# A Sound Basis for Proper Scripture Interpretation

Only one interpretation of any given scripture can be absolutely correct, in the objective sense. While a Bible passage may have many different subjective meanings, uses and applications, there can only be one underlying objective truth.

For example, there are a variety of opinions held by Christians regarding the story of the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Some regard the story as literally true, while some regard it as true only in the symbolic or allegorical sense. Still others would regard the story as untrue altogether, and believe that it reflects a primitive, incorrect understanding of what God is like and how God relates to us. The latter view can still yield a positive benefit, however, by helping the reader to gain an accurate perspective on the origin and development of Hebrew thought, on which Christianity is largely based.

In order to interpret the Bible correctly and effectively, one must determine, as far as is possible, the underlying objective truths contained in it. I personally have never believed in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. In the Bible you will find many historical, factual, doctrinal, and logical absurdities and incongruities. You will also find in the Bible the most sublime and powerful spiritual truths ever penned by mankind.

I was raised in the Christian fundamentalist tradition and was taught that if you can't believe all of the Bible, then you have no basis for believing any of it. If the Bible is not true and accurate in every respect, it cannot possibly be the inspired Word of God, because God is perfect and cannot lie. If only parts of the Bible are true, then it would be impossible to separate the truths from the errors.

Late in life, after much diligent study and research, I learned to my joy and amazement that it is not only possible to accurately separate truth from error in the Bible, but it is extremely easy to do so. There are tons of resources out there that can help us do this.

The best way to correctly determine whether a proposition is true or not is to first examine the underlying assumptions on which the proposition is based. Perfectly logical conclusions which are based on false underlying premises cannot be relied upon. So, in order to correctly interpret and understand the Scriptures one must honestly examine and evaluate many assumptions or premises on which one's understanding of the Scriptures is based.

Here's how I would suggest you proceed in your search for religious truth:

1. Do not begin with the assumption that the Bible was written by God or that it was inspired by God. That is a conclusion, not an underlying assumption.

2. Do not base your views on internal claims made within the Bible itself. A suspected criminal is not convicted or exonerated in a court of law based on his own personal testimony. Instead, his claims must be evaluated based on the external testimony of independent witnesses and must also be corroborated by historical, scientific and other evidentiary facts.

3. Do not base your views on cultural or family biases. Think for yourself. When someone (or group of some ones) you know and trust tells you what they believe about the Bible, challenge them. Ask them about why they believe what they do. Ask them to list for you the objective facts and assumptions on which their beliefs are based. Most people have not formed their opinion about the Bible based on an independent investigation of the facts. Instead, they have adopted the views of a social or cultural group with which they are involved, based on strong emotional or familial attachments.

4. When evaluating the Bible based on scientific evidence, be very careful. Scientists, although very methodical and systematic in their approach to truth, also harbor many biases. Many scientists are biased against theism and/or the supernatural, while others are very religious. Basing your beliefs about the Scriptures on science alone is like navigating a minefield. Most of us are not smart enough to do it successfully.

5. Do not base your views about the Bible solely on human experience. If you do so, you will be most heavily influenced by the groups of people with whom you are most closely associated, and will be receiving little or no input from social groups in other places and countries.

6. Begin with logical assumptions. The underlying premises which form the basis of your belief system need to be based primarily on sound reason and logic. Reason and logic are a lot like mathematics. Scientists can disagree about many theories, but in the end, theories become indisputable laws when finally proven by some form of mathematics. The logic of the math is very hard to disprove. The same is true with reason and logic. For a proposition to be considered viable, both sides of the equal sign must agree. Reason and

logic are extremely effective at disproving things by pointing out logical incongruities. They also help people in positive ways to develop rational and effective belief systems.

A belief system, such as Christianity, can only be viable and helpful to you if you actually believe it. The more you believe it, the more effectively it will guide and improve your life.

I would strongly encourage you to read my book online, or watch it in video format on my website. The title of the book is: *"Logical Answers to Life's Toughest Questions, the Rational Basis for Faith in Christ"* Here is the link: http://toughestlifequestions.com/

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