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QUESTIONS

1. What is the most fundamental understanding of the epistles?
2. Who can profit from the teachings that are found in the Epistles?
3. How can a reader become familiar with the contents, concerns and purposes of the author?
4. How can we tell what was the historical context of the New Testament letters?
5. How can our perception of a letter be enhanced?

ANSWERS

1. The most fundamental understanding of the epistles is that they are written with a note of apostolic authority that gives them a unique character.
2. Christians everywhere and at all times may profit from these letters as God's word to them as well.
3. In order for the reader to become familiar with the contents, concerns and purposes of the author, the reader should read the whole epistle straight through several times. It may be best to do so in different English translations.
4. Historical documents outside the Bible shed interesting light, but still can leave gaps. Internal evidence (from the letter itself) is the best way to gain an understanding of the historical context. The exegete has to read between the lines in order to gain answers.
5. Our perception of a letter can be significantly enhanced if we make the effort to identify its historical origins.

TERMS

Epistles- Relatively long and formal documents.

Narratio- Statement of the facts.

Chiasm- An ordering of clauses in an A-B-B-B-A pattern.

SUMMARY

The Epistles aren't regular letters, but are from God and carry His authority. The Epistles serve as being more than just historical documents. As Paul and the other writers wrote letters, they did it knowing that they were God's words rather than their own. Having a knowledge of the historical situations that surround those passage help us to better understand the commands that were being given.