

# Interpreting the Bible

When interpreting Scriptures out of the Bible questions will always arise. Many times, it is opinions that are presented and not facts out of Scripture. The theme of all Bible study is ***“Open your heart when you open the Bible”***. A closed fist can neither give nor receive. God is a giving God. **(Psalms 145:16)** It was creation’s greatest need that God responded to. **(John 3:16)**

Faith is the result of hearing the Word of God. Faith is what begins the journey of learning and understanding the will and purpose of God in our lives. **(Romans 10:17)** Many people base their faith on what they have heard from their church or from well-meaning friends or family members. Because of this, many people do **NOT** base their faith on what the Scripture says.

Often times the things that are said are not what the Scriptures themselves say but are ideas and opinions that are held and are things that have just been traditionally taught. It is like wearing a pair of tinted sunglasses; everything you see is influenced by the lens in the sunglasses. This is why traditional ideas and concepts that have been passed along for a long time can be very misleading. This is what is called **“hand-me-down religion”**.

One proven way to interpret Scripture is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Words like trees, grass, fish, lampstands, Babylon, and beast are not new allegories, but are symbols used throughout the Old Testament by the prophets.

Jesus Himself continued to use these same words in a symbolic or allegorical way. For example, the Book of Revelation is not a code book requiring new keys of understanding. The Book of Revelation is the climax of a vocabulary that God had been building and using for many centuries.

Let’s examine some things that we read in the Book of Revelation. Many believe that the Babylon in the Book of Revelation was Rome. This is not true because the Book of Revelation itself tells us exactly who Babylon was.

**Revelation 11:8** names that great city as the place where the Lord was crucified. The identity of the **“great city”** is Jerusalem because this is where Jesus was crucified. A further description of **“Babylon the Great”** is found in **Revelation 17:5-6**. **“Babylon”** is named that **“great city”**. **Revelation 18:10,24** also describe Babylon as the prophetic name for Jerusalem because she **“played the harlot”**. **(Revelation 17:1)**

Rome is not absent from the Book of Revelation. Rome is the first beast who empowers and allies with Jerusalem, but ultimately betrays Jerusalem. **(Revelation 13:1,7)** We can distinguish these two roles: the first beast is Rome which is a great political power; the second beast is Jerusalem, the covenant city turned harlot. **(Revelation 13:11, Ezekiel 16:2, 35-36)**

We can read in **Revelation chapter 17 and 18** how Rome turns against the harlot, Jerusalem. It was the harlot city Jerusalem who took the full wrath of the armies of Rome. (**Revelation 17:1, 4-6, 16-17, Revelation 18:2, 9-10, 21, 24**)

The woman, who represented the faithful first century early believers of the Gospel, was delivered from the wrath of the first beast, Rome. They were protected and nourished during the 3 1/2 year tribulation of the Roman siege. (**Revelation 12:6**)

**This all happened in AD 66 - AD 70.**

The woman, being the betrothed bride of Jesus Christ, listened to the warnings of Jesus to escape the city before it was destroyed. (**Luke 21:20,22**) The sacrifices and offerings also ceased during this time of tribulation. The prophet Daniel prophesied about this in **Daniel 12:8-11**.

**What about Resurrection Day?**

Paul, John, and Daniel all spoke of resurrection in covenantal terms. The resurrection that they spoke of was the liberation of the righteous from “**sheol**”, which was the holding place of the dead, and the vindication of Messiah’ people.

This was fulfilled at the last Trumpet when “**sheol**” gave up its dead and the reign of Jesus was revealed. This does not mean that born again believers today have no hope beyond death.

On the contrary, because the covenantal resurrection has already occurred, those who die in Jesus now enter directly into God’s presence and into eternal life with a new heavenly body. (**2 Corinthians 5:1**) Resurrection is not denied, but it is established in Jesus.

Jesus said in **John 5:39**, to “*search the Scriptures to find eternal life*”. **1 Thessalonians 5:21** commands us to “*prove all things*”. **Proverbs 14:15** says this: “*a simple-minded person will believe anything, but a prudent man will look into his going*”.

“*A prudent man dealeth with knowledge*”. (**Proverbs 13:16**) Knowledge is the facts spoken of by God and is the inspired written word in the book we call the Bible. The Word of God commands us to “*study to show yourself approved unto God*”. (**2 Timothy 2:15**)

**You can’t believe in something that you know nothing about.**

## Conclusion

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Because of this fact, the more you look into its pages, the more you find. A very important step in the proper interpretation of Scripture is the concept of audience relevance.

When we ask ourselves the question, **“What did this mean to the people to whom it was written?”**, this puts the Word of God into its proper context. Letting the Scripture interpret the Scripture is another very important tool in interpreting the Bible.

**When the context is right, the content will be right.**

Understanding the apocalyptic symbolic language God used throughout the Bible to forecast gloom and doom upon His enemies also brings clarity. When we apply all of these concepts when interpreting the Scriptures, we will discover that the Book of Revelation is all about God’s judgment on the Nation of Israel, the City of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple and not about the end the world.

When the context is right, the content will always be right. Remember, the Bible was not written to us, but the Bible was written for us.

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