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# *The Pastor's Corner Vol. 2*

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## *Is Everything in the Bible to be Taken Literally?*



*.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith  
that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV*

## Is Everything in the Bible to be Taken Literally?

The Bible within its pages, says it's inspired or God breathed. 2 Timothy 3:16 says "All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,". By "inspired"/or God breathed, I believe to mean that the process by which the Bible was written was a process by which God worked through humans to write the Bible. In this process, God did not destroy or take away their individual personalities and styles to produce the Bible. The end result of their writing is the inerrant Word of God, written by God through authors of his choice to mankind. However, the saint and sinner/atheist have argued down through the years as to which parts of the Bible are to taken literally and which parts are not to be taken literally. For the sinner/atheist, the book of Genesis, Chapters 1 through 3 have been reduced to the level of fairytale at best, and should not be taken literally.

To be more specific, the sinner/atheist argue that at least the following three biblical teachings found in Genesis Chapters 1 through 3 cannot be taken literally:

1. Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The author of Genesis (Moses) makes a clear statement, "God created" that goes against what the atheist/sinner believes and has been taught in school namely, that the earth is the result of an explosion known as the "Big Bang" and not the creative work of God. This or similar teachings regarding the earths origin is taught in all secular schools and universities and even some Christian schools teach that Genesis account of creation is not to be taken literally.
2. Genesis 2:7 "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." To the atheist, sinner and some liberal Christians (in my opinion not Christians at all), the origin of man as taught in Genesis 2:7 is a primitive story from unlearned men and cannot be taken literally. Sadly, the Genesis account of the origin of man is laughed at in most schools and universities. In fact, I remember when I was in school being taught by a teacher, Mr. Roth, in opposition to the Genesis Account, that such alleged

transitionals like “Nebraska Man”, “Piltdown Man” and “Java Man” proved beyond doubt that we are products of evolution and not the creative work of God. What the Christian parent should find disturbing is the fact that our children are still being taught in school, the lie that “Nebraska Man, “Piltdown Man” and “Java Man” are the transitionals that prove evolution is true while each of these so-called transitionals have been proven to be fakes and frauds. Finally, Jesus, the God-man validates the Genesis account by quoting it. If the Genesis account was not true or a fairytale, I believe Jesus would not have quoted it, remember he is God incarnate (John 1:1, John 8:58, Colossians 2:9 and John 10:30). In Matthew 19:4 Jesus said “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female,...” It should be clear and beyond refute that the Genesis account of creation is to be taken literally simply because Jesus quoted from Genesis. (See “The Face That Demonstrates The Farce of Evolution” by Hank Hanegraaff)

3. Genesis 2:17, 3:6 in these passages we find two essential Christian truths:
  - A. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said the day they ate from it they would surely die. (Genesis 2:17) (There are two deaths in this passage, spiritual death and physical death. Spiritual death, which is separation from God took place first, physical death came after)
  - B. We find in Genesis 3:6, that Adam and Eve did eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thereby sinned against God. This original or first sin is what is imputed to all mankind, because of Adam and Eve’s sin we’re all sinners standing in need of a Savior from birth. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, David said in Psalms 51:5 “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (See also Psalm 58:3; Genesis 8:21; John 9:34). If the sin of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis is not to be taken literally, we’re not sinners and we do not need a Savior, Jesus died in vain, the New Testament is incorrect in its teaching, Jesus is not the lamb sacrificed for our sins (See John 1:29 and 1 Corinthians 5:7). For the Christian, the Genesis account of creation and the fall of man must be taken literally, otherwise we have nothing!!

The answer to the question “Is everything in the Bible to be taken literally?” is YES!! This is not to say that the Bible does not contain figurative language. However, if we interpret figuratively portions of scripture, we must always find good reason from the passage(s) to do so. A good rule for interpretation is, “If the literal sense makes good sense, seek no other sense lest you come up with nonsense.”

In truth, the Bible contains at least four (4) types of figurative language:

1. **Metaphors** – a metaphor is a comparison by direct statement.  
Example: In John 15:1 Jesus says, “I am the true vine.” This does not mean Jesus is a literal vine, but that he can be compared to one.  
(See also John 10:9 and John 6:35)
2. **Similes** – a simile is a comparison by use of the words “like” or “as”.  
Example: Exodus 24:17 says, “To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.”
3. **Hyperboles** – a hyperbole is an exaggeration for emphasis.  
Example: In John 21:25 says, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” (See also Luke 14:26)
4. **Anthropomorphisms** – anthropomorphisms, which are particularly in the Old Testament, is when God is described using human characteristics or experiences.  
Example: Genesis 6:6 says, “The Lord was grieved that he had made man on earth, and his heart was filled with pain.” Another example is found in Isaiah 48:13 “My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens...”

With all that said, we see figurative language does have a place in scripture, but only when certain factors indicate that the passage in question is not to be interpreted literally. Aside from the use of figurative language, what God says in his word/letter to us, should always be taken literally. But let’s do more than just read/hear God’s Word, let us do as James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

God Bless,

Pastor D. M. Duncan

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