

## Creating an X-ray of a Book

The first step is to read the book of the Bible we want to study as a whole. Here are three important tips for reading:

- Read through a book of the Bible in its entirety several times. Longer books of the Bible can be divided (e.g., Matt. 1-7; 8-14; 15-21; 22-28). I divided Isaiah into eleven parts. So I read six chapters each day until I read the whole book. Then I repeated it. So I was able to read through Isaiah five times in two and a half months. Anyone who has watched a movie several times knows how often it happens that certain connections only become clear the second or third time.
- Read at least once in a different translation of the Bible, because no translation is perfect. Moreover, by reading a different formulation of the same thought, we perceive some statements that we did not notice when reading in our preferred translation.
- Read the book of the Bible with the right questions in mind. As we read, we want to keep the following questions in mind, which will help us better understand the historical-cultural setting:

- **Who wrote?**
- **To whom was he writing?**
- **What is the book about?**
- **What is the main concern of the writer?**
- **What does the writer intend or seek to achieve through this letter or book?**
- **How does the writer argue his case?**
- **How does he present his case?**
- **What is his tone of voice?**

These questions help us discover the writer's intent. But in order to discover his purpose(s), we must pay attention to certain clues. I want to share with you what I look for when reading a book several times. First, I compare the introduction with the conclusion.

### 1. Compare the introduction with the conclusion of a book.

Often a writer ends his book as he began it, and often his main point is discovered through this. We have an example of this in the Epistle to the **Philippians**. Paul's joy at the Philippians' participation in the progress of the gospel is mentioned in the introduction and again at the conclusion of Philippians. **James** emphasizes at the beginning and conclusion of his letter how important it is for Christians to think rightly in the midst of suffering. He also emphasizes how important "the prayer of faith" is, especially when God's children are suffering. Compare below the introduction with the conclusion of the Letter to the Romans:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, **called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God--** <sup>2</sup> the gospel he promised beforehand through **his prophets in the Holy Scriptures** <sup>3</sup> regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup> and who through the Spirit of holiness

was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup> Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. <sup>6</sup> And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 1:1-7 NIV)

<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with **my gospel**, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through **the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith--** <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Rom. 16:25-27 NIV)

In both passages, Paul emphasizes that his gospel is God's gospel. This gospel was already prophesied through the prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul emphasizes at the beginning and conclusion of this letter that this gospel is "for the obedience of faith of all nations." This is one of the most important emphases of the entire letter.

When you compare the introduction with the conclusion, remember that the introduction and conclusion of a book are not always found in the first and last three verses. If you compare Romans 1:8-15 with 15:14-33, you will see that in both passages Paul expresses his longing for the brethren in Rome. And he explains in both passages that he has been prevented from visiting them until now by the Lord's work. In these two passages, he reveals his heart and his concern.

## 2. Pay attention to the verses in which the writer clearly states his intentions.

We are to rejoice when the writer tells us why he wrote his work. Here are a few examples from the Bible:

Now Jesus also did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31 ELB)

In this passage, John shares why he wrote his Gospel. If we read through John's Gospel several times, we see that the Gospel is structured according to his purpose as well.

- 2:1-12 Jesus turned water into wine.
- 4:43-54 Jesus heals the son of a royal official.
- 5:1-14 Jesus healed a man who had been lame for 38 years.
- 6:1-15 Jesus fed five thousand people.
- 6:16-21 Here we have two miracles of Jesus. First, Jesus walks on the water. And second, the boat, including Jesus and the disciples, is moved from the middle of the lake to the shore immediately after Jesus got into the boat.
- 9,1-41 Jesus heals the man born blind.
- 11:1-46 Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.
- 20:1-10 Jesus is raised from the dead.
- 21:1-14 Jesus enables his disciples to catch fish in large numbers in broad daylight.

Jesus Himself speaks in this Gospel, emphasizing that His works testify of His person, so that those who do not believe in Him are without excuse (Jn 5:36).

Another example where the writer describes his concern is found in 1Timothy 3:14-15:

**<sup>14</sup> Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, <sup>15</sup> if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (1 Tim. 3:14-15 NIV)**

Here Paul informed Timothy that he was writing this letter to give him the rules of God for his house. Therefore, in this letter we find specific instructions for younger and older women, for younger and older men, for widows, for elders and deacons, and for Timothy himself. These instructions to men and women are therefore timeless and also binding on all local churches because the church of God is still the pillar and foundation of the truth and is under the authority of God. Its rules for its house do not change just because society has different views regarding the family.

