

Know One Thing

We are often told that to truly understand a scripture you must consider its context.

[w10 2/15 p. 11] ⁸ What will help us to 'handle the word of truth aright' in our ministry? Before we can clearly impart to others what the Bible says, we need to get the sense of it ourselves. This calls for our giving attention to the context of a verse or a passage. According to one dictionary, "the context of a word, sentence, or text consists of the words, sentences, or text that come before and after it and help to make its meaning clear."

But what does considering the context mean? Just reading a verse or two before and after? No, it means much more than that.

[w03 1/1 pp. 27-28] A dictionary defines context as "the parts of a written or spoken statement that precede or follow a specific word or passage, usually influencing its meaning or effect." Context can also be "the set of circumstances or facts that surround a particular event, situation, etc." In this latter sense, a synonym for "context" would be "background." Considering the context of a scripture is particularly important in view of what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Timothy 2:15) In order to handle God's Word aright, we need to understand it properly and then explain it honestly and accurately to others. Respect for Jehovah, the Bible's Author, will move us to try to do that, and considering the context will be an important help.

Let us examine, for example, the Bible book of Second Timothy. To start our examination, we could ask about the background of the book. Who wrote Second Timothy? When? Under what circumstances? Then we could ask, What was the situation of the "Timothy" who appears in the book's title? Why did he need the information in the book? The answers to these questions will greatly enrich our appreciation of the book and help us to see how we today can benefit from it.

With that in mind let's look into the "*one thing*" that Christ told his apostles to "*know*".

(Matthew 24:43) "But know one thing:

The Greek word (ginóskó) translated as "*know*" means to be sure of, to recognize as a certainty.

What is the context? What is the background? He had just come from the temple where his disciples had watched him publically condemn the Scribes and Pharisees, the spiritual leaders of their people. It was no short discussion, but was a prolonged encounter. Six times he said to them "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*" He also called them "*blind guides*" and "*Serpents, offspring of vipers.*" And just before he left the temple he told them:

(Matthew 23:38) Look! Your house is abandoned to you.

As he left the temple he told his disciples that "*by no means will a stone be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down.*" (Mt 24:2)

Once they reached the Mount of Olives a short distance away, and they could speak to him in private, they asked him:

(Matthew 24:3) “When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?”

He tells them about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and about the things that will happen in the last days before Armageddon. He finishes with these words:

(Matthew 24:42) Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Why were they to keep on the watch? Merely to see and acknowledge the signs? No. His prolonged confrontation with the Scribes and Pharisees was still fresh in his mind and in the minds of his disciples. And he did not want his disciples to become like the Scribes and Pharisees.

So he tells them:

(Matthew 24:43) “But know one thing:

What is the one thing? Continuing on he tells them four illustrations.

- 1) The first is about a *“householder”* who's house was broken into. (Mt 24:43-44)
- 2) The second is of a *“faithful and discreet slave”*. (Mt 24:45-51)
- 3) The third illustration is about ten virgins. (Mt 25:1-12)
- 4) The fourth is about three slaves who their master gave talents to. (Mt 25:14-27)

Let's briefly look at each of those four illustrations that Christ uses to make his one point.

One

(Matthew 24:43, 44) “But know one thing: If the householder **had known in what watch the thief was coming**, he would have kept awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ On this account, you too prove yourselves ready, because **the Son of man is coming at an hour that you do not think to be it**.

(Luke 12:39, 40) But know this, if the householder **had known at what hour the thief would come**, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also, keep ready, because **at an hour that you do not think likely, the Son of man is coming.**”

The Greek word *oikodespotés*, translated as householder, means: the master of a house, a head of a house. The householder did not stay awake and prepared so his house was broken into. Who does the householder represent?

Christ asks that very question himself, and by asking it, he answers the question:

Two

(Matthew 24:45-51) “Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Happy is that slave if his master on coming finds him doing so! ⁴⁷ Truly I say to you, he will appoint him over all his belongings. ⁴⁸ “But if ever that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying,’ ⁴⁹ and he starts to beat his fellow slaves and to eat and drink with the confirmed drunkards, ⁵⁰ **the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect and in an hour that he does not know**, ⁵¹ and he will punish him with the greatest severity and will assign him his place with the hypocrites. There is where his weeping and the gnashing of his teeth will be.

(Luke 12:42-48) And the Lord said: “Who really is the faithful steward, the discreet one, whom his master will appoint over his body of attendants to keep giving them their measure of food supplies at the proper time? ⁴³ Happy is that slave if his master on coming finds him doing so! ⁴⁴ I tell you truthfully, he will appoint him over all his belongings. ⁴⁵ But if ever that slave should say in his heart, ‘My master delays coming,’ and starts to beat the male and female servants and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ **the master of that slave will come on a day that he is not expecting him and at an hour that he does not know**, and he will punish him with the greatest severity and assign him a part with the unfaithful ones. ⁴⁷ Then that slave who understood the will of his master but did not get ready or do what he asked will be beaten with many strokes. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not understand and yet did things deserving of strokes will be beaten with few. Indeed, everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded of him, and the one who was put in charge of much will have more than usual demanded of him.

