

# Hindrances to Understanding the Scriptures

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Intro:

1. We are commanded to understand God's will (**Eph. 5:17**; **Col. 1:9-10**).
2. God's word is written in a way that we **are able** to understand (**Eph. 3:3-5**)
3. However, many will fail to understand God's will, as Jesus described when explaining the purpose of Parables – (**Matt. 13:13-16**; quoting from **Is. 6:9-10**)
  - a. This failure to understand was not for lack of ability – (**:14**)
  - b. The failure was due to a dull heart (not wanting to hear the truth) – (**:15**)
  - c. This prophecy of Isaiah is quoted numerous times in the new testament.
4. Any inability to understand the will of God revealed in His scriptures is not the fault of the Scriptures or of God – but man.
5. What are some hindrances to understanding the scriptures?

Discussion:

## I. NOT EXPECTING (OR INTENDING) TO UNDERSTAND

- A. If we do not set out expecting to understand, we have failed before beginning, and if we do not intend to understand, ultimately, we are wasting our time, yet many do this!
- B. Reading for the sake of reading, or reading sporadically:
  1. Not sufficient to just read with no purpose – we must study and apply the scriptures to our lives – **1 Tim. 4:12-16**; **2 Tim. 2:15**
  2. Some who are “always learning, but never coming to the truth” – **2 Tim. 3:7**; **1 Tim. 1:5-7**
- C. Only reading favorite passages (usually out of context and to the exclusion of the rest of scripture) – **2 Tim. 3:16-17** (all scripture is profitable); **2:15** (rightly divide); **Ps. 119:160** (entirety is truth)

## II. CLERGY / LAITY DISTINCTION

- A. Began with the Catholic church making interpretation of the Bible the sole property of the priesthood, sometimes even forbidding “lay” or common people from reading it.
- B. Permeates through denominationalism with “Pastors” and creeds.
- C. This shifting of personal responsibility has crept into the church.
- D. There is a role for teachers in understanding the scriptures – **2 Tim. 2:2**; **Rom. 10:14-17**; **Eph. 4:11-12**
- E. We must search the scriptures to ensure what we are taught is the truth – **Acts 17:11**
- F. Our faith must be our own – **2 Tim. 1:5**; **3:15**; **1 Pt. 3:15**
- G. There is no clergy/laity distinction – all are priests (**1 Pt. 2:9**)

## III. DESIRE TO PLEASE THE WORLD / SEARCHING FOR DISTINCTION

- A. Often, an inordinate desire to please the world is the reason some are unable to understand the scriptures.
- B. Appealing to what is popular (itching ears) – **2 Tim. 4:1-5**
- C. Others are seeking distinction – wanting to be known for their interpretation or some “new teaching”.
- D. *“When the ambitious mind has only in view the exaltation of self, the exegete comes to stand in the way of every other effort than that which he is making, and his thirst for distinction even prevents the acceptance of the plain and simple truth of the gospel - Dungan”*
- E. Like the Athenians – always wanting to hear or tell some new thing so as to be distinguished from others – **Acts 17:21**
- F. This is the motivation for calls of a new way of interpreting scripture
- G. “If it is new, it is probably not true; and if it is true, it is not new”
- H. We should seek the old paths – **Jeremiah 6:16.**
- I. The goal should be unity, not distinction – **1 Cor. 1:10-13**

#### IV. ATTEMPT TO PROVE DOCTRINE

- A. When we start with some doctrine and then go to the Bible to support or prove that doctrine – we will certainly fail to understand.
- B. Eisegesis vs. exegesis
  - 1. This is the method of eisegesis (to lead in) – “an interpretation, especially of Scripture, that reflects the personal ideas or viewpoints or the interpreter; reading something into a text that isn’t there” (The Century Dictionary)
  - 2. Contrast to the method of exegesis (to lead out) – “explanation or critical interpretation of a text” (Webster)
- C. Almost anything can be proven to the one who wants to find the proof. Causes one to twist the scriptures to their own destruction (**2 Pt. 3:14-17**)
- D. The bible is not a book to prove doctrine – it is the doctrine (**2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; 2 Jn. 9-11**)
- E. Not our place to add meaning to scripture – **2 Pt. 1:19-21**

#### V. ASSUMING A HIDDEN MEANING

- A. Some employ the mystical or allegorical methods of interpreting the scripture – instead of regarding it as a sensible communication from God to man, it is turned into a riddle with hidden meaning, and may be made to say almost anything except what it is meant to say. – with this method, what the Bible means to any person will depend on what they want it to mean.
- B. Example – Philo of Alexandria on **Genesis 2:10-14** – “In these words Moses intends to sketch out the particular virtues. And they, also, are four in number – prudence, temperance, courage, and justice.” (He then attempts to explain why this is with no context or scriptural support for any of his explanation.)
- C. God’s word is not too mysterious or far off for us to understand alike – **Deut. 30:11-20**
- D. Causes our minds to be “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” – **2 Cor. 11:1-4**

#### VI. ATTEMPT TO HARMONIZE THE BIBLE WITH ‘POP-SCIENCE’

- A. The physical world reveals God's glory – **Rom. 1:18-23; Ps. 19:1-7**
- B. True science will harmonize with scripture, but many things labeled as science, and widely accepted, are not so (Old earth, evolution, etc.). Many only look at the scriptures only thru the lens of popular science.
  - 1. Start with old earth theory, and thus the days of creation are not accurate (Gen. 1)
  - 2. Start with evolution and thus discount the creation account of God speaking things into existence and species reproducing after their kind
- C. Others seek to harmonize miracles with science – and thus miss the point and purpose of miracles – that which is against nature to show the power of the creator

#### VII. PRACTICAL ATHEISM

- A. The belief that there is a God; that He is the author of the Bible; but with a disposition to do as we please about divine things, indifferent to what God says and that God will accept us doing things our way.
- B. Example: the Samaritans feared Jehovah but served other gods.
- C. If we don't think God cares if we do His will, we will fail to accurately handle His word.
- D. God instructs us to rightly divide the word – **2 Tim. 2:15**
- E. Jesus emphasized the need to know and God's will – **Matt. 7:21-23**

#### Conclusion:

- 1. If we are to be pleasing to God, we must come to an understanding of His word and commit to keeping it, for we will be judged by His words.
- 2. We must be sure to avoid anything which would hinder us from understanding the scriptures.