

## CHAPTER 1

### MYTH 1: THE BIBLE IS TOO COMPLEX TO UNDERSTAND

#### 1.1 WHY BELIEVE OR TEACH THIS?

Many honest people really believe this myth, but anyone who has diligently studied the bible knows that it is both false and totally enslaving. However, as long as false teachers can convince their followers that the bible is too complex for the average person to understand, they can control their beliefs. When people go directly to the source of truth, they cannot be enslaved. Jesus said: "If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32).

Based upon the author's own upbringing, which consistently discouraged any inquiry of false religious doctrines as divisive, we expect that many reading this chapter will feel that it is not an attempt to unify but to divide. We urge you to look beyond these most prevalent attitudes and consider the fact that there is but *one* reality, *one* truth. If we believe that the bible is from God, then we must believe that it is His attempt to communicate that one reality to us. We cannot have it both ways. If we believe that this is His attempt to communicate reality to us, then we must believe that *He has the capacity to communicate it to us* in the most effective way. Anything short of this is a denial of His love for us.

The myth of bible complexity takes many alternative forms: (1) we cannot understand the bible alike, (2) everyone has their own interpretation, (3) we do not want to be legalists like the Pharisees, (4) you can prove anything with the bible, etc., etc. All of these have the same thing in common: *they are personal excuses to avoid independent study of the only source of spiritual truth upon the face of this earth: God's word.*

The apostle Paul was addressing the question: "What advantage then hath the Jew?" in Romans 3:1. His reply was: "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). At that time the only oracles that the Jews had were the written Old Testament scriptures. Their advantage accrued from their possession of the written word of God. However, they failed to benefit from this great advantage. Why? Was it because the bible is too complex to understand? No! Let us read on ...

Rom. 3:3-4: "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Once again, the only source of spiritual truth upon the face of this earth is God's word. The Jews failed to take advantage of the oracles of God, not because they could not understand them, but because they *would* not believe them.

Truism: *you cannot believe in something if you do not know what that something is.* Many declare that they believe the bible but rarely read it and *never* study it. How can people claim to believe the bible when, in fact, they are merely taking other peoples' word for what it says? What you are told by someone else that it says may or may not be true: "Let God be true, but every man a liar." (We recognize that this applies doubly to books such as this one, and we urge you to challenge every word of it in light of the standard!) It is essential that we study the bible for ourselves: *God demands it.* Otherwise, by definition, our faith is in the word of man, not the word of God.

*Why believe or teach this?* The answer to both questions have one characteristic in common: ignorance. If we are ignorant of God's word and wish to remain ignorant of it, then the myth of bible complexity is a comforting one. For, if we believe that the bible is too complex to understand, then why should we make any attempt to understand it? We recognize that some teach this myth out of a real conviction -- they really believe it. However, those who have studied the bible and recognize its clear structure and basic simplicity must have other motives. Independent bible study will reveal that there is no such thing as a clergy class within the church. There is no need for someone to be educated at a university of divinity and "ordained" to make the word of God understandable to the common man. (Usually the effect is just the opposite.) However, as long as the clergy can convince others of this myth, they can easily influence them to accept traditional beliefs of men as opposed to those of God.

The psychological effect of believing this myth is devastating. After all, if the bible is too complicated to understand, why try? Most leap to this comfortable conclusion and go for weeks and months without independent bible study. In this chapter we will show that this myth is not only untrue, it is one of the most devastating tools of the devil to keep us from learning the very truth that will free us from his grasp.

## **1.2 WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS**

[Before starting this section allow us to take a few lines here to explain the meaning of the word *mystery* as used in many passages of the New Testament, several of which we will quote shortly. According to Vine's *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, this word does not refer to something which is complex or difficult to understand. Rather, it refers to something which was hidden prior to being revealed by God. As an example, if I asked you to guess what was in my pocket, this would be a mystery prior to its revelation. However, once I pulled out a handkerchief, this would not be at all difficult to understand.

The totally counterintuitive nature of the New Testament teaching clearly demonstrates that it could not have originated in the mind of man. However, once revealed it is not difficult to understand by those who have an honest desire to understand it. Jesus said to his largely un-educated disciples (Mark 4:11): "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all [these] things are done in parables ..." Even the parables were not difficult to understand for those who are seeking the truth; indeed, the purpose of parables was to present spiritual principles in the clearest possible way for

those with honest, seeking hearts. A by-product was the virtual impossibility of their comprehension by those who were not seeking truth.

