



Understand

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2Peter 3:13-16)

Peter tells us that the scriptures were written, among other things, that people might understand things pertaining to salvation—avoiding destruction. This is precisely the type of conversation that took place between Philip and the man from Ethiopia: “*Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him*” (Acts 8:30-31). Paul wrote that he wrote what was given him by God so that men could understand (Ephesians 3:3-4). Since God wanted us to understand, we need to grasp that concept.

Like Peter said, sometimes understanding the scriptures is not easy. The eunuch from Ethiopia did not understand what he read. It is apparent, even from a casual conversation, that most people do not understand much of what they read in the scriptures.

Understanding the scriptures is of such great importance. People must obey the truth of the scriptures. Peter explains that becoming a Christian involves this obedience: “*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls ...*” (1Peter 1:22). But how can we obey those things which we do not understand? Through the scriptures, we may know of the hope of his calling (Ephesians 1:18). But how can we know until we understand? A failure to understand makes one alienated from God (Ephesians 4:18). A failure to understand the need to follow the words of God shows one to be foolish (Matthew 7:26-27).

Why is it then, that so many do not understand the scriptures?

One reason why some do not understand the scriptures is that some things are more difficult. Notice that Peter never said “cannot” understand, but “hard to” understand. One cannot scan the scriptures and understand very much about them. Nevertheless, if one is really serious in his search, much understanding is provided. “*You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*” (2Timothy 3:14-17).

Peter has already made mention of those that do not understand the scriptures very well because they don't want to understand (**2Peter 3:5**). This is so tragic. There is no other source of hope for them.

Others do not understand the scriptures because they do not really study them. It seems that most people may be in this category. We ought to put forth the effort to know (**2Timothy 2:15**). We need to meditate upon the scriptures (**Psalms 1:1-2**).

Others do not understand the scriptures because some, in whom they have confidence, have told them things that do not agree with the scriptures, and so the conflict leads to a failure to really understand. "And He also spoke a parable to them: 'A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?'" (**Luke 6:39**).

Some do not understand the scriptures because they read from a translation containing words or language with which they are not familiar. How many of us use phrases like, "we do you to wit"? On the other hand, make sure that you read a trustworthy translation. Please note that many self-claimed "Bibles," like the older *Living Bible* or the newer *The Message*, are not translations at all.

Others do not understand the scriptures because they use them improperly. Some do not consider the text in the context. For instance, what is the context of **Galatians 3:26** or **1Corinthians 1:17**? Failure to notice context leads to a very faulty conclusion.

Others do not understand because they fail to accurately handle scriptures (**2Timothy 2:15**). Where would you be if you failed to accurately handle **Genesis 6:14**?

Others fail to understand the scriptures, because, like Martin Luther, they add to them. Remember what he did to **Romans 3:28**? How could he ever understand something he refused to acknowledge and to change?

Still, others fail to understand the scriptures because they fail to take all that is written on a given subject. What if we failed by reading only **Acts 16:31** and not reading the entire story of the Philippian jailer or anything else God says about salvation?

Others misunderstand the scriptures because they misapply that which is written. **James 1:27**, in its use by many brethren, illustrates this.

Others fail to understand the scriptures because they don't know how the scriptures authorize a thing—by direct command, approved example, and necessary inference.

We can all understand some things in the scriptures, and I suspect that we could understand other things on the same basis. We can all understand that there is one God and one Christ (**Ephesians 4:1-5**). Why? Is it not that we are willing to accept what the Bible says about this? Why can't we see that there is only one faith and one baptism from the same scripture?

How well do you understand the scriptures? Do you understand the information of the scriptures concerning what to do to have remission of sins? Do you understand what the scriptures inform is necessary to continue in His favor?