

STUDENTS OF THE SCRIPTURE

Supplemental Studies

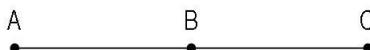
Study Outline

The Necessity of Thinking Biblically (Selected Verses)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Euclidean Geometry Proofs

1. *Properties, Theorems and Postulates.* In the world of Euclidean geometry, statements are never simply accepted as true or untrue. Rather, a system of *properties, theorems and postulates* are used to justify each step necessary in proving a statement true or untrue. Therefore the beginning student is taught this system one step at a time. Let me give a very simple example.



This figure shows a line *segment*. The segment begins with *point A*. The segment ends with *point C*. Somewhere along the line is *point B*. In a typical situation, the student will have a certain piece of information presented as a *Given*. Then, the student will be given another statement that is uncertain, and told to *Prove* the truth of that statement. For example, consider this information:

Given: B is the *midpoint* of \overline{AC}

Prove: $\overline{AC} = \overline{AB} \times 2$

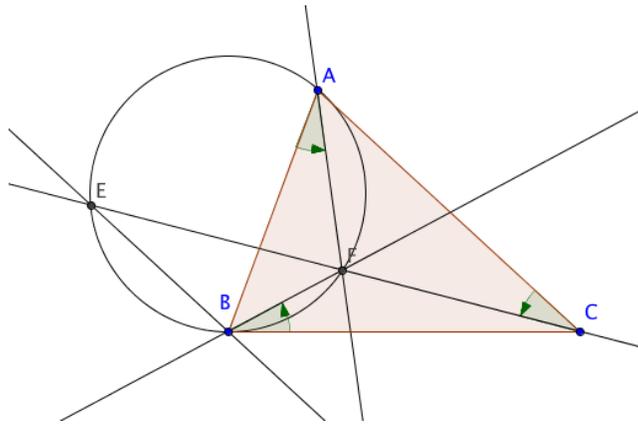
In this example, then, the student is *Given* the fact that *point B* is the *midpoint* of the line *segment* called AC. Then, the student is asked to *Prove* that the entire *segment*, AC, is exactly the same length as the smaller segment AB if that smaller length was multiplied by 2.

To the uninitiated student, this appears confusing and impossible to prove, and we might simply say, “Well, that’s obvious. It needs no proof, it’s just obviously true.” But in geometry, nothing is accepted as “just obviously true.” Whatever is true has to be demonstrated logically and justified using consistently applied principles. To that end, a student of geometry would provide the following:

Statement	Reason
B is midpoint of \overline{AC}	Given
$\overline{AB} = \overline{BC}$	Definition of midpoint
$\overline{AC} = \overline{AB} + \overline{BC}$	Segment Addition Theorem
$\overline{AC} = \overline{AB} + \overline{AB}$	Substitution Property
$\overline{AC} = \overline{AB} \times 2$	Simplified \square

This two-column proof is perfectly logical, and makes simple deductive statements which are each justified by clear, unimpeachable, logical mathematical propositions (definitions, theorems, properties, etc.). And to mathematicians, this is one of the simplest proofs conceivable. But how much of this makes sense to the average person? More importantly, this relatively simple mathematical proof is

basic to learning *how* to think logically where geometry is concerned. It is a building block, so to speak, upon which the higher levels of geometric logic are based. Consider this:



Givens: Circle is tangent to side BC, line BE is parallel to side CA

Prove: Angles FAB, FBC and FCB are congruent

Suddenly things are more complicated, right? And if I have not mastered the very simple logical propositions of geometric reasoning, this more complicated proof becomes impossibly tangled in my mind, and I cannot even begin to think through the steps that would lead logically to the appropriate conclusion (don't worry, we're not going to attempt to write a two-column proof for this one).

- B. **Theological Parallels.** Now that I have your brain good and fuzzy, let's have Bible study! Why did we begin a study of biblical principles by looking at Euclidean geometry proofs? It is because there are several parallels between the study of geometry and the study of biblical reasoning. The most significant difference is that biblical reasoning affects moral, not mathematical, outcomes. Let's dig in.

