

Why Are There So Many Different Interpretations Of The Bible?

On my January 3, 2016 SiriusXM Bible Crossfire radio program, Jamie from Pensacola, Florida called in with an outstanding question - "Why Are There So Many Interpretations Of The Bible?" We are told by many the answer is because of honest differences of interpretation because the **Bible is so hard to understand**, but I challenge that notion. I think it has more to do with people not having a "**love for the truth**" – II Thess 2:10 "**And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**"

Pressure From The World

I immediately read to Jamie **I Cor 14:34-35** "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." and asked him why so many congregations allow women to preach from the pulpit. Is it because this passage which forbids it is hard to understand? Jamie answered with the obvious - no, the passage is clear.

That illustrates that we can understand the truth of the Bible if we will just read and study it. **Eph 3:3-4** teaches this very thing - "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)." That says we can understand the Bible simply by reading it just like we can understand a letter from a friend by reading it. Churches allow women to preach, not because the Bible's prohibition against it is unclear, but because they feel pressure from **political correctness**.

The Wrong Authority

Another reason people falsely interpret the Bible is because they let another authority take precedence. Notice this quote from the **Watchtower Witnesses** - "We find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself. We see also that if anyone lays aside the 'Scripture Studies' (Watchtower magazine), even after he has read them for ten years - if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the 'Scripture Studies' and had not read a page of the Bible, he would be in the light." So the Watchtower religion believes their false positions not because the Bible is hard to interpret but because they position their literature above the Bible in what they are going to follow. Contrast that with **II Tim 3:16-17** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Some denominations do the same with **Creed Books and Confessions** if they let them take priority over scripture. Do we sometimes do the same with **favorite preachers**? Do we sometimes accept what they say without making sure it matches up with what God's word says?

Tradition Trumps Scripture

The Catholic Church does this exact thing by admittedly allowing their church tradition to take precedence equal to or above scripture. For example, Catholic tradition trumps scripture when they continue to hold on to their tradition of the **perpetual virginity of Mary**, even though the Bible is clear she was only a virgin up until the point Jesus was born. Talking about Joseph and Mary, **Matt 1:24-25** reads "And Joseph ... knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus." **Matt 13:55-56** (which reads "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters ...") teaches Jesus had physical brothers and sisters. How could Jesus have brother and sisters if Mary was a perpetual virgin?

The Catholic Church claims **Peter was the first Pope** and of course the Pope is not allowed to be married, but did you know the Bible says Peter had a mother-in-law in **Matt 8:14** ("And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever")? How could Peter have **a mother-in-law** if he was unmarried? Why are there different interpretations? Sometimes it is because church tradition trumps what the Bible clearly says.

*There are a number of binding statements and approved new testament examples of individuals and congregations fasting (for example, II Cor 6:5, 11:27, Acts 13:2-3, 14:23, Matthew 6:16-18), yet very few Christians practice **fasting**, and hardly any gospel preachers teach it is required. Is it because fasting is not a traditional emphasis of the churches of Christ? If so, aren't we letting tradition trump scripture just like the Catholics do?*

Ulterior Motives

Many times ulterior motives come into play when people reason with the scriptures. For example, **John 12:42-43** reads "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Do you see how these chief rulers really understood the truth, but ulterior motives kept them from following the truth? Many believers today do the same. Is **Lev 20:13** ("If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination") hard to understand, or do Gay Church people just not want to change? All the **testimonies** of Gay Church writers that I have ever read, indicate they first had the desire to be a

homosexual and struggled against it (perhaps as a member of a denomination that taught against it). Then suddenly, when they found the Gay Church and its teaching, they discovered the Bible approved of homosexuality all along. So they didn't really accept gay marriage because they honestly thought the Bible condoned/authorized it. No, they forced interpretations on the Bible in order to justify their preexisting sexual preference/perversion.

Interferes With How We Want To Live

This leads right in to my next point. **Sir Julian Huxley** (one of the world's leading evolutionists) said "I suppose the reason we leaped at *The Origin of Species* was because the idea of God interfered with our sexual mores" (practices). In short, he wouldn't accept the Bible because he knew it would restrict his sexual freedom. Many believers also won't accept the clear teaching of passages like **Matt 19:9** ("And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery") because it would restrict their sexual freedom to divorce and remarry as they wish.

Contradicts What We Wish The Truth Would Be

Sometimes people reject the clear meaning of Bible passages because it contradicts what they want the truth to be. For example many believers can never feel comfortable if there is any chance they can lose their salvation, or they don't want to live a strict lifestyle, so they accept "**Once Saved Always Saved**" even though practically every page in the Bible teaches against the theory. One good example is **Gal 5:4** which reads "**Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.**" Isn't this the main reason some denominations don't believe in everlasting punishment - because that's not the way they want the truth to be?, or it's not the way they think the truth ought to be, they don't think it is fair?

*God's new testament law is full of approved examples and instruction to **debate** (for example, Acts 19:8-10, 17:17, 15:2,7, Jude 3), but most Christians refuse to support such efforts. Aren't the majority of disciples coming down on the side of how they wish the truth to be instead of how it is in reality? Is that any different than the reason many believe in Once Saved Always Saved?*

Doesn't Take Into Consideration All Passages

Many times wrong conclusions are drawn because all of what the Bible says on a particular topic is not taken into consideration. For example, the Catholics do that with their doctrine of **transubstantiation**. About the Lord's Supper Jesus said in **Matt 26:27-28** "**And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of**

sins.” The Catholics take that to mean the fruit of the vine miraculously changed to the literal blood of Jesus when He gave thanks - a doctrine called transubstantiation. But Catholics ignore other passages that would falsify this position. Just look at the very next **verse 29** “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.” Notice Jesus is now calling the liquid “fruit of the vine,” not his blood. So had it already changed back to juice just moments after it had changed to Jesus’ blood? Or was Jesus using a metaphor all along, like when He said “I am the door” (**John 10:9**)?

The same mistake is being made when preachers teach salvation is by **faith alone**. It is true enough that verses like **John 3:16** teach we must believe to be saved, but no passage says believe only is enough. To the contrary, **James 2:24** says “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” and **Mark 16:16a** says “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

More Loyal To A System Than To What God’s Word Actually Says

Many believers are more loyal to a system of interpretation than to God and what He says. A perfect example of this are the adherents of **Calvinism**. They will stubbornly hold to all five of their TULIP points of doctrine rather than accept the very plain meaning of some verses. For example, a first grader can see the truth of **Heb 2:9** (“that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”), but Calvinists continue to teach that Jesus only died for a few (for the saved/elect), because if they accept the General Atonement, they know their **whole Calvinistic system falls..** Heb 2:9 is not hard to interpret - that’s not the problem, is it?

Conclusion

Though Peter did say Paul wrote some things hard to understand (II Pet 3:16), 99 times out of 100 that is not why there are different interpretations of the Bible on any particular passage or topic. The great majority of time other factors come into play. What we generally find is the reason there are so many different interpretations of the Bible is **not really because the Bible is that hard to understand/interpret**, but is usually because people refuse to accept what it does plainly say. **Mark Twain** is famous for saying “It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.” It all goes back to keeping an open mind (Matt 13:15 ... their eyes they have closed ...) to God’s revealed will.