

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

July 16, 2017

Difficult Verses (2)

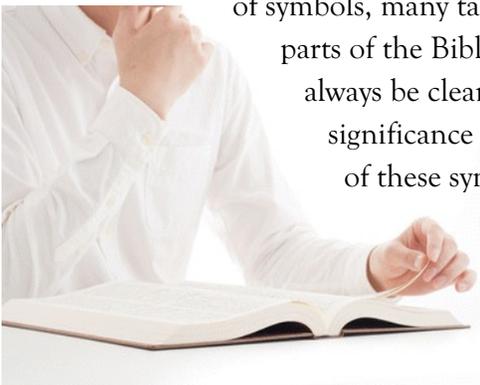
by Frank Himmel

What makes a Bible verse difficult? It may be the subject. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways" (Romans 11:33). Grasping the things of God is always a challenge for humans.

Another factor that sometimes makes a passage difficult is that the specific reference in the verse may not be obvious.

The Bible uses figures of speech, just as we do in everyday conversation. These must be approached in the same commonsense way we would interpret each other's speech.

Some Bible books, such as Revelation, make heavy use of symbols, many taken from other parts of the Bible. It may not always be clear what the significance of the details of these symbols is, or if the details even have any significance at all!



Another area where this problem arises is in predictive texts. The same prophetic language might be used to describe two different, yet perhaps connected, events. (This is sometimes called "telescoping.") For example, when God told David that He would seat one of David's descendants on his throne (2 Samuel 7:12-16), the Bible applies that promise both to Solomon, the immediate fulfillment (1 Chronicles 28:2-8), and to Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment (Luke 1:31-33). Likewise, the Bible uses some of the same terminology to describe both the judgment of Israel that occurred in A.D. 70 and the future final judgment of the entire world; occasionally, it is difficult to tell which event is in view in a specific verse.

Paul's depiction of the internal conflict between right and wrong (Romans 7:14-25) and his discussion of the struggle of the creation (Romans 8:18-25) are other oft-discussed illustrations of the problem of uncertain references. Even Peter acknowledged that some things Paul wrote are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16)!

Passages like these are certainly the exception, not the rule. The obvious approach in such circumstances is to proceed cautiously, being careful not to interpret any uncertain reference so as to contradict more obvious ones. Do not let your imagination run wild, and do not be dogmatic.

Remember the aim of Bible study: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5). ■

Experts Say . . .

by Frank Himmel



Atheistic scientists tell us the earth was formed billions of years ago, the random result of an explosion. Life somehow developed from non-life, and the variety of creatures we observe today evolved from simpler life forms. Man happens to be the highest form. *The Creator* tells us, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” bringing forth living creatures after their kind (Genesis 1:1, 25). Man is uniquely made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27). Whose explanation carries more weight with you?

Child psychologists tell us we must avoid generating any negative feelings in our children lest we damage their self-esteem; therefore, we must be extremely cautious about saying their thinking or conduct is wrong. Spanking is archaic and has the effect of teaching them that violence is acceptable. *The heavenly Father* says, “For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights” (Proverbs 3:12, NKJV). “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother” (29:15). Whose approach carries more weight with you?

Family counselors may tell husbands and wives they need to immediately separate, at least until one or the other gets his or her problems straightened out. When a problem persists, divorce is a viable alternative. Jesus,

our “*Wonderful Counselor*” (Isaiah 9:6), said through His Apostle Paul, “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians 7:5). He added that the wife should not leave her husband and the husband should not send away his wife (vv. 10-11). Whose counsel carries more weight with you?

Lawyers advise their clients to take any legal measures necessary to guard their rights, be it property rights, civil rights, or whatever. Suits, countersuits, injunctions, court orders, etc., are simply legal tools for your protection. *The Judge of all* tells us there are more important things than rights (1 Corinthians 9:12), especially property concerns (Luke 12:15). He says that going to court with brethren is itself a greater loss than anything we will gain (1 Corinthians 6:7). Whose advice carries more weight with you?

Theologians say we should accept all the world’s great religions. God is broad and loving enough to include people of all faiths as His spiritual children. Rejection of others’ views is the narrow bigotry that fuels hatred and war. *The only begotten Son*, the only one who has ever come from heaven with first-hand knowledge of God, said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 4:6). Whose teaching carries more weight with you?

Whose expertise carries more weight with us is determined by one simple test: whose advise are we following in real-life situations? ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Adam Gibson	Josh Baucom	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Bruce Williams	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Mike Zachry	J B Williams	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Bruce Hollander	Bruce Hollander	
CUP	Josh Baucom	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Daven Daniel		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Chris Brooks
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Adam Wilson	Kerry Gray