

LESSON # 36
HARD QUESTIONS SERIES
“CAN WE TAKE THE BIBLE LITERALLY?”

People often ask, “Do you take the Bible literally?” The answer is, **“Yes.”**

But literally, just like you would any other book or conversation. The Bible, like books and conversations uses many different “forms of speech.” As a book, it needs to be approached reasonably and intellectually. As the Bible, the Revelation of God Himself, it needs to be approached spiritually. We will attempt to learn how to integrate the two. We will study Bible study methods, the theories and history of interpretation, as well as general principles involved.

(I) WHAT ARE HERMENEUTICS? (the word is Greek and means interpret)

- A. Science of **interpretation**
 - 1. Exegesis - proper practice of hermeneutics, taking out and expounding
 - 2. Icegesis - Improper practice of hermeneutics, putting in (heresy, false doctrine)

(II) WHO CAN UNDERSTAND SCRIPTURE?

- A. **Christians**
 - 1. With a new heart (I Cor. 2:14)
 - 2. With a hungry heart (I Pet. 2:2)
 - 3. With an obedient heart (Ps. 119:90-100)
 - 4. With a disciplined heart (Matt. 7:7)
 - 5. With a teachable heart (Isa. 50:4)
 - 6. With the aid of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15ff)
- B. Three verses to interpret
 - 1. Ps. 115:17
 - 2. II Cor. 6:14
 - 3. I Cor. 15

(III) SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- A. The Bible is God's Word.

- B. The Bible can be understood.
- C. The Bible is its own interpreter.
- D. We must respond to the message.
- E. The Holy Spirit is necessary.

(IV) WHO IS C. W. GABS?

- A. C = Context
W = Words
G = Grammar
A = Author's intention
B = Background
S = Scripture interprets Scripture

(V) HOW CAN C. W. GABS HELP US?

- A. Context
 - 1. What is the book written for?
 - 2. What is the paragraph about?
- B. Words
 - 1. Words have a tendency to evolve in meaning.
 - 2. Often our definition is not the authors.
 - 3. Some words have many meanings.
 - a. Prov. 14:15, Prevent = come before, anticipate
 - b. Ps. 59:10; 79:8; 88:13
 - 4. K. J. 500 archaic words
 - a. Let = hold back
 - b. Conversion = conduct
- C. Grammar

1. Know the relationships between words
2. Understand their settings

D. **Author's Intention**

1. What was the writer trying to convey?
2. What prompted the writing?

E. **Background.**

1. Who was it written to?
2. What were they like?
3. Was anything in their culture strange?
4. Are there things we should know that would make understanding easier?

F. **Scripture by Scripture**

1. Scripture is unity
2. Scripture doesn't contradict itself.

(VI) **BIBLE LANGUAGE**

A. Ordinarily the Bible means what it says.

B. It does use figurative language.

1. The sun rising. We know the sun doesn't "rise." The Bible also knows this, but we all say it.

2. **SIMILES** Compare one thing to another. 1 Peter 5:8: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion."

3. **ALLEGORIES** Uses words that don't 'really' apply to the situation or person, but is used to describe something. Jesus saying He was "The Good Shepherd" is one of these. He wasn't a shepherd and we are not sheep. Yet He IS a shepherd and we ARE sheep.

4. METAPHORS Describe something using “like” without always saying “like.” Jesus said, “You are whitewashed tombs.” Allegories and metaphors are closely linked together.

5. HYPERBOLE means to ‘exaggerate something.’ Jesus said, “If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off.” If you cut off your right hand, yo can still sin with the other. But we get the point.

6. ANTHROPOMORPHISM is when we assign human characteristics to God. “The hand of the Lord” “The eyes of the Lord.”

7. APOCALYPTIC LANGUAGE It might be hard to know whether this language is literal or figurative when it says things like “The moon will turn to blood.” Or “The stars will fall from the sky.”

C. It does use symbols.

1. Who is the woman in Rev. 12:1-6?

2. Who is the dragon?

D. It does use **parables**.

1. Uses everyday experiences, images, people and places to give hidden or deeper messages. “Let he who has ears to hear, hear.”

E. It does use types.

(VII) PARABLES (RULES FOR INTERPRETATION)

A. Determine historical occasion and aim

B. Determine subject matter

C. Determine several parts, with reference to general design.

D. Consider context

E. Look for **one central truth**

(VIII) EXERCISE IN TITUS

A. Lessons in Titus

1. Who is it written to?
2. By whom?
3. For what purpose?
4. What action is to be taken?
5. How and why?
6. For whom is instruction included?
7. What applications may be made?

(IX) SIX HONEST MEN

- A. Who?
- B. What?
- C. Why?
- D. Where?
- E. When?
- F. How?

(X) QUESTIONS TO ASK

- A) Should this passage be taken literally or is using other literary methods?
- B) Is it Poetry?
- C) Is it history?
- D) Should we just go with the plain meaning here, or is there more to it?
- E) Is this prophecy?
- F) Is there apocalyptic language in the passage?
- G) Is this a letter?

Question: What is the theme of Philippians?