

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I — STUDENT HANDOUT
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Lecture 6

Chapter 6 — The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity

What You Should Learn From Today’s Lecture

- Define the clarity of Scripture.
- Explain how the Old Testament affirms the Bible’s clarity.
- Explain how the New Testament affirms the Bible’s clarity.
- Identify the requirements for understanding Scripture rightly.
- Recognize the major objections to the doctrine of clarity.
- Understand the practical implications of this doctrine for Christian living and ministry.

I. What the Clarity of Scripture Means

The clarity of Scripture means:

Key idea: Scripture is understandable, but not every passage is equally easy.

Major Teaching Passage

“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”
—Psalm 119:130

II. Old Testament Affirmations of Clarity

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 teaches that God’s Word can be taught in daily life.

Notes:

Deuteronomy 30:11–14 teaches that God’s Word is not beyond reach.

Notes:

Psalm 19:7 teaches that God's Word makes wise the simple.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."

Notes:

Psalm 119:105 teaches that God's Word gives light for life.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Notes:

III. New Testament Affirmations of Clarity

Jesus often said, "Have ye not read?" showing that people were responsible to understand Scripture.

Notes:

The New Testament letters were written to churches, not only scholars.

Notes:

Key passages: Matthew 12:3, Matthew 19:4, Matthew 22:29, Luke 24:25, Colossians 4:16, 1 Timothy 4:13

IV. Requirements for Understanding Scripture Rightly

1. Time

2. Effort

3. Use of ordinary means

4. Willingness to obey

5. Help of the Holy Spirit

6. Humble recognition that our understanding is imperfect

Major Teaching Passages

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

—James 1:22

“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

—Psalm 119:18

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

—Luke 24:45

V. Objections and Responses

Theological liberalism:

Postmodern hermeneutics:

Roman Catholic teaching on interpretation:

VI. Implications of the Doctrine of Clarity

The meaning of Scripture can be known.

Translations should be encouraged.

Bible reading should be encouraged.

When Christians disagree, the fault is not with the Bible.

Things to Know (Exam Review Section)

1. The clarity of Scripture means the Bible is written in such a way that it is able to be understood.
2. The doctrine of clarity does not mean every passage is equally easy to understand.
3. Misunderstanding comes from the reader's limitations and sin, not from defects in Scripture.
4. The Old Testament teaches that God's Word can be taught, understood, and obeyed.
5. Jesus treated Scripture as understandable and held people accountable for knowing it.
6. Right understanding of Scripture requires time and effort.
7. Right understanding also requires the use of ordinary means.
8. Right understanding requires obedience and the help of the Holy Spirit.
9. God's character is the basis for the clarity of Scripture.
10. The doctrine of clarity encourages preaching, translation, Bible reading, and doctrinal confidence.

A question on the exam will ask if you did the assigned reading.

Closing Summary

The clarity of Scripture teaches that God has spoken in words his people can understand. Though some passages are difficult, the Bible is clear enough to reveal truth, proclaim the gospel, guide believers, and strengthen the church. Because God is wise, loving, and faithful, his Word can be read, studied, believed, and obeyed.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Chapter 6 — *The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity*