Introduction

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Hermeneutics: How to Read and Understand the Bible

Introduction

It is possible to know the Bible well and yet not understand it, as Jesus told the Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, and scribes of His day. These religious leaders had great technical knowledge and fanatical adoration of the text of the Bible above all other men, but they did not understand its spirit or meaning.

> "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"
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> Matthew 9:13

> "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."
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> Matthew 12:7

> "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."
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> Matthew 22:29

He boldly rebuked these ministerial leaders by asking, "Have you never read?" (Matthew 12:3,5; 19:4; 21:42; 22:31). They had read these places many times, but they did not understand them. They knew the passages well, but they did not know their meaning. And so they had the Word of God, they read and studied it diligently, but they did not understand its message. It is this paradox we must avoid.

It is still common today to know the Bible and not understand it, as we live in the perilous times of carnal Christianity, where a form of godliness and love of pleasures are exalted over God's authority and loving Him (II Tim 3:1-13). Modern Christians are constantly learning from seminars, guest speakers, Bible studies, videoconferences, tape ministries, television specials, and radio programs; but they never come to the knowledge of the truth. And how should the sons of God oppose these effeminate preachers and their popular fables? Hold fast to the inspired Scriptures (II Tim 3:14 – 4:4)!

It is a practice today in most religious circles to quote the Bible without truly knowing the meaning of what is quoted. The words are used as sound bites rather than sober statements of holy importance from God. The sound of words is more important today than the sense of words, just as in our Lord's day. Even conservative preachers will take an obscure phrase from the Old Testament, Charles Spurgeon was famous for it, and proceed to develop a pretty talk from the text, though there is little connection.

Do you believe the Bible? What do you believe about it? How can you believe what you do not understand? Do you mean you believe it to be the Word of God? We want more than this. We want to understand exactly and

fully what God has communicated to us in the Bible. Nothing else will do.

So help us, Lord.

← Assumptions
Means →