

Beliefs Concerning the Bible

- x There are all kinds of ways to interpret the Bible.
- x The King James Version is the only legitimate Bible.
- x The book of Revelation is about the end of the world.
- x The words of the Gospel have magical powers.
- x A person needs the original texts to really understand the Bible.
- x The Bible has hidden code words that reveal prophetic events.
- x Samson was built like a weightlifter and had huge muscles.

There Are All Kinds Of Ways To Interpret The Bible

The Bible is God's "owner's manual" for living. Therefore, He would not have given us something beyond our ability to reason. Admonitions such as "husbands, love your wives," and "do not get drunk," are pretty straightforward. How many ways can such things be understood?

For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

God Himself says that His word is not that tough to figure out. So it's not that the Bible is hard to understand; it's that we make our conscience as the moral standard and the Bible's simplicity interferes with our desire to do something different.

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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16, 17)

Those who reject the Bible say something like, "No one knows what it means. A thousand people can come up with a thousand different conclusions. Who knows which one is right? I'm not gonna listen to any of it. I'll let God sort it out in the end."

These folks prefer the Bible to remain closed, not because they want to be bothered with racking their brain trying to sort out the truth, but because they don't want to face their guilt and therefore be exposed by the Word. (John 3:19, 20) They want to do what they please and not be subject to a moral code. Liberals and so-called "free thinkers" hate the Good Book because it generally condemns whatever they're trying to promote.

The KJV Is The Only Bible You Should Read

Foreign language Bibles cannot be translated into 16th-Century English, so I guess only those who speak English will be in heaven. Claiming that the KJV is “the most accurate” shows a woeful ignorance of the subject, not to mention a loss of what Christians *should* be focused on, namely bringing the lost to Christ.

Dr. James Vernon McGee, a famous radio preacher of the past, made the statement that the "any Bible translation that is not the King James translation is from the devil." Pretty bold, considering that the Word is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17), and blasphemy of the same is close on the heels of such dogmatic criticism.

The KJV is a good Bible, but it's God's *truth* that saves, not the arrangement of words and their syntax. I've heard folks say that 16th Century English “was what Jesus spoke.” Another once told me, “It's the language we'll be speaking in Heaven.” Some think that prayers should be prayed in Old English. This extremism turns folks away from Christianity. Even modern-day translations are riddled with terrible grammar, missing punctuation, and other issues. But it is the truth contained within these texts that save us, not how professorial it sounds.

Do you think today's young people will embrace a Bible they can barely understand? In our video-driven culture, today's youth struggle with modern English. How much less will they understand or be interested in something written centuries ago?

For a more thorough discussion on the infallibility issue of the King James Bible, there's a scholarly article written by Robert Joyner under the *Lessons* section at bogadocious.com.

Here is an excerpt from the translators of the Authorized KJV. Those who think it's wrong to read another translation, read closely:

Another thing we think good to admonish thee of, gentle reader: that we have not tied ourselves to a uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish that we had done, because they observe that some learned men somewhere have been as exact as they could that way. Truly, that we might not vary from the sense of that which we had translated before, if the word signified the same thing in both places (for there be some words that be not of the same sense everywhere), we were especially careful, and made a conscience according to our duty. ...**For is the kingdom of God become words or syllables?** (Emphasis mine) Why should we be in bondage to them if we may

be free, use one precisely when we may use another no less fit, as commodiously?

The Book Of Revelation Is About The End Of The World

I used to believe that...until I started studying my Bible!

Revelation speaks of God's redemptive purposes, just like the rest of the New Testament. The only difference is that it uses poetic language and style, among other things. While many tend to read the book as a linear timeline of events, culminating with the end of time, it is written in a cyclical fashion, repeating itself several times from different viewpoints.

Revelation was written to Jewish Christians living in the First Century, initially and specifically to seven congregations in Asia Minor. It was written to provide comfort during a time of persecution and uncertainty. What good, or what comfort would these folks have gotten from a prophecy dealing with the far future? Not much.

The book opens up with the sentence, “The revelation (literally, *revealing*) of Jesus Christ...” Not “the revealing of the end of the world.” It's a book that reveals our *Savior*, and how God reconciles sinful mankind back to Himself. It speaks to our victory in Christ.

The early Jews had little trouble understanding Revelation since the language and symbolism comes straight out of the Old Testament. The Gentiles, steeped in paganism, knew nothing of the Jewish scriptures. To them, Revelation seemed like a weird fantasy. People who don't know and study the Bible perpetuate this same ignorance. Revelation describes how God overcame Evil with Good, namely, through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Stay away from all those bogus books you see clogging up an entire aisle in the Bible bookstore. Revelation's interpretation can come only from the Bible, not by what the morning newspaper says, and certainly not from what most denominational preachers will tell you.

