

BIBLIOLOGY (69)

hindered and hampered and, more than likely, behind the scenes is a life of carnality and fleshliness that refuses to submit to the Truth of God.

Illumination is a critical doctrine for the believer. A believer's ability to grasp the Word of God is due to the illuminating work of God's Spirit.

Dr. Charles Ryrie suggests that there are two main passages that teach us much about the doctrine of illumination: 1) John 16:12-15, 2) I Cor 2:9-3:2. From these two passages, Dr. Ryrie makes the following observations:

1. The Spirit is the Teacher, and His presence in the believer guarantees the availability of the illuminating work to all believers.
2. Unbelievers cannot experience this ministry and even though they may achieve a high level of understanding of some Biblical facts, most of what they know they consider to be foolishness.
3. The Spirit's teaching incorporates "all the truth" including "things to come", which is Biblical Prophecy.
4. Carnality in the believer can thwart the ministry of illumination.
5. The purpose of the Spirit's ministry is to glorify Christ.
6. The Spirit will use the gift of teaching to carry out His ministry (Eph.4:11-12; Rom. 12:7). This would include the writings of those, who perhaps are even now dead, who have left behind the results of the Spirit's work in their own lives in written form.

Dr. Ryrie goes on to say:

"The experience of illumination is not by "direct revelation." The canon is closed. The Spirit illumines the meaning of that closed canon, and He does so through study and meditation. Study employs all the proper tools for ascertaining the meaning of the text. Meditation thinks about the true facts of the text, putting them together into a harmonious whole and applying them to one's own life. The end result of the illumination ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life, or to promote healthy doctrine- teaching that brings spiritual health and wholeness to the believer's life. Illumination is not concerned merely with understanding facts but with using those facts to promote Christlikeness." (Basic Theology p.116)

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes:

"A requisite life in conformity to the will of God, on the student's part is neither incidental nor optional; it is arbitrary, determining, and crucial. There is not the slightest possibility that the most educated and brilliant mind can make one step of progress in the understanding of spiritual truth apart from the direct, supernatural teaching to the individual heart by the indwelling Spirit. Hence the imperative aspect of the new birth. In like manner, there can be no full or worthy apprehension of God's revealed truth by the Christian who is unspiritual or carnal. Hence the imperative aspect of a yielded life." (Vol. 1, p.113)

BIBLIOLOGY (70)

QUESTION #14 - How does one interpret the Bible?

The science of Bible interpretation is called hermeneutics. The treatment of this subject usually falls under a course of study called "Hermeneutics." However, since the purpose of Bibliology is to systematically study and understand as much as possible about the Bible and since one's understanding of the Bible is greatly determined by one's method of study, it is fitting, under the category of Bibliology to at least gain some working knowledge of Bible interpretation.

Any person who has ever attempted to study the Bible, in an honest attempt to truly understand it, immediately faces the realization that there are a variety of interpretations set forth on a variety of subjects. All interpretations have their own proof texts, which are cited as evidence for their position. For example when it comes to prophetic matters, such as "Pretribulationism", "Midtribulationism" or "Posttribulationism", or when it comes to a matter such as "Premillenarianism", "Postmillenarianism" or "Amillenarianism", all cite their passages as proof. However, any honest, thinking, spiritually minded student must admit someone must be wrong and someone must be right. Someone is wrong in their interpretation and someone is right.

If we believe that one of the interpretations is correct, then immediately we are faced with the reality that two are wrong. Since students are divided and divergent in their interpretations, how is it possible to determine the truth? How is it possible to figure out what the true interpretation of the Bible really is? The answer is found in the arena of and under the heading of hermeneutics. If a system of Bible interpretation is carefully and prayerfully followed, we believe that in every instance of Biblical study and interpretation, it is possible to precisely know God's truth.

Dr. Chafer once stated: "It is noticeable that all theological systems and even modern cults make use of the Bible." (Vol. 1, p.114). However, none of them have consistently applied a system of Bible interpretation. For example, when it comes to the O.T. law- most cults will pick and choose a few items from the O.T. law and then, in all reality, disregard other elements. If one is to be consistent in one's interpretation one must apply all elements of the law, which is exactly what Paul taught.

God has commanded that intense study of His word be undertaken in order to gain a "rightly divided" or "accurate handling" of His word. The wise student of the Bible will give careful diligent study to the Word of God and will continue to maintain the godly spiritual life which is required by God so that the Spirit of God may continue to illuminate him into an accurate understanding of God's truth. Again, as Dr. Chafer observed, "...the uncompromising student will do well to give indefatigable study to the Sacred Text and demand of himself that right relation to God which insures the priceless divine guidance into all truth." (Vol. 1, p.114).

We must assume that the desire of God is that we know His word. God desires that we have an accurate, deep understanding of His word. General, surface level knowledge is never the desire of God for His people. In fact, Paul prayed specifically that believers might have a God given ability to grasp the deep things of God. In Ephesians 1:17, the word "knowledge" speaks of a

BIBLIOLOGY (71)

knowledge-upon-knowledge level of understanding. In other words, Paul prayed that believers might grow deep in their knowledge of the Word of God. To reach this level, certain attitudes must exist within the individual believer and certain hermeneutical guidelines must be followed.

QUESTION #15 - What should our attitude be when we want to accurately interpret the Bible?

Just because one wants to accurately interpret the Bible, does not automatically mean he will accurately interpret the Bible. In order for that to happen, one's attitude must be right and must reflect the kind of attitude that God would grant proper interpretation and illumination.

(Quality #1) - We should have an attitude of teachability. Prov. 2:1-2

A desire to be taught, not an attitude that we already know it all.

(Quality #2) - We should have an attitude of prayerfulness. Prov. 2:3

Specifically a prayer for deep understanding of God's precious word.

(Quality #3) - We should have an attitude of intensity. Prov. 2:4

An intense, persistent drive to truly know more and more of God's word.

(Quality #4) - We should have an attitude of humility. I Cor. 8:2

An honest realization of what we do know and what we don't know and what we need to know. Never should we think more highly of ourselves and abilities than is true (Rom. 12:3).

(Quality #5) - We should have an attitude of honesty. II Cor. 4:2

We must never twist a passage to say or mean what we want it to say or mean, we must be honest with exactly what it says.

(Quality #6) - We should have an attitude of study. II Tim. 2:15

To accurately unravel God's Word requires diligent study.

(Quality #7) - We should have an attitude that recognizes spiritual gifts. I Cor. 12:28

God has given gifted pastors and teachers to the church to help bring an understanding of God's word and one who will grow to maturity and to a deep level of understanding will submit to this important truth.

(Quality #8) - We should have an attitude of responsibility. II Tim. 4:1-4

We must defend and stand for sound doctrine always.

Without these attitudes, one will not ever grow to grasp a deep and true level of the Word of God. For these are qualities that God, Himself, demands.