

## **Studying the Bible and arriving at sound beliefs.**

I am 66 years old at this time and have attended church the biggest part of my entire life. My Dad was a Lay minister and I went to Church 3+times per week. I have also gone to a variety of denominational as well as non-denominational Churches most of my adult life. For decades I have believed in God, and His Son Jesus as my Savior.

There are so many things of great importance in the Bible that seem to be interpreted in many different ways and with much potential for conflict and dissension, which probably accounts for the hundreds of denominations in existence today. For several years I have spent hundreds of hours trying to arrive at conclusions based on the mass of information that is in the Bible.

I came to understand that our Bibles are not inerrant. There are translation differences and translation mistakes. There are scribes/copiers over the centuries that have made mistakes as well as seemingly added some of their own interpretation into the translated copies. The original Greek writings of the Bible did not have chapters, verse numbering or punctuation. There are many differences of meaning based on where commas are placed, sentences (verses) beginnings and endings, as well as the placement of capitals, etc.

I then came to realize that there are many doctrinal issues that have been taught over the years that have conflict among denominations and individuals. Some of those differences are related to the doctrine of the Trinity, is Jesus God, can we lose our salvation, do we go immediately to heaven when we die, what is the Gospel that Jesus taught, is baptism necessary for remission of sins, etc.? So, in addition to transcription/translation errors there are interpretation errors made by “the church” over the years and taught religiously to us today.

Following are a few examples of hundreds of errors/discrepancies in the Bible;

1 John 4:12 “No man hath beheld God at any time.”

Ex. 24:9 “And Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy Elders of Israel went up; and they saw the God of Israel,”

2. Luke 1:37 “For with God nothing is impossible.”

JG 1:19 “Although God was with Judah, together they could not defeat the plainsmen because the latter had iron chariots.”

3. Matthew 4:1-11 Immediately following his baptism, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness resisting temptation by the devil.

John 2: 1-11 Three days after the baptism, Jesus was at the wedding at Cana.

4. 1 Kings 8:12, 2CH 6:1 God dwells in thick darkness

1 Timothy 6:16 God dwells in unapproachable light

5. Mark 3 :17 The heavenly voice addressed the crowd, “This is my beloved Son.”  
Mark 1:11 and LK 3:22 The voice addressed Jesus, “you are my beloved Son.”
6. Matthew 4: 18-20 (one story about choosing Peter as a disciple)  
Luke 5: 2-11 (a different story)  
John 1:35-42 (another story)
7. Matthew 7:21” Not everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”  
Acts 2: 21 “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
8. Matthew 8: 5-12 “The centurion himself approaches Jesus to ask to heal his servant.”  
Luke 7: 2-10 “The centurion sends elders to do the asking.”
9. Matthew 9:18 “”The rulers daughter was already dead when Jesus raised her.  
Luke 8:42 “She was dying, but not dead.”
10. Matthew 27: 5 “Judas hanged himself”  
Acts 1:18 “He fell headlong ,burst open, and his bowels gushed out.”

I have had to recognize that the teaching I have received may have errors or incompletions and that I need to study in great depth and with much prayer to understand the Bible. All of this has been very shocking with a heavy responsibility but I believe it is possible. The Bible says, and I believe, that God will guide us into and through His word. I think we are just as capable of understanding God’s word today as people were in the second century and onward. In fact, I think we have far better access to information both historical and Biblical than what was available 2000 years ago. I don’t think that the “bishops” who responded to the Roman Emperor Constantine’s request to have a convention 300 years after Christ died and decide on certain aspects of the Bible so his empire would run smoother, had any more or better access to God’s mind and meaning than you and I do.

As I try to move toward my final thoughts on the subjects I study I am developing what seem to be reasonable methods and requirements for understanding and accepting what the Bible says about issues.

If the only way to believe a doctrine is to infer or deduce it from verses that don’t clearly state it, I am unlikely to believe it.

If there are multiple verses that clearly state an issue I am likely to believe it.

If there are verses that seem to say both ways, I am likely to use the preponderance of evidence/verses to complete my understanding.

I had an epiphany –I am to read the Bible and conclude my understanding of what it says and means from clear and simple Biblical teachings with prayer and the power of Holy Spirit. If it takes a PHD or tradition to believe something I will not believe it as none of the early Christians would have had time to get a PHD and then follow Christ and there hadn't been enough time pass to develop traditions!!! Yet Christianity flourished even though Christians were persecuted unto torture and death.

I have found that using topical studies to be the best way to study about certain topics. That sounds reasonable doesn't it! Rather than read entire books or entire Testaments you can read on specific topics all the Bible has to say about it. You can use the concordance in the back of your Bible or stand alone concordances, This will build into your thinking all the Bible has to say about the topic. Then you can bring in outside sources if needed to help you come to conclusions. Conform your thinking to what the Bible says not what man thinks, As a man thinketh so is he.

May God Bless,

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