While there are times when the word *mystery* applies to specific parts of the New Testament, it generally refers to the gospel in its entirety. In these cases, however, a part of the gospel (including some of the most counterintuitive aspects) is used to illustrate the necessity for revelation. To illustrate one such example, the mystery in Ephesians 3:5 is defined in the next verse (Eph. 3:6): "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel ..." While this is certainly not difficult to understand, the racial barriers that still divide the vast majority of the religious world demonstrate that this is still a mystery (hidden) to all those who do not accept the *full gospel of Jesus Christ*.]

The myth that the bible is too complex to understand is exploded by the Apostle Paul when he said: "... by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)" (Eph. 3:3-4). This teaches that we can and should have the same understanding as the apostle Paul had. Does anyone today claim to have a better understanding than the apostle Paul had? Do we need to have a better understanding than he did to be saved?

Why would the bible have been written in the first place if it were only going to generate controversy because it is too hard to understand? The reason that it was written, however, is not left to our speculation. Again, the apostle Paul instructing the younger Timothy (2 Tim. 3:16-17):

All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Now if the scriptures have the capacity to "thoroughly furnish us unto all good works," what happens when we ignore them and look elsewhere to determine what is and is not a good work? Can anyone read the passage quoted above and believe that the apostle Paul thought that the scriptures were too difficult for the common man to understand?

In the preface we introduced the fact that the *one and only* way that the bible indicates that we can produce faith within ourselves is through hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17): "So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This theme recurs throughout the New Testament, and it is critical to our salvation that we know and understand what produces faith. We will take up the subject of faith in Chapter 3; for now, we wish to confirm that *to obtain the faith that saves, we must hear the truth that is written in the bible*.

The apostle John provides the authority for this conclusion (John 20:30-31): "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of

God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Did John think we would have the capacity to understand what he wrote?

Those who think they have created faith within themselves by some means other than a study of God's word have faith in something, but it is not faith in God. Some trust their experiences, their charismatic leaders, humanism and the wisdom of man. But those are not God's ways for granting us faith. The apostle Paul makes it quite clear that it is the gospel (good news) of Christ which is the sole basis for salvation in Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

No one in the bible was ever chastised for honest bible study -- the bible *never* discourages anyone from independently studying the bible for himself or herself and thereby "working out their salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). The bible has no such motive; only men possess motivation in the direction of discouraging independent study. The thrust of the scriptures are in the opposite direction as exemplified by Paul's command to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:15): "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Neither is there ever a stigma on challenging our religious leaders by comparing their teaching to the scriptures. Consider Acts 17:10-12:

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming [thither] went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Note three points from this passage:

1. Those of Berea were more noble because they "searched the scriptures" and validated the teaching of no less a teacher than the apostle Paul himself. If they were noble for checking up on an inspired apostle, we should not be intimidated from challenging our teachers today to provide book, chapter and verse for what they are putting forth. *The burden of proof is upon the teacher, and the standard of proof is the written word of God.*
2. "Therefore, many of them believed." Note once again that the honest study of God's word produces faith, a recurring theme throughout the New Testament.

3. As is true today, there were many false teachers in the first century. The test of validity was one of consistency with that which had already been revealed and written down: the scriptures. How much more is this the standard in a day and age when multiple copies of the Holy Scriptures are in each of our homes?

The scriptures were recognized as the standard of authority even in the first century when the Holy Spirit was directly inspiring the apostles and prophets to reveal the truths of the New Testament. Can anyone argue that God expected them to understand the scriptures? Since we know that God is not a respecter of persons, we know that he expects that same thing of us today.

As the New Testament was being compiled from recognized inspired writings, it became the standard of authority for the churches in the first century. The apostle Peter made this clear when he expressed the purpose of his writing (2 Peter 3:1-2): "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in [both] which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior."

We also know this from the writings of the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 14:37-38): "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."

This cannot be misunderstood! The written words of the apostle Paul *are* the commandments of Jesus. Do you think that Paul or Peter thought they were too complex to understand? I realize that this destroys a cherished myth that is believed by many in the denominational world. But these are not difficult passages to understand. If we refuse to recognize that the writings of Paul (and the other inspired writers) are the commandments of the Lord, then what else can be said of us other than that we are willfully ignorant? "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."

