

# You Can Understand the Bible

(by Bob Pulliam)

Many people in the world have concluded that it is impossible for the everyday person to read and understand the Bible. For them, Bible understanding must be the result of formal education at some seminary or Bible college. I am here to tell you that such just isn't so! You *can* understand the Bible without formal education, and the Bible itself says as much!

"...how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)" (Eph 3:3f)

The apostle Paul said, "when you read, you may understand". You don't need a theologian to tell you what you've read. Paul also wrote:

"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Eph 5:17)

How would Paul's readers understand what the will of the Lord is? By reading, of course! Now I'm not saying that there aren't portions of the Bible that are more difficult to understand. The apostle Peter noted that Paul wrote some things hard to understand (II Pt 3:15f). But when God's word is read as a whole, and difficult passages harmonized with simple teachings, we can know what God requires of us. We can understand the word of God!

## ***But You Have to be Guided...***

I've had people knock on my door and tell me that I can't understand the Bible unless their particular religious organization guides me. In an effort to prove this, they directed my attention to Acts 8:31. When Philip asked the eunuch if he understood what he read, the eunuch responded, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" I was expected to conclude that no one can understand the Bible unless there is a religious organization ordained of God helping in the matter.

Now that sounds good, if you *want* to believe it. But the eunuch was not in the same situation as we are today. The eunuch was reading from an Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 53) which found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. That fulfillment is *revealed* in the gospel! How much of the gospel was written out for the eunuch to read?... Nothing, yet! Would the eunuch have needed help if he had sat down to read Acts 2?... The three thousand who obeyed in that chapter didn't need someone to explain what was already said! The eunuch needed help because he did not have a New Testament to read, which would have answered his questions.

## ***To Whom Was the Bible Written?...***

I think some of the false impression of the Bible's difficulty comes from not realizing to whom it was actually written. People have the mistaken idea that the Bible was written to church theologians who then were to explain it to everyone else. That just isn't true, no matter how many different churches would like to proclaim it in their creeds as true.

The Bible was actually written to the everyday common man. In fact, scholars at one time thought that the New Testament was written in an inferior dialect of the Greek language. None of the classical writers had used that dialect. But then it was discovered that the New Testament was written in the common dialect of that day. Nearly everyone spoke and wrote this dialect of Greek, and the Bible was written in that common (koine) Greek dialect.

A simple reading of the New Testament will bear out this concept of scripture written to the common man. Paul addressed the letter to the Philippians this way: "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." (Phil 1:1) We cited a few passages from Ephesians earlier, noting that Paul expected these people to understand what he wrote. To whom was he writing?... "To the saints who are in Ephesus..." (Eph 1:1) All of the disciples in Ephesus were under consideration. Colossians was written to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ" (Col 1:2). Peter addressed his first epistle "To the pilgrims of the Dispersion ..." (I Pt 1:1). Even the book of Revelation was written to disciples who were expected to understand (Rev 1:3f). The reason it is so difficult for us is that it was not written to us. Revelation was about events that were shortly to take place (1:3). The horrible images depicted in Revelation were understood by the people who were living the nightmare of persecution brought upon them by Rome. It is not essential that we understand these images to be saved. Passages dealing with salvation in the New Testament can be easily understood if we apply ourselves to their study! Because they were written that all might understand!

### ***Ask Yourself...***

Why wouldn't God have the Bible written in an understandable form? To encrypt it's message would lead to abuse by those given the ability to decipher it's message! Can't we look into the past and see that such did happen when Church authorities burned Bibles and condemned its reading. To this day, the reading of the Bible is not encouraged by many churches. Although the Bible is thoroughly understandable, Church officials want the masses to rely upon them for it's interpretation. Certainly, it was to the benefit of God's cause that the scriptures be understandable for all who read them.

If the Bible can't be understood by reading it, then whose interpretation should you adopt? No one has missed the fact that the religious world is woefully divided. Their division comes chiefly through the peculiar doctrines and practices ordained by each. Each one wants you to believe that it is providing the truth of God in it's message. But how do you know that to be so? This leaves religious institutions competing with each other on the basis of the social programs provided. No one walks in and asks, "Do you go only by the Bible?" People today find this irrelevant.

Do you want to know whose interpretation you should adopt?... God's! He told you what He wants you to know. All you need to do is study it!

If the Bible cannot be understood, then why was it even revealed by God? If I go back and read this article and find that it isn't understandable, then I will rewrite it. I won't let something go out that serves no purpose. How could we believe God would do any differently?!

### ***Conclusion...***

Here is the bottom line -- We can understand the Bible when we read and study it. God provided it for that purpose! If I want to know how to be saved, I can see what the people

were taught by Peter and Philip in the book of Acts. If I want to know what the church looked like, I can read about the church of the first century. If I want to know about the conduct God would require of my everyday life, I can find admonitions and examples in the New Testament. Do you need a degree from a seminary to understand the Bible? No way! In fact, the seminary does not exist to teach you the Bible. Its purpose is to teach you the doctrines of the denomination behind it. The common man is at a distinct advantage over the theologian. Prejudice and preconceived notions are minimized, and the word can be read for what God has to say, rather than for what one wishes to extract.

The Bible is yours... Are you reading it?

"as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," (I Peter 2:2)