



# How can you read the Bible literally?

## The Main Questions

How can you trust the Bible as history?

Isn't it inconsistent to take some things as literal and other things as not?

What about all the contradictions?

What about the fact that the Bible supports morally corrupt institutions or practices?

What about other gospels and other later Christian writings?

# How can you read the Bible literally?

How can you trust the Bible as history?

- Invite people to read the Bible in community.
  - Admit the obvious – It's actually a library of 66 books that we claim is both 100% of humans and 100% of God. And since it was first written by humans and to humans who lived 2000-3500 years ago. It takes some real work to fully appreciate its message.

# How can you read the Bible literally?

How can you trust the Bible as history?

- Be clear on what we are trying to prove.
  - We can't give absolute certainty, but there are few areas of life that can be proven with absolute certainty. We believe we have good reasons to trust that the Bible's witness to history is reliable, reliable enough to stake your life.
- Focus on Jesus and the Gospels
  - The Gospels present themselves as reliable witnesses to the life and teaching of Jesus, providing sufficient evidence to believe in Jesus.
  - Jesus affirms the inspiration, authority, and reliability of the OT.

# How can you read the Bible literally?

How can you trust the Bible as history?

- Invite People to test the Historical Reliability of the Gospels, just as we would any other book from antiquity.

When modern historians assess the value of a specific historical witness, for example how reliable is the author of the Gospel of Luke as a historian, they ask a number of questions to help establish a basis for historical reliability.

- I. How reliable is the text?
  - a. Do we have reasonable proof that what we are reading is from the author?
- II. What was the intention of the author?
  - a. Did they have a stated intention of recording history?
  - b. Did their style of writing match their intention?



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- III. What type of ability did they demonstrate in recording history?
  - a. Did their culture and heritage prepare them to write reliable history?
- IV. What can we discern of the character of the author?
  - a. What reasons do we have to trust their reports?
  - b. What reasons do we have to doubt their reports?
- V. How consistent is their account?
  - a. Does their report have internal inconsistency or loose ends that demonstrate reason to doubt their ability to provide reliable history?
- VI. Does the author have a certain bias that may color the way He reports the events?

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How can you trust the Bible as history?

- Invite People to test the Historical Reliability of the Gospels, just as we would any other book from antiquity.
- VII. Are there signs that the author covers-up unfavorable parts of the story to protect their position or credibility?
  - VIII. What type of external collaboration do we have to confirm their report and what does it show?
    - a. What can we glean from other written historical sources?
    - b. What can we glean from archeology?
    - c. Were there any opponents that provide a counter perspective or does it support the report of the historian?

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How can you trust the Bible as history?

- Let people draw their own conclusions

Even the majority of critical scholars admit that the Gospels are trustworthy sources. A. M. Hunter gives four reasons that critical scholarship accepts the overall historical claims of the Gospels.

1. The earliest Christians were meticulous in preserving the tradition of Jesus' words and life.
2. The Gospel writers were close to the eyewitnesses and pursued the facts about Jesus.
3. There are indications that these authors were honest reporters.
4. The overall composite of Jesus as presented in the four Gospels is essentially the same.

## How can you read the Bible literally?

Isn't it inconsistent to read somethings as literally and other things as not?

- The literal interpretation of Scripture is the in literary interpretation of Scripture.
  - The power of words
  - Why we sometimes choose poetry over prose, story over lists, parables over commands...and other observations
- God's Word to us was first God's word to them.

# How can you read the Bible literally?

Isn't it inconsistent to read some things as literally and other things as not?

- We want to be guided by good practices of reading

The Method of Good Reading

What does it Say?

- Context and Content
  1. What is the Genre? What kind of literature am I reading? What are the rules for this type of literature?

# How can you read the Bible literally?

The Method of Good Reading (Continued)

2. What is the historical context?
  - a. Start with the General Historical Context: When was it first written? What was the city of Philippi like, its people and rule?
  - b. Look at the Specific Historical Context: Why is Paul writing this letter? What is going on Paul's life? What is going on in the life of the Philippians?
3. What is the literary context? Where does this paragraph fit into the context of the letter? What does this passage mean in this specific context?



# How can you read the Bible literally?

## The Method of Good Reading (Continued)

### Content Questions

1. What are the Meaning of Words?
2. What is meaning of its Grammatical structure?
3. What is the historical background that lies behind this text?

## What does it Mean? Interpretation

1. What did it mean for the original hearers?
2. How does this meaning speak into our present situation?

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## What about all the Contradictions?

- Contradiction or Historical Distance?
- Contradiction or Paradox?
- Contradiction or Perspective?
- Contradiction or Skepticism?

Invitation: We are searching for the truth, so let's questions and explore and also be open to learning that what on the surface may appear contradictory can become a pathway for us to learn more our history, our world, and maybe even the nature of God.

## How can you read the Bible literally?

What about the fact that the Bible supports morally corrupt institutions or practices?

- Slavery, sexism and an author who tells it like it is...
  - Historical Distance
  - Seeds of Discontent
- Beware of the Tyranny of the Modern
- Distinguish between Major themes and minor themes
- Be open to cultural correction

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What about the other Gospels?

- Have you read any of them?
- How do they compare to the other Gospels?
- While they give us a picture of what some people claimed Jesus taught, the evidence does support them giving us good historical evidence of what Jesus taught.



# How can you read the Bible literally?

## Discussion Questions

- Why do you believe the Bible is the revelation of God?
- In what ways do you find it challenging to read the Bible?
- What did you find most helpful from tonight's discussion?
- Can you think of any good reasons for people to reject the historical reliability of the gospels? How can we respond to these objections?