**A third example is in Hebrews 8:1-2:**

**Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup> and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being. (Heb. 8:1-2 NIV)**

Here the inspired author informs us what is the main thing in this letter. He wanted to assure the recipients that Jesus is their perfect high priest. He proves that Jesus is much more superior as a high priest than the sons of Aaron. He makes several arguments in this letter that Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant. He emphasizes four times in his letter that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, so that we can understand that Jesus has the best and most strategic position when it comes to the role of a high priest. This is because a high priest represents people before God. The writer wanted to encourage the persecuted Jewish Christians to go to the throne of grace with all frankness to receive grace and mercy for timely help. In doing so, he emphasizes that Jesus is a compassionate high priest who has compassion on us because he himself was tempted in all ways as we are, but without sin (see 4:14-16 and 10:19-25).

So, when reading a book of the Bible, we are to look for passages where the writer tells us directly the reason for writing. Next, I want to show how helpful it is when we watch for repetition of any kind.

### **3. Watch for repeated words, ideas, questions, phrases, or themes.**

Here we want to notice not only the words that occur more than once, but also the synonyms. This is because even though different words are used with the same meaning, an idea is still repeated. Here are a few words that occur several times in the Letter to the Hebrews.

- made perfect; 5:9; brought to completion 7:19 teleiotheis; eteleioses.
- perfection 7:11 teleiosis
- to make perfect 2:10; is perfected 7:28; make perfect 9:9; be perfected 11:40 teleiosai; teteleiomēnon; teleiosai; teleiothosin.
- perfecter 12:2 teleiōten
- more perfect (adj.) 9,11 teleiōteras

- made perfect 10:14 teteleioken
- Adults 5:14; of full maturity 6:1 teleion; teleioteta.
- high priest: 2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:1, 5, 10; 6:20; 7:26, 27, 28; 8:1, 3; 9:7, 11, 25; 13:11
- Priest: 14x
- Blood: 21x
- sacrifice: 15x
- sacrifice or offering: 21x
- sin: 25x
- sanctuary: 7x
- "once" or "once for all" (referring to Christ's sacrifice): 9:12,26,27,28; 10:10,14
- Holy: 19x
- holiness: 12:10
- make holy: 2:11 (2x); 10:10,14 (2x)
- curtain: 6,19; 9,3; 10,20
- Sanctuary or holy of holies: 8:2; 9:1, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11
- Faith: 31x
- perseverance: 10:36; endurance 12:1
- persevered: 6:15
- reward, rewarder: 10:35; 11:6; 11:26
- Promise: 4:1; 6:12,13,15,17; 7:6; 8:6; 9:15; 10:23,36; 11:9 (2x); 11:11,13,17,33,39
- hope: 3:6; 6:11, 18; 7:19; 10:23
- better: 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6 (2x); 9:23; 11:4, 16, 35, 40; 12:24.

These are not all the important words from Hebrews, but if we pay attention to these repeated terms, we clearly see two themes. First, the twofold work of Jesus Christ as High Priest is emphasized. He has made us perfect once for all through the sacrifice of His blood and has given us access to the throne of grace behind the curtain of the sanctuary. Moreover, He continues to serve us as High Priest by interceding for us in prayer. The second theme is the perseverance of Christians in faith, looking to the hope or reward and using access to the throne of grace.

#### **Repeated phrases in the Epistle to the Hebrews.**

- "to the right hand": 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2
- "Let us" (the main applications are announced by these two words): 4,11.14.16; 10,22.23.24.28; 13,13.15
- "By faith...": 6:12; 11:2,3,4,5,7,8,9,11,17,20,21,22,23,24,27,28,29,30,31,33,39 (Here we see that half the verses in Hebrews 11 either begin with "By faith" or include this phrase).

#### **Repeated questions in the letter to the Hebrews**

We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. <sup>2</sup> For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. <sup>4</sup> God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (Heb. 2:1-4 NIV)

<sup>29</sup> How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." <sup>31</sup> It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:29-31 NIV)

Even though this question is not the same word for word, it is still a repeated question. Why? Because the context is the same. Because if God punished with severity every transgression of the Old Covenant, which was not imparted to men by Jesus but by angels, how much more does a man deserve punishment who rejects what was imparted to us by the Son of God? The writer emphasizes this danger a third time in the form of a statement, instead of a question:

<sup>25</sup> See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? (Heb. 12:25 NIV)

*In Hebrews 1:5 and 1:13, the first part of a question is the same:*

- For to which of the angels did he ever say, "My son are you, I have begotten you this day"? and again, "I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me"? (1,5)
- But to which of the angels did he ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I lay down your enemies as a footstool for your feet"? (1:13)

### **Repeated Themes in the Letter to the Hebrews**

Here we consider themes within the Letter to the Hebrews that are emphasized by repetition:

- Jesus is superior to the **angels** (1:1-2, 18), **Moses** (3:1-6), and **Aaron** (4:14-10, 18).

