

Bible Study 101

Our Standing

Study of the Bible assumes that one is already a Christian. That must be a fact.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:17)

Conversely, no one can hope to understand the Bible and truth if they're not saved and in dwelt with the Holy Spirit.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

and

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13).

The Object Must Be Authentic

As the object of the study of the Bible must be held as authentic and authoritative. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."* (2 Timothy 3:16) We are commanded to study it. *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8) and *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15).

Comprehensive

The Bible must be studied consistently and comprehensively. *"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."* (Isaiah 28:10,13) and also *"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom*

teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:13). This means in order to uncover truth we need to study cover to cover comparing scripture with scripture taking the plain sense just as it says. When this totality of scripture is taken into account doctrines and truth is verified.

Logic and Common Sense

God is a God of order. *"Let all things be done decently and in order."* (1 Corinthians 14:40) and not of confusion. *"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."* (1 Corinthians 14:33).

We must approach Scripture—the Bible with logical conclusions and good common sense. Here is an example: *"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."* (Matthew 5:29)

So we are too pluck out our eyes if it makes us sin? Is that what God would have us do self-mutilation? No, it is a figure of speech, or an idiom, which is an expression peculiar to one particular Language. (i.e. in English, six of one half dozen of another) Just like today when we say, "Boy, I slept like a log" do logs sleep? No, do you see what I mean? Is there any example in the entire New Testament that any followers of Jesus plucked out their eyes? No. So you see where logical thinking and common sense comes in?

God, I know what you said, but what do You Mean? "Did God Mean THAT?" Dare we claim to improve on the Perfect Communicator's choice of words? While we may "explain" Bible passages using extra-biblical terms and examples, none will improve on what God has said—all of fallen man's "interpretations" are flawed, less than truth and are dangerous. The best "interpretation" is in the Bible.

God did not conceal the truth in numerical codes, or complex language structures, or in an allegory, that would show favoritism to some small group of mankind. God says He wants to be known universally—by everyone. Such claims beg the question, "Why does God mislead the masses?" He doesn't.

To know the truth (what actually happened) we must respect...

The plain meaning...

1. Is NOT the literal meaning

Taking every word in the Bible literally would be blind rebellion. As the world's best literature, the Bible is full of all kinds of non-literal language. Metaphors, similes, figures of speech, parables, visions, poetry and proverbs. Each of these methods were selected by the Master Communicator because it is better than an entirely literal Bible to reveal perfect truth. Our first task is to submit to His powerful use of language, not to overrule it in any way. Furthermore the plain meaning does not mean simple –the Bible is always profound.

2. Believes that the Bible Is What It Claims to be –God's Words

"No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:20,21)

3. Honors The Great Communicator

Treat His words as if He Says What He Means and Means What He Says. After all He taught, "Let your Yea be Yea and your Nay be Nay."

4. Seeks ONLY the Author's meaning never The reader's meaning.

Always come to Scripture as a learner, never an expert. If the reader decides the meaning of words then the Author's meaning, right or wrong, can never reach the intended destination: the reader's mind.

5. Presupposes Common Word and Sentence Meanings

When the tempter used God's own words to test Jesus, Jesus' simple "It is written" ended all negotiation. (Matthew 4). The prophets stopped semantic debate with, "Thus Saith the Lord." Truth is in the words–never in the interpretation.

6. Follows the Universal Rules for Non-literal Language

The Bible is full of non-literal language governed by universal rules that guide the reader to the Author's meaning, never his own. Mythology is treated as myth because that is what it claims to be. Scripture claims to

be an inerrant record of history –past, present and future. It begins with, "In the beginning..." It does not begin with "Once upon a time..."

7. Draws Only Deeper Meaning Consistent with ALL of Scripture

Every historical event in Scripture has spiritual implications. History is the framework on which the Bible teaches spiritual truth. In this way we learn to apply spiritual principles back to our real life history. Any secondary meaning will not contradict the plain meaning of the text. Inerrancy is horizontal –consistency between passages, and vertical –consistency between levels of meaning.

8. Tests for Doctrinal HARMONY

The Plain Meaning of Scripture does not hang for its life on semantics.

We must also "Prove All Things." by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." testing every so-called 'interpretation' for doctrinal harmony. An additional key to understanding prophecy is one that applies to all Scripture. It is the principle of searching out everything that the Bible has to say on a particular point.

Avoid hanging a doctrine on one isolated verse. All verses on a particular topic must be searched out, compared, and then reconciled. The Bible itself teaches that each passage in the word of God is intended to convey a single absolute truth. That truth may have several applications, but the truth conveyed is to mean the same thing to each and every person. Just as the expressed equation of $2+2=4$, or the statement, "You are visiting LCM's website" is to mean the same thing to each person who understands it, so is God's word. A person may be adding duck, dogs, or dandelions, but adding two of them or two more of them will always equal four of them.

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John 2:27)

As some may see, a reader of the Bible must either be open to believing that nothing they read in Bible means what it actually says, or believe that it means exactly what it says and nothing else. It is error if that which the Bible truly deems to be literal is interpreted symbolically. It is equally

erroneous if that which the Bible truly deems to be symbolic or spiritual is interpreted literally.