

plunging. For a person to try to redefine the Bible word for baptism as "sprinkling" would be to handle the word of God deceitfully.

**4) Ignoring verses that contradict what you believe.** For example, to ignore the first part of Mark 16:16 and only accept the latter part of the verse is to mishandle God's word. We must accept the first part (that belief and baptism are necessary for salvation), and also the last part (that those who don't believe will be condemned.)

**Acts 20:27** — The apostle declares that he had not shunned to declare to them \_\_\_\_\_ council of God. He did not hesitate to proclaim to them God's complete will. We are required to believe everything the Bible says, not just the parts that suit us. Do some people disregard or try to "explain away" the verses that go against what they want to believe? \_\_\_\_\_

### AN OPEN MIND

Many people today approach the Bible with preconceived ideas and opinions or presupposing something to be truth based on what their parents believed or based on what they have always heard. However, it is dangerous to use the Bible to sustain our personal beliefs rather than to obtain doctrinal truth.

**Galatians 1:14** — The apostle Paul was exceedingly zealous in the traditions of his \_\_\_\_\_. Is it possible that those who taught us the Bible (including our parents) could have misunderstood some of its teachings and unknowingly taught us some things that were incorrect? \_\_\_\_\_ If we discover that the Bible says something different than what our parents taught us, should we be open to changing our beliefs to match the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

**Hebrews 4:7** — This verse describes two ways you can react to the Scriptures: You can either hear and be receptive to God's voice or you can \_\_\_\_\_ your heart. Some people lack this submissive attitude and would not be persuaded to believe in Jesus even if they witnessed someone being raised from the dead (Luke 16:31). Today, if we have the attitude that says, "I don't care what the Bible says. I'm going to live my life the way I want to live it", are we hardening our hearts? \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary** - We do not need someone with additional revelation or who is spiritually enlightened to help us understand the Bible. If we are strictly honest in studying the Bible and are willing to use ordinary rules of common sense in drawing conclusions, not adding anything to God's revelation or taking anything away, then **we can understand the Bible alike**. We can also avoid the division and religious confusion that now pervades the world. In our next lesson we will learn what the Bible teaches about humanity's greatest problem, sin.

# OPEN BIBLE STUDIES

By Paul Melton

## INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

### Lesson 2



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Please locate in your Bible the following references and read each verse carefully before answering each question.

In lesson one, we discussed four evidences that prove beyond a doubt that the Bible is the inspired word of God. Since God has given us His word in written form, we should make studying and understanding it a primary objective in our life. Yet, with so much disagreement in the world over what the Bible teaches, is it even possible to understand the Bible? Why are there so many different interpretations of the Bible?

### CAN THE SCRIPTURES BE UNDERSTOOD?

**Ephesians 3:3-5**— These verses describe the four-step process by which God has communicated "the mystery" (His will) to the human race.

According to verse 3, God's will has now been \_\_\_\_\_ by His Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. These men **WROTE** down the words revealed to them by God, and now we can **READ** their inspired writings. By reading them, we gain an **UNDERSTANDING** of God's will. Verse 4 says:

"When you \_\_\_\_\_, you may \_\_\_\_\_ my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Is the Bible written in such a way that we are able to understand God's will for us by simply reading it? \_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 13:23**— Can we understand the Holy Scriptures by simply reading and hearing them? \_\_\_\_\_

Are the Scriptures are so cryptic and difficult to understand that they require someone with extra biblical knowledge to interpret them for us? \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Corinthians 14:33** — God is not the author of \_\_\_\_\_. Did God create all the religious confusion in the world today by giving us a book that we are incapable of understanding? \_\_\_\_\_

**Psalms 119:129-130** — When we open God's word and read it, it gives light and gives \_\_\_\_\_ to the simple. Through reading God's precepts, we gain an understanding of His will for our lives (Psalm 119:104). Are the Scriptures so dark, unclear or vague that the average reader/listener cannot understand them? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 17:11** — The Bereans \_\_\_\_\_ the Scriptures daily in order to verify for themselves if the words they heard preached were actually from God. In the same way, is it our responsibility to examine the Scriptures carefully for ourselves to determine whether the conflicting doctrines we hear preached today are in accordance with the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_ Do many people today not understand the Bible simply because they do not take the time to read and study it? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 28:26-27** — This verse discusses people who have the ability to hear and understand the Bible, but cannot because their ears are \_\_\_\_\_ of hearing. They are capable of seeing and perceiving the truth, yet they cannot because "their eyes they have \_\_\_\_\_." Do many religious people not understand the Bible because they are blinded by prejudice, emotional bias or pride? \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Corinthians 1:10** — This verse teaches us that it is God's will that we understand the Bible alike and that we be of the \_\_\_\_\_ mind and judgment. Each verse of the Bible has only one meaning; so if two people disagree about what it means, then one person is incorrect and is misunderstanding the verse. **There are millions of ways to misunderstand, but only one way to understand.**

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4** — Many people cannot understand the Bible because their minds have been blinded to what the Bible teaches. According to verse 3, for many "the gospel is \_\_\_\_\_" by their own preconceived ideas. It is their own close-minded attitude that prevents them from having a clear understanding of the Scriptures. Should we study the Bible with an open heart and be receptive to the truth we read? \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Peter 3:16** — Some parts of Scriptures are \_\_\_\_\_ to be understood. Some people take the difficult verses of the Bible and **WREST**

(**TWIST**) them just as they do the other \_\_\_\_\_. Instead of accepting and obeying those things written in the Bible, do many people twist and distort the meanings of the verses they do not like? \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Corinthians 4:2** — Some people handle the word of God \_\_\_\_\_. They corrupt its teaching, twisting and perverting the Scriptures to mean something God never intended. God wants His word handled **rightly** (2 Timothy 2:15).

## FOUR COMMON WAYS OF MISINTERPRETING GOD'S WORD

We must avoid the following four mistakes people sometimes make which result in an incorrect handling of God's word and twisting of the Scriptures.

**1) Taking verses out of context.** The "context" is the verses surrounding the verse you are studying. Some people take Acts 1:5 out of context and teach that anyone who believes can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. **Please read Acts 1:2-5.** According to verse 2, to whom was Jesus talking and giving commandments, when he said "You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit"? \_\_\_\_\_. So as you can see, according to the context, the promise of Holy Spirit baptism was not given to all Christians, but only given to the apostles whom Jesus had chosen.

**2) Taking literal verses figuratively.** We must always understand the words of the Bible in a literal sense and never figuratively unless the context demands it. For example, Isaiah 55:12 speaks of trees clapping their hands. Since trees do not have literal hands which they clap, should we take this verse literally or figuratively? \_\_\_\_\_

**Genesis 1:5** — Some religious people twist this verse to teach that in the creation of the world, the word "day" is used figuratively to refer to millions of years. They say that during these "million-year-long days", human beings evolved from lower life forms. However, this is not true, because Genesis 1:5 states that the first day of creation was made up of an \_\_\_\_\_ and a morning. It is evident that the days of creation were normal 24-hour days consisting of an evening and morning. To give the word "day" some strange, figurative, unnatural meaning is to twist the Scriptures.

**3) Improperly defining words.** For example, the word "baptism" used in the Bible NEVER meant sprinkling or pouring (Matthew 3:16). Reputable Greek dictionaries unanimously define the Greek work "baptizo" as referring exclusively to the act of immersion, submersion, dipping, or