In the midst of demonstrating Jesus' superiority as high priest over the descendants of Aaron, the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant is also emphasized. Since Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant, these arguments also serve to support Jesus' superiority as messenger, high priest, and mediator.

- Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father: 1:3; 8:1-2; 10:12; 12:2. This not only emphasizes his deity, but also Jesus' ministry as high priest. For he sits in a very strategic place when he is to represent us before God. When he prays for us, he is talking to his Father who is sitting right next to him.
- Jesus has opened a new and living way behind the curtain of the true Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Temple: 6:19-20; 9:3, 8; 10:19-22. Jesus has passed through the heavens 4:14.
- Now every believer may go to the throne of grace behind the curtain in heaven without fear: 4:14-16; 8:1-2; 10:19-22. Christians may and should make constant use of this privilege.
- There is a future reward for those who persevere: 10:32-39; 11:6, 10, 13, 23-27.
- Jesus "for the joy that was set before him did not regard the shame and endured the cross" 12:2. Likewise, Christians are to look forward to the reward in the midst of suffering and endure the shame of the cross of Christ: 13:10-14.
- Strong warning is given against unbelief or self-deception: 2:1-4; chapters 3 and 4; 6:1-9; 10:26-31.
- The persecuted scattered Jewish Christians are encouraged several times to persevere in the faith: 2:1; 3:6, 12-14; 4:11, 14; 6:11, 15; 10:36-39; 11:1-12, 15
- The recipients are exhorted to look to Jesus: 3:1; 12:3.

➤ Abraham is used twice as a model of perseverance: 6:11-20; 11:8-19.

#### 4. Watch for questions in the text.

In the pastoral letters of Paul there is only one question (1Tim. 3:5). In these letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul gives commands. This makes them different from his other letters, where he asks many questions. He does this mainly for two reasons: First, he picks up his audience with these questions and asks them to think along. Second, many of these questions reveal the counterarguments that Paul expected to find in the minds and hearts of his listeners. It is therefore extremely important to pay attention to questions in the text.

There are 81 questions in the letter to the Romans. Paul first answers ten of these questions with "May it never be!" and then gives a detailed answer. These ten questions contain thoughts that Paul very strongly denies.

**3:3-4** What then? If some [Jews] have been unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness cancel out God's faithfulness? May it never be! Rather let it be, God is true, but every man a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and may have the victory when it is reckoned with you."

**3:5-6** But if our unrighteousness proves God's righteousness, what will we [Jews] say? Is God unjust, then, in inflicting wrath [on us Jews]? - I speak after the manner of men. - <sup>6</sup> May it never be! How else could God judge the world [those who are not Jews]?

**3:31** Do we then abolish the law by faith? Far be it from us! But we confirm the law.

**6:1-2** What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> May it never be! We who are dead to sin, how shall we yet live in it?

**6:15** What then, shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? May it never be!

**7:7** What shall we say then? Is the law sin? May it never be! But I would not have known sin as only by law. For neither would I have known of covetousness if the law had not said, "You shall not covet!"

**7:13** Has now goodness become death to me? May it never be! But sin, that it might appear sin, by causing death to me through good, that sin might become exceeding sinful through the commandment.

**9:14** What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? May it never be!

**11:1** I say now, Has God cast off his people? That is out of the question! For I too am an Israelite from the descendants of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

**11:11** I say now, Have they stumbled so that they should fall? That is impossible! But by their fall salvation became to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy.

The first two and the last three questions have to do with God's faithfulness to the people of Israel (as opposed to the nations!). Has God rejected Israel? Paul answers loudly and clearly, "That is out of the question!" This theme is an important part of the letter to the Romans. In 6:1; 7:7; 8:31 and 9:14, Paul

asks the question, "What shall we say then?" With this question, Paul introduces another question, which he then answers. I am always amazed at how Christians ignore a writer's questions. They try to interpret his answer without considering the question itself. Yet the question is crucial to the interpretation of the answer. The questions reveal the writer's thoughts and often his main concern. Here are a few important questions within the letter to the Hebrews:

<sup>15</sup> As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." <sup>16</sup> Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. (Heb. 3:15-19 NIV)

<sup>11</sup> If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood-- and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood-- why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? (Heb. 7:11 NIV)

<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined-- and everyone undergoes discipline-- then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. (Heb. 12:7-10 NIV)

Here we see that the author of Hebrews also likes to use questions. These questions reveal, in part, why he is addressing certain topics and why he is quoting or referring to certain texts from the Old Testament. If the quotation from the Old Testament is the answer to the question, then logically we need to examine the historical context of the quotation or reference to the Old Testament so that we clearly understand why he is using that particular Old Testament quotation.

