

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session II

September 19, 2010

The Word Of God: The “ILLUMINATION” Of The Holy Spirit!

In the first week of our study we established the fact that the Bible “claims” to be the Word of God – His personal revelation of Himself to mankind! This process is secured in its truthfulness, accuracy, and reliability by the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Third Person of the Godhead “inspired” the human authors of Scripture, using their individual personalities, and produced an “inerrant” message from God. The Holy Spirit has also “guarded” this message through the centuries of translation so that when we open our Bibles today we can have confidence that it is the Word of God!

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth!”

John 17:17

Yet, most serious students of the Bible have at some point had the following questions:

- “Why are there so many differences in the interpretation of the Bible?”
- “If God truly gave us His ‘message’, why do genuine people come to different or conflicting beliefs?”
- “If God’s Word is supernaturally ‘inspired’, why can’t Christians agree in doctrine?”

These questions have caused confusion throughout the history of the Church. Often they have led individuals to personal discouragement, spiritual frustration, and even disillusionment! Today, these questions have grown beyond the “individual” to what seems to be a “general consensus” – the viewpoint most people hold – that it is not possible to know for certain what God might have said to mankind! His message is “unknowable!” This conclusion means we cannot hold “beliefs” with certainty!

Philosophically, this conclusion is inconsistent with the Bible’s claim to be “inspired.” If God went to the trouble to communicate His truth to mankind, why would He not also enable His message to be understood with clarity and certainty? The only logical conclusion is that He would provide for the proper understanding of His Word.

The question we address in our study today is . . .

“How can the Word of God be understood correctly?”

I. How Does The Bible Answer This Question?

A. The Original Design of Mankind: “In the Image of God!”

*“Let Us make man in Our IMAGE, according to Our LIKENESS . . .
God created man in His own IMAGE, in the IMAGE of God He
created him; male and female He created them.” Gen. 1:26,27*

1. God is a Person:

He has intellect, will, emotions, and relationships!

--His “personality” has definable characteristics or attributes.

2. Man and woman were created “in His image!” (Gen. 1:26,27)

We have intellect, will, emotions, and relationships!

--Our human “personality” has definable characteristics and abilities.

3. In the perfection of the “Garden of Eden”, man and woman “walked and talked with God” on a daily basis! (Gen. 3:8)

--The infinite God shared “personal” relationship with His finite creations!

--They communicated by a common language – “**words**” had meaning that brought cognitive understanding and allowed for meaningful relationship.

These “**words**” were not just “mystical” feelings or “existential” experience!

4. Application: This is an important understanding – that God’s “communication” with man was in the form of “**words**” that were cognitively understood! They were spoken and written mental concepts! However, we live in a religious and philosophical culture which no longer sees the need for the “knowledge of God” to be based on definable “**words**” or understandable “**concepts**”. Today, for many, knowing God is defined by experience – a “feeling” or “existential” encounter – with no “transferable” content or meaning!

5. Note: The original “problem” man and woman experienced with God occurred when they rebelled against His spoken “**words**” – “*Hath God said?*” (Gen. 3:1). It is amazing that the “serpent” quoted God’s words to Adam and Eve in his effort to deceive them! Mark carefully: God held man and woman responsible for obedience to His “**WORDS**”!

B. The Result of the “Fall”: Separation from God → Inability to Understand His “Words” (“Thoughts”)!

1. After the “fall” (separation from God and “spiritual death”) mankind retained a God-given intelligence, but that reasoning ability was affected by rebellious pride and spiritual blindness!

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.”
Romans 1:21-22

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (understood).”
I Corinthians 2:14

2. Helpful Quotations: Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer.

- a. Human “Reason”: A definition.
“Reason . . . the intellectual and moral faculties of man exercised in the pursuit of truth . . . apart from supernatural aid.”
- b. Human “Reason”: Its arrogant pride.
“Certain men have held that, without divine guidance or assistance, man can attain to all truth which is essential to his well-being here and hereafter.”
- c. Human “Reason”: Its limitations.
“Within the . . . boundaries of that which is human, reason is paramount; yet, as compared with divine revelation, it is both fallible and finite!”

3. The Warning of the Apostle Paul: I Corinthians 1:18-2:16.

- a. “Regeneration” is required to understand “Revelation”!
“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
I Corinthians 1:18
- b. Human “wisdom”, “power”, and “position” do not guarantee spiritual knowledge or understanding!
“Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”
I Corinthians 1:20

C. The Result of the “New Birth”: Reconciliation to God → Ability to Understand His “Words” (“Thoughts”)!

1. The Basis of spiritual understanding: “REGENERATION!”

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (understood).”

I Corinthians 2:14

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these are from God . . .”

II Corinthians 5:17,18

2. The Means of spiritual understanding: “ILLUMINATION!”

a. Jesus’ Promise:

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you . . . But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth . . . He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.”

John 16:7,13,15

b. Paul’s Commentary:

“But we speak God’s wisdom . . . which none of the rulers of this age has understood . . . for to us God revealed them through the Spirit . . . the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the things freely given to us by God . . . we have the mind of Christ.”

I Corinthians 2:7,8,10,12,16

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in the words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Holy Spirit, comparing spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

I Corinthians 2:12-13

c. Definitions of “ILLUMINATION”

--Lewis Sperry Chafer: “Illumination” . . . the divine unfolding of Scripture already given . . . by the Supreme Teacher!”

--Paul Enns: “Illumination” . . . the ministry of the Holy Spirit in enlightening the Believer, enabling the Believer to understand the Word of God.”

3. The **Result** of spiritual understanding: “**Accuracy**” in interpretation!”

*“But He who is spiritual appraises (understands) all things . . .
 . . . but we have the mind of Christ!” I Corinthians 2:15,16*

--**Note:** A “spiritual” Christian is one controlled by the Holy Spirit, whose focus is the Word of God, and whose first-love is Jesus Christ!

--**Practical Application:** The “three-fold” division of humanity.

- a. The “natural man” → Cannot understand the Scriptures, I Cor. 2:14.
- b. The “spiritual man” → Enabled to receive **all** spiritual truth, I Cor. 2:15.
- c. The “carnal Christian” → Unable to receive the “solid food” of God’s Word, I Cor. 3:3. (“ . . . walking like mere men . . .”)

“ . . . unspiritual living hinders the normal illuminating work of the Spirit of God in the mind and heart of the Child of God.” --Lewis S. Chafer

4. The **Requirement** for spiritual understanding: Diligent “**Study!**”

“Be diligent (study) to present yourself approved unto God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” II Timothy 2:15

II. What Does This Mean For Us?

A. Every Believer should have _____ in God’s _____!

--We must _____ the “cultural consensus” that teaches we _____ know God’s truth with certainty, John 8:32; 17:17.

--We must be careful not to base our _____ upon how we _____!

--“Faith” declares, “I _____ **know!**” (God has promised to _____ it!)

B. A Mature Believer should be “_____” by “_____”!

--Every Christian should base their beliefs on the _____ of God’s Word.

--Every Christian should “Hold their _____ before the Word of God.”

--Every Christian should be _____ of _____ movements!
(This will be increasingly important as we near the “end of the age!”)

C. A Mature Believer should be “_____” for “_____”!

“But sanctify (set apart) Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.” I Peter 3:15-16