The Faithful slave is over the domestics under his care just as the householder is over those in his house. **And just as the householder did not know when the thief was coming, neither does the faithful slave know when his master would come.** Yes, the householder in the first illustration is the “*faithful and discreet slave*” in the second illustration.

Three

(Matthew 25:1-12) “Then the Kingdom of the heavens may be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were discreet. ³ For the foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them, ⁴ whereas the discreet took oil in their flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ While the bridegroom was delaying, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ Right in the middle of the night there was a shout: ‘Here is the bridegroom! Go out to meet him.’ ⁷ Then all those virgins got up and put their lamps in order. ⁸ The foolish said to the discreet, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are about to go out.’ ⁹ The discreet answered, saying: ‘Perhaps there may not be enough for both us and you. Go instead to those who sell it, and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ While they were going off to buy it, the bridegroom came. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward, the rest of the virgins also

came, saying, 'Sir, Sir, open to us!' ¹² In answer he said, 'I tell you the truth, I do not know you.'

(Luke 12:35-38) ³⁵ "Be dressed and ready and have your lamps burning, ³⁶ and you should be like men waiting for their master to return from the marriage, so when he comes and knocks, they may at once open to him. ³⁷ Happy are those slaves whom the master on coming finds watching! Truly I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at the table and will come alongside and minister to them. ³⁸ And if he comes in the second watch, even if in the third, and finds them ready, happy are they!

In this third illustration the householder is likened to 10 virgins. Five are "*discreet*", that is to say, wise and prudent. The other five are "*foolish*". They did not plan for the future. Christ says to them: "*I do not know you.*" He cannot relate to them. They are nothing like him. (Mt 7:23) They are not prepared for the arrival of "*the Kingdom of the heavens.*" (Mt 25:1)

Four

(Matthew 25:14-27) ¹⁴ "For it is just like a man about to travel abroad who summoned his slaves and entrusted his belongings to them. ¹⁵ He gave five talents to one, two to another, and one to still another, to each according to his own ability, and he went abroad. ¹⁶ Immediately the one who received the five talents went and did business with them and gained five more. ¹⁷ Likewise, the one who received the two gained two more. ¹⁸ But the slave who received just one went off and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ "After a long time, the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ So the one who had received the five talents came forward and brought five additional talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I gained five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him: 'Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things. I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²² Next the one who had received the two talents came forward and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me; see, I gained two talents more.' ²³ His master said to him: 'Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things. I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.'

²⁴ "Finally the slave who had received the one talent came forward and said: 'Master, I knew you to be a demanding man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not winnow. ²⁵ So I grew afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' ²⁶ In reply his master said to him: 'Wicked and sluggish slave, you knew, did you, that I reaped where I did not sow and gathered where I did not winnow? ²⁷ Well, then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my coming I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ "Therefore, take the talent away from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ³⁰ And throw the good-for-nothing slave out into the darkness outside. There is where his weeping and the gnashing of his teeth will be.'

(Luke 19:12-26) ¹² So he said: "A man of noble birth traveled to a distant land to secure kingly power

for himself and to return. ¹³ Calling ten of his slaves, he gave them ten mi'nas and told them, 'Do business with these until I come.' ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent out a body of ambassadors after him to say, 'We do not want this man to become king over us.'

¹⁵ "When he eventually got back after having secured the kingly power, he summoned the slaves to whom he had given the money, in order to ascertain what they had gained by their business activity. ¹⁶ So the first one came forward and said, 'Lord, your mi'na gained ten mi'nas.' ¹⁷ He said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because in a very small matter you have proved yourself faithful, hold authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸ Now the second came, saying, 'Your mi'na, Lord, made five mi'nas.' ¹⁹ He said to this one as well, 'You too be in charge of five cities.' ²⁰ But another one came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mi'na that I kept hidden away in a cloth. ²¹ You see, I was in fear of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and you reap what you did not sow.' ²² He said to him, 'By your own words I judge you, wicked slave. You knew, did you, that I am a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?' ²³ So why did you not put my money in a bank? Then on my coming, I would have collected it with interest.'

²⁴ "With that he said to those standing by, 'Take the mi'na from him and give it to the one who has the ten mi'nas.' ²⁵ But they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten mi'nas!'— ²⁶ 'I say to you, to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.'

(Mark 13:34-36) It is like a man traveling abroad who left his house and gave the authority to his slaves, to each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to keep on the watch. ³⁵ Keep on the watch, therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether late in the day or at midnight or before dawn or early in the morning, ³⁶ in order that when he comes suddenly, he does not find you sleeping.

The fourth illustration compares the householder to three slaves who their master gave talents to. The first two slaves are good and faithful and are therefore prosperous. The third slave is "*wicked and sluggish*". He is "*sluggish*" in that he is lazy and slothful. He is "*wicked*" because he is sluggish by intent. Therefore he is "*good-for-nothing*", that is to say, he is worthless and does not increase the congregation. He did not even deposit his master's money with the bankers so that they could do the work of increase for him. This third slave will weep and gnash his teeth, just like the hypocritical "*evil slave*" at Matthew 24:28.