## **1.4 SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

In addition to the scriptures given above which clearly teach that the revelation of God can only be attained from a study of His written word, the bible contains mountains of supporting evidence which attest and further supports this conclusion. The bible is the most efficient book ever written; it guides us to every possible good work (2 Tim. 3: 16-17) while containing absolutely no useless information. Jesus infers this in Matthew 4:4: "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Indeed, Jesus' respect for the written word must be mirrored in His followers. His statements with regard to the Old Testament law gives us confidence that the providence of God is active in preserving His written word (Matthew 5:17-18): "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." [The jot (YODH) was the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the tittle, the smallest stroke.] We do not have to worry about the Old Testament, and if God can preserve that, He will surely preserve the New. This was also assured by Jesus in Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Why, then, do the very same teachers who want you to believe that the bible is too complicated to understand so often talk about lost books, defective translations, and the like? They point to the most difficult passages which may have awkward and archaic translations. *Why?* Is it not to create doubt in the written word in order to convince you to accept their doctrines? Surely no dispersions such as these appear in the scriptures themselves.

Jesus expected his contemporaries to understand the scriptures. He chastised them for their apparently deliberate misunderstanding. Over and over again he responded, not with what he had the authority to dictate to them directly, but with the voice of scripture. Open your bible and look at the number of times that Jesus and the apostles referred to the Old Testament scriptures in their teachings. It is obvious that they believed that those who they were teaching already understood (or could easily ascertain) these references in the identically same way as they did. In those cases where this was not true, those who misunderstood were held accountable for their error.

As an example of this, consider the incident in which Jesus corrected the error of the Sadducees with regard to the resurrection (Matthew 22:29-33):

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard [this], they were astonished at his doctrine.

Let us observe the following from this passage:

1. Jesus did not teach that the scriptures were too difficult to understand -- he charged the Sadducees with the responsibility to understand the concept of the "resurrection of the dead" from the Old Testament scriptures.

2. Jesus stated that they should have understood because of the *tense of a verb*. Had God said "I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" then it could be concluded that they were no longer in existence. However, since He said "I *am* the God ..." this indicated that they were still alive (in spirit).
3. The difference in the Hebrew between "am" and "was" is based upon the presence or absence of *one* word; in the Greek manuscript that he quoted it was just a few letters. Thus, Jesus was basing His argument on the accuracy of the manuscripts then in existence (recall Mt. 5:17-18 quoted above).
4. Jesus could have appealed to His miraculous ability, or even performed a miracle, but when it came to the resolution of doctrine *which had already been revealed*, He appealed to "that which was written." So should we.

As you study these passages, keep asking yourself the question: *Does God expect us to avail ourselves of the most published book in history?*

As another example, consider the story of Lazarus and the rich man. There is some disagreement as to whether this passage is a parable or an actual story, but that is inconsequential here. We are attempting to ascertain whether God expects us to understand His written word today and use it to determine His plan for our lives. The complete story is given in Luke 16 beginning with the 19th verse. To summarize: after his death, the rich man was in torment and, upon finding out that there was no longer hope for his own relief, he asked Abraham if he could send Lazarus back from the dead to warn his brothers. Let us pick up the reading in Luke 16:27:

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Observe the following from this passage:

1. The only way that they "had Moses and the prophets" was through their reading of the Old Testament scriptures.
2. "Let them hear them" clearly demonstrates that Jesus attributed to Abraham the expectation that they should have read and understood the Old Testament in order to determine the will of God.

3. The final statement clearly shows that "faith cometh through hearing," and if an individual will not allow the written word of God to produce faith, then even the most definitive of miracles will not avail. Indeed, *One did rise from the dead*, but those who did not have the will to be persuaded by Moses and the prophets would not be convinced even by Jesus' resurrection.

As we consider the importance that Jesus placed upon the Old Testament for determining God's will, can we really believe that the bible is too complicated to understand? (Recognize that while Jesus was upon the earth, the New Testament had not yet been written.) The Old Testament was less accessible to them, but Jesus expected them to know and understand it. How much more are we responsible for knowing the gospel by which we will be judged?

