

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

EXPLORING GOD'S
AMAZING WORD #3

"Recently, I have read a story of a man who shared his experience at a hospital while he was sitting in a waiting room. He visited a family whose daughter was ill. This, however, was no ordinary visit, for this family's middle-aged daughter was deaf. A number of her friends, who were also deaf, sat around the room and he sat spellbound as he watched them communicate by sign language. He sensed some of the frustration deaf people must feel living in a soundless world as he watched them converse with their hands and he realised that he could neither hear nor understand their language. Because they spoke different languages all they could do was gaze and smile at each other. A great barrier called "sound" prohibited communication and comprehension.

Fortunately, a young lady named Bonnie was present who possessed both the sense of hearing and the capacity to converse in sign language. Her ability to bridge the gap between our two worlds allowed them to communicate freely and to understand each other. Bonnie signed and spoke simultaneously, interpreting words of silence into words of sound, and vice versa. He was intrigued (to say the least) by the experience, stimulated by the interaction, and grateful for the opportunity to minister via Bonnie. He left the hospital that day with a new appreciation for the role an interpreter plays in connecting two worlds that would otherwise remain disconnected. He acclaims that the experience of Bible study is not unlike his experience in the hospital room that day. "

To most people, stepping into the world of Scripture is comparable to visiting a foreign country.

The people of the Bible world speak a different language, practice strange customs, wear eccentric clothes, and express themselves in unusual ways. It's very interesting to read about 'kine' and 'unicorns', 'mitres' and 'sceptres', 'ephahs' and 'homers', but what could all of those things possibly mean to someone who lives in the Western world at the conclusion of the 21st Century?

What was 'a smoking furnace' and 'a burning lamp'? Or 'a bruised reed' and 'a smoking flax'? What is a "portion," a "lot," a "brazen laver," and a "cherubim?" What does it mean to "sit in the gate" or to "cast lots?"

Obviously, the Bible world was culturally and linguistically different from ours. For this reason, many people may feel LOST when they step into the world of Scripture!

The experience is similar to visiting a foreign country. The sense of intrigue at the novelty of the experience is soon replaced by a sense of frustration at the unfamiliarity of the environment. The Bible, consequently, seems remote and disconnected to the contemporary world.

Today's lesson is to help you discover ways to understand the Bible by using an effective method of interpretation.



"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

LET'S LISTEN (9:45 mins):

A. 'Hermeneutics'

The interpretation of Scripture is essentially a matter of traversing this deep cultural and linguistic gap between the ancient and the contemporary world.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
2 Tim 2:15 (NKJV)

2 Timothy 2:15 is the New Testament precedent for the science of Biblical _____ which is also known as **'Hermeneutics'**.

The phrase "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" literally means "_____".

B. Convictions We Bring to the Interpretive Process:

- (1) The _____ of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16)

- (2) The _____ of Scripture (Deut 32:4)

- (3) The _____ of Scripture

- (4) The _____ of Scripture

- (5) The _____ of Scripture (Ps 19:8)

- (6) The _____ Purpose of Scripture

C. Reading the Bible for Effective Interpretation

- 1. Read the Bible in _____, NOT in bits.
(The Principle of Context)

- 2. Use the _____ to interpret the Bible.
(Scripture interprets Scripture)

- 3. Discovering the intended _____ of a text.

- 4. Do not interpret a single _____ of Scripture to contradict the overall message of Scripture.

D. Three Key Questions to Ask When Interpreting the Bible:

- "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused the people to understand the meaning." [Nehemiah 8:8]
- (1) What does a text _____?

 - (2) What does it _____?

 - (3) How does it _____ to me?

- "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly **(What does a text say?)** and gave the sense **(What does it mean?)** and caused the people to understand the meaning **(How does it apply to us?)**."*

LET'S DISCUSS:

Examine the following verses and discuss your interpretation of them by asking the three key questions mentioned earlier.

John 15:1-8

- (1) What does the text say?

- (2) What does it mean?

- (3) How does it apply to us?

Psalms 23:1-6

- (1) What does the text say?

- (2) What does it mean?

- (3) How does it apply to us?