II. GOD'S WISDOM, NOT MAN'S

- A. *1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:16* = This is one of the clearest declarations in the entire Bible regarding the difference between the so-called "wisdom" of this world, and the wisdom of God. Note that "natural" (Gr., literally "soulish;" this is the Greek word from which the English word *psychology* is derived) men do not accept the things of God's Spirit, and in fact, such men **cannot** understand those things. Please understand clearly the meaning of the word "cannot." Literally, the Greek construction says that this kind of soulish man does not have the power to understand them. It's impossible for him, beyond his reach. If that is true, then why can *we* as God's children understand them? Because **to us God revealed them through the Spirit (2:10)**, so that **we may know the things freely given to us by God (2:12)**, because **we have the mind of Christ (2:16)**.
- B. *Proverbs 3:5* = Solomon is also very clear here, that men ought not to **lean on** our own understanding. Because our own understanding is, as Paul told the Corinthians, *foolishness* before God (*1 Corinthians 1:20*).
- C. *James 3:13-18* = James draws the same contrast between *soulish* wisdom and heavenly wisdom. The difference between the two is demonstrated most clearly in how those who follow each live practically in their daily existence. In other words, godly *wisdom* leads to godly *character*. This is why unbelievers live ungodly lives. For them to live with real, genuine godliness, they would need to understand genuine spiritual truth. And they **cannot**. It's not only that they **do not**. They lack the **power** to understand.
- D. *Romans 12:1-3* = This sums up our idea pretty clearly. Because God has shown us such mercy, we are to give ourselves to Him as living sacrifices. We are not to allow our thinking to be conformed to the thinking of the world around us. We are instead to be transformed as we submit our minds to the wisdom of God, and thus have our thinking made new. This is how we prove God's will at work in this world. So we are

not to be arrogant or proud, boasting of our own merit. Instead, we are to **think so as to have sound judgment** (“sound judgment” is a single word in Greek, based on the Greek word that means “wisdom”).

III. THE BLACK, THE WHITE AND THE GRAY

A. **Explanation.** Certain issues in our lives are very clear, biblically. Some are less clear. And some are downright fuzzy. Ask yourselves the following questions.

1. *Is it wrong to murder?* Hopefully you don't even have to think much about this one. If this *is* a difficult question in your mind, please see me afterward and I'll pray for you (and then lock my doors when you leave!). This is a basic tenant of Christian faith. Simple, straightforward, and not up for debate. But hey, let's debate it anyway!
2. *Is it wrong for soldiers to kill during war?* Wait...this is a little fuzzier. War is government sanctioned, and aren't we supposed to obey our government? Oh, wait. We only obey the government as long as it doesn't tell us to disobey God, and God says killing is wrong. But, wait...God told the Israelites to kill the Canaanites and take their land...oh, this is so confusing!
3. *Is abortion wrong?* Oh boy. This is another easy one. Murder is wrong. That settles it. But wait, if I kill a deer, that's not wrong. If I kill a dog...well, maybe. But the Bible only specifically says that killing humans is wrong. So at what point does an unborn fetus become a human? Is it automatic at the very moment of conception, or is it only after a certain point in fetal development (say, when the heartbeat develops, or the brain starts to register pain)?

I'm sure everybody in the room has an opinion on these issues. Many of our opinions are based either on our own emotional sensations, or on “facts” gleaned from medical professionals, mental health practitioners, or (God-forbid) politicians, lobbyists, and so-called “experts.” Do you understand that this kind of *wisdom*, gleaned from the reasoning of unsaved, natural, *soulless* men and women, is the very definition of *foolishness* before God. This is the very *understanding* that Solomon, by the Holy Spirit, warns us not to **lean on**.

Is there a clear biblical position on these issues? Is that position clearly, logically, and inescapably proveable? Can I use the same kind of mental process that geometers use, to put together in a logical kind of sequence, the basic truths and tenets that *are* black and white, so I can come to some kind of conclusion on the issues that may *not* be so clear? Before we tackle this specific area, let me give another example that doesn't involve so much emotion.

IV. IS THERE INTELLIGENT LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS?

A. **Scientific Arguments.** There are seven consistent, “strong” scientific arguments that seem to lead to the conclusion that there probably *is* life on other planets. Here they are, in no specific order¹:

1. *Existence of Extremophiles on Earth.* An extremophile is a living organism that lives in extremes of heat, cold, poisonous atmospheres or even vacuums. Environments that seem hostile and uninhabitable have actually been proven to host a variety of life forms. Here is the scientific conclusion: “...we know life can survive in conditions we've seen on other planets and moons. We just haven't found it yet.”
2. *Chemical Precursors to Life Found on Other Planets/Moons.* Apparently life on Earth evolved from chemical reactions that eventually formed cellular membranes and proto-DNA. Those chemical reactions may have started with complex organic compounds (nucleic acids, proteins, carbohydrates, lipids) in the atmosphere and ocean. These precursors to life have been found in the atmosphere of Titan (one of Saturn's moons), and even in the Orion Nebula. The conclusion? “If those ingredients are common throughout the universe, it's likely that life has emerged in places other than our home planet.”
3. *Vast Number of Earthlike Planets.* New techniques for planetary detection have allowed scientists to detect many small, rocky worlds like Earth, some even in the “Goldilocks Zone” around their stars.

