

# Answering The Religious Errors Of Our Family, Friends, and Neighbors

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## “We Cannot Understand The Bible”

### Lesson 10

#### INTRO:

- A. This statement is usually made when in conversation with someone about the Bible.
1. When a difference arises over a subject or verse, the conversation usually comes to an end with the statement:
    - a. “We cannot understand the Bible!”
    - b. “We cannot understand the Bible alike!”
    - c. “You see it your way, I see it mine!”
- B. The religious world seems convinced that we can't understand the Bible.
1. This is one of the excuses given for denominational division.
  2. It also is the reason some give for not studying the Bible.
    - a. They say "How can I know what God wants? Everybody interprets the Bible so differently."
  3. We must admit that the existence of literally thousands of different "churches," all teaching different plans of salvation, ways to approach God, worship modes, doctrines, and forms of organization and leadership, is strong evidence that most people don't know what the Bible teaches, don't understand it, or simply choose to reject it.
  4. But what does the conclusion that we can't understand the Bible say about God and His word? Does it not put on God the ultimate blame for the religious confusion and division that exists in the world?
  5. Consider the implications: If God created us and gave us the power to think and reason, and then gave us the Bible as a revelation of His will, but we can't understand His message, then God must not be as intelligent and all-knowing as we've thought.
    - a. If the Bible is intended to show us how to be saved from sin, and we are incapable of understanding the message, God's communication skills must have failed. Is that conclusion logical or acceptable?
- C. Can We Understand the Bible?
1. Those who say, “No!” quote **2 Peter 1:20 (NASB)** “*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*”
    - a. **THEY INTERPRET** this verse to mean no individual can interpret the Scripture by himself and must depend on the church to tell him what the Scriptures mean.
    - b. “*Above all, you do well if you recognize this: No prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination,*” (**New English Translation, NET**)
    - c. “*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.*” (**New International Version, NIV**)

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#### I. WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH?

- A. Timothy Understood. (**2 Timothy 3:15** - “...and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”)
  - 1. Timothy understood—from childhood.
  - 2. And that was the Old Testament!!
- B. Whole Books Were To Be Read To Congregations.
  - 1. **1 Thessalonians 5:27** - “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.”
  - 2. **Colossians 4:16** - “Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”
- C. Paul said that when they read, they would understand.
  - 1. **Ephesians 3:4** - “...by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),”
- D. Parts of books were addressed to husbands, wives, slaves, and children.
  - 1. **Ephesians 6:1** - “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”
- E. Those addressed were expected to understand what the will of the Lord was for them.
  - 1. **Ephesians 5:17** - “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
- F. The necessary conclusion which has to be reached is:  
**WE CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!**

#### II. CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

- A. That is the only way we can understand it if we are to understand it at all!
  - 1. It offers truth on every subject.
  - 2. Only a **MIS**understanding will cause differences.
- B. Not only can we understand it alike, we must understand it alike!!  
... or, someone has misunderstood it.
  - 1. That is why Paul could expect Christians to be in harmony when they speak, or think, or discern:
    - a. **1 Corinthians 1:10** - “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
  - 2. That is why the New Testament so consistently speaks of “the faith.”
    - a. **Acts 6:7** - “...a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

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- b. **Ephesians 4:5** - *“one Lord, one faith, one baptism;”*
  - c. **Ephesians 4:13** - *“till we all come to the unity of the faith...”*
  - d. **2 Corinthians 13:5** - *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.....”*
  - e. **1 Timothy 6:10** - *“...some have strayed from the faith...”*
  - f. **Jude 1:3** - *“...to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”*
- C. We **CAN** and **SHOULD** understand the Bible alike  
... **BUT**, we **DO NOT** understand it alike!
- 1. Why is that?
    - a. **Prejudice:** Prejudice involves making up one's mind before hearing the facts, or unreasonably holding onto a belief after the facts show the belief to be wrong. It is a mental exercise that defies reason and knowledge.
      - 1) Basing our judgments about what the Bible means on what our parents said, or on what we believed in the past, is prejudice, if we are unwilling to look at the text and find its true meaning. Confronted with clear Bible teaching, some folks say, "I don't care what it says, I know what I believe." This is prejudice!
    - b. **Lack Of Desire To Understand:** ...or an unyielding refusal to obey and submit to God's will. This may be another special form of prejudice.
    - c. Willful Ignorance keeps people from understanding the Bible. Some folks just don't want to know. **2 Peter 3:5** speaks of folks who dismiss God's impending judgment by "*willfully forgetting*" past judgments, such as the flood of Noah's day.

