

## ML106 Three Levels of the Word

### Introduction

The scriptures have three levels of interpretation. God's Word has a body level, a spirit level and a soul level.

Jesus was spirit, soul and body just like you [1Th 5:23]. John 1:1 express these as the Word, the Word with God, and the Word was God. The Greek for Word in that verse is Logos which means "something said, including the thought" [G3056].

The Word becoming flesh in Joh 1:14 covers only the human aspect of Christ. Jesus was human just like us, but God thought and spoke many more words about making Christ than He did about making you and me.

Being the product of the Word, and the Word being a product of Jehovah's mind, His intent is to bring many sons into glory [Heb 2:10]. Christ began as thought and speech in God's mind, but God thought and spoke many scriptures before the Word became flesh.

Because Christ was body, spirit and soul, and because the word of "the Law and the Prophets" worked to fulfill Jehovah's plan, the whole Word of God is body, spirit and soul. Those who understand this concept are better equipped to divide and interpret the scriptures.

### The Body Level

Body level scriptures say what they mean. Other than a few symbols and shallow parables that require interpretation, all the scriptures in the NT Epistles are body level. They say what they mean and need no interpretations.

### The Spirit Level

Whether in the NT Epistles or elsewhere, words that mean something other than what they say are symbols. They are body-level in the texts, but they have spirit-level meanings. Let's use a well-known text to see how this works.

First Corinthians 3:1-15 is a body-level text, but it includes enough symbols to see the spirit-level at work. Paul teaches about building on a foundation he has laid [1Co 3:10]. Please read the whole text before continuing. Here are four verses that require special attention:

V2: Milk is a symbol of elementary principles.

V6: Simple parable of watering plants.

V12: Symbols that describe building materials.

V13: Symbols that show works under test.

Our focus is on the symbols in V12. First, burnings within your person represent passions. These kinds of fire

are not trials. You can see these in the "offering made by fire" in the Book of Leviticus.

The fire Paul writes about represents trials. Trials test works to see if they merit rewards. As you saw further down in his lesson, these works are unrelated to salvation because salvation is by faith and not by works.

Paul listed two sets of symbols to support his lesson. There are three symbols within each set. The materials in the first set are inflammable; materials in the second set are flammable. Here are both sets with their interpretations:

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. gold:           | glory              |
| 2. silver:         | knowledge          |
| 3. precious stones | precious witnesses |
| 4. wood:           | life               |
| 5. hay:            | death              |
| 6. stubble:        | works              |

Most students see only that inflammable works merit rewards and that flammable works don't merit rewards. This is helpful, but Paul had more in mind when he used these symbols. You must interpret the symbols within each set to know the full meaning of his lesson.

If you build on Paul's foundation with symbols 1-3, you bring Glory to God by "Witnessing the Knowledge of Christ." Fiery trials don't burn these works, they merit rewards.

If you build on Paul's foundation with symbols 4-6, you live a "Life of Dead Works." Fiery trials burn dead works, these do not merit rewards. We know these burnable materials as "works of self-righteousness."

### The Soul Level

The soul is the identity or personality of the spirit. If you haven't read FL201, "What is the Soul," you should do so before continuing this lesson. In that lesson, you saw how the soul manifests itself through the body. Thus, the soul of the body is the soul of the spirit.

The definition of the soul of man is the same as the definition of the Word of God. Let's examine one symbol from our previous topic to illustrate.

Thus, the body level of wood is "wood;" the spirit-level of wood is "life," and the soul level of wood is "identity or personality." In searching for wood's unique identities, we can also study trees. Wood and trees are from the same Hebrew word in the OT. And, they are from the same Greek word in the NT.

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There are many kinds of woods and trees in the Bible. I chose the ones in the list below because you can relate to their unique meanings without additional discussion.

Fig Tree	Life of the nation of Israel
Olive Tree	Life of Anointing
Shittim Wood	Cursed Life
Oak Tree	Corruptible Life
Cypress Tree	Incorruptible Life

Again, woods and trees represent life. This is the spirit-level. The unique kinds of woods and trees describe their identities and personalities. Let's discuss some of them.

After Adam and Eve realized they were naked, they sewed fig leaves into aprons and covered themselves. This work agrees with the scriptural fact that Israel is a nation of works. Add the word tree and "Fig Tree" represents a life of works. Whether these works are dead or alive depends on the text in which the wood or tree appears.

Now consider Shittim Wood. Shittim trees are thorny. Thorns represent curses. After our first parents sinned, God cursed the ground for Adam's sake. The earth was to bring forth thorns and thistles [Ge 3:18].

Go from this to Moses' Tabernacle plan. Shittim is the only wood used to make the following:

Ark of the Covenant  
Table of Shewbread  
Boards  
Bars  
Pillars  
Altar of Burnt Offerings  
Altar of Incense  
Staves for transporting the furniture

Moses' Tabernacle represents the body of the Son of man. And what do the scriptures teach about His body? "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*" [Gal 3:13]. Thus, both the tabernacle and its furniture teach how Jesus became cursed for the sins and imperfections of humanity.

### Some Examples

Wood represents life. There are many aspects of life. Each aspect requires its own symbol. For example, water represents spirit.

As with wood, water has three levels of interpretation. It is water on the body-level; it is spirit on the spirit-level, and it has multiple personalities on the soul-level.

For example, your body is a vessel. If your human spirit is alive in Christ, your vessel is full of living water. And if you have received the Holy Spirit, your spirit has become a vessel of the Spirit of God.

From here we could discuss ponds of still water, brooks of running water, rivers that represent nations, and seas that represent all nations. Moreover, the aspects of wood and water are applicable to multitudes of other symbols, treasures that await hungry prospectors of God's Word.

### Rules of Interpretation

It helps to understand the three levels when working with symbols. It also helps to know that most nouns, pronouns, names, etc. have unique spirit-levels which further divide into unique soul-levels.

Here are three rules that will help guide you in your studies. In the Old and in the New Testament:

1. Never interpret body-level words.
2. Always interpret spirit-level words.
3. Always interpret soul-level words.

### Another Point: "Last but not Least"

The letters that form the words in the Bible are literal. These form the "body of the word," but not the "body level of the word." Again, the body level includes only those scriptures whose words say what they mean.

Some scriptures have no "spirit level." For example, Isa 7:14 reads, "... Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." If you interpret the word "virgin" [as you would a symbol], you demolish Christianity. However, this verse has a soul level because the name "Immanuel" gives this son an identity. This name gives this part of this verse a soul level. This agrees with the "soul level" definition."