

I Know Absolutely Nothing About The Bible

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How to Read the Bible: Did It Really Happen That Way?

There are different ways Christians have read and understood the scripture. Many misunderstandings among Christians have to do with their unique perspective about the authority of the bible. Is the bible the ultimate authority in matters of faith and life or is it just one of many voices that need to be listened too? There may not be one answer that fits everyone. I have listed three ways people have viewed the bible.

View #1 Because we believe the bible is inspired by God, we must believe the bible is also inerrant and infallible (meaning it is without errors). So if the bible says Adam and Eve were the first two people God created then it is a historical fact. If the bible says Jonah was swallowed by a big fish and he lived in its belly for three days, then that had to have happened.

View #2 We believe the bible is inspired by God and is the source and norm of our faith and life. As such we believe that the bible contains the message of new life that is given to us from God through his son Jesus Christ. As such the bible may have historical errors in it but since it was not written to be a historical account these errors don't affect the truthfulness of the message.

View #3 The bible is a book of myths. It was compiled by religious leaders using stories from various traditions and religions. As such the bible should not be viewed as anything more or less than any other religious book.

If we hold that the bible is without error (view #1) then we have to accept all the laws and rules that are required of the faithful in the bible.

- Laws concerning women wearing men's clothing
- Laws concerning slavery
- Laws concerning and eye for an eye
- Laws concerning a woman's and child's place in society.

If we hold that the bible is not infallible (view #2) then we have to wonder if everything in the bible can be changed.

- If we don't like something the bible says can we just ignore it?
- If we don't like the concept of hell can we say it doesn't exist?
- If we don't like the idea that some people are not going to heaven can we believe in a universal salvation?
- As our society moves further and further from traditional Christian values should the Christian Church follow and change along with society in order to be relevant, mirroring society, or should the Christian Church stand strong on the values it receives from the bible and be a prophetic voice to the society?

What do Lutherans believe about the bible?"

The ELCA Constitution states:

"This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life."

For Example: Noah

- #1 There was a flood that lasted either 40 days or 1 year. Noah was told by God to build a large boat to hold 2 of every kind of animal (or 7 pairs of every kind of clean animal and 1 pair of unclean). God was punishing the earth for its sinfulness. The boat landed on Mt. Ararat and Noah and his family, along with the animals, became the new Adam and Eve.
- #2 The story of the flood may or may not have happened as it is told in the bible. It may have been a regional flood that caused many deaths. It may have been a legend that was picked up from another group of people which was then incorporated into the story of the Hebrew people. What is really important is its message of sin, punishment, and salvation.

For Example: Nicodemus

- #1 Jesus said to Nicodemus; "Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." (John 3:3) Certain Christian traditions understand this to be a command. In order for people to be saved they must have a second, spiritual, birth or being "born again". In this tradition there is no salvation without being born again.
- #2 Not only did Jesus tell Nicodemus that he must be born from above but he went on to describe t

his second birth as being born of water and the spirit. To other Christian traditions this second birth relates to baptism. When Jesus was baptized the Spirit of God descended upon him and said, "You are my son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased." For these Christians, baptism is our adoption by God and therefore it becomes our "spiritual" second birth.

Catholic View of Scripture

There are three authorities in our interpretation of the bible

1. The bible
2. Reason (or science)
3. Tradition (or Ecclesiastical interpretation)

Evangelicals View of Scripture

The bible is inerrant and therefore it stands alone as our authority.

Mainline Protestants View of Scripture

This varies between each denomination but basically

1. The bible is authoritative in that it points to Christ as the source of our salvation.
2. Science and reason are also authoritative in that they help us understand and live in a fast changing world.
3. Neither science, reason or scripture are necessarily superior to each other. They each have a part to play in helping us address current issues.