STUDY PACK 2

WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

"The highest authority in interpreting Scripture is _____. He it is who enlightens the interpreter to find the mind and sense of Scripture, and this He accomplishes through Scripture itself."

~~Robert Preus ~~

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPERLY UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

A. The Parable of the Engineers and the Blue Print.

Once a corps of engineers was assigned to continue the building of a magnificent cathedral which had already been under construction many centuries and which had benefitted from the devoted labor of great engineers of many generations. Some of the new engineers, however, began to question contradictions in them. When asked for clarification by some of their fellows, they pointed out that architectural styles were changing and that the plans erroneously presented _____ _____ and _____.

In reply, a few engineers noted that this did not make the plans erroneous or contradictory in themselves, and that it was the architect's business to draw the plans and the engineers _____. The majority did not agree, but they did not want to cast direct aspersions on the architect or abandon the construction. So they had recourse to a number of stratagems.

First, they argued that though the plans were erroneous and contradictory this was not the architect's fault and should be attributed to his draughtsmen. (Intransigent engineers claimed that the architect was always responsible for his draughtsmen, but this argument was brushed aside.) Endeavors were thus made to ignore the "draughtsmen's errors" while accepting the architect's "true ideas" as conveyed by the draughtsmen's plans. But since the only knowledge of the architect's ideas came by way of the draughtsmen's plans, this endeavor miserably failed and led to more radical suggestions. (It is perhaps worth pointing out while these discussions went on, relatively little building was done.)

Then the engineers argued that the purpose of the plans had been misunderstood. They were not intended to be followed as such, but contact with them would increase the engineer's _____. But one engineer's sensitivity did not produce the same results as another's. Considerable confusion set in, and a tower collapsed.

A particularly brilliant engineer now suggested that everything in the plans was symbolic of the architect himself. However, it was soon discovered that if everything was symbolic and nothing literal, no engineer could determine the real meaning of any particular element in the plans. More disputes set in, and another section of the building crumbled.

Now the people for whom the cathedral was being built were becoming more and more agitated and many would not enter the half completed edifice at all because of the danger of falling stones, loose mortar, and buckling floors. Some

were even crying for a new staff of engineers. This made the engineers terribly nervous and excitable, and finally some of them, to placate the mob, began to claim that there was no architect at all, that the people for whom the cathedral was being built were more important than anything else, and that everyone was in as good a position as the inaccurate draughtsmen to draw up plans. Oddly enough, this seemed to infuriate the people even more, for the latter apparently considered it self-evident that the plans, the great engineers of the past who had faithfully followed them, and the earlier work on the cathedral (the work done before the present confusion) all _____. They began to become violent and even claimed that the engineers were destroying their cathedral and making a mockery out of the engineering profession.

At this point, a very vocal engineer tried to convince the people that such efforts as he and the others were making were really acts of tremendous heroism and that even though the plans of the architect were impossibly naive and had been hopelessly muddled by past draughtsmen and engineers, he himself could lead them through the maze by direct communication with _____ _____, thereby proving the deathless value of engineering science. But instead of being considered a representation of heroic, reforming engineers of early times, this engineer was regarded as an epitomal fool by virtually all of his colleagues and the great mass of the people. Only the media of communication featured him, for they quickly discovered that people followed his exploits with horror and fascination even as they did the latest scandals of famous entertainers.

