



How Do We Read Our Bible?

- A “Quick” History Lesson
 - Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Pre-Modern Era

- **Post-Exilic Interpretation (Ezra)**
 - Key Figures: Ezra and the Levites
 - Key Phrase: “So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading” (Neh 8:8).
- **Rabbinic Judaism**
 - Key Figures: Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai (70 B.C.–A.D. 10)
 - Key Phrase: Oral Law

Pre-Modern Era

- Hellenistic Judaism/Late Church Fathers
 - Key Figure: Philo and Augustine
 - Key Phrases: Allegorizing is searching for a hidden or secret teaching underlying but unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of the text.
- The Reformation (A.D. 1500–1650)
 - Key Figures: John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, and John Calvin
 - Key Phrase: *sola scriptura* (scripture alone)

Modern Era

- Rationalism
 - Descartes: I think, therefore I am.
 - Pre-Modern: God said it, therefore it is.
- Liberalism(1600–1900)
 - German Theologians – Deconstruction
 - Mainline Denominations
- Subjectivism (1900–present)
 - More Germans – Personal Experience
 - Spiritual Bible (not historical)

Post-Modern Era

- Pre-Modern: God said it, therefore it is.
- Modern: I think, therefore I am.
- Postmodern: I feel, therefore it is “true” for me at this moment.

Results:

1. Equality – Reader-response
2. Tolerance – The value of those who believe nothing.
3. No Authority – No one has absolute truth.

Review

The battle for the meaning of the Bible has reached four diverse conclusions:

- The Bible has one meaning. (Literal)
- The Bible has no meaning. (Liberalism)
- The Bible has many meanings.
(Allegorical/Subjectivism)
- The Bible means whatever you want it to mean. (Postmodernity)

Foundations to Good Bible Study

1. The ultimate determiner of meaning is the intention of the author.
2. The task of the reader is to determine what the author intended and the original audience understood.
3. Every text of Scripture has only one valid meaning/interpretation.
4. Every text of Scripture may have multiple valid applications.

Foundations to Good Bible Study

5. The reader of the Bible must cross bridges to properly understand the meaning of each text of Scripture:
 - The Literary Bridge
 - The Grammatical Bridge
 - The Cultural Bridge
6. The ultimate author of the Bible desires to make known His original meaning for every believer.