

Biblical Interpretation

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“The literal meaning is the simple meaning of the words. When you read a news article in the newspaper, it may tell you basic facts about something that happened. For example, the sports page might say that the Detroit Tigers were going to New York to play the Yankees. You would simply realize that one baseball team was travelling to play a baseball game with another team. You would not understand this as some kind of code language to indicate the movement of foreign spies west to east. On the other hand, you would not “literalistically” assume that the Detroit Zoo was sending ferocious animals (tigers) to New York, either. The context is the sports page. The Detroit Tigers is a baseball team. The simple, literal (some might say obvious) meaning is that two teams will play a baseball game in New York” (Keller, Brian. Bible, p. 183).

- What dangers are there in seeking out mysterious coded meanings from the Bible?
 - When someone says there are many ways to interpret the Bible, we should say, “Well, not really; Greek and Hebrew are pretty specific.”
 - Can you think of any examples?
 - False theology can be found in “The Bible Code.”
 - Why does Keller warn against a “literalistic” interpretation?
 - Sometimes interpreting literally is misleading; the God uses visions and dreams. Words or practices in cultures or times past may mean something different than they do to our time and our culture.
 - Explain the importance of context in interpreting Scripture.
 - We want to correctly interpret the Bible.
 - If we have trouble interpreting a particular passage, how should we proceed?
 - The proper way to interpret the Bible is in terms of Jesus Christ. He should be at the center of interpretations. We use our logic in understanding the Bible so when logic fails, we simply believe what the Bible says. One example is the Trinity
 - Why are there so many misinterpretations?
 - The devil has a hand in this and also our sinful nature, so we rebel against interpreting the Bible if it says something we don’t want to hear.
- **1 Thessalonians 2:13: And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.**
- **John 17:17: Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.**
- **Deuteronomy 4:2: Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.**

Please also see the “People’s Bible Teaching” by Brian Keller and “Biblical Interpretations: The Only Right Way,” by David P. Kuske for additional information.