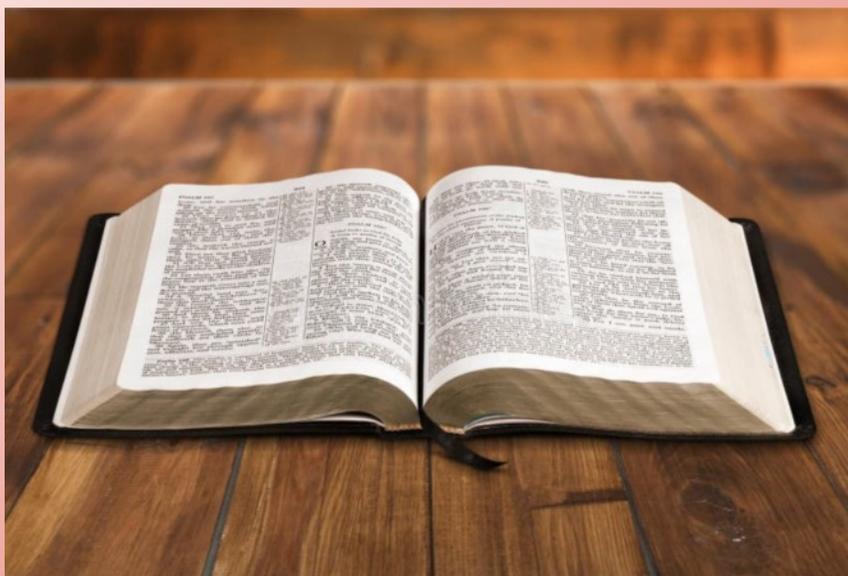


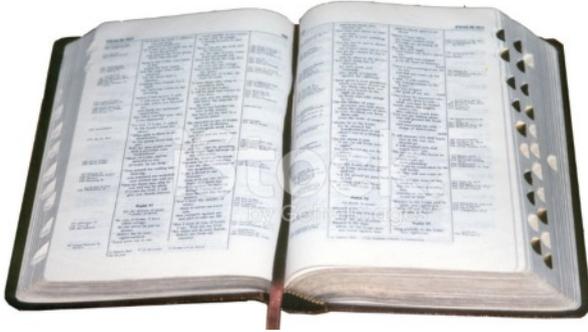
16 Scriptural Reasons NOT to Take The Bible Literally!



**By
Joshua Tilghman**

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FROM TIME TO TIME I get e-mails asking why the Bible shouldn't be taken literally. One of the reasons is that the scripture itself makes this clear. I've decided to provide the scriptural reasons themselves all in one post so I can refer people to it. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it gets the point across.

Old Testament Scriptures

1) **Psalms 78:2:** "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old."

Dark sayings of old are ancient teachings in the forms of riddles and parables. The Biblical writers call them "dark" because the meanings are hidden, or concealed. They are meant to figure out through careful meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

Why would the Lord speak to us like this? The answer is provided in the following scripture.

2) Proverbs 25:2: “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.”

God’s glory is always concealed from the lower, or natural man. It’s an honour to become a king and figure it out. How do we become a king? Kings are symbolic for the ruling quality of the soul.

We become symbolic kings by learning the spiritual meaning to the scriptures and applying them. As I stated in scripture number 1, we must involve our minds in careful meditation and prayer when thinking about the scriptures in order to understand their deeper meanings.

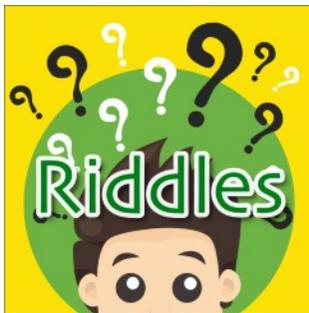
3) Proverbs 1:5-6: “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and man of understanding will attain unto wise councils: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.”

Notice how the above scriptures states that proverbs need an interpretation. This is not just referring to the book of Proverbs; it’s speaking about all scripture. The dark sayings of the wise, which need to be interpreted, are parables and mythology that conceal spiritual truth.

4) Ezekiel 20:49: “Then said I, Ah Lord God! They say of me, doth he not speak in parables?”

Ezekiel is clearly stating God speaks in parables.

5) Ezekiel 17:2: “Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel.”

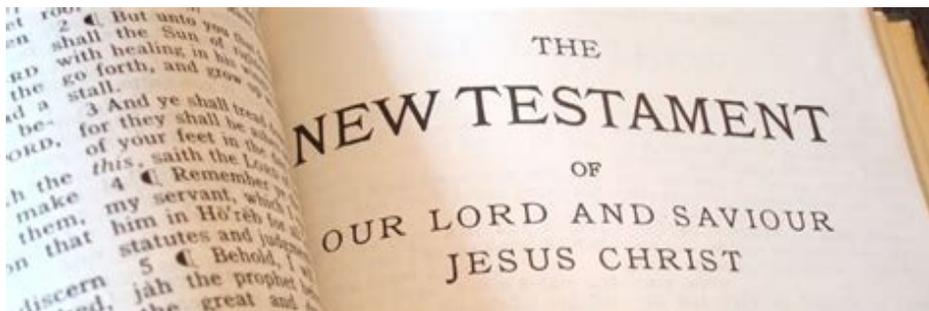


Again, We Can See That God Loves Riddles!

