

Is the Bible literal?

Let's start with a definition. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, the word "literal" means "taking words in their usual or most basic sense without metaphor or allegory, free from exaggeration or distortion."

Why do people balk at this common-sense notion when it comes to the Bible or, more precisely, certain passages in the Bible?

Not only can we take the Bible literally, but we must take the Bible literally. This is the only way to determine what God really is trying to communicate to us. When we read any piece of literature, but especially the Bible, we must determine what God intended to communicate.

Many people today will read a verse or passage of Scripture and then give their own definitions to the words, phrases, or paragraphs, ignoring the context and the writer's intent. But this is not what God intended, which is why God tells us to correctly handle the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

One reason we should take the Bible literally is because the Lord Jesus Christ took it literally. Whenever the Lord Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, it was always clear that He believed in its literal interpretation. As an example, when Jesus was tempted by Satan in Luke 4, He answered by quoting the Old Testament.

If God's commands were not literal, Jesus would not have used them and they would have been powerless to stop Satan's mouth, which they certainly did.

The disciples also took the commands of Christ literally. Jesus commanded the disciples to go and make more disciples in Matthew 28:19-20. In Acts 2 and following, we find that the disciples took Jesus' command literally and went throughout the known world of that time preaching the gospel of Christ and telling them in (Acts 16:31). to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved"

Just as the disciples took Jesus' words literally, so must we. How else can we be sure of our salvation if we do not believe Him when He says in (Luke 19:10), He came to seek and save the lost and in (Matthew 26:28), pay the penalty for our sin and in (John 6:54) provide eternal life.

Although we take the Bible literally, there are still figures of speech within its pages. An example of a figure of speech would be that if someone said "it is raining cats and dogs outside," you would know that they did not really mean that cats and dogs were falling from the sky. They would mean it is raining really hard. There are figures of speech in the Bible which are not to be taken literally, but those are obvious. (like in

Exodus 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

A Metaphor is not literal.

Metaphors take one meaning of a word and then create another meaning to make an impact on a reader.

Something about metaphors. All metaphors rely first on literal definitions before they can be of any use as figures of speech.

Jesus spoke in parables – parables are not literal. They paint a picture of God’s kingdom to some. He used figurative language to describe a literal place to be understood, first by His disciples then us.

Strictly speaking, since no word is a metaphor in itself, words cannot be used metaphorically unless they’re embedded in a context. Therefore, it makes no sense to ask of a solitary word, “Is the word meant literally?” because the word standing on its own gives no indication.

God gave Israel various laws. He said if there was a homosexual found guilty stone him – kill him. That’s a civil law. The New Testament says a homosexual and other sinners will not enter the kingdom of God – that’s literal. There was no civil law available in the New Testament for Israel at that time. We are governed by the laws of the land and God’s spiritual laws.

God will forgive a liar, homosexual and other sinners if they repent. In the Old Testament there was repentance by David and others but I find no repentance requirements in the law.

Matthew 5:21-25

Murder Begins in the Heart

21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

So when we read in the Bible homosexuals were stoned to death – that’s literally correct for their period of time – not now.

And if the Bible is God’s inspired words we should take His words literally.

Finally, when we make ourselves the final arbiters of which parts of the Bible are to be interpreted literally, we elevate ourselves above God. Who is to say, then, that one person's interpretation of a biblical event or truth is any more or less valid than another's? The confusion and distortions that would inevitably result from such a system would essentially render the Scriptures null and void. The Bible is God's Word to us and He meant it to be believed—literally and completely.