## 5. Watch for contrasts that compare two people, objects, or ideas:

Here I would like to present some contrasts within the letter to the Hebrews.

- The majesty of Jesus over the angels is strongly emphasized in the first two chapters. The angels are created, Jesus is their creator. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, the angels do not have this honor. Jesus effected the atonement for our sins, the angels are only ministering spirits (1:4-2:18).
- Jesus' exaltation over Moses is also emphasized. Moses was faithful as a servant in the house of God; Jesus was faithful as a Son over the house of God (3:1-6). Since the angels and Moses were ambassadors of God through whom God spoke to Israel in the past, Jesus' exaltedness as an apostle (i.e., messenger) and ambassador of God is emphasized very strongly in Hebrews 1:1-3:6.
- Jesus is a much more exalted high priest than Aaron (5:1-10).
- Jesus is a much more exalted high priest than the priests who serve in Jerusalem (7:1-8,2).
  - Jesus is without sin; they are sinners.
  - Jesus sacrificed himself for the people, they must sacrifice for themselves and then for the people.
  - Jesus is eternal, they are mortal.
  - Jesus serves in the true temple in heaven, they serve in a copy on earth.
  - Jesus sacrificed himself once for all, they must sacrifice again and again.

- Jesus opened the access behind the curtain to the Holy of Holies in heaven, they could not effect this access.
- The Old Covenant is contrasted with the New Covenant (8:6-11; see also the contrast of the two mountains, Sinai and Zion: 12:18-24).

## 6. Look for places where we can gain information about the author:

There is much debate among Christians about the author of the Letter to the Hebrews. Some think that Paul wrote this letter. The fact is that no apostle of Jesus Christ wrote this letter. For the author clearly states that he received the gospel from the apostles:

<sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. <sup>4</sup> God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (Heb. 2:3-4 NIV)

The author makes it clear that first Jesus proclaimed this great salvation and that he and the recipients of his letter (i.e., "us") received confirmation of the gospel through those who heard it directly from Jesus: namely, the apostles. The fact that this letter was not written by an apostle should not be a problem for us, because Luke was not an apostle either and wrote two books of the Bible. The same is true for Judas and James, who were half-brothers of Jesus and not apostles. More importantly, the Letter to the Hebrews was written during the lifetime of the apostles, so they were in a position to either confirm or reject what was written. Obviously, the apostles gave their approval to this letter.

The author knew Timothy personally and according to 2:3-4 he received his gospel directly from the apostles. At the end of the letter he announced his visit with Timothy, who was now released. Therefore, it can be assumed that Timothy was in prison.

**Know that our brother Timothy is released, with whom I will see you when he comes soon.** (Heb. 13:23)

According to Hebrews 13:10, we know that the temple had not yet been destroyed when this letter was written. That destruction took place in 70 AD. So we know that the letter was written before 70 AD. Regarding Timothy, Paul told him in 2Timothy 4:6-8 that he (i.e. Paul) would soon die. At that time, Timothy was not yet in prison because Paul was the one the Jews had sought to kill. Because Paul knew that the Jews would target his co-workers after his death, he exhorted Timothy to suffer along with them for the gospel. The theme of "suffering for the gospel" is a common thread throughout 2Timothy. Since Paul probably died no later than 67 AD, the Epistle to the Hebrews would have to have been written between 65 and 70 AD.

We do not know much about the author of Hebrews, but the recipients knew him and Timothy very well and accepted him as an authority. Based on the contents of the letter, we also know that he was very knowledgeable about the Old Testament.

In addition, we know that he considered this letter "short" (13:22) and that he shortened the letter in some places due to lack of time:

But above it the cherubim of glory overshadowed the cover of reconciliation, of which things it is not now necessary to speak in detail. (Heb. 9:5 ELB)

And what more shall I say? For I would not have time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the prophets (Heb. 11:32 ELB).

