

# FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS - 72554 EDITION

BI-MONTHLY PERIODICAL OF MAMMOTH SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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## Can We Understand the Bible?

Kevin Hedden - An elder at Mammoth Spring church of Christ

**M**ost religiously minded individuals will agree that the Bible has been faithfully preserved and translated. They will acknowledge that it contains the books that serve as our authority in religion. They even recognize and declare that the Bible is the inspired word of God. Yet, many of these religious folks will contend that the Bible cannot be understood. They hold to the idea that the contents are too difficult for the common man to understand or that it is so “mysterious” that only “Spirit-led” or theologically educated people can comprehend it. But is the Bible too difficult or mysterious to understand? As we consider this matter, let’s begin by noting what the Bible has to say concerning this question.

Regarding the Old Testament, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “*whatever things were written before were written for our learning*” (Rom. 15:4). Paul also expected the unbelieving Jews to understand when he had reasoned, explained, and demonstrated from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ spoken of in the Old Testament prophecies (Acts 17:2-3). Second Timothy 3:14-15 tells us that because of his early training in the Scriptures, Timothy had known and understood what he had been taught. Jesus said on several occasions, “*have you not read*” with the assurance that the people to whom He was speaking had read and, therefore, would be able to recall and understand the scriptures He was quoting (Matt. 12:3-5; 19:4). Our own experiences in life have taught us that in order to practice and correctly apply what we have learned, we must first understand what is being read or taught. The fact that the Old Testament was recorded for the purpose of learning about God and His will can only lead to the conclusion that it was written with the expectation that it could be understood so mankind could reasonably comprehend it and do His will.

The writers of the New Testament had the same expectation for their readers. Luke wrote his gospel so that one would know with certainty those things in which they were instructed (Lk. 1:1-4). John wrote his gospel so that one might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and because of that belief have life (Jn. 21:30-31). He wrote his epistles so that the reader might know that they have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13). Paul wrote so that people could read and understand (2 Cor. 1:13) and have record and understanding of his knowledge in the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:3-5). It is clear that the

writers of the New Testament wrote with the confidence that everyone could understand what they were inspired to write.

God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He deals with everyone in an equal way and has the same expectations for everybody. His qualities of impartiality and justice mean that He treats mankind based only on whether they have or have not done His will. He shows favor or grace to those that obey. Making the Bible impossible for some to understand would be showing favoritism to those who could more easily understand it. God’s desire for mankind to obey and have eternal life is manifest in His love. The Bible reveals His will to man, so that His expectations of obedient service and design for man to receive eternal life could be known. If that message could not be understood, would God be a just, gracious, and loving God? The answer is obviously, no! God wants everyone to be saved and He revealed His will to mankind in a manner that it could be understood by all.

*“God always speaks the truth  
and always keeps  
His promises.”*

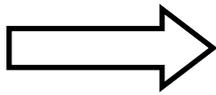
But that does not mean that everything can be easily known or that there are not some difficult things to comprehend. Some passages can be tough to understand without an effective method of study. An individual could easily misunderstand the context or audience and then incorrectly apply the words in a way that was not intended. The apostle Peter wrote that Paul’s writings contain things that were hard to understand by untaught and unstable people (2 Pet. 3:16). Peter said that these people twisted the truth to their own destruction because of their lack of understanding and discernment. Peter did not mean that the difficult things Paul wrote could not be understood. He simply meant that some people will not be able to come to a knowledge and understanding of the truth because they will not give an earnest effort to Bible study or they have predispositions and beliefs that prevent an honest and true understanding.