### **These three reasons for not understanding the Bible is based on our attitude and not in God not being able to reveal the truth!**

- d. **Blatant Infidelity.** This isn't actually a lack of understanding. Rather, it is a lack of willingness to believe. One can understand and still not believe. Infidels (unbelievers) readily argue with what Peter, Paul, or even Jesus had to say.
  - 1) When trapped by their unbelief, they very proudly declare that we can't understand the Bible alike.
- e. **Unwillingness To Be Confined To What God Said.** Sometimes the Bible doesn't speak to certain issues or elaborate on some details. At this point, men must come to grips with the silence of the Scriptures. When they don't, they tend to speculate or personally legislate. Speculations

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not laid out in Scripture lead to differences of opinion, dissension, and division over meaning.

- 1) Human opinions are at the heart of division and our failure to understand the Bible alike. God's word is completely adequate without our opinions.
2. If We Can't Understand the Bible, We Can't Be Saved!
  - a. Jesus declared, "*And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*" (**John 8:32**) Therefore, if we can't understand the truth, we can't be freed from sin. That is, we can't be saved.
  - b. The words of Jesus will judge us. **John 12:48** declares the words of Jesus: "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*"
  - c. The truth is, we can understand God's revelation. And if we understand what God said, we'll understand alike.

#### Questions:

1. **Sometimes we may not have the proper understanding of the Bible, because we haven't learned how to study it. What are some basic rules of Bible study?**

#### Answer:

- A. Think of a picture puzzle:
  1. Look at the picture.
  2. Start with corners and straight pieces (border).
  3. Do the standout areas.
  4. Save the sky/grass/water for last (Most difficult).
- B. Rightly Divide. (2 Tim. 3:15)
  1. Two major divisions:
    - a. Old Testament
    - b. New Testament
  2. Old Testament:
    - a. Gen. - Deut. Books of the law.
    - b. Judges - Esther Books of history.
    - c. Job - Song Of Solomon Books of Poetry & Wisdom
    - d. Isaiah - Malachi Books of the Prophets
  3. New Testament:
    - a. Matthew - John Life of Christ
    - b. Acts - Church History
    - c. Romans - Revelation Letters to Churches and Individuals
- C. Focus On The Big Picture/Main Points
  1. Creation
  2. The Flood
  3. Tower Of Babel
  4. The Patriarchs
  5. Egyptian Bondage
  9. United Kingdom
  10. Divided Kingdom
  11. Judah Alone
  12. Babylonian Captivity
  13. Return and Rebuilding

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|----|----------------------|-----|-------------------------------|
| 6. | Wilderness Wondering | 14. | Life of Christ                |
| 7. | Conquest of Canaan   | 15. | Early Church                  |
| 8. | The Judges           | 16. | Letters - Churches/Christians |
- D. Define (give meaning) to words that are found.
1. Sometimes an English dictionary will do but not always.
  2. Use a dictionary or lexicon that deals with Bible words.
  3. See how it is used in other verses.
  4. Compare with another translation.
- E. Always keep verses in their context. That means the surrounding verses, chapters, and maybe even the entire book.
1. Who said it?
  2. To whom was it said?
  3. Under what circumstances?
  4. Subject under discussion?
- F. Gather all the facts.
1. With the help of a concordance or topical bible, research and find all that's said on that particular word/subject.
    - a. Mt. 19:16 “one came”
    - b. Mt. 19:20 “young man”
    - c. Lk. 18:18 “certain ruler”
    - d. Lk. 18:23 “very rich”
- PUT IT ALL TOGETHER:** He was, THE RICH YOUNG RULER
- G. Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.
1. One writer may explain what another writer meant.
    - a. Acts 2 and Joel 2
  2. A definition/meaning of a word may be given in another verse.
    - a. Mark 16:16 “he that believeth and is baptized”
    - b. Rom. 6:4 “buried with Him through baptism”
- H. Helpful tools:
1. KJV, ASV, NKJV, NASV (watch out for the “helps” could HURT!) (Get as plain of a Bible as you can find.)
  2. Strongs, Cruden, or Young Concordance
  3. Nave's Topical Bible
  4. Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Word
  5. Barnes's Notes, Adam Clark's (Commentary)

### **Psalms 19:7-11**

*“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.”*