

Saturation, Timing, and Outside Help

A number of years ago I was preparing for a Bible class that dealt with Matthew chapters 24 and 25. For quite some time the text had puzzled me. I was quite confident that Jesus was referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in the first part of chapter 24. I was also quite confident that chapter 25 ended with a description of the final judgment. It was puzzling that there was no obvious break in the teaching of Jesus between the beginning of chapter 24 and the end of chapter 25. It was as if these two unrelated events were somehow bound together in the text, yet with no real clue as to how to decipher the meaning.

I finally found my answer and it came as the result of three important elements of study:

- Saturation,
- Timing, and
- Outside assistance

Saturation: This is the idea of being engrossed in a verse or passage or question. You have turned it over in your mind many times. You have looked at every angle asking and refining questions. You are keenly aware of the difficulty as well as the details of the passage. Even when reading or studying other passages, this question lies in the back of your mind. The question awaits illumination. Even unrelated studies are evaluated for a possible clue to understanding.

**But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.**
—Psalm 1:2

Timing: Have you ever experienced sudden insight into a passage of scripture that you had read many times before? Why were you able to understand more *that* day than before?

Simple timing.

Often a change in circumstances provides a heightened awareness of a need. Passages that answer that need seem to stand out. Some scriptures are better understood when a person is an adult, or when a person is married, or has children. I am eager to see what more I will learn as old age opens my eyes even wider.

Financial difficulties, loss of job, health issues, and the death of a loved one can all place us in circumstances that open our eyes to truths never before seen with such clarity. Some passages are difficult simply because we are not ready to understand fully. Timing.

These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him....

—John 12:16

Outside help: What do you expect here? Bible dictionaries? Commentaries? No.

I am thinking about prayer and the Holy Spirit!

Bible resource materials are useful and should be consulted, but not first. Commentaries, Bible dictionaries and other resources are produced by man. Before turning to man's resources search for meaning and understanding in the immediate text and within the context of the Bible as a whole. Listen to God first. Then pray for understanding.

Ask and it shall be given to you.
—Matt. 7:7

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?
—Luke 11:13