

Scripture Reading: Nehemiah 8:1-12

Come to the Knowledge of the Truth

Intro.

1. This lesson begins a brief series on ***understanding the Bible.***
2. God made man in His image w/ an intelligent/rational mind, capable of communicating & understanding by means of words (***Gen. 1:26-28***).

Genesis 1:26-28²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man^[1] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

3. God has always spoken to men in the words of men so as to be understood by men:
 - a. Adam & Eve understood from the beginning (***Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-3***).

Gen. 2:16-17¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat^[4] of it you shall surely die."

Gen. 3:1-3 ¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You^[1] shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

- b. Israel understood both the spoken & written word from the time God gave it to them - (**Exo. 20-23**) **Exo. 24:3-4, 7, 12; 25:8-9**.

Exodus 24:3-4 ³Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do."⁴And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

- c. "The book of the law of Moses" could be plainly understood 1,000 years after it was given to man by God – **Neh. 8:1-3, 7-8**.

Nehemiah 8:1-3¹And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month.³And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

Nehemiah 8:8

⁸They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly,^[2] and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

4. God's determined wish is that we come to know truth –

1 Timothy 2:3-4³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

5. Men who sincerely try to understand God's word **can** understand

John 8:31-32³¹So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Ephesians 3:3-5 ³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

I. **HERMENEUTICS: WHAT IS IT?**

A. The Science (principles) of **Interpretation**.

Acts 14:12 ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

1. Hermes – Greek messenger of the gods & interpreter of Jupiter.
2. How to go about interpreting the Bible to understanding it.

B. God **Expects** us to **Use His Book** to **Know** His **Character** & to Know His **Will** - **Psa. 119:11-16**.

1. Go about understanding the Bible like we would other books.
 - a. The true principles of understanding the Bible are the common principles of human language & understanding
 1. who is speaking,
 2. to whom; when;
 3. context;
 4. literal; figurative;
 5. poetry, prose, history, biography,
 6. letter; statement, example, implication).
 - b. Used unconsciously every day. Should be conscious of these principles in our study & understanding of God's word.
2. God does not inspire our interpretation (**2 Tim. 3:16**).

2 Timothy 3:16¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

- a. God chose **the word-method** of revelation & communication (**Heb. 1:2; 1 Cor. 2:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:21**). (This method brings its own particular strengths & weaknesses re. interpretation.)

Hebrews 1:2 ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴

II. THOSE IN ANCIENT TIMES BELIEVED THEY COULD GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL.

A. "To the Law & to the Testimony" – Isa. 8:19-20.

1. By applying the same methods of interpretation used in any other branch of knowledge, knowledge of God's word obtained.

- a. Set heart: Seek...obey...teach (cf. **Jno. 7:17**).

Ezra 7:10 ¹⁰For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

- b. Things revealed belonged to them to do!

Deuteronomy 29:29 ²⁹"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

2. Law of God read – taught – understood (**8:12**). **Neh. 8:1-8**

- B. Like Them, We **Must** Read, Study, Meditate in order to Understand & Obey God's Word – **Psa. 1:1-2** (cf. **Lk. 16:29-31; 1 Tim. 4:13, 15**).

III. WHY MUST WE BE CONCERNED WITH USING CORRECT HERMENEUTICS (principles of interpretation) **IN BIBLE STUDY?**

- A. It Shows **Respect** for God's Word

2 Timothy 2:15 ¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, ^[1] a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

- B. To **Not Be Led Away** into **Error & Lose** our Soul.

2 Peter 3:16-18 ¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

- C. To Help **Promote Unity & Heal Division** Among Believers

John 17:20-21 ²⁰"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

1. Jesus prayed for unity, his apostles condemned division.
2. Only truth of Christ can unite us with God & with each other!
3. Improper interpretation accelerates division! (**2 Pet. 2:1-2**)

- D. To **Correctly Answer** Truth Seekers &/or Skeptics (**1 Pet. 3:15**).

1 Peter 3:15 ¹⁵but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;

1. Philip accurately preached Jesus because he accurately understood the word of God! **Acts 8:30-31, 35**
2. From the scriptures Paul showed the purpose & work of the Christ **Acts 17:2-3**
 - a. His hearers could understand them!
 - b. The answers we must give so people can understand God's will for them!

E. To **Know** the **Way** to **Heaven**.

1. Bible answers the question of how to be saved! **Acts 16:30**
- 2.** Answers to man's pardon from sin, life of righteousness & hope of eternal life found in God's word! – cf. **Psa. 19:7-11**
3. If we misinterpret scripture, we lose our way! (**Jno. 14:6; Matt. 7:21, 24**)
4. God does not want us to be ignorant! (**1 Ths. 4:13**)

Conclusion

1. We are under obligation to understand God's will – **Eph 5:17**.
- 2.** How we obtain our understanding of the Bible will determine whether we are approved & received or rejected by God! – **2 Tim. 2:15; Jno. 8:31-32**

Joe Price