Thus did the great cathedral eventually crumble and fall, killing not only the people who had loved it but also the engineers responsible for its loss. Pathetically, there were a few engineers who, right up to the moment of final destruction, still pleaded that the only hope lay in following rigorously the original plans, that the engineers must bring _____ _____ and the deviations from their notions of style did not constitute genuine errors or contradictions in the plans. But their voices were scarcely heard amid the din of engineering teams working at cross-purposes to each other, and the deafening roar of falling masonry.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that cathedral; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

B. Man's Fall Was Influenced by Bad Hermeneutics!

Michael Horton (*Modem Reformation* magazine, July-August 1999) describes the tempting of Adam and Eve:

> "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Yea, hath God said 'Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?'" Gen. 3:1

Bound up with the narrative of the creation and fall of humanity is the question of interpretation - hermeneutics, if you're after the technical term. The cunning serpent knew what he was doing when he tried to "interpret" God's word as tyrannically restrictive: "not eat of *every* tree'?" Eve answers the serpent in an attempt to "interpret" God's command, replying correctly that God has only

singled out one tree whose fruit is forbidden, but then she, too, adds to it: "... God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, *neither shall ye touch it*, lest ye die." Before there is any explicit act of rebellion, _____ _____, preparing the way. Finally, the serpent gets to the point: "Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." In other words, Adam and Eve will be autonomous, able to decide for themselves what they should believe, how they should conduct their lives, and to what end their destiny drives them. The only criterion left for this decision was pragmatism: the cash - value of eating over against not eating. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

A "God's-eye" perspective on everything, the ability to make of yourself, others, the world, and perhaps, if there's room, even a god or two, whatever you wish: that's the dream of humanity ever since the fall. It was particularly the view of the seventeenth-and eighteenth-Century Enlightenment and Romanticism. And despite its rejection of this "God's-eye" or "autonomous" perspective of modernity, "postmodernism" in all its varieties seems to persist in the notion that the self (if there is a self) is free to construct its own "reality" and "meaning." In the more dogmatic forms of reader-response theory, "interpretation" is not an act of discovering meaning, but of creating and constructing it. The reader is no longer accountable to authors or even to texts: they become occasions for the sovereign self to engage in "world-making."

II. THE BIBLE IS WRITTEN FOR SAVED PEOPLE

A. The Bible is designed to communicate God's will _____, I Cor. 2:11-14.

B. A lost person reading the Bible is "reading someone else's mail," II Cor. 3:14.

C. The Holy Spirit promises to "_____" the mind and heart of the believer, I John 2:27; John 6:45.

D. The church age believer receives not revelation but illumination. As Frances Turrettin writes:

> "He is not given to us in order _____,
> but to _____;
> so that here the word must never be separated from the Spirit (Isaiah 59:21)."
>
> *~~ Institutes of Elenctic Theology ~~*

E. The Holy Spirit is _____. The meanings of word and grammar can be known without any special enlightenment but not the gospel message, I Cor. 3:7; Eph. 1:7.

III. THE SCRIPTURES ARE CLEAR TO OPEN HEARTED BELIEVERS, ACTS 17:11; I THESS. 1:6

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647):

"... All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which _____, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them."

B. John Chrysostom.

"The Scriptures are so proportioned that even the most ignorant can understand them if they only read them studiously." "All necessary things are plain and straight and clear."

~~ *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, p. 145 ~~

C. Irenaeus.

"The prophetic and evangelic Scriptures are plain and unambiguous."

~~ *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, p. 145 ~~

IV. THE PERSON WHO WANTS TO HAVE A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURE SHOULD APPROACH THE BIBLE _____ _____

J. C. Ryle declares:

"The spiritual reformers of the last century taught constantly the _____ and _____. The Bible, whole and unmutilated, was _____. They accepted all its statements without question or dispute. They knew nothing of any part of Scripture being uninspired. They never allowed that man has any "verifying faculty" within him by which Scriptural statements may be weighed, rejected or received.

They never flinched from asserting that there can be no error in the Word of God; and that when we cannot understand or reconcile some parts of its contents, _____ _____ and not in the text. In all their preaching they were eminently men of one book. To that book they were content to pin their faith, and by it to stand or fall." ~~ Larsen, *The Company of Preachers*, p. 359 ~~

Never put a question mark where God put a period.

V. THE BIBLE SHOULD BE STUDIED PRAYERFULLY

Martin Luther said, "To _____ is to study well."

