

Do You Take The Bible Literally?

Joe Slater

Many would give a knee-jerk response, “Of course I do!” They suppose that to say otherwise would mean they don’t believe the Bible is God’s inspired, authoritative, infallible word. But is that really the case?

Jesus admonished, “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction*” (Matthew 7:13). Do you know of anyone who thinks He had reference to literal physical gates and roads? Similarly, Revelation 7:1 refers to “*the four corners of the earth.*” And yes, there are still a few “flat-earthers” who take that literally; but practically everyone understands it correctly as a figure of speech. That takes nothing whatever away from the inspiration, authority, or infallibility of God’s word!

But now, does that mean we should take nothing in the Bible literally? Is everything a figure of speech? Of course not! It isn’t all that difficult to distinguish between figures of speech and things to be taken literally. Most of us do it routinely in conversation and with books other than the Bible. A good rule of thumb is: “A passage should be taken literally unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.” Such a compelling reason might be that it would contradict other passages, or that taking it literally would involve an absurdity.

Far from upholding the inspiration of Scripture, taking the Bible’s figures of speech literally would actually detract from inspiration. Scripture does not contradict itself, nor does God present absurdities as though they were reality.

Hitting The Jackpot

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

I recently read of a father in England who “rediscovered” his hobby of metal detecting after much encouragement from his children. On the first day, he made a find after only fifteen minutes of searching. What he found was a rare gold coin from the reign of Henry III (1217 – 1272). It was the first example of this coin to be discovered in 260 years and one of only eight known to exist. Within weeks, the coin sold at auction for \$878,000. Not bad for a morning’s work!

Almost everyone has dreamed of hitting it rich. People tend to be more than ready to share their dreams of winning the lottery or unexpectedly inheriting money from a long-lost relative. I’ve found myself engaging in such conversations more than once. In reality, few become wealthy in this fashion, and those who do often lose it just as quickly. One news site reported that 70% of people who win a lottery or get a big windfall end up broke in a few years.

How would one define true wealth? It far transcends having piles of money. True wealth can be measured by the friends we have, the commitments we make, or the methods we establish to achieve true peace of mind. Lord Jesus offers mankind the greatest wealth of all (2 Corinthians 8:9). A life for Him allows believers the opportunity to establish wealth in heaven, where “*neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal*” (Matthew 6:20).

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

Life’s Book

No matter what else you are doing,
From cradle days through to the end,
You are writing your life’s secret story –
Each day sees another page penned.
Each month ends a thirty-page chapter,
Each year means the end of a part;
And never an act is misstated,
Or even one wish of the heart.
Each day when you wake, the book opens,
Revealing a page clean and white.
What thoughts and what words and what doings
Will cover that page by tonight?
God leaves that to you – you’re the writer –
And never a word shall grow dim,
Till the day you write the word “Finish”
And give your Life’s Book back to Him.
--Author Unknown

Good Advice Any Time (Including Social Media)

Before you assume, learn the facts.
Before you judge, understand why.
Before you hurt someone, feel.
Before you speak, think.

Procrastination is the arrogant assumption that God owes you another opportunity to do what you’ve already had time to do.