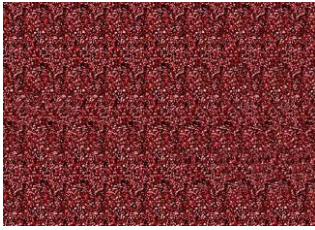


## INKBLOTS AND PUZZLES – How, Then, Are We Reading?

p 41-44



(Discussion Questions = Q!)

**Magic Eye Picture | Narnia**  
**Q1: Have you ever seen a “Magic Eye” picture or read “The Dawn Treader”?**

**Q2: Why do we want shortcuts?**

What we are looking for in reading the Bible is the ability to turn the two-dimensional words on paper into a three-dimensional encounter with God, so that the text takes on life and meaning and depth and perspective and gives us direction for what to do today. Gaining **Magic Eyes** ushers, us into the renewal way of reading the Bible.

Perhaps another analogy will work. Who of us, once having read **C.S.Lewis’s The Voyage of the Dawn Treader**, can forget the scene where Eustace Scrubb and Lucy and Edmund Pevensie stare at a picture on a wall of a Narnian ship when suddenly the picture draws them into a whole new world? Suddenly that picture on the wall comes alive and they begin to feel the breeze, smell the air, and hear sounds. The kids are magically drawn into the painting and find themselves in the water, where they are helped into a boat with the enticing name Dawn Treader. These kids, now in a new reality, travel... **We find our Magic Eyes and we are drawn up onto the Dawn Treader only when we learn to read the Bible as a story.**

Somewhere we've gone astray, and we've stopped reading the Bible as story. Our intent, and it is the right one, is to get something out of the Bible for our daily lives. I too want the Bible to be a "light for my path"(Psalm 119:105) and I'm sure you do as well. But, because reading the Bible as story takes more time, thinking, and discerning, we've developed routines & techniques that get us to our goal sooner. We've learned the CliffsNotes version of the Bible, or we settle for a brief synopsis; we've developed shortcuts to grace. - *Illustration: Can you loose weight wearing an AbTronic device? No! Just as shortcuts in exercise prevent full health benefits, so also shortcuts in Bible reading affect our spiritual health. 5 Shortcuts!*

### Shortcut # 1: Morsels of Law

p 44-45

For some, the Bible is massive collection of laws-what to do and what not to do. It is not difficult to understand how the Bible, which contains plenty of commandments and prohibitions-there are 613 in the Old Testament alone-can gradually take on the impression that it is a collection of legal morsels, a law book. Nor is it an uncommon experience, especially for the younger generation, to express the sentiment that "law book" is how they were taught the Bible, and it turned them off to the Bible.

Why? It begins with God. God becomes the Law-God, usually a little ticked off and impatient. Our relationship to God becomes conditioned by whether we are good citizens. There's another ugly element to the mistake of making the Bible a law book: what it does to us. We, the Obedient Ones, become insufferable. How so? We become (1) intoxicated with our own moral superiority. (2) become more concerned with being right than being good. & (3) become judgmental.

In short, law book readers become pompous, self-righteous, and accusatory. Sometimes we become resentful that others haven't caught up to our level of holiness. I was a teenage legalist and considered myself one of the Obedient Ones. Being good convinced me that I had joined an elite fraternity of the faithful.

**Q3: How did people in your days respond to the Bible as a “law book?” Response for today?**

**Q4: Works Mindset**  
**Was your relationship with God based on the strict condition that you were a “good” citizen?**

**Q5: What is your view of God?**



**Q6: How approachable is an angry God? Is that how most people view Him? Why?**

### Shortcut # 2: Morsels of Blessings & Promises

p 45-48

In 1551 a certain Stephanus divided the New Testament into numbered verses. Dividing the Bible up into verses turns the Bible into morsels and leads us to read the Bible as a collection of divine morsels, sanctified morsels of truth. We pause for each one to see if we can get something from it.