¹ 7 Good Reasons Why There Might Be Life on Other Planets (gizmodo.com)

The conclusion? “Given how common exoplanets beyond our solar system have turned out to be, it seems likely that one of them plays host to some form of life.”

4. *Diversity and Tenacity of Life on Earth.* Life apparently evolved on Earth under extremely difficult conditions. It even managed to survive megavolcanoes, meteorite strikes, ice ages, droughts, ocean acidification, and radical atmospheric changes. Further, in a relatively short period of time we have an incredible diversity of life on our planet, geologically speaking. The conclusion: “Life is pretty tenacious. Why couldn’t it take hold on one of Saturn’s moons, or in another star system?”
5. *Mysterious Origin of Life on Earth.* Even with the theories involving complex carbon molecules that I mentioned earlier, it is still a mystery how those chemicals came together to form fragile membranes that eventually became cells, especially in light of the incredibly hostile environment of Earth when life evolved (the atmosphere was packed with methane, and the planet’s surface boiled with lava). This leads us to a theory called *panspermia*. The conclusion: “Simple, single-celled life actually evolved elsewhere – perhaps Mars – and came to Earth inside meteorites. Panspermia suggests that life on Earth arose due to life on other planets.
6. *Oceans and Lakes Are Common in Our Solar System.* There is strong evidence that water once flowed freely on Mars. Saturn’s moon, Titan, has seas of methane as well as rivers flowing across its surface. Jupiter’s moon, Europa, is one, massive ocean warmed by the moon’s core and completely covered in a thick, protective layer of ice. Conclusion: “Any of these worlds might have harbored life at one time, or currently.”
7. *Evolutionary Theory.* Life adapts to its environments. Where life *can* take hold, it *will*. Conclusion: “We may one day be meeting creatures who’ve evolved in ways we never dreamed possible – or we may become those creatures ourselves.”

Just briefly, for the sake of clarity, let me address these. Arguments 1, 3 and 6 take true scientific facts (there *are* extremophiles on Earth; there *are* many Earth-like planets in existence, and some of them *are* in the Goldilocks zones around their stars; and there *are* many ocean- and lake-like bodies of liquid on other planets...although to be fair, none that we’ve found so far have been liquid *water*), and then come to wildly unprovable conjectures, rather than conclusions based solely on these true facts.

Arguments 2, 4, 5 and 7 on the other hand, assume things about the origin of life on Earth, things that are not facts, and are not proveable by any recognized scientific methods. For example, how does science know that nucleic acid, proteins, carbohydrates and lipids are the “precursors” to life? They know that all known life forms include these chemicals, but was the presence of these chemicals a prerequisite to life’s origins? (No. God literally created life forms out of dust...that’s why the same chemicals present in living things are also present in the environment around them.) Did life actually evolve on Earth under extremely difficult conditions? (No. God created the world *to be inhabited* (Isaiah 45:18).) Did life evolve on another planet, and then immigrate to Earth on a meteor? (No. God spoke things, including living things, into existence *on Earth*.) These arguments actually *start* with the conjectures, and then build further conjectures on top of them. This is exactly how man’s *wisdom* is built and founded.

- B. **Biblical Evidence?** Okay, so does the Bible say whether there is life on other planets? There is no passage that says there *is*, and there is no passage that says there *is not*. The Bible doesn’t directly address this issue. So can we draw any kind of conclusion regarding this? I think so. And the answer will have more than scientific ramifications. It will have *moral* consequences as well. So try to follow my seven *doctrinal* building blocks.
1. *What did God create?* Moses tells us that God created *the heavens and the earth* (cf. *Genesis 1:1*). And then God populated the earth with living things: plants, animals and people. But this does not say anything about *angels*, does it? And we know from other passages that *they* were created as well. So it is *possible* that God created other things, but chose not to tell us about them specifically.
 2. *What Are the Heavens and Earth?* It is clear from the opening passage of Scripture that the creation account is meant to tell us about the creation of *natural* things, not *supernatural* ones. What counts as *natural* things, in God’s view? The *heavens* and the *earth*. Everything in our physical universe, everything in this physical realm, in other words. So although angels would not count, life on other planets would. And God does not say here that He created such life...but He doesn’t say He didn’t, either. So let’s keep going.

