

Read

In camp this week, in 4 sessions with teenagers, we read the gospel of Mark. All of it. Four 70 minute classes. Over half that time was in the shared, verbal reading.

How important is reading the Book of God?

The great piont of the gospel is that all who have faith can be saved in Christ.

How did Paul expect the church to know, accept and put into practice this ground breaking teaching that brought people from so many varying ethnic, racial, social, and religious backgrounds together in one unified group? The only way it could possibly work was to get all to accept it as the will of God. It had been revealed to Paul and he revealed it to others.

Eph. 3:3-6 "...by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

6 *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel

The apostle received it first, he passed it on to others, and now everyone could work from the same reference point. Those that read the will of God had just as much information on it as the apostle.

Thanks be to God that He revealed Himself. We could not know the will of God without Him telling us. *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?" (Rom. 11:33,34)*

The next logical step is to ask why His will was revealed and written if it was not intended to be understandable? Would you write a letter to someone if you did not intend to convey some information? Of course not.

Remember how in school our teachers used to convey a lot of information to us on the printed page - and they held us responsible to know it.

So then if God has a letter written and distributed throughout the world, is there not a responsibility on our part to know it?

So many view the word of God as an impenetrable tome. They see it as a befuddling mass of information defying coherent understanding.

The interesting thing is that those most likely to view the Bible this way are those least likely to have read it.

According to surveys of the American public, although most people believe that the Bible is the word of God, only 20% of the people have ever read more than a few quotes from it. How do they possibly hope to understand it?

The entire presumption of the scriptures is that it is understandable if carefully read. Paul wrote the Colossians, *"And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea."* (**Col. 4:16**)

This instruction is based on the fact that the Colossians and Laodiceans could understand what was written well enough to ask for each other's letters. And if they could understand that, why couldn't they understand the rest of the letter as well? Finally, having read and understood the letters they would all be expected to put the teaching into practice. If not, what is the point of the entire exercise?

If the Bible is understandable you are expected to follow it. Why did Paul write about Jews and Gentiles being one body if he did not expect them to live with each other in brotherly harmony and equality in the same church? This was expected of them because they could understand the clear language of the apostle. Likewise consider this incident from the life of Moses: *"Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!'"* (Ex. 24:7) They heard, they understood, they vowed to do. This is the only sensible response to any instruction of God.

How do we explain so much division and confusion over the teaching of the scriptures and the things that we are to practice if the Bible is understandable? The simple truth is that most folks are ignorant and mistaken about what the scriptures teach, even if they are religious.

Does that sound harsh? What did Jesus say to those who denied the resurrection? *"You do err not knowing the scriptures or the power of God."* (Matt. 22:29)

I didn't say that about people who denied a basic Bible doctrine, Jesus did.

Since most people don't read their Bibles so as to know what God teaches, what is being taught and learned?

Men are teaching what others have taught or that which they make up themselves. *"You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"* (Matt. 15:7-9)

The amazing part is that when men teach their traditions and doctrines they expect their disciples to understand them.

Man made teachings are often much more complicated and difficult than what God taught - but they are learned anyway.

It would just as easy or easier to learn God's will, but men depart because they withstand God's will, not because it is impossible to know.

The choice of what you study and know and practice is up to you. *"So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."* (Eph. 5:17) You shall be wise and knowledgeable by reading the pure words given by God to the apostles and prophets. And you shall bring glory to God and His church, and you will show the world a better way. *"...[T]hat the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose..."* (Eph. 3:10,11a)

Are you understanding what you read? Are you reading so that you can understand?