

Getting the Most From Your Bible

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The Bible is a unique book. Of the millions of books that have been written, it alone is from God. While it is the revelation of God's mind to men, it still has several things in common with all other books. God used men and human thought patterns through which to communicate His word to us. Therefore, it should be approached in the same logical way that one would approach other books. The critical difference in approaching the Bible and the books of men must always be to recognize that the former is the inerrant Word of God, while all others are the works of fallible men.

The following rules of study will help you get the most from your Bible:

1. Search out the setting. This may be done by asking, "Who wrote it?" "Why did he write it?" "To whom was it written?" and similar questions.
2. Collect all of the teachings of the Bible on a subject before concluding what the Bible teaches on that subject. A *baptism only* salvation might be concluded from 1 Pet. 3:21, if we fail to consider other passages that include other things necessary for salvation (e.g., Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; et al.).
3. Doubtful and figurative passages, capable of more than one meaning, must be made to harmonize with literal and plain passages. Paul mentions "baptism for the dead" (1 Cor. 15:29) which some have taken very literally. However, such an interpretation is nullified by plain teaching requiring both a confessed faith and repentance of one who would be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), which the dead cannot do. Also, baptism must be as individual as faith and repentance and confession according to these plain verses.
4. Related to the previous principle, but distinct from it, is the principle that no important teaching or practice is to be based upon a doubtful or figurative passage. The only passage in which a 1,000-year reign is mentioned is in the highly figurative language of Revelation 20. Yet an entire system of theology, which conflicts with dozens of literally stated Scriptures, is built upon it, more than any other passage.

These simple principles will lead you into more Truth and will keep you from being "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

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