

Bible Study Tools – Cross-References

Bible Study Tools activities are designed to give students practice in basic Bible study skills: the use of Bible maps, cross-reference systems, concordances and lexicons.

Cross-Reference Systems

Cross-references identify biblical connections for us. Here are five kinds of connections that commonly occur in the Bible:

- (1) Direct Quotations. A later passage quotes an earlier passage.
- (2) Prophecies and Fulfillments. What is foretold in one place is also foretold or fulfilled in another.
- (3) Parallel Accounts. A story is told in more than one place, often with different details.
- (4) Related Subjects. The subject of one passage is connected in some way to that of another passage.
- (5) Repeating Principles. The fundamentals of God's plan for mankind are repeated in many places throughout the Bible.

The use of cross-references expands our knowledge and understanding of the Bible. This activity focuses on Related Subjects. It uses the cross-reference system that was developed for the English Revised Version of 1881/1885 and is found in many modern study Bibles.

Bible Study Tools – Cross-References Related Passages

Related passages are different from parallel accounts.¹ Related passages fill out a story that is introduced in one part of the Bible and complemented somewhere else. Cross-references help us bring the related passages together and see a fuller picture. Here are two examples to study. Answer the questions that go with each example.

Example 1

Psalm 51

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN
v NATHAN THE PROPHET WENT TO HIM, AFTER HE HAD
GONE IN TO BATHSHEBA. ¹ w Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love; according to your
x abundant mercy v blot out my transgressions.

Cross-References:

Title v 2 Sam.12:1.

- ¹ w See Ps.4:1.
x See Ps.106:45.
v ver. 9; Isa.43:25;
44:22; Acts 3:19;
Col.2:14.

- 1 – Read Psalm 51. List the things that David asks God to do for him? Notice his appeals to God: “blot out,” “wash me,” etc.

- 2 – A Psalm title is part of the Psalm and should be read with it. Look at the title of Psalm 51. What event in David’s life is the Psalm related to?

- 3 – Look at the cross reference in the title. Where is the event recorded in the Bible?

- 4 – How does Psalm 51 fill out the story that is recorded in 2 Samuel 12:1-15?

¹ See the cross-referencing activity re. “Parallel Accounts.”

Example 2

Acts 24

¹⁷ Now after several years [¶] I came to bring alms to [†] my nation and to present [§] offerings.

Cross-References:

¹⁷ ¶ Rom.15:25-28, 31;
1 Cor.16:1-3;
2 Cor. 8:1-4;
9:1-2, 12.
Cp. Gal.2:10.
[†] Ch. 26:4; 28:19.
[§] Cp. ver. 11;
ch. 20:16.

- 1 – Cross-reference [¶] goes with the phrase “I (Paul) came to bring alms.” It directs us to significant portions of Romans 15, 1 Corinthians 16, and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Without first looking, what do you think these passages are about?
- 2 – Read Romans 15:25-27. Who was making contributions and for whom were they doing it?
- 3 – Look at a Bible map of Paul’s travels. What ecclesias were in these regions?
- 4 – Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. What other ecclesias were taking up collections for the same purpose? When were they doing it?
- 5 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 9:1-7. What do these passages tell us about the spirit in which the contributions were made by these ecclesias?
- 6 – Read Galatians 2:9-10. This is the back story behind the “alms.” Who originally asked Paul to help the poor saints in Jerusalem?
- 7 – How do the cross-references for Acts 24:17 filled out a picture of interecclesial fellowship in New Testament times?