

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

We Can Understand the Bible

By Andy Sochor

Many say we cannot understand the Bible. Though if we could, they would certainly believe that we cannot understand the Bible alike. This belief is often used to justify the myriad doctrines and denominations we see in the religious world. But is the assertion true that we cannot understand the Bible? Can we even say we understand the Bible if we do not understand it alike?

God’s will is revealed in the Bible (1 Cor. 2:7-10). The word of God has been revealed in such a way that we can understand it. Paul wrote to the Ephesians concerning the mystery which he had revealed and said, *“When you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ”* (Eph. 3:4). The Ephesians were not to come to a different understanding than Paul. The message was revealed in such a way that they could have the same understanding that Paul had. Since we have the word of God today, we can have the same understanding as well.

God created us (Gen. 1:26). He certainly knows how to reveal His will in such a way that His creation would understand. After all, God not only created our bodies, but our minds as well. He understands the way man thinks and comprehends. To say that we cannot understand the Bible is to accuse God of being incapable of properly communicating with the very ones He created.

God has instructed us to understand His will. Paul told the Ephesians, *“Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is”* (Eph. 5:17). Understanding God’s will is necessary for us to be saved from sin (Matt. 13:15). To say that we cannot understand the word of God which reveals His will is to indict God as being unjust for requiring something that we cannot do.

If we do not understand the Bible, the fault does not lie with God, but with us. *“The law of the Lord is perfect,”* and is capable of *“making wise the simple”* (Psa. 19:7). What is necessary for us to understand the Bible?

A willing heart – Jesus said, *“If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself”* (Jn. 7:17). If we do not have a desire to know and understand the word of God, we will not understand it. We must first want to know God’s will to be able to understand it.

An open mind – When Jesus told the parable of the sower, He spoke of three types of soils (hearts) that rejected the seed (the word of God). The *“good soil”* was used to describe those who had *“an honest and good heart”* (Lk. 8:15). If we do not possess an open and honest heart, we will be like those of whom Jesus spoke who would hear but not understand (Lk. 8:10). We must approach the Bible without any preconceived notions, biases, or prejudices in order to be able to understand it.

A commitment to study – Paul told Timothy, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15). To accurately handle the word, we must understand it. Diligence is required to learn how to handle the word of God properly. We must be committed to studying God’s word if we hope to understand it.

Paul prayed on behalf of the Colossians: *“That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Col. 1:9-10). A proper

understanding of the word of God is necessary in order to please Him. Let us approach the Scriptures properly, so that we will ***“not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is”*** (Eph. 5:18). – ***Eastside Church of Christ.*** ■

Distinctive Gospel Preaching

By John C. Robertson

Beautiful sermons are recorded in God’s word. Studying the content of sermons preached is extremely valuable to our Christian walk. We learn how to perfect the heart in holiness by studying the Sermon on the Mount at Matthew 5-7. We learn the connection between God’s grace, forgiveness of sins, and man’s obedience by studying Paul’s sermon at Acts 13. We learn about the value of Old Testament commandments to our modern day Christian lives by studying Stephen’s sermon at Acts 7. The gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to save men’s souls from an eternity of hell (Rom. 1:16). Those who present the gospel carry with them God’s power to transform and save men’s lives (see Col. 1:13-14). Aside from the great doctrinal lessons of salvation learned by studying these sermons we also learn something about man’s character. As these sermons were preached there were reactions and responses.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount Matthew records, ***“28 and it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes”*** (Matt. 7:28-29 see also Matt. 9:2-8 and 13:54). To be ***“astonished”*** (Greek *ekplesso*) means ***“to drive out of one’s senses, to amaze, astound, to be astonished at a thing or to be struck with panic fear of”*** (LS 243). The multitudes had been taught by the scribes and Pharisees for most of their lives. What they heard Jesus preaching was distinctly different than what they had been hearing (see Titus 2:1). Jesus did not speak his own opinions, traditions of the fathers, or personal convictions. Jesus spoke divine revelation in an authoritative way that left his audience astounded. Some would later listen to Jesus and say, ***“No one has ever spoken the way he does”*** (Jn. 7:46 – ***Common English Bible***). Many of the people could obviously see right through the scribes and Pharisees. The multitudes had witnessed their hypocrisy for years yet accepted them due to their position and representation of the Mosaic Law. There was no corruption or hypocrisy in Christ.

When Jesus preached that salvation is dependant upon man’s works and understanding of divine truths many were repulsed and walked no more with Jesus (John 6:66). When Jesus preached on vain worship as people teach the doctrines of men the Pharisees were offended (Matt. 15:7-13). When Stephen exposed sin, bitterness, and rebellion in the lives of his audience they resisted his message and stoned him to death (Acts 7:51-60). When Paul preached about the resurrection of the dead to the people of Athens many of them mocked while others desired to hear more (see Acts 17:32-34). Distinctive gospel preaching exposes sin in people’s life and all are left with a decision to take or leave the gospel’s remedy.

Those that work their way out of denominational error can relate to such a study. When attending a denominational church that does not bear the name of Christ there is weak preaching that rarely touches the word of God. When a hungry denominational member attends the true body of Christ they are astounded at the difference in teaching. The preaching is directly from the Bible. Distinctive Bible preaching looks at the actual words of Jesus, the prophets, and apostles. Distinctive Gospel preaching will encourage people to want to know more about God and his plan of salvation. Distinctive preaching will motivate people to study the whole council of God rather than certain hobby subjects. Distinctive gospel preaching will save a few people that are not offended by the words of our creator (Jn. 6:44-45). – ***The Floral Heights Informer***, February 8, 2015. ■

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:2-3).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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