**Hindrances to Understanding the Scriptures**

*Isaiah 6:9-10*

**Introduction**

1. We are commanded to understand God’s will (**Ephesians 5:17**), and we are able to understand God’s will (**Ephesians 3:4**).
2. However, it has always been the case that many fail to understand God’s will – **Isaiah 6:9-10**
   1. **(v. 9)** – not for a lack of ability.
   2. **(v. 10)** – but the hindrance of a dull heart. (dull to the truth – not wanting to hear the message)
   3. Quoted several times in the New Testament – this was not only true in the relationship between the prophet Isaiah, and the people he spoke to, but for the relationship between God and His message, and most people.
3. If any man is unable to understand the scriptures properly, i.e. actually, it is not the fault of the scriptures, nor of the Author, but of the man.
4. What are some hindrances to understanding the scriptures?
5. Not Intending to Understand
6. If one does not expect to understand they have failed before they even make the attempt.
7. If one does not intend to understand they are wasting their time altogether.
8. Reading for the sake of reading
   1. **1 Timothy 4:12-13, 15-16** – give attention to reading, but to understand the doctrine and apply it.
   2. Some seem to be godly minded (knowledge of text), but don’t really have an understanding of it – **1 Timothy 1:7; 2 Timothy 3:5**
   3. Some always learn, but don’t ever come to the truth – **2 Timothy 3:7**
9. Some only read the parts of scripture they like, and doing so take them out of context – they need to take the whole pattern, and rightly divide – **2 Timothy 1:13; 2:15**
10. Reading must be intentional, and for the sake of knowing God’s will – **Psalm 119:33-40**
11. Making the Clergy/Laity Distinction
12. The Catholic church made the Bible the property of the priesthood, and prohibited the “common people,” or the laity, to even read it.
    1. They must rely on the priest to tell them what is too difficult for them to understand themselves.
    2. This shifts responsibility away from the individual and gives power to the priest.
13. Denominationalism has done the same thing with the pastoral system, and with the creed books of various sects.
    1. What does your pastor say?
    2. What does the creed book say?
14. It is God’s will that there be aids to understanding – **Romans 10:14-15; Acts 8:30-31; Ephesians 4:11-12**
15. However, these are appointed to aid the individual in growing in that understanding, not simply accepting what is said without investigation – **Nehemiah 8:8**
16. Each must come to know themselves, and each must have the personal understanding where they can handle God’s word accurately to give an answer – **Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 3:15**
17. All of God’s people are the priesthood – **1 Peter 2:9** – no special class.
18. Searching for Proof of Doctrine
19. Such is the method of eisegesis – eis (into) hēgeisthai (to guide, lead) – “the interpretation of a text (as of the Bible) by reading into it one’s own ideas” (Webster)
    1. Contrast with exegesis – ex (out of) hēgeisthai (to guide, lead) – “an explanation or critical interpretation of a text” (Webster)
    2. Eisegesis – “you can prove just about anything with the Bible” – i.e. if you read INTO it your interpretation.
20. The Bible is not an instrument to establish doctrine.
21. THE BIBLE IS THE DOCTRINE – **2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:8-11** (reproving anything contrary to sound doctrine); **Ephesians 4:11-16** (not carried about with every wind of doctrine, but stable in Christ)
22. God has put the meaning into the text, and it is our duty to extract it through study, not put our own meaning in – **2 Peter 1:20-21**
    1. ***“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19***, NASB)
23. Craving Distinction
24. Some are like the Athenians – **Acts 17:21** – wanting to hear something new, so as to distinguish themselves from others.
25. The Gnostics were guilty of this lust for distinction – **1 John 2:20-27** – use of word “anointing” due to the Gnostic claim of a special anointing of enlightenment that others were not privileged to have. (YOU KNOW THE TRUTH – SAME AS THE BEGINNING)
    1. Modern Gnostic mindset – AD 70 Doctrine (realized eschatology) – convoluted, but they want it to be that way – you just aren’t capable of grasping this!
26. We should not be seeking to interpret ancient scriptures in new ways.
27. IF WE HAVE LEARNED SOMETHING THAT NOBODY ELSE KNOWS, IT PROBABLY ISN’T RIGHT!
28. We should be asking for the old paths **– Jeremiah 6:16**
29. We should not be seeking distinction, but unity in the Spirit – **1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:3, 12-13**
30. Assuming a Hidden Meaning
31. Some approach the study of scripture with the mystical, or spiritual method – i.e. the Bible is not a sensible communication of God to man, where the words communicate straight forward thought, but it is more like a riddle with a hidden meaning.
32. Example – Philo of Alexandria on **Genesis 2:10-14** – “In these words Moses intends to sketch out the particular virtues. And they, also, are four in number – prudence, temperance, courage, and justice.” (Goes on to explain, but with no context or evidence.)
33. The Bible is straight-forward – **Deuteronomy 30:11-18** – not mysterious or far off, but near to hear and do – blessing or cursing.
34. Words are the vehicle communicating thought – **1 Corinthians 2:13** – they possess meaning, and God has used them accordingly.
35. Seeking Harmony Between Scripture and Pop-science
36. Scripture and science harmonize – **Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3** – God created, and He manages creation, or sustains it with the laws He created.
37. If all things came from God, then God’s revelation will not contradict such matters of nature.
38. **Psalm 19:1-4, 7** – nature reveals God’s glory, and His word reveals who He is – both are at harmony.
39. However, there are matters which are labeled as science that are truly mere unproven theories, or philosophies. (Old earth, and evolution)
    1. This may be referred to as Popular science – matters which are widely accepted but are not truly scientific.
    2. The Bible does not have to agree with such!
40. Many, even some brethren, claim that the Bible needs to take a back seat to science – i.e. only interpret the Bible through what is accepted science.
    1. We must let God be true first **– Romans 3:4**
    2. God’s word does not contradict what is truly science – i.e. that which employed the scientific method and was proven true objectively.
41. Some seek to harmonize miracles with science – THIS UNDERMINES THE VERY PREMISE AND PURPOSE OF MIRACLES – they are that which is against nature and manifest the power of the One who created nature.
42. Some explain Divine processes through natural processes – creation/evolution – two matters which are irreconcilable.
43. Example – Day/Age/Gap Theory
44. Practical Atheism
45. Practical atheism is the belief that there is a God, and even that the Bible is His word, but that doing what He says is a matter of inconsequence. That God is not concerned with our fidelity.
46. Samaritans as an example – **2 Kings 17:29-33** – feared Jehovah but did what they wanted religiously.
47. If God does not care what we do, then why would it be important to accurately handle His word.
48. Yet, we must handle it accurately to be approved – **2 Timothy 2:15**
49. And if we do not, we will destroy ourselves – **2 Peter 3:16**
50. Many in the end will be rejected for their practical atheism – **Matthew 7:21-23** – ***“I never knew you”*** ultimately because they never knew Him.

**Conclusion**

1. We must come to an understanding of the scriptures to be pleasing to God.
2. However, this is our responsibility, so we must avoid things which would hinder our understanding.
3. Let us approach the study of the Divine word with prudence, and candor.