

Understanding the Bible

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Nothing is more obvious than that men who profess belief in the Bible do not understand it alike. Some believe this is inevitable or even good. If so, why does the Bible command that we “all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you” (1 Cor. 1: 10)? We are to “walk by the same rule” (Phi. 3:16), so it must be possible for us to understand its demands.

The greater question may be, “**Why** do men not understand the Bible alike?” The Bible provides several answers.

- **Ignorance** — Because of ignorance the Jews crucified Jesus, and Saul persecuted Him (Luke 23:34; 1 Tim. 1:13). Earnest Bible study is the cure for ignorance. One can hardly understand what he does not know.
- **Deception** — Many are victims of false teachers (Mat. 7:15). Jesus warned: Blind teachers and their students will be lost (15:14). “Take heed that no man lead you astray” (Mat. 24:44).
- **Human traditions** — To the Jews of Jesus’ time, religious traditions were more important than the Bible (Mat. 15:6). Human traditions are many and varied; they prevent men from understanding and following the Bible. Such things as infant “baptism,” instrumental music in worship, “Easter,” et al., are the result of human traditions, rather than Biblical practices.
- **Prejudice** — Jeremiah wrote of those in Jerusalem “that have eyes, and see not; that have ears, and hear not” (5:21). The Jews of Jesus’ time had their minds “made up” that the Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom like David’s, so they rejected His teaching concerning the imminent coming of His spiritual kingdom, the church (Mat. 16:18–19; Mark 9:1). Multiplied millions make the same mistake today in their biased and false millennial hopes.
- **Convenience** — Jeroboam enticed his nation to stay at home and worship his idols, saying, “It is too much to go up to Jerusalem” (1 Kin. 12:28). Roman Catholicism popularized effusion (pouring of water) in place of immersion for baptism beginning in the twelfth century because it was more “convenient” than immersion. Many Protestant churches find it “inconvenient” to serve the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s Day. Biblical Truth is often set aside for sake of convenience.
- **Sincerity** — We must be sincere in our devotion to God, but sincerity alone was insufficient for Cornelius; he still had to hear and obey the Gospel to be saved (Acts 10:33; 11:14). If sincerity is all that matters, why do we even need the Bible?

All of the foregoing factors are obstructions to understanding the Bible. Those who pervert the Scriptures do so to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16).

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