6) Isaiah 6:9-10: “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

Besides being a prophecy fulfilled in the New Testament, God is telling us through this scripture that when most hear or see the scriptural stories and sayings, they do not understand. Our hearts have to be opened to the spiritual truth which is beyond any literal interpretation or meaning.

New Testament Scriptures



7) Matthew 13:34: All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitudes in parables, and without a parable spake he not unto them.”

As you can see, Jesus didn’t speak to the multitude unless it was in a parable. Why would he do this?

8) Mark 4:11: “And he said unto them, unto you it is given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them who are without, all these things are done in parables.”

Who are those without? It is those who do not realize that the kingdom of heaven is within (Luke 17:21). Notice also how Jesus said the kingdom of God is a mystery. It, too, is part of the dark sayings of old. The entire Gospel story and the Old Testament is all a dark saying of old.

9) 2 Corinthians 3:6: “Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

Paul is telling us that the New Testament is not of the letter (literal), but of the spirit (spiritual). The letter of the law or the literal leads to death because the literal interpretation has no life in it. Anyone who stops at the literal interpretation will eventually die in what they think (doctrines) when life has run its course.

The literal interpretation cannot transform a person’s mind. It is the spiritual interpretation, especially when understood properly, that opens the heart and mind to the truth which is beyond any literal or physical interpretation.

10) Galatians 4:24: “Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants, the one from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.”

Notice how Paul directly states that the story of Isaac, Ishmael, Sara and Hagar are an allegory. They are the two covenants, one of promise (faith) and the other of bondage.

The Greek word Paul uses literally translates as allegory, which in English means, an expressive style that uses fictional characters and events to describe some subject by suggestive resemblances.

11) 2 Corinthians 4:3: “But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to them that are lost.”

Paul is telling us that the spiritually lost see the Gospel through a veil.



This is because without the proper understanding and knowledge, the Bible becomes a letter that kills and confuses (with hundreds of opposing doctrines), not one that gives life (the true understanding).

12) 2 Corinthians 3:14: “But their minds were blinded: for unto this day remaineth the same veil un-taken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ.”

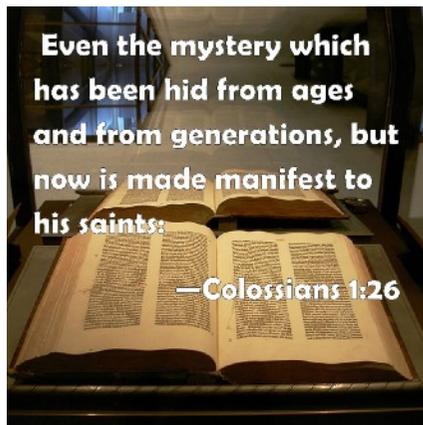
I want to make a few important notes here. Paul didn't consider any of his writings or any of the New Testament scripture. It is a known fact that he wrote his letters before the Gospels were penned, so Paul didn't even have a New Testament, nor did the church during his day.

The Old Testament was the only thing considered scripture. This is why Paul emphasizes the Old Testament above. For him the New Testament was a spiritual interpretation that was not of the letter of the law, not some book we refer to as the New Testament.

For Paul, Christ is the spirit that is born in us, which also gives us the true interpretation to scripture. When the Christ arises, spiritual interpretation comes in as intuition, for it is all spiritual anyway.

13) 1 Corinthians 2:7: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”

Notice how Paul states that the wisdom of God is a hidden mystery. The Greek word for hidden means higher spiritual wisdom, which is again is spiritual, not literal.



14) 1 Colossians 1:26: “Even the mystery which has been hid from the ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”

The saints are like the kings who interpret the word correctly. They are the spiritually pure and are able to peer beyond the literal for true understanding.

15) Matthew 22:29: “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”

Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees who interpret scripture by the letter, or literal interpretation. If the scriptures were meant to be literal, do you think Jesus really could have said this to the very experts who knew scripture by heart better than anyone in their day?

16) Hebrews 5:13: “For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.”

Here the author of Hebrews is explaining that everyone who doesn't understand the hidden meanings of the word is unskillful. A babe is the one who stops at the literal meaning instead of diving beneath it for the spiritual meat that is the only interpretation that gives life.

What Does All This Mean?

Wordsworth once stated: “Hebrew history, as written by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, is a divine parable.”

Even though Wordsworth boldly declared the Old Testament to be parables, he still called them “divine.” A lot of the time Christians get caught up in the idea that if the scriptures aren't literal history, then they'd be worthless stories and all their faith would be for nothing. This couldn't be further from the truth. As divine parables they illustrate the spiritual laws of the inner world through outer reflections. This was their purpose all along. And they were certainly inspired of the Spirit.

The Bible has always been one of the greatest road-maps for the soul ever compiled. It doesn't have to be literal history to fulfil this role.

Comments

Bernhardt Adjedi Cadbury says

Oh Josh, Well done for compiling this one stop scriptures for our references, but you forgot one of the last and most important scripture.

thus: 2 Corinthians 3:15 that reads, “But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart”. May be you should comment on this. Blessings.

Reply
Joshua Tilghman says

No problem, Bernhardt. And you’re right, I should have mentioned that one. It simply means that the religious miss the greater spiritual meaning because they are too focused on a literal interpretation.

The End