As we read through the New Testament we see reference after reference to the written word of God (generally the Old Testament) even as the New Testament was being written. In no case is anyone discouraged from studying it, and in all cases it is held in the highest esteem. As an example, the apostle Paul concludes his letter to Christians at Rome with the following statement: (Romans 16:25): "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, [be] glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

[Recall the discussion of the word mystery at the beginning of Section 1.2.]

Another example is the charge that Paul gave to the Thessalonians near the end of his first letter to them (1 Thes. 5:27): "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." Clearly Paul expected every member of the church to understand his writings.

As a final bit of supporting evidence, consider the final warning of the bible: Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book." If God did not expect us to understand the bible, why would He warn us not to add to it or take away from it?

Despite the claim of inspiration of many false teachers to this day, the pure word of God has been preserved from the first century. Not one word has been added to it or deleted from it, despite all of the attempts to alter it. Many have dared to defy the threat

of God; none have succeeded. Their counterfeit scriptures have been easy to detect, some even bordering on the absurd.

## 1.5 BIBLE COMPLEXITY

With all of this evidence that the bible is both understandable and the source of all spiritual truth, we might be tempted to conclude that it is trivial (i.e., not worthy of our time to study). Those who neglect to study it because they think it is "just common sense" make this mistake as well. In reality, the bible is a very challenging book. The apostle Peter referring to the writings of Paul stated "in which are some things hard to be understood" (2 Pet. 3:16). The following presents that context of this statement beginning with verse 14:

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know [these things] before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Note the following from this passage:

1. The apostle Peter had a very high regard for the writings of the apostle Paul; by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he placed them in the category of "scripture."
2. *Some* of the things that Paul wrote were "hard to be understood." This implies that other things were not hard to understand.
3. Not the faithful but *the unlearned and unstable* "wrested" or twisted these scriptures unto their own destruction.

Who was responsible for misunderstanding the writings of Paul (even though admittedly they were difficult to understand)?

We have been emphasizing that the bible is capable of being understood, while clearly the scripture quoted immediately above states that certain parts *are difficult* to understand. It is easy to reconcile these two views. Peter did not say that all things were

hard to be understood. There is a difference between "hard to be understood" and "too complex to understand." We can be safe in concluding that parts of God's word are quite simple, while others are much more challenging.

The distinction between the simple (milk) and the difficult (meat) was understood by all of the biblical writers. The apostle Paul indicated that this was correlated with the spiritual maturity of the reader or hearer (1 Cor. 3:1-2): "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, [even] as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able [to bear it], neither yet now are ye able."

The distinction is between the *milk* of the word, which is easily digested, as opposed to the *meat*, which requires more maturity for its discernment. The writer of the book of Hebrews indicated that time was necessary for maturing process to take place. He chastised the Hebrew Christians for not maturing as they should have (Hebrews 5:12-14): "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which [be] the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk [is] unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

There is a lesson here for both the weak and the strong. To the babe in Christ: God expects us to be obedient in all things which we understand to be His will (Heb. 5:9): "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." It is our job, not just to believe that He exists but also to diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6): "But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Growth is an essential part of the life of the Christian, and this requires the addition of knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5): "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."

To those who freely feed upon the meat of God's word, it should be recognized that you never "arrive." Indeed, it was those who had the most knowledge of God's word who were the recipients of the harshest rebuke from our savior (Matthew 23:23): "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier [matters] of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. [Ye] blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." Note, however, that it was not their study of God's word that produced this attitude. Their misunderstanding of the scriptures had nothing to do with the scriptures being difficult. No one who is self-serving will ever allow himself to understand the writings of God. However, their error was not study per se; their error was that they went to the bible solely to prove their preconceived ideas (see John 5:30-47).

The fact that the bible cannot be totally mastered is further evidence that its author was none other than God. Moreover, the fact that its first principles are so simple only adds to this evidence. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3) ... which introduces another way of expressing the myth of complexity: the myth that you can prove anything with the bible.

## **1.6 SUBMYTH: YOU CAN PROVE ANYTHING WITH THE BIBLE**

To illustrate this we might cite the scriptures (Matthew 27:5) "And he [Judas] cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." Then (Luke 3:11) "... let him do likewise." Or the famous words of Job's wife (Job 2:9) "... curse God, and die." Obviously, words taken out of context can be twisted to produce absurd teachings. But what does this prove? Give me the simplest of writings and I can do the same. Thus, should we conclude that no writings can be understood? Such reasoning demonstrates ulterior motives. God expects us to use the basic common sense which he has given to every normal human being.

