Examples

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Hermeneutics: How to Read and Understand the Bible

Understanding the Bible – Example #1

Ezra and Nehemiah led a great day of understanding Scripture in Israel (Neh 8:1-12).

1. The people came together in unity and peace without self-defeating division and strife (*8:1*).
2. Their own personal desire to hear and learn Scripture is indicated by their request for it (*8:1*).
3. They chose Scripture reading rather than popular fables or entertainment for itching ears (*8:1*).
4. They chose Ezra the scribe to read and teach rather than a famous or charismatic preacher (*8:1*).
5. Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of God and did not need time to respond to the request (*8:2*).
6. The women and all those who could hear with understanding were included, indicating God's endorsement of family worship rather than Sunday Schools and other juvenile inventions (*8:2*).
7. They stood and heard the reading for at least three hours – from morning until midday (*8:3*).
8. The people were attentive and focused to the reading rather than sleeping or dreaming (*8:3*).
9. Ezra read the Scriptures to them – he did not tell stories about his childhood, slay anyone in the Spirit, use canned illustrations, crack jokes, use anecdotes, or even make a chalk drawing (*8:3*).
10. He used a pulpit to elevate himself above the crowd for this public and solemn reading (*8:4*).
11. Since he was visibly above the people, they could easily see him open the book to read (*8:5*).
12. All the people stood up in solemn and fervent reverence when he opened the book to read (*8:5*).
13. Observe the reverential worship of God that accompanies proper reading of Scripture (*8:6*).
14. The people themselves participated reverently in this glorious worship of God with Ezra (*8:6*).
15. Ezra's assistants helped him instruct the people rather than provide them entertainment (*8:7*).
16. They read in the book of the law of God rather than some novel of Christian experience (*8:8*).
17. They read distinctly so all the people could easily distinguish the words of the reading (*8:8*).
18. They gave the sense – the meaning or interpretation – of what they read to the people (*8:8*).
19. They rightly divided the word of truth as faithful ministers in applying secondary senses (*8:8*).
20. They did not give primary definitions of words, as all the people already knew them well (*8:8*).
21. Distinct reading and sound interpretation are the means by which the people understood (*8:8*).
22. Though there was true reason to mourn, understanding Scripture calls rather for holy joy (*8:9*).
23. Their leaders called for a time of celebration and feasting for understanding Scripture (*8:10*).
24. Mourning is not always appropriate, especially when there is reason for holy rejoicing (*8:11*).
25. The celebration and attendant mirth of the people was in appreciation for understanding (*8:12*).

26. They had more than individual sound bites declared, for they understood the message (*8:12*).
27. One day of hearing God's law expounded was not enough, so they came together again (*8:13*).
28. We can see the leaders of the people coming to learn more so as to understand and teach (*8:13*).
29. They learned by hearing and understanding that they had forsaken the feast of booths (*8:14*).
30. When a people come willing to hear and learn, the Lord will reveal His will for them (*8:15*).
31. These willing hearers did not resist a new commandment but rather obeyed it quickly (*8:16*).
32. This feast had been neglected for over 1000 years, but they did not excuse themselves (*8:17*).
33. And their spirit was not a begrudging reluctance to obey but rather a very great gladness (*8:17*).
34. They didn't waste a single day without hearing the book of the law of God read to them (*8:18*).
35. They kept the feast for the full duration and solemnly according to the specified manner (*8:18*).

Understanding the Bible – Example #2

Jesus judged Pharisees for accusing His disciples in Scriptural ignorance (Matt 12:1-8).