Those who read the Bible as story refuse to cut up the Bible into morsels of blessings and promises because they know the Story. Sure, there are all kinds of wonderful blessings surrounding Abraham, Moses, David and Paul and there also are days of doubt, defeat, disobedience, and darkness..

**Q7: Do you agree that chapters/verses added was a mistake & made reading the Bible as a story more difficult?**

**Q8: What happens to the Christian who reads the Bible as little more than a collection of morsels of blessings & promises?**



**Q9: How have you seen someone shape the Bible to reflect what they want?**

**Shortcut # 3: Mirrors and Inkblots**

**p 48-49**

Some people read the Bible as if its passages were Rorschach inkblots. Looking at the inkblots gives a person an opportunity to reveal himself or herself. They see what is in their head. They project onto the Bible what they want to see. If you show them enough passages and you get them to talk about them, you will hear what is important to them, whether it is in the Bible or not!

They may have discovered in the inkblot called "Paul" a wonderful pattern for how to run a church, which just happens to be the pastor's next big plan! You get the point-reading the Bible as an inkblot is projecting onto the Bible *our* ideas and *our* desires.

**Shortcut # 4: Puzzling Together the Pieces to Map God’s Mind**

**p-49-52**

For some people the Bible is like a big puzzle. Once you’ve got the puzzle solved, you no longer have to work with the pieces. The shortcut is that once you’ve expended the energy to solve the puzzle, the job is done – forever and a day. These people know what the Bible says before they open it because they’ve already puzzled it together.

*What is the problem here?*

In one word, *mastery*. Those who solve the puzzle think they’ve got the Bible mastered; they have caged & tamed the Blue Parakeet who gave us the blue parakeets. God did not give the Bible in order that we could master Him or it; God gave the Bible so we could live it, so we could be mastered by it.



**Q10: What’s wrong with this shortcut?**

1. These people have mapped the mind of God. What is this Grand System, the solved puzzle all about? A system that presumes knowledge of God before the Bible was written.  
Puzzle in hand = Bible all figured out.
2. Ignores the parts of the puzzle that don’t fit.  
Who decides what is emphasized & de-emphasized?
3. Puzzling together the pieces we find in the Bible into a system is impossible. Why?  
Who says that our system/pattern is that unity?
4. Puzzling calls into question the Bible as we have it. Could God have revealed a systematic theology, (a template or “behold the pattern”) if he had wanted? Why didn’t he?

**Shortcut # 5: Maestros**

**p-53-54**

I have several times done my best to imitate the risotto recipe of the Bolongaro family, but to say that many read the Bible the way they learn from a *maestro di cucina*. That is, they go to the Bible to find the master, the uber-Rabbi-Jesus-at work. Then, when they get up from their reading of the Bible, they imitate Maestro Jesus. “What would Jesus do?” is the only question they ask. The problem here is the word “only.”

It is almost justifiable to make Jesus the Maestro. But more than a few of us are aware that Jesus has been *eclipsed by many Bible readers by Maestro Paul*. In this shortcut, **Jesus is either ignored or overwhelmed by Paul's way of thinking**. Some of us grew up in churches where the thought patterns, the lenses, the grid through which everything was filtered-however unconsciously-was the book of Romans **or Paul's theology**.

**Q11: Is your theology about God shaped more by Paul’s theology or Jesus?**

The problem was not Paul. (I’ll get to that soon enough.) The problem was that I was not taught to read the Bible as a story and many of us weren’t. **I had been nurtured in a world that read the entire Bible as a solved puzzle that used Maestro Paul's categories to understand everything else in the Bible.**



Reading the Bible through a maestro’s eyes gives us one chapter in the story of the Bible . One-chapter Bible readers develop one-chapter Christian lives. What is the long way? How can we learn to read the Bible as Story? How can we develop Magic Eyes and be drawn up onto The *Dawn Treader*?

**"Step This Way!"**