Those four illustrations are directed at the "*slaves*" of the master who are appointed over his household to give them food at the proper time. Yes, they are tasked with feeding the lambs and little sheep. (Jn 21:15-17) (see my article "Share Your Thoughts and Research + advice")

Those four illustrations are about obedience, performing actions, and fulfilling assigned duties. They are a reminder to the "*faithful and discreet slave*" to make sure that they are "*ready*" by continuing to fulfill their assigned duties acceptably.

And who is that slave?

(Matthew 24:45-47) "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Happy is that slave if his master on coming finds him doing so! ⁴⁷ Truly I say to you, he will appoint him over all his belongings.—(Lu 12:41-44)

Jesus identifies the faithful and discreet slave as the one whom he will appoint *"over all his belongings."* What belongings does Jesus have? Jesus tells us:

(Matthew 28:18) Jesus approached and spoke to them, saying: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth.

How does he appoint the slave over those belongings?

(Revelation 20:4) And I saw thrones, and those who sat on them were given authority to judge. Yes, I saw the souls of those executed for the witness they gave about Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had not worshipped the wild beast or its image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for 1,000 years.

So the faithful and discreet slave in Jesus' illustration represents those that will rule over his belongings with him for the 1,000 years.

How many will rule with him? Revelation 7:4 tells us that it will be 144,000.

So the *"faithful and discreet slave"* represents the entire 144,000, ***not*** just a handful of men in New York who have claimed a position of authority. (see my articles "Do Not" and "Leaven")

Not All

Can someone be one of the *"chosen ones"* (Mt 24:31) and yet not rule with Christ? Yes. Jesus' illustrations show that some will fail in their faithfulness and discretion. Not all of them, but a significant portion. In the third illustration it is half, and in the fourth it is one third. So we don't know how many will fail, but the first illustration tells us that it is a sure thing that some will. (Ac 20:29, 30)

Those *"chosen ones"* (Mt 24:31) *"who survive to the presence of the Lord"* and are found to be *"faithful and discreet"* are rewarded. But if any of them have started to beat their fellow slaves and over eat and over drink, they will be thrown outside with the ***"hypocrites"*** where they will weep and gnash their teeth, like a householder who was not prepared for a thief and so his house was broken into. (Mt 23:38)

Jesus tells us that someone is a **hypocrite** if they *"honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from me."* (Mt 15:7, 8; Mr 7:6)

Jesus warns us about **hypocrites** who *"resemble whitewashed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men's bones and of every sort of uncleanness. In the same way, on the outside (they) appear righteous to men, but inside (they) are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."* (Mt 23:27-28)

Jesus also warns us that appearances can be deceiving.

(Matthew 7:15) "Be on the watch for the false prophets who come to you in sheep's covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves.

How do they beat their fellow slaves? Since those who do so are grouped in with the hypocrites, their teachings must have become hypocritical. And they seat themselves in the seat of Christ and force those teachings and regulations on their fellow slaves. (see my article "Leaven")

Jesus tells us that the slaves themselves will also be beaten.

(Luke 12:46-48) the master of that slave will come on a day that he is not expecting him and at an hour that he does not know, and he will punish him with the greatest severity and assign him a part with the unfaithful ones. ⁴⁷ Then that slave who understood the will of his master but did not get ready or do what he asked will be beaten with many strokes. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not understand and yet did things deserving of strokes will be beaten with few. Indeed, everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded of him, and the one who was put in charge of much will have more than usual demanded of him.

Why does the slave get beaten even though he "*did not understand*"?

A boss tells an employee that he has a task for him and gives him a box containing both the parts of a device and the instructions on how to assemble it. The parts seem pretty easy to assemble so the employee ignores the instructions. Upon picking up one piece a fellow employee sees that he is not sure how it goes in so he tells him how the part fits. After it is assembled he plugs it in to test it. The device makes a loud noise as it breaks apart. The boss comes over and sees that the part was put in backwards and becomes angry. The employee says the he did not know that he put the part in backwards. The boss says that he believes him, and then fires him.

Why would the boss fire him if the employee did not assemble it wrong on purpose? Because the boss provided the instructions but the employee chose to ignore them.

So it is with the GB. They have the proper instructions in the Bible, but they choose the human tradition of the WTB&TS over the commandments of God. (Col 2:8; Mr 7:7, 8) Raymond Franz gave us a look into how the GB do things in his book. When an issue comes before them, they base their decisions on former teachings of the society instead of, and in spite of, scripture. Just like the employee chose to listen to his fellow employee instead of reading the instructions.

Conclusion

So what is that one thing that he wanted them to know, that was sure to happen, that was a certainty? (Mt 24:43)

- Know that the householder will not keep awake. His house will be broken into.
- Know that some of those that make up the faithful and discreet slave, the steward of the house, will beat their fellow slaves, and will be punished for it when the master comes.
- Know that some of the virgins will not bring enough oil, and they will not be allowed in.
- Know that not all of the slaves will increase their talents, and they will be thrown out into the darkness outside.

What can you do with this information? That answer can be found in my article "Leaven".

What do *you* think?

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