3. *Romans 8:19-22* = Here, we are told clearly that the *creation* (which by definition, as we've seen, is everything in the *heavens* and the *earth*, the created universe) was subjected to futility because of Adam's sin. The process of decay that all physical matter undergoes, from breakdown of the smallest atom to the life cycle of a gigantic mega-star is a result of Adam's (a human, Earth-dwelling man's) sin. How much of the creation was subjected to futility? *Verses 22* says the **whole creation** groans under that bondage. Everything, to the farthest reaches of the universe is under a curse because of Adam's sin. Logically, then, if there *is* life that God put on other planets, but hasn't told us about, those life forms experience death because of the sin of Adam on Earth.
4. *Genesis 1:26* = God made Adam in His own image. He was flawless, sinless and not subject to death or decay. By contrast, when Adam fell, he now produced children in *his* image (cf. *Genesis 5:1-3*), and now the descendants of men are corrupted and sinful, born in rebellion against God (cf. *Psalms 51:5*).
5. *Hebrews 2:14-16* = Therefore, in order to provide redemption for a race of fallen men, Christ had to *partake of the same flesh and blood*. He had to be made like His brethren in all things (*2:17*). But note...He did not become an angel to die for the redemption of those who fell, called demons. The sin of angels is not accounted to them because of Adam's fall. Their fall and rebellion is an entirely separate matter in the mind of God, and is dealt with as such; therefore no redemption is possible for them. They are not under Adam's curse, and thus cannot partake of Adam's redemption.
6. *Romans 2:6* = Here, we see that God will judge each "person" according to his deeds. So although animals experience physical death because of Adam's sin, they will never face eternal judgment or damnation for it, because animals do not sin. And God's judgment, in that sense, is based on deeds. It seems, then, that self-aware, conscience-possessing creatures like men and angels are held to a different standard. And among *natural* creation, those creatures under Adam's care (but not similarly sentient or morally intelligent) are placed by proxy under his curse; but not held to account for personal sin, since they have no understanding of that concept.
7. *Conclusion* = We see that the two races of intelligent, self-aware creatures that we know about (men and angels) are under separate systems, and held to separate judgments. And we see clearly that every morally sentient being is held to account for his moral choices. So what can we conclude then, about life in other planets? There may be some kind of life-form existing out in the broader universe. If so, that life form decays and dies because of us. So it *cannot* be sentient or morally aware. Otherwise, it would be held to account for its own sin, not Adam's (because it would not be of the same created race, just like the angels). Life? Maybe. Intelligent life? Alien societies and cultures? Alien technology? Possible encounters with similarly sentient beings? Absolutely not.

Science (men's wisdom) does not have answers, even to this scientific question. God's wisdom, however, makes the truth clear and compelling.

V. IS ABORTION A SINFUL ACT OF MURDER?

A. **Scientific Arguments.** Murder is "the unlawful, premeditated killing of one human being by another." So the question hinges on the issue of *when* the fetus is considered a viable *human* life. I am not going to even touch the so-called scientific "evidence" one way or the other. I hope I've demonstrated by now that man's reason is *not* the way to get answers to life's questions. God declares that principle over and over in His Word. So instead, let's turn to God's definitions, and see what conclusions we can come to. This issue also has more than *scientific ramifications*. It most definitely has serious *moral* consequences.

1. *Psalms 139:13-16* = King David, under the control of God's Holy Spirit, tells us that we are formed and knit together in our mother's womb by the hand of God. God's hands, however are not the only divinely active extremities involved in conception. His *eyes* see our *unformed substance*. Our days are ordained, **when as yet there was not one of them**. In other words every day of my life was ordained by God before even the first day existed. So at what point did I come to exist? What was the *first day* of my existence? Suddenly, some of the smoke begins to clear from the room, doesn't it?
2. *Psalms 51:5* = King David also makes a clear and resounding statement about when his sin nature came into existence: "In sin my mother conceived me..." David was a sinner from the very moment of *conception!* What kind of creatures have sin natures? Animals? Plants? Inhuman fetuses? No.

Only human beings. David was a human being, with a completely depraved spirit, from the very moment of conception.