The fact that the author of the Letter to the Hebrews does not share his name with us does not prevent us from forming a picture of him as a writer. We know that he enjoys the recognition of the recipients. We know that he received his gospel directly from the apostles. And we know what his purpose was in his letter: to encourage the scattered Jewish Christians not to be like their fathers, but to be like Abraham, who persevered in his faith. So he has a shepherd's heart and exhorts and encourages the scattered Jewish Christians to become firm and not sluggish in their conviction concerning Jesus.

## 7. Pay attention to places where we are told information about the recipients of the letter.

Regarding the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews, we are told about them.

- They were eyewitnesses to the signs and wonders of Jesus' apostles (2:3-4).
- They have been in the faith long enough that they should have been teachers according to the times. But they are still unsettled in the truth (5:11-15).
- They have a good reputation for brotherly love, and they are still loving one another (6:10-12).
- They have accepted the dispossessions of their homes and land with joy for Jesus' sake (10:32-35).
- In suffering for Christ, they have not yet suffered to the point of bloodshed, and they have forgotten the word of encouragement from Proverbs 3:11-12 (12:4-6).

## 8. Pay attention to interpretative comments by the author.

I will use the Gospel of John to illustrate how helpful explanations from the author can be in understanding his point. We begin with a passage from chapter 11:

Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! <sup>50</sup> You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." <sup>51</sup> He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, <sup>52</sup> and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. (Jn. 11:49-52 NIV).

In this passage John explains the prophecy of Caiaphas so that we do not draw the wrong conclusion. The words of Caiaphas could be understood to mean that Jesus died for the nation of Israel alone. John informs us that Jesus' death is for all the "scattered children of God" and not for the nation of Israel alone.

There are many indications within John's Gospel that he was writing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Gentiles. For example, there is no genealogy of Jesus. In addition, terms such as "Messiah," "Rabbi," and "Cephas" are translated (John 1:35-42) that were common to Jews. So, these interpretive interpolations

by John continue to portray him as working for the salvation of the nations in this Gospel. We have another example in 12:1-6:

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, <sup>5</sup> "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." <sup>6</sup> He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. (Jn. 12:1-6 NIV)

Here we are given information about Judas that Jesus' disciples did not possess when the event took place. John, in commenting about an event, lets us know things that he himself did not know at the time of the event. John emphasizes as a focal point several times in this Gospel that Jesus is the good shepherd who never loses a sheep (e.g., 6:35-40; 10:27-30; 17:12). The question arises: What about Judas? Wasn't Judas a child of God who lost his salvation? For this reason, John mentions Judas several times in his Gospel and portrays him as an unbeliever. John did not learn this fact until later. John 6:71 is an explanatory insertion. John lets us know that Judas Iscariot was a "devil" from the beginning.

Jesus answered them: Did I not choose you, the twelve? And of you one is a devil. <sup>71</sup> But he spoke of Judas, the <son> of Simon Iscariot; for he was to deliver him up, one of the twelve. (John 6:70-71 ELB6)

In 12:6 John reveals to us what motives were in Judas' heart when he feigned concern for the poor:

<sup>4</sup> Now Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples who was to deliver him up, says: <sup>5</sup> Why was not this anointing oil sold for three hundred denarii and <the proceeds> given to the poor? <sup>6</sup> Now he said this, not because he was concerned for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the treasury and set aside what was put in. (John 12:4-6 ELB6)

In John 13, Jesus prophesied Judas' betrayal in advance.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. (Jn. 13:10-11 NIV)

At the foot washing, Jesus makes it clear that at least one of the twelve is "unclean." John adds to this event the information that Jesus meant Judas by this statement. In John 17, Jesus mentions several times the people given to him by his Father (see also 6:37-39). Of these, he does not lose a single one.

<sup>12</sup> When I was with them, I kept them in your name which you gave me; and I have kept <them>, and not one of them is lost, except the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17:12 ELB6)

From these passages we see that Judas was a devil, a thief and an unclean person from the beginning. John, through the interpolations about the person of Judas, emphasizes that Jesus did not "lose" Judas because he was never one of those whom the Father had given him. For Judas was never truly his

disciple, but the "son of perdition." Jesus chose him as one of the Twelve "so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" (John 17:12).

From these two examples from John's Gospel, we can see that interpretive interpolations by the author (especially in narrative texts) are very helpful in perceiving his purpose.

**Summary:** These are the things I look for when reading. I pay attention mainly to repetitions of any kind, to questions, to contrasts, and to similarities in the introduction and conclusion of a book. The result is an x-ray image. This information portrays to me the main concern or concerns of the God-inspired author.