VI. THE BIBLE SHOULD BE STUDIED WITH A PREDISPOSITION TO OBEDIENCE, JOHN7:17

D. L. Moody said, "The Bible will keep you _____ or sin will keep you _____."

VII. THE BIBLE SHOULD BE STUDIED WITH A _____
I PETER 2:2

VIII. THE BIBLE STUDENT MUST HAVE A _____, ISA. 50:4-5; PS. 119:18

"History shows that erroneous principles have often spoiled the exegetical work of fine men, some of whom are great saints. This should be a warning to us against careless interpretation. There is less excuse for us because we can profit by the lessons of the past." ~~ A. Berkely Nickelson, *Interpreting the Bible*, p. 20 ~~

IX. THERE ARE MANY GREAT RESULTS TO PROPER BIBLE STUDY

A. _____, Romans 10:17

B. _____. Romans 15:4

C. _____, II Peter 3:15-18; Colossians 3:16

D. _____. John 15:3; 17:17

E. _____, II Timothy 3:16-17

X. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO KNOW GREEK AND HEBREW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

A. Some teach that the Bible can only be properly understood by studying the original languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

B, The Scripture never makes such a statement. The Scripture never commands or even encourages the believer to study the original languages.

Adam Taylor (writing in the *History of the English Baptists*, 1818) says:

"We readily grant, that learning of the languages, to wit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, etc. may be useful in its place, as a servant to help: but to make it a qualification absolutely necessary to the being of a minister, we dare not. Our reasons are: (1.) Because the gospel was at first preached and brought forth into the world by unlearned men; - such were the apostles; (2.) Because amongst the many qualifications required, in the scriptures, to be found in those that are set apart to the work and office of an elder, _____ _____; (3.) Because experience testifies, that men, unlearned in the languages, have been very useful in the Lord's hand, and famous instruments for the good of souls; and (4.) Because, in all ages, learned men have introduced and defended the errors of popery, and persecuted the true Christians."

C. Many of the Greek and Hebrew resources that students depend upon are corrupt!

Sam Gipp warns:

"The Greek Game

Another authority by which to judge and downgrade the absolute authority of the Authorized Version is to change the meaning of the translation and the words used in Scripture.

First the student is taught that he must not accept a word as it is in the Authorized Version. He is told to study the Greek or Hebrew words to see if there is another way the word could be translated. The student, with the purest of motives, proceeds to a lexicon or a Greek or Hebrew dictionary and discovers to his horror that the translators of the Authorized Version have translated the word *improperly*! In *truth*, the exact *opposite* has happened. The _____ _____! The poor, naive, well-meaning student does not know it, but he has been "headed off at the pass."

Years before this poor student ever turned the first page of his lexicon, Roman Catholics *provided the pages he would turn*! Let me explain. If the student can be taught to doubt the accuracy of the translation of any given word in the Bible, then we will turn to a lexicon or dictionary. All this leaves Satan to do, *is to provide that student with a lexicon or dictionary* which reads the way he (Satan) wants it to! This is a subtle and dangerous precedent.

Most often, it is taught in complete, innocent sincerity.

Many unsuspecting colleges teach their students to accept the lexicon or dictionary as an authority *above* the Bible, but the lexicons and dictionaries are provided by infidels."

John R. Rice points out the result of such "authority switching" while discussing Isaiah 7:14 in the Revised Standard Version: "The most active opposition to the Revised Standard Version has been about changing the translation of Isaiah 7:14 from, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive,' to 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son.' Dr. Luther Weigle, chairman of the translators, said that in the Hebrew English lexicon the word 'alma' means simply 'young woman,' not necessarily 'virgin' and he said that the word for 'virgin' in the Hebrew is 'bethulah.'" He did not tell you, however, that the lexicon he uses was prepared _____-."

~~ *An Understandable History of the Bible*, pp. 107-108 ~~