3. *Jeremiah 1:5* = God tells Jeremiah that He formed him in the womb. But even before Jeremiah was born (while he was still in the womb, in other words) he had been *consecrated*. Do you see that God *knew* Jeremiah even *before* He began to create him in the womb. And similarly, God *chose* and *consecrated* Jeremiah *before* he was conceived! How could God know a person before that person existed? In a very real, spiritual sense, it becomes clear that to God's eyes, we are to Him knowable, recognizable *human* entities even *before* conception, and that the beginning of our *days* as physical, human persons occurs at the moment of conception.
4. **Conclusion.** So is abortion murder? If murder is the killing of one human by another, and a human is a human from the moment of conception, then yes...by God's definition (though not by man's), abortion is murder. Although this conclusion may ignite some sparks inside you, there are two things to bear in mind.

First, facts are not facts because our emotions make them so. My emotions are subject to change. Eternal truth is not. I might be wrong. God never is. So I am commanded repeatedly not to lean on my own understanding, but to trust Him with all my heart.

Second, even killing is, sometimes, lawful and morally acceptable. Under certain circumstances, there may be situations where abortion might be morally permissible. If a mother of four children is pregnant with her fifth, and she is in a situation where to continue her pregnancy would most likely result in her death and leave her other four children orphaned...would abortion still be sinful murder? Do you see what I mean? In a perfect world, no fetus will ever be aborted. There will also be no war, no crime, no death and no sin. But this is not that world. Not yet.

VI. FINAL THOUGHTS

- A. **What's the Point?** The point of this study was *not* to teach you geometry. It was not to convince you that there is no intelligent life on other planets. It was *not* even to try to preach against abortion. The point is to draw out for you the necessity of thinking and reasoning biblically. Let me wrap it up this way.
- B. **Hard Problems Have Basic Solutions.** Here is the main idea. Geometry often presents its students with difficult dilemmas, and challenges them to find solutions. Not common sense obviously-true solutions that are based on the student's idea of what is clearly apparent and self-evident. But logical, proveable solutions that can be justified plainly by bringing to bear simple, basic axioms in the form of definitions, properties, theorems and postulates. These basic building-blocks must be absolutely mastered by the student. If they are, there is no mathematical dilemma that cannot be seen clearly, broken into its logical constituent parts, and solved rationally, properly and correctly. In that sense, a student's inability to grapple with a difficult problem is directly related to his inability to grasp these most basic of mathematical axioms.
- C. **Moral Problems Have Doctrinal Solutions.** In the same way, moral or ethical dilemmas are often convoluted by emotion and false human logic. The solution is *not* to allow my emotions to decide right and wrong for me. The solution is *not* to use my best judgment, or to follow my heart, or to trust my common sense. The solution is to master all the doctrinal truths (from the most basic to the most complex and academic) that God, in *His wisdom*, offers to me. I may not see immediately how a doctrinal truth directly impacts behavior (in the same way that a geometry student may not immediately understand how the Segment Addition Theorem is necessary or useful). But I must master those truths anyway, trusting that God will not fill my head with worthless drivel. Then, when a situation arises that I am not prepared to answer, the Lord can bring to bear all the related and applicable doctrines that I've mastered, and can order them into a logical, rational sequence that brings me to His mind and will in that situation.
- D. **Most People Cannot Master These Doctrinal Truths.** I remind you that Paul told the Corinthian believers that soulless men (unsaved people) **do not accept** this spiritual wisdom, and indeed they **cannot** understand these true, factual doctrinal realities. They literally do not have the capacity to reason this way.
- E. **God's Children Can.** If you are God's child, however, you **have the mind of Christ**. You have the *ability* and *responsibility* to master God's truth. And although I love to teach you, and I have a part in that process, it is *your responsibility* to do the work. Don't put it on me, or on your husband, or on your parents, or on

anybody else. They will not answer for your moral decisions. You will. We must devote ourselves to studying and mastering those things that matter.

But a word of caution is in order. Most of those living in the world around us are *soulish*, natural people. They do not and *cannot* accept or understand these doctrinal truths...and even the few truths they can understand are never useful to them in connecting morally difficult situations with God's will. For you, this means that you will literally be swimming upstream, against the current *at all times*. Understand that plainly. God's children are called to be holy. Not popular. We are called to be obedient, not compliant. We are called to submit to Him, not to other men. We are called to please Him, not our friends. We are called to conform our thinking to His Word and will, not to the thinking of the world around us, and CERTAINLY not to our own warped emotions or idea of common sense.

We are called never to offend Him...not never to offend *them*.

- F. *Galatians 1:10* = Please engrave this thought on your hearts and minds, first and foremost. This is *the* single most important doctrinal truth we need to master tonight, and we need to master it immediately, given the world we live in. May God give us grace!

VII. PRAYER