

Principles of Bible Study

There are some basic principles that need to be employed when studying the Word of God (or any other writing for that matter). To start with, we should ask God to help us understand and illuminate the Text.

The first principle is to look at the context. Who wrote it? Who was it written to? When was it written? What was going on at the time? What is the historical setting?

The second principle is to read it straight forward, so as to understand it the way the recipients would have understood it. The meaning of the words needs to be understood and the logical use must be adopted.

The third principle is to understand why it was written. What was the purpose?

The fourth principle is to understand how it applies to us.

In all these things, we also need to apply the principle of letting the Bible interpret itself. In other words, the Bible is consistent within itself, so if there is more than one way of interpreting a Scripture, the way that is consistent with the rest of Scripture is the correct one.

Jesus and the New Testament writers often exhorted those who mis-interpreted or mis-represented the Scriptures. We are called to accurately handle the Word. Just read the letters to Timothy and see the emphasis on maintaining the correct doctrine!

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

Presuppositions

When we study the Bible, we will normally come with presuppositions that we may not even be aware of, so let's establish some groundwork as to what is true.

1. The Bible is the Word of God. It is not something that was dreamed up by mankind.
But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Pet. 1:20-21)
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (Jn. 1:1)
2. The Universe and all life were created by God as described in the beginning of Genesis. We know from science that the universe, space, time material and energy had an absolute beginning, prior to which nothing existed in this realm. In light of this, logically there needs to be an eternal creator that created this universe and who is not subject to the limitations of this physical world. We also know that scientists have not been able to produce life from non-life and that the atmospheric conditions for this to happen accidentally by chance do not appear to have been present. The Cambrian explosion of life also shows us that life did not gradually evolve, since the variety of animals all appeared about the same time. There are many other scientific reasons that evolution is not true and that creation is true, but this will do for now. Based on the Word of God and science, we must therefore read the Bible based on creation being true, and evolution and long time being false.

3. The Word of God is authoritative. God created the universe and all mankind; therefore, He establishes all truth. In our modern world, we tend to approach the Bible (and virtually everything else) with the notion that we can establish right and wrong. We really need to affirm that what God has said in His word is true, whether we like it or not, and set our hearts and minds to obey Him.
4. There is only one way to God, and that is through Jesus Christ.

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (Jn. 3:16-18)

Bible Study Helps

While Bible study helps such as study Bibles, Bible Encyclopedias, Bible Dictionaries, Bible Atlases, commentaries can be quite helpful with the information they contain, it must be pointed out that most of them are written from an evolutionary perspective. Some examples here:

1. The timelines for events and archeology are usually pretty good from around 3000 BC forward. Prior to that, you pretty well need to disregard all dating since it is not true. What we know is true, is that there was a worldwide catastrophic flood that is dated around 3300 BC or so. This flood wiped out everything that existed prior to the flood, so all of the archeological sites that we have are post flood. Since everything was destroyed in the flood other than what was on the ark with Noah, terms like stone age, bronze age and iron age need to be re-examined. The dating that is used, assumes that there was a gradual improvement in the technology used for tools and other items. Looking at it from a Biblical point of view, when people spread out from the ark, they would have to start from scratch again, other than what they had with them. It would be quite logical to expect a restart with primitive tools and relatively quickly move to a higher technological level as some knowledge that was gained prior to the flood was re-established.
2. The development of religion, when based on an evolutionary model, contradicts the Bible. Many scholars operate on the basis that the Israelite religion evolved from the people around them and that you can only understand it if you understand the other religions that it was supposed to have evolved from. This is just totally contradictory to the Scriptures. In fact, the very reason that God, through Moses, included the whole creation story was to set the record straight of what is actually true.
3. Look at who the author(s) or contributors are for the resources. As you look at some of the articles, are they trying to destroy the reliability of the Bible or build it up? Do they hold to the timeline given in Genesis? Do they hold to the Deity of Jesus? His death and resurrection? The existence of the spiritual world? Miracles? All of these types of questions will help to define what information can be used and what needs to be discarded.