

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON READING HOLY SCRIPTURE

I exhort you, and I will not cease to exhort you to pay heed not only to what is said here, but when you are home also you should occupy yourselves attentively with the reading of Holy Scripture. Let no one say to me such cold words-worthy of judgment---as these: 'I am occupied with a trial, I have obligations in the city, I have a wife, I have to feed my children, and it is not my duty to read the Scripture but the duty of those who have renounced everything.' What are you saying?! It is not your duty to read Scripture because you are distracted by innumerable cares? On the contrary, it is your duty more than those others, more than the monks; they do not have such need of help as do you who live in the midst of such cares. You need treatment all the more, because you are constantly under such blows and are wounded so often. The reading of Scripture is a great defense against sin. Ignorance of the Scripture is a great misfortune, a great abyss. Not to know anything from the word of God is a disaster. This is what has given rise to heresies, to immorality; it has turned everything upside down.



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

Ten Principles of Orthodox Scriptural Exegesis

adapted from Bishop MICHAEL (Dahulich)

1. Christ - God is real and is incarnate in Jesus Christ; He is the Key to the Scriptures.
2. Life - One's ability to interpret depends upon one's spiritual state; one must live it in order to fully understand it.
3. A Love Letter - We read scripture to fall deeper in love with God and put on the Scriptural Mind.
4. Theosis - We read Scripture to become by grace what God is by nature.
5. Tradition - Only within the Church and her Tradition (the consensus of the Fathers) is there full and correct interpretation.
6. Scripture is a witness to the truth, the pinnacle of Holy Tradition; it is not an exhaustive manual of church life.
7. We must interpret the Bible as the Church has handed it, not try to reconstruct the canon of Scripture.
8. Personal - Ask yourself not only What does the text mean, but What does it mean for me?
9. Humility - As did many Church Fathers, consider your understanding of difficult texts as provisional.
10. Use secondary knowledge (history, literary criticism, archeology) to illuminate your understanding, not redefine dogma.