

CHAPTER 2

CAN I UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Suppose someone showed you a high level math book. Would you be able to understand it? Could you understand a college chemistry or college physics textbook? Have you ever seen a Hebrew lexicon (dictionary of Hebrew words)? Is this a book you could easily understand? What about an economics textbook, a mechanic's manual for repairing your car, a book of navigational charts, a guide to computer programming, an advanced anatomy book for medical students, a textbook on composing music, a journal for those who are serious about investing in the stock market or a collection of architectural blueprints? Would you be able to understand most of these books?

There are some books that are almost impossible to understand unless you become an **expert** in some field. Some technical books will make sense only after years of special training and study. For the average person who has never received this training, such a book would be of little value. He would probably think, "Why spend time reading something I can never understand? This book is not for me; it's for the experts!"

Many people feel this way about the Bible. They think the Bible is some mysterious and puzzling book which only a few, highly trained people can ever hope to understand. They believe that only "expert" theologians who have studied for years at seminaries can read and understand the Bible. For the average, common, ordinary, run of the mill person there is no hope of ever understanding God's Book. "Perhaps the Pope, or a priest or a professor or a pastor can understand the Scriptures, but certainly I can't." **WHAT A LIE!**

It's a **LIE** to say that only a select few are educated enough and privileged enough to understand the Bible. For centuries (especially during the "Dark Ages") men lived in darkness, depravity and a state of spiritual death because they believed that the Bible could not be understood by the common man. Often this is what their priests and religious leaders told them. As a result, millions of people were discouraged from reading the Bible or even having a Bible of their own, and in many cases the Bible was not even translated into the common tongue or language of the people.

GOD WANTS PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

1. God's Word is for the World

A good book should be understood by all those for whom it was intended. An astronomy book was intended for astronomers and they should understand it. An anatomy book should be understood by medical students or doctors because it was written for them. Legal books were written for lawyers to understand. If the book was intended for you, then you should understand it.

For whom was the Bible intended? Was it written only for Popes, priests, professors and pastors? The Bible was written for SINNERS so that they might come to a SAVING relationship with the living God. How many of the world's population are sinners (Romans 3:23)?

_____ How many of these sinners does God want SAVED (1 Timothy 2:4 and compare 4:10)? _____ Therefore, IS THE BIBLE FOR YOU? _____ If God intended the Bible for you, do you think He would also intend for you to understand it? Would a father build his son a beautiful basketball court but never give him a basketball? What good is a basketball court if you cannot use it due to lack of a ball? Would the Heavenly Father give His children a Book but never help them to understand or use what it says? What good is a Bible if we cannot understand it?

2. An Uncommon Book Given in a Common Language

Some technical books (especially high level science or math books) are so complicated (at least to us "non-experts") that reading them is almost like reading a foreign language! That calculus equation does not seem to make any sense! When God gave us His Word, He did not give it in some technical or difficult or "divine" language that would be beyond the grasp of our frail human minds.

The New Testament, for example, was originally written in **Koine** (pronounced **koynay**) or common Greek. This was the natural and common language that was spoken by ordinary people throughout the Roman empire. The Bible could have been written in "classical" Greek (the written Greek used by Plato the philosopher, Thucydides the historian and Demosthenes the orator/statesman, to name just a few), but then only the well-educated, the intellectuals and the "experts" would be able to understand it. God wants "U _____ (uneducated) and I _____ men" (Acts 4:13) to understand His Word! One of Martin Luther's greatest accomplishments was his translation of the Bible into German so that the German people could have God's Word in their own language (instead of in Latin) and thus they could understand it. The Bible is an UNCOMMON book communicated in a COMMON language to COMMON people with a COMMON need for the salvation that is found in our Lord Jesus Christ!

It's amazing how simple the Bible really is. God did not choose long and difficult words to communicate His truth. Consider, for example, some of the simple and common words found in Matthew 13: sower, seed, thorns, ground, ears, field, birds, pearl, etc. Jesus used earthly language to communicate heavenly truth.

This does not mean that everything in the Bible is easy to understand. Even Peter had difficulty with some of the things Paul wrote: "even as our beloved brother _____ also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you, as also in all his _____, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things _____ to be _____" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Some things we will understand right away as new Christians; other things God will teach us years later as we become more mature in the faith. But whether we are new Christians or mature Christians, God wants us to understand His Word.

