

Make Certain You Understand The Difference Between What The Bible Records And What The Bible States As True

APPENDIX 4

MAKE CERTAIN YOU UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT THE BIBLE RECORDS AND WHAT THE BIBLE STATES AS TRUE

There is a huge mistake that people often make, not only in their everyday study of Scripture, but also in their attempt to understand last days Bible prophecy.

Simply put, they believe that they can pick up the Bible, find a verse or passage that says something that they believe is profound, believe it is true, then quote it to others as God's truth. However, it is not quite that simple.

NOT EVERY STATEMENT IN THE BIBLE IS TRUE

When we read the Bible, should we regard every statement as true? Can we confidently read any portion of Scripture and act upon any statement or promise that we find? Can we believe any statement that we find in the Bible that seems to give us an understanding of what we should expect in the future?

The answer is no. A distinction needs to be made between the accuracy of the statements that are made in the Bible, and their truthfulness. A number of observations need to be made.

THE TRUTH OF EVERY STATEMENT OF SCRIPTURE IS NOT GUARANTEED

Divine inspiration guarantees the accuracy of every statement in Scripture, but not the truth of it. We can give a number of examples to illustrate this.

1. THE DEVIL ALWAYS LIES

To begin with, we are told that every time Satan, or the devil, spoke, he lied. Jesus said the following to the religious leaders of His day:

You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 NRSV).

The only truth in the statements of Satan is that he actually said them – nothing more. Therefore, his claims and false promises should always be read and understood in context.

2. THE SERPENT LIED WHEN MAKING PROMISES TO EVE

As Jesus had said, we find the devil lying from the very beginning. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent promised Eve that she and Adam would be like divine beings, or God, if they ate of the forbidden fruit:

The serpent said to the woman, “Surely you will not die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil” (Genesis 3:4,5 NET).

The New International Version translates these verses in this manner:

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4,5 NIV).

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The statement of the serpent is recorded accurately, but the statement is not true. Adam and Eve would not, and they certainly did not, become divine beings or God, or even become like divine beings or like God, by eating the forbidden fruit.

Other examples can be found in Scripture where people made statements that are against the clear teaching of the Lord and His Word. These statements were actually made by people, and the Bible accurately records them.

However, the statements do not reflect biblical teaching. They are only true in the sense of that Scripture tells us what they said, nothing more.

3. THERE WERE INCORRECT STATEMENTS IN THE BOOK OF JOB

We find that a large section of the Book of Job contains statements that are recorded accurately but are not true—the people actually made these misguided statements.

After Job and his three friends had been discussing Job's problems, God made the following comments:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: “Who is this who darkens counsel with words without knowledge? Get ready for a difficult task like a man; I will question you and you will inform me. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you possess understanding! (Job 38:1-4 NET).

The Lord called what they were saying, “Words without knowledge.”

The New Living Translation translates the Lord's comments in this manner:

Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: “Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?” (Job 38:1,2 NLT).

Therefore, we must always be careful when we read and quote from this portion of the Book of Job. According to the Lord, the previous discussion of Job and his friends was ignorant and uninformed.

The unspiritual words of Job's friends, as recorded in the Book of Job, do not have the same usefulness to lost humanity as does the gospel of Jesus Christ.

However, both are exactly what God intended to include in His Word and each has its place and its divine purpose.

4. THERE ARE HUMAN MISSTATEMENTS IN THE BIBLE

In addition, there are also human misstatements in Scripture. In the gospel of John, we find the religious leaders said the following to Nicodemus about the origin of Jesus:

You aren't from Galilee too, are you? Investigate carefully and you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee! (John 7:52 NET).

If this is the proper understanding of what the religious leaders said (and there is some controversy as to what exactly they did say), then this statement of the religious leaders was not true. They said that no prophet comes from Galilee.

However, the prophet Jonah was from the region of Galilee.

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CONCLUSION: EACH STATEMENT IN SCRIPTURE MUST BE READ IN CONTEXT TO DETERMINE ITS TRUTH

Therefore, it is the utmost importance that each passage of Scripture needs to be read in context to determine whether or not it is saying something that is true. While all the statements and events are accurately recorded, they may not always be teaching God's truth. Hence, there is the need to read and study the Bible in context.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS PROFITABLE

There is one final point which we need to make. While not every statement of Scripture may be true, all of it is profitable; we can learn lessons even from those who are lying. Paul wrote:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17 NIV).

Therefore, there are lessons for us in all of Scripture; even those portions which record lies.

SUMMARY

We can summarize what we have just said as follows.

Although every statement and event recorded in Scripture actually happened, not every statement recorded is a true statement. Each statement of the Bible needs to be read in context.

We need to know who is speaking to see whether the statement, though recorded accurately, is in harmony with the truth of God. The Bible records misguided statements as well as lies.

While there may not be Christian doctrine in every statement of Scripture, all things recorded in the Bible can be read with profit.