



Cutting It Straight

Lesson 3: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Interpretation

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 2:12

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.”

The Doctrine of Illumination

Illumination can refer either to one’s salvation or to a believer’s need for greater understanding of or enlightenment regarding the Bible.¹ Regarding the latter definition, illumination in the spiritual sense is “turning on the light” of understanding so that one may apply the knowledge given in the Bible.² This illumination is done by the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life.

Why the Spirit Is Required

1. Ephesians 2:1. What is the condition of man spiritually? _____
2. Ephesians 4:17–19. In what five ways did Paul describe Gentile unbelievers?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
3. 1 Corinthians 2:14. What does Paul tell us about unbelievers regarding spiritual truth? _____

4. Romans 8:6–8. How does Paul describe “the mind set on the flesh”? _____

¹ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, Gen. eds. *Biblical Doctrines: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 389.

² *What is the Biblical Doctrine of Illumination?* <https://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-illumination.html>. Accessed on January 11, 2023.

5. Matthew 13:11–13. Why don't unbelievers understand God's Word? _____

6. 2 Corinthians 4:3–4. What is the state of unbelievers? _____

The Holy Spirit's Role

1. Titus 3:5. What does the Spirit do? _____

2. John 14:26. What did the Holy Spirit do for the apostles? _____

3. John 15:26. What is the Spirit's role in this verse? _____

4. John 16:8. What is the Spirit's role in this verse? _____

5. John 16:13. What is the Spirit's role in this verse? _____

6. 1 Corinthians 2:9–13. How does God reveal truth to the believer? _____

7. 1 John 2:26–27. How can a believer discern between deception and truth? _____

The Believer's Response and Reward

1. 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6. How did the believers receive the Word? _____

2. 1 Thessalonians 2:13. How did the believers receive the Word? _____

3. Psalm 119:12. What is the psalmist's desire? _____

4. Psalm 119:18. What does the psalmist ask for? _____

5. Psalm 119:130. What is the reward for believers? _____

What Illumination Does Not Do³

1. Illumination does not function outside God's Word (Ps. 119:18; Luke 24:45).

³ *Biblical Doctrines*, 389-390.

2. Illumination does not guarantee that every Christian will agree doctrinally, because the human element can cause false doctrine (Gal. 2:11–21).
3. Illumination does not mean that everything about God is knowable (Deut. 29:29).
4. Illumination does not render the need for human teachers unnecessary (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2).
5. Illumination is not a substitute for dedicated, personal Bible study (2 Tim. 2:15).
6. Illumination is not a one-time experience (2 Tim. 2:15).

Application

1. How does the doctrine of illumination help us in our interactions with unbelievers?
2. Why is the Holy Spirit so important in the life of the believer?
3. How can you grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word?