Means of Understanding

August 10, 2019 · https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/2019/means-of-understanding/

Hermeneutics: How to Read and Understand the Bible

The Means of Understanding

The Holy Spirit tells us exactly how to understand the meaning of Jehovah's Scriptures. Let us read and understand this inspired verse with thankful hearts to our gracious God; for most Bible students have never read this verse, as they are instead slowly choked to death on two dead languages, Spurgeon's sermons, a liberal arts education, and memorizing sermon illustrations.

> "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."
>
> Nehemiah 8:8

Ezra read the law of God carefully, distinguishing the individual words; he interpreted the reading by giving the sentences their proper sense or meaning; and by this simple process he caused the people to understand what he had read to them. If the Pharisees of Jesus' day had used this sound approach, they would not have erred by being so ignorant of the meaning of Scripture.

Let us consider what Ezra did not do, and let us illustrate it by corrupting our text to reflect the current trend in using the Bible in seeker sensitive churches.

> "So they determined what was politically correct and popular with carnal Christians and worldly unbelievers, and they computer-searched twenty different versions of the Bible looking for sound bites to support fleshly ideas of worldly success, and they caused everyone to believe the Bible was a flexible book allowing modern interpretations that anyone can read and generally understand with little effort."

Let us again consider what Ezra did not do, and let us also illustrate it by corrupting our text to reflect the monastic approach to Bible study.

> "So they read in the book in the law of God with sacramental and transcendental piety, and gave the most obscure and mystical sense they could imagine, and they caused their hearers to believe they had never heard anything so deep and beautiful in all their lives."

Let us again consider what Ezra did not do, and let us also illustrate it by corrupting our text to reflect a radical approach to Bible study once taught to the author.

> "So they read in the book in the law of God one word at a time, and gave the one and only primary definition for each word, and caused them to understand the meaning of words they had known from childhood to arrive at a mechanical, literal interpretation."

All such instructional foolishness aside (II Cor 11:23), let us consider the principal words of this priceless text for exactly what it declares to us. And give God the glory!

A. Consider the sense of these words, which is clearly obvious to all but the willfully ignorant.
    1. **Read.** Perusing written matter to decipher marks of language into words and sentences.
    2. **Distinctly.** Reading carefully to separate and differentiate the individual words clearly.
    3. **Gave.** Interpreting and expressing to the hearers by clear verbal communication.
    4. **Sense.** The precise, singular meaning intended by the Author in the specific reading.
    5. **Cause.** Producing a desired effect by careful and calculated procedures to that end.
    6. **Understand.** To fully comprehend, apprehend, and grasp the meaning and import.

B. Consider what we need to accomplish this process of understanding for ourselves and others.
    1. We need the written revelation of God in a language we can read. We have it!
    2. We need the ability to read written words (or it must be read to us). We can do it!
    3. We need to read distinctly to identify all the words in a given passage. We can do it!
    4. We need spiritual ability and the right process of finding the sense. We have them both!
    5. We need to explain the sense well enough to cause understanding. We will learn it!

C. Consider what Ezra did not do and what we do not want to do in perverting this godly process.
    1. Ezra did not read and interpret Scripture without worshipping the Author (Neh 8:6).
    2. Ezra did not read the law of God in another version with different and contrary words.
    3. Ezra did not read the law of God in a dead language neither he nor anyone else knew.
    4. Ezra did not follow loose spiritualizing for a mystical sense they had to take by faith.
    5. Ezra did not follow a literal hermeneutic by using every word in a strict, literal sense.
    6. Ezra did not read the law of God and then give primary definitions of the words he read.
        a. Primary definitions of a current language are those meanings known by all men.
        b. Even the illiterate know primary definitions, as they have heard them since birth.
        c. We will deal with this heresy at length later in the study, so think about truth.

D. Consider what Ezra did and how it matches perfectly with Scripture's ministerial instructions.
    1. Ezra gave the interpretation that would not contradict any other Scripture (II Pet 1:20).
    2. Ezra gave the spiritual sense that cannot be found comparing natural words (I Cor 2:13).
    3. Ezra rightly divided the word of truth by giving words secondary senses (II Tim 2:15).
    4. Ezra gave the relative sense whenever internal contradictions appeared (II Chr 19:8-11).
    5. Ezra interpreted the meaning that would have been lost by dark sayings (Proverbs 1:6).
    6. Ezra opened up parables, which are unintelligible by their mere words (Matt 13:10-15).
    7. Ezra gave the spiritual sense the Pharisees could not see (Matt 9:13; 12:1-7; Mark 2:27).
    8. Ezra gave the spiritual application only a man of God can truly perceive (I Cor 9:9-10).
    9. Ezra gave the interpretation that average readers might easily have missed (II Pet 3:16).

← Introduction
Reading →