1. The context is a situation where the disciples plucked and ate corn on the Sabbath day (*12:1*).
2. The disciples were hungry enough that it was disruptive to their use of the Sabbath day (*12:1*).
3. We know our Lord did not do this by mere chance or coincidence, but sought occasion (*12:1*).
4. The Pharisees were the straightest, or most conservative, of the Jewish religious sects (*12:2*).
5. The Pharisees, just like their successors today, judged by the appearance and letter only (*12:2*).
6. Pharisees knew the law – but only the strict, literal law of words and primary definitions (*12:2*).
7. Jesus rebukes their literal charge by asking if they had read about David and his hunger (*12:3*).
8. He knew they had read about David many times; but He knew they missed the meaning (*12:3*).
9. So He rebukes their ignorance in the law by not rightly dividing between two passages (*12:4*).
10. Jesus teaches us glorious wisdom here that understanding requires secondary senses (*12:4*).
11. Our Lord indirectly commends David for his hermeneutic in eating forbidden bread (*12:4*).
12. He then rebukes their literal sense by asking if they had read about the Levites' duties (*12:5*).
13. Of course they had read ***Leviticus***, but our Lord needed to crush their false hermeneutic (*2:5*).
14. Jesus points out that there is an implied sense of the Sabbath law not applying to priests (*12:5*).
15. He showed by two examples that a literal sense of words by primary definitions flunks (*12:5*).
16. He announces to these unbelieving scribes and disputers that He is the temple's LORD (*12:6*).
17. Their problem was misunderstanding the spiritual sense of the words they worshipped (*12:7*).
18. They knew the words from Hosea 6:6, but they did not know the sense by interpretation (*12:7*).
19. Jesus had already exposed their false hermeneutic by this same verse in Matthew 9:13 (*12:7*).
20. Primary definitions and a literal hermeneutic will destroy this and most other verses (*12:7*).
21. Their application of the law and consequently their actions were therefore wickedness (*12:7*).
22. Judging righteous judgment, rather than by appearance, requires a spiritual hermeneutic (*12:7*).

23. Our glorious Lord makes a further spiritual interpretation from this event in Mark 2:27 (*12:7*).
24. Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath and gives true spiritual understanding to His saints (*12:8).*

Understanding the Bible – Example #3

Jesus condemned the Sadducees for their ignorance of the Scriptures (Matt 22:23-33).

1. The Sadducees were a heretical Jewish sect that denied the resurrection of the dead (*22:23).*
2. They came to ask Him, but their intent was neither truth nor proof, for they were sure (*22:23).*
3. The foolish question of dying brothers was to confound Jesus, as they had Pharisees (*22:24).*
4. They raised Scripture to establish their premise, as any good heretic or Satan will do (*22:24).*
5. Sadducees knew the Scriptures well, but were trying to use them against the Author (*22:24).*
6. The hypothetical case was created as a rhetorical device to refute the resurrection (*22:25-27).*
7. Their faulty minor premise was assuming that resurrected saints are given in marriage (*22:28).*
8. Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection at all, but they assumed it to ridicule Him (*22:28).*
9. Our Lord denied their heresy on two counts – ignorance of Scripture and God's power (*22:29).*
10. Doctrinal error is still created the same way – ignorance of Scripture and God's power (*22:29).*
11. Our Lord destroys their entire argument by showing the faulty minor premise in error (*22:30).*
12. Then He shows their further ignorance of the Scripture by using Scripture against them (*22:31).*
13. Notice His ridicule of their ignorance of one of the most popular Jewish passages ever (*22:31).*
14. He authoritatively starts right out that God had taught them the resurrection directly (*22:31).*
15. What a marvelous sense He draws from words we read with little regard for doctrine (*22:32)!*
16. Here we have the Lord Jesus Christ arguing important doctrine from only verb tenses (*22:32).*
17. He further argues that death and annihilation would preclude a relationship with God (*22:32).*
18. He astonished the multitude by His doctrinal method in shaming Sadducees publicly (*22:33)!*
19. Luke records that the scribes praised His wonderful answer they had not heard before (*20:39).*
20. Luke records they didn't dare ask any more foolish and unlearned questions for fear (*20:40).*

Understanding the Bible – Example #4

Paul condemned the Jews for ignorance of the Scriptures regarding Christ (Acts 13:27).

1. Jews dwelling in the capital city of Jerusalem fulfilled the Scriptures by killing Jesus the Christ.
2. Even the rulers of the Jews were no wiser in the Scriptures, for they executed the great crime.
3. The Jews were able to do such a thing by neither knowing God nor His inspired Scriptures.
4. The voices of the prophets were read every Sabbath day, but they still fulfilled them wickedly.
5. Children of the promises, they ignorantly fulfilled their own Scriptures by the dastardly deed.
6. This is incredible ignorance, even though they had a great technical knowledge of the words.

← Interpretation

Need →