** and foretelling
4. Determine what **kind of language** is being used (poetic? disputation? narrative?) Literary forms are often crucial in determining the author's meaning and intent.
5. Place these texts in their overall **place in redemptive-history**. In doing this, be careful not to make wrong associations between Israel and your nation or church.