Not everyone learns in the same manner or at the same pace. For some, learning may take longer and others may need help to fully understand a process or idea. The Book of Acts tells of someone that needed assistance from another person to fully grasp the truth. In Acts 8, the Ethiopian eunuch responded to Philip, “*How can I, unless someone guides me*” when asked if he understood what he was reading (v. 30-31). The eunuch was reading the prophecies about Messiah from

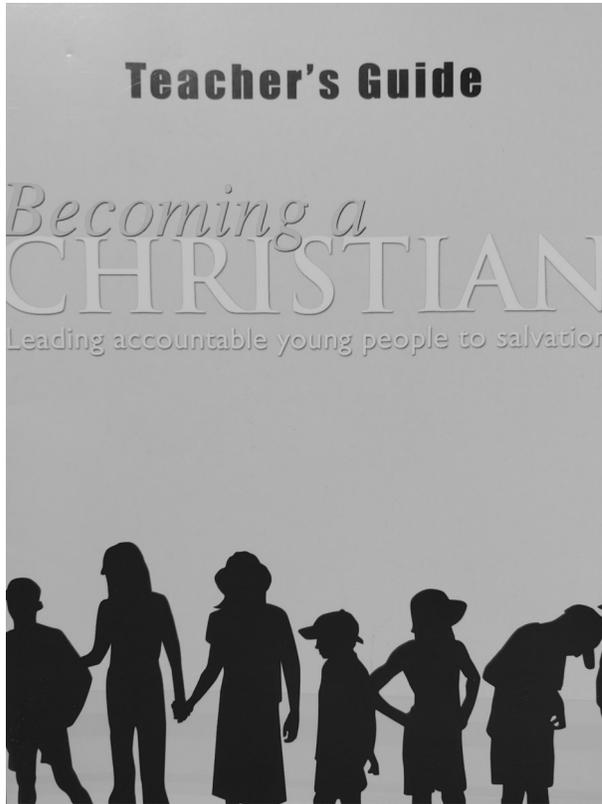
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*Would You Like to Study the Bible?*

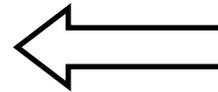
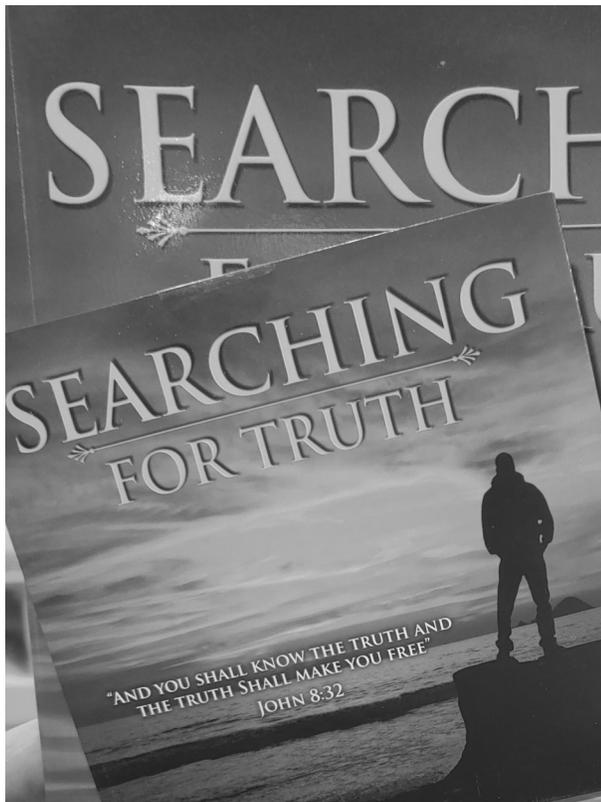
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## Can We Understand the Bible?

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the book of Isaiah. The text says that Philip began at the place where the eunuch was reading and taught him about Jesus. We don't have a full account of what Philip said to the eunuch, but we know that what was said caused the eunuch to believe and asked to be baptized (v. 36). Without Philip's knowledge of God's word and assistance, the eunuch may not have been able to realize his poor spiritual condition. By reading only the account of Isaiah, the eunuch might not have learned that he needed to be baptized and be obedient. Philip's words and guidance helped lead the eunuch to a better understanding of the truth.