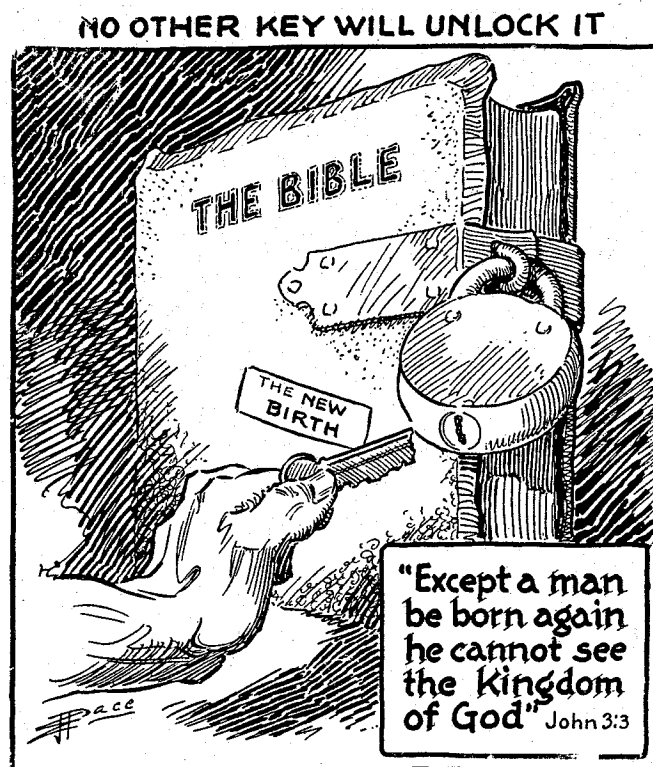
3. One Man who Needed to Understand

In Acts chapter 8 we meet a man who needed and wanted to understand God's Word—the Ethiopian Eunuch. In verse 30 Philip found this man sitting in his chariot reading the Bible (the book of Isaiah) and he asked him, _____ thou what thou readeſt?" or "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Did God want this man to understand the Scripture? As we study this chapter we discover at least three things:

1. God providentially and graciously provided this man with a copy of the Scriptures in a language he could read (verses 28,30-35). This man was seeking and God provided him with the Bible, or at least a portion of God's Word.
2. Philip had been busy preaching the gospel to multitudes of people (see verses 5-6,12,25), but then God sent Philip to one man in order to give this man the help he needed (see verses 26,30,35). **Note:** One of the reasons the Eunuch needed help was because he did not have the New Testament as we do today. The New Testament had not yet been written.
3. God gave this man enough understanding so that he could intelligently believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 35,37).

Does God want YOU to understand the Scripture? Has He given you a Bible that you can read in your own language? Has He given you believers who are able to teach you and help you understand? Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ?



4. God Does Not Want Us to be Ignorant!

In Matthew 24:15 the Lord Jesus said, "Whosoever readeth, let him _____." The person who reads the Bible (in this case the book of Daniel) is commanded to UNDERSTAND what he reads, because this is what God desires. God does **not** want us to be **IGNORANT**:

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|----------|---|------------------|
| 1. _____ | Ignorant concerning Satan's schemes | A. Romans 11:25 |
| 2. _____ | Ignorant concerning the mystery of Israel's partial blindness during this present age | B. 1 Cor. 10:1-5 |
| 3. _____ | Ignorant concerning the past failures of the Israelites | C. 1 Cor. 12:1 |
| 4. _____ | Ignorant concerning the rapture (the "catching up") of believers | D. 2 Cor. 2:11 |
| 5. _____ | Ignorant concerning the worldwide flood (judgment) in the days of Noah | E. 1 Thess. 4:13 |
| 6. _____ | Ignorant concerning spiritual gifts | F. 2 Peter 3:5-6 |

It delights the heart of God when we understand His Word (1 Corinthians 14:9,19,20). If a person refuses to read God's Word and refuses to understand it and obey it, then God has no choice but to say: "If any man be _____ let him be _____" (1 Corinthians 14:38). What is the real problem? Circle the correct answer:

- People **cannot** understand the Bible.
- People **refuse** to understand the Bible and they **refuse** to come in simple faith to the God who can help them to understand.
- The Bible is too difficult to understand.
- God does not want some people to understand.

Read 1 John 5:13 and correctly complete this verse: "These things have I written unto you... that you might..."

- a. be ignorant"
- b. be confused"
- c. go to the priest (or some other "expert") so he can explain it to you"
- d. KNOW" (God wants YOU to know and understand!)

HELPFUL HINTS IN UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

1) Make Sure You Are Saved!

The unsaved cannot understand the things of God. They are spiritually BLIND (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 3:11; Eph. 4:18). Only the living God can open their eyes and help them to see (compare Acts 16:14).

2) Make Sure You Depend on God to Teach You!

Who must give you understanding (2 Timothy 2:7) so that you might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45)? _____ The Author of the Bible (God the Holy Spirit) can help you to understand the Bible! It is the only Book you can read and have the Author always present with you!

3) Make Sure You Desire to Do God's Will!

Read John 7:17 (this should be translated: "If anyone DESIRES (WANTS) TO DO HIS WILL, he shall KNOW...."). If you really want to do God's will, then you can be sure God will reveal His will to you through His Word. But, why should God reveal His will and His Word to someone who is not going to follow or obey it? Would you give someone \$50.00 if you knew that they would go out and spend it on alcoholic drinks? God is very careful about giving out and revealing His truth!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH THE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS ALREADY SHOWN YOU IN HIS WORD???

10 "MUSTS" IF I AM TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD

1. **I must be born again.**

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.... Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:3,7). The person who is not born again cannot understand God's Word:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

2. **I must desire to know the truth as found in God's Word.**

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

3. **I must desire to DO God's will.**

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:16-17).

4. **I must desire to GROW.**

"As newborn babes, DESIRE the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

5. **I must obey the truth that I already know.**

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

6. **I must be a DOER of the Word and not a hearer only.**

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

7. **I must not only learn Christ's commandments but I must learn to observe (keep) His commandments.**

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).

8. **I must take heed not only to the doctrine but to MYSELF.**

"Take heed unto thyself; and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16 and see also Acts 20:28).

9. **I must understand that Bible study is hard work.**

"STUDY (be diligent, make every effort) to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

10. **I must realize that understanding is a gift from the Lord and thus I need to be right with the Lord and spiritually prepared and ready to receive understanding from Him.**

"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.... Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (1 Timothy 2:7; James 1:21).