This submyth is just another way of rationalizing ignorance of God's word. After all, if clever teachers can prove anything by quoting scriptures, why should the average person give it any credibility at all? The problem with the statement "you can prove anything ..." is that it is in large part true when speaking of those who are wilfully ignorant. As we observed from Peter when speaking of some of Paul's more difficult writings, he said (2 Peter 3:16): "which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." It is clear that not only the difficult but also the simple scriptures are wrested by the ignorant and steadfast to lead those with itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3) to proceed in whatever direction in which they have already set their hearts.

So the bible itself confirms that our section title is partially true, and thus the danger. But before we swallow this fable hook, line, and sinker, let us explore the part of it that is false. The old adage comes to mind: you can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time ... In fact, you cannot prove any false doctrine with the bible to someone who is proficient in God's word. In most cases false doctrines are proven to those who already wish to believe them, and they will accept even the lamest, most illogical proof provided it is the same as their preconceived ideas. However, in other cases false teachers are very adept at the manipulation of both their followers and God's word to produce the effects that they desire.

Warnings with regard to false teachers are so numerous that we invite the reader to pick a point at random in the New Testament and read five chapters in a row. The

chances of a warning against one in any given five pages is very high. The references to false teachers are difficult to avoid, but we must study the scriptures to recognize when a false teacher is misapplying a verse from God's word.

Appealing to the bible itself, we see absolutely no evidence that the *stable* and *honest* disciple will be readily deceived by those who twist the scriptures to their own destruction. We see absolutely no disrespect for God's word because "it can prove anything." Finally, we see absolutely no discouragement for the study of God's word for this reason.

The inevitable conclusion is that those who make this appeal are either excusing their own ignorance or discouraging study by others. They have no greater prospect than to live their lives out in slavery and servitude to the devil (John 8:32).

## **1.7 WHY PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND**

There is a reason that most people do not understand God's word, *but it has nothing to do with intellectual ability or the difficulty of the scriptures*. The following story provides enlightenment in this regard (Matthew 13:10-17):

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and [their] ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with [their] eyes and hear with [their] ears, and should understand with [their] heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed [are] your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous [men] have desired to see [those things] which ye see, and have not seen [them]; and to hear [those things] which ye hear, and have not heard [them].

Jesus places the responsibility for understanding upon the individual. When we say that we cannot understand it (or tell others that they cannot), we shift the blame for our ignorance from ourselves to God. For, if the bible is too difficult for us to understand and

understand alike, then the fault for this must lie with the maker -- *for He made both us and His word*. I am not ready to blame God for my ignorance of His word, are you?

One of the tenderest and most moving passages in the bible is found in Matthew 11:25-29:

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and [he] to whomsoever the Son will reveal [him]. Come unto me, all [ye] that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light.

Jesus is calling us all today through His word (John 6:45) "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." If you study the bible with no other intent but to find what God's will is for you, you will have no problem in understanding what you need. God will change your life, what you most desire, and what you expect to find each time you open His word. Certain parts of it will be difficult to understand at first, but with maturity which comes from digesting the milk, you will soon be able to partake of the meat.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter is merely a sampling of the scriptures which demonstrate that God expects us to understand His written word. Once you get into it you will recognize that page after page reinforces this basic theme: the holy scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation. Paul stated to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:15): "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The ramifications of this simple fact are enormous in terms of organized religion. Simply put: *we do not need organizations of men or a clergy class to tell us what God's word means*. We will see what the bible teaches with regard to our organizing ourselves later. At this point we need to revisit the thoughts of Section 1.1. As long as you believe that God's word is too difficult for you to understand, you will make no effort to understand it for yourself, and you will be enslaved to whatever doctrine persuasive false teachers wish you to believe.

A few of these are discussed in the remaining chapters of this book. We will see that the word of God is not common sense -- that it is as far from the intuition of man as darkness is from light. The bible is not a spurious and unnecessary book. It is as essential to faith as faith is to salvation (Rom. 10:17).

If you do not agree with the basic premise of this chapter, there is really no use reading any further. For, the remaining chapters assume that the reader agrees that the bible *is* God's word and that it *can* be understood.

Perhaps you totally agree and have the highest regard and respect for the authority of God's word. We urge you to use it to validate what we have written as you read on.