Jesus prayed for His disciples, "*Sanctify them by Thy truth: Thy word is truth*" (Jn. 17:17). God always speaks the truth and always keeps His promises. He has revealed His will to us in the Bible and it contains all the knowledge man needs that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). The scriptures are complete and beneficial in helping us know and demonstrate what we must do to be obedient to Him (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Jesus told His disciples, "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*" (Jn. 8:32). If God is truthful and faithful, we must believe that the Bible can be understood. God has done everything that is needed to ensure that mankind can understand and do His will. He sent His Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth (Jn. 16:13). God desires that everyone be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). The truth is that every person has sinned (Rom. 3:9) and has earned eternal death (Rom. 6:23). But God has paid that debt by sending His Son as a ransom in our place (1 Tim. 2:5-6). God fully expects us to understand the Bible, His word, and demands that we do His will in order to be pleasing to Him.

### Belief in God is Hard-Wired into Man

Kyle Butt - [www.apologeticspress.org](http://www.apologeticspress.org)

**A**.C. Grayling wrote a book titled *The God Argument*. Those in atheistic circles have lauded it as a profound and insightful representation of atheism. Remarkably, Grayling makes an error that is extremely common within the writings of unbelievers. He contends that mankind has no religious nature and that all belief in God is a product of teaching passed on to children from parents, teachers, or other environmental factors. He wrote:

*It would, though, be far better if religious doctrines and systems were not taught to people until they had attained maturity. If this were the case, how many would subscribe to a religion? Without being given a predisposition through childhood indoctrination to think there might be something in one of the many and conflicting religious beliefs on offer, the likely answer would surely be: not very many.<sup>1</sup>*

It seems as though Grayling completely fails to acknowledge the massive amount of research that proves that belief in God comes naturally to mankind and is hard-wired in to the fabric of humanity.<sup>2</sup> Atheist Richard Dawkins contradicts Grayling and admits that humans have "a lust for gods."<sup>3</sup> He noted that people are "innately predisposed to be creationists" and said that children are "native teleologists, and many never grow out of it."<sup>4</sup> Renowned atheist Sam Harris is forced to

concede that "several experiments suggest that children are predisposed to assume design and intention behind natural events - leaving many psychologists and anthropologists to believe that children, **left entirely on their own devices**, would invent some conception of God."<sup>5</sup>

Since atheism cannot explain why people are born to believe in God, many of them simply deny the truth that they are. The logical explanation for this innate belief is the idea that the Creator "*put eternity*" in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11), so that all people might "*seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us*" (Acts 17:27).

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> A.C. Grayling (2013), *The God Argument: The Case Against Religion and for Humanism* (New York: Bloomsbury), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> See Kyle Butt (2013), "Why is Belief in God Natural to Mankind?" <https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=4655>.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Dawkins (2006), *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin), p. 169.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>5</sup> Sam Harris (2010), *The Moral Landscape* (New York: Free Press), p. 151, emp. added.

## LOCAL POSTAL CUSTOMER

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### Unique features of the Church of Christ

- We use the Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3). We have no creed book, convention, or central headquarters.
- Our name is after the One who died to establish His church (Rom. 16:16).
- The church of Christ began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4).
- Jesus promised to establish His church (Matt. 16:18).
- That church was purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28).
- The church is married to Christ (Rom. 7:4).
- It was established in the first century (Acts 2:41, 47).
- Jesus is the one and only Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23).
- You can only be added to the church by God Himself (Acts 2:41, 47).

### What about being saved?

- All people are saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9).
- No one is saved by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26).
- No one is saved by grace alone (Matt. 7:21).
- Jesus said that belief plus baptism will produce salvation (Mk. 16:16). That is a promise, not a command.
- The Bible teaches that repentance plus baptism produces remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38).
- Belief, confession, and baptism is seen in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37-38).
- The Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8).
- Christ is "put on" in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27).
- The apostle Peter said that "baptism does save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

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Send us an email with your Bible questions - [mscoc251@gmail.com](mailto:mscoc251@gmail.com)

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Sunday Worship - 10:45 & 6:00  
Wednesday Classes for all ages - 7:00 PM  
Facebook Live Stream Study - Mon-Thu - 11:00 AM