

Ministers:
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley
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Sunday:
8:00 AM: WGCY
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:
7:00 PM: Bible Study

[gibsoncitychurchof
Christ.com](http://gibsoncitychurchofChrist.com)

This Past Week:
Worship—23
Wednesday—7
Contribution—\$

For meditation:
Ecclesiastes 2.15–16
Soon, we will be
dead. Soon after,
everyone who
knew us will be
dead. Soon after
that, everyone
who heard of us
will be dead, and
we'll be entirely
forgotten. Given
this reality, how
should we be liv-
ing our life?

Radio program:
WGCY FM, 106.3
Sundays at 8 AM

More on hermeneutics

“For me was reserved the high honor of discovering among the rubbish of the ruined Coliseum the only playbill of that establishment now extant . . . Thus reads the bill:

ROMANCOLISEUM.
UNPARALLELED ATTRACTION!
NEW PROPERTIES!
NEW LIONS!
NEW GLADIATORS!

Engagement of the renowned
MARCUS MARCELLUS VALERIAN!
FOR SIX NIGHTS ONLY!”

The above is from Mark Twain’s, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) a travelogue of a trip Twain took to Europe and the Bible lands in 1869. It is full of humor and information, and I’d recommend it to all.

In 1870, the *London Saturday Review* published a critique of *Innocents* that had nothing good to say. The anonymous critic said this about the above excerpt: “[Twain] gives at full length a theatrical programme seventeen or eighteen hundred years old, which he professes to have found in the ruins of the Coliseum, among the dirt and mould and rubbish. It is a sufficient comment upon this statement to remark that even a cast iron programme would not have lasted so long under such circumstances.”

The reviewer thought Twain was being serious; now how funny is that! By missing the joke, he proved himself unqualified to pass judgment on Twain’s book.

When reading, the first thing to decide is whether the author is being literal or figurative. If we fail in this, we’re in trouble (e.g., Jn. 11.11,12; Jn. 13.8,9). This is especially the challenge when reading the Revelation. If we don’t have a good idea of which parts are literal and which are figurative, may we have the good sense not to volunteer to teach something we don’t understand.

kenny

Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL

The church—the building of Christ

You also . . . are being built up a spiritual house.
1 Peter 2.5

Matthew 16.18 and 1 Peter 2.5 both speak of the church using the figure of a building, and common to every building are three considerations worth considering.

There is a design to follow. There is a blueprint, if not on paper, then in the mind of the builder. The blueprint for the church was first in the mind of the builder and then was committed to paper, and we call that blueprint the Bible (Heb. 8.5). The church is not ours, it is Christ’s, and as such, ought to be built to his specifications.

There is a duty to fulfill. Buildings are built for something. A hospital helps the ailing. A school educates the ignorant. For what was the church built? “In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2.21,22). The church is the “building” that God calls “home.”

There are decorations to furnish. Buildings aren’t meant to merely empty shells consisting of little more than four walls; they are furnished and decorated. The Bible speaks of the church—the people of God—living in ways that *adorn* the doctrine of God. The church of God is decorated by the righteous faith and good works of its people who glorify the God of the church (Matt. 5.16). God’s house deserves the finest furnishings, nothing cheap or inferior, but furnishings of gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Cor. 3.12).

kenny

Sermon: James 3.1–5

“Stick out your tongue”

26 January 2025

On the reading of books, part 2

The first book I encourage young preachers to read is Mortimer J. Adler's, *How to Read a Book*. Adler was a preeminent twentieth-century American philosopher and educator who coedited the *Great Books of the Western World* series.

Preachers like to use big words (it makes us sound smarter than the average bear), such as *hermeneutics*. But hermeneutics is simply reading with understanding, which (hopefully) we learn to do in second grade. *How to Read a Book* shows how to raise our understanding to the level of the author's understanding simply by applying our brain to the book, with no outside help. After we've read a book with understanding, we'll know what the author knew.

To achieve this, every book should be read three times. With practice, a good reader will eventually be able to do all three readings simultaneously.

A book should first be read analytically. "Every book," writes Adler, "has a skeleton hidden between its covers. Your job as an analytical reader is to find it." Adler calls this, "X-raying a book," wherein we discover the book's unity, its outline. What is the author's theme? his point? Once we know the theme, we then identify the major parts (sections) of the book and identify how they support the book's theme. Adler teaches us how to do this by simply applying our brain to a book, with no outside help.

A book should then be read synthetically. At this level of reading you *come to terms with the author*, which means you learn the meaning he attaches to the words he uses. When we're reading and come across a word we don't understand, most of us skip it and go on reading. But words we don't understand are often the very ones we need to understand. Adler shows how to understand an author's terms by using nothing but the book you're reading.

A book should then be read critically. When you finish a book and don't understand it, you must reread until you do understand. Once you understand, you must decide if you agree or disagree with the author. If you disagree, Adler shows there are only three reasons for doing so. You'll have to read the book to find out what they are.

How to Read a Book will make reading more rewarding for anyone, not just preachers. The same fundamental rules of hermeneutics (see how smart I am) apply, whether you're reading Plato's *Republic* or John's *Revelation*. Adler's guidelines will free you from dependence on what other's think and make your study more exciting and enriching no matter what book you're reading.

kenny

A primer on evil

**Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.
Genesis 4.8**

As incredible as it might seem, the jump from stealing swiping a piece of fruit (Gen. 3.6) to first-degree murder was short. Sin doesn't cure itself but grows and grows until someone is dead (Jas. 1.14,15). Cain offers an especially chilling glimpse into the nature of sin.

ITS RATIONALITY

Wiersbe notes that Cain was guilty of every sin God hates (Prov. 6.16–19), which by itself is enough to explain Cain's action. In Genesis 4.7, God admonishes, "If you do well, will you not be *accepted*?" A margin note in the KJV reads, "have the excellency," and some understand this as a reference to the rights of the firstborn. Did Cain fear that as a result of his rejected offering his younger brother would get his first-born privileges?

THE BRUTALITY

Cain *slew* his brother, says 1 John 3.12, using a word that means "butcher," "slaughter." This makes me think Cain cut Abel's throat (cf. "open"/trachea in Heb. 4.13). Even more, it suggests how Abel typified another innocent victim who was slaughtered (Acts 8.32) and whose blood cried out for justice.

THE DEPRAVITY

And for what reason was it that he slew his brother? Incredible as it may seem, it was because his brother's works were righteous, while his own were evil." His brother's works were righteous, and he, therefore, hated and slew him. The goodness he refused to emulate was unendurable. . . . A sentence was surely never penned that sheds a more horrifying light upon the evil capability of the human heart. If we did not know as a fact and an experience the envy 'which withers at another's joy and hates the excellence it cannot reach,' it would seem a thing entirely preposterous—a fantasy from some grotesque nightmare world. Robert Law, *The Tests of Life*, 239

Murder comes from the heart (Matt. 15.19). If we yield our heart—our being—to Satan, we're capable of hating a man for no other reason than that he's a good man. Does it get more depraved than that (Jn. 3.19,20)? Keep your heart with all diligence.

kenny