Revelation is not about the USA or its political struggles. It is not about us, but about Jesus and the New Covenant.

The Words Of The Gospel Have Magic Power

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom 1:16) In that sense, the Good News can indeed change a person into a brand-new creation. (2 Cor 5:17) But some have picked up the notion that reciting a formulaic 30-second sermon on Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection has some kind of mystical ability to convert people.

While attending a ceremony for one of my troops retiring from the Air Force, I met his Baptist pastor. I introduced myself and told him I was a Christian and in the Church of Christ. As I expected, he shook his head in dismay and began praying and preaching me the gospel. Doctrinal issues aside, I've met many like him, especially "street" preachers. They find an opportunity to use the gospel message as a sort of magical formula. These guys believe that if you hear the right phrases, scriptures, etc from the Bible, you will somehow be "zapped" by God and become a Christian.

In a college speech class I attended a young man would use the other students, whom he considered unrepentant sinners, as an opportunity to preach the Gospel. After the third "speech," some in the class had had enough and told him to come up with something else—they didn't want to hear it. To which, the young man replied, "I gave you the gospel, so now, you won't have any excuse if you wind up in Hell."

These guys are like the gunslingers of the Wild West, making a notch on their pistol for every person preached to. They believe once the Good News has been preached to every living person on the planet, Christ's Second Coming will occur.¹ It is an unloving and unfruitful endeavor. I know of no one who has been saved by a stranger grabbing him or her on the street and annoying them with a religious recipe. Yet many believe that the actual words of the Gospel weave some kind of magic spell to influence sinners to Christ.

Here's a story from the New Testament to illustrate:

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. [One day] the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts 19:13-16)

¹ The Muslims believe the same thing, with a slight twist. Their mullahs claim that once the entire world has converted to Islam, then Muhammad will come. Just hearing the message won't do, folks have to embrace it.

There are no magical qualities in the arrangement of certain Bible words and verses that can "wake up" an unwilling, unrepentant sinner. Jesus' parable of the Sower and the Seed (Matt 13, Mark 4) shows how different hearts react to the Word of God. But a person has to be *willing* to accept Christ's salvation; it doesn't come like a spell being cast by a wizard.

I became a Christian at 49, after living a terrible life of sin and depravity. I had heard every kind of nickel-and-dime sermon imaginable. None of them "stopped me in my tracks" and changed my life for the better. It was only after I had had enough of sin, and was so loaded down with guilt, that I finally fell to my knees and begged God to forgive me. I was baptized and have never looked back on my old life. That, my friend, is true "magic."

If someone comes up to you and hands you a Bible tract, be polite, and accept it. Read it. Perhaps one day it will trigger something within so that you'll reach out to Jesus. But the message of the Good News itself can only transform your soul if you let it.

A Person Needs The Original Texts To Really Understand The Bible

While standing in line at a Christian bookstore, I heard a gentleman say to his buddy that if he could only get his hands on the original manuscripts, he would know the “real” truth of the Bible. He apparently didn't trust those who wrote and spoke the ancient tongues and who translated them into English. Such people view the Bible as some kind of magic talisman, where the “really good stuff” is anywhere except right under their noses.

If this is true, then we're all doomed and only those conversant in Greek and Hebrew will be in heaven. Imagine yourself standing before God one day, crying out, “Lord, if only you'd given me the understanding to read the Dead Sea scrolls in their original language, then I could've obeyed you better!” The truth is, these folks are not interested in obedience or getting to know Jesus Christ; they are only looking for things to titillate their thinking.

Jesus told the religious leaders, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” NAS (John 5:39-40) Madonna, Oprah, and a host of other pop-culture figures are all looking for a “secret book” or kabbalah to lead them to heaven.

Christianity is about a person—Jesus Christ. One of the apostles wrote that our Lord did many things, but “these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31) Thus, the scriptures provide adequate testimony so that a person may understand and embrace salvation. It is not a magic puzzle book, where deep secrets are hidden inside of anagrams. It's not a word search puzzle book.

If you are searching for salvation and a release from the burden of sin and guilt, you can only get there through faith in Christ. “Faith comes by hearing the word of God.” (Rom 10:17) You're not going to get a Super Faith by poring over the Dead Sea scrolls or other ancient texts.

I spent many years studying ancient Greek. Know what I found out? The translators did a good job.

The Bible Has Hidden Code Words That Reveal Prophetic Events

Not so very long ago, books were snatched from shelves, and broadcasts on national television had convinced many that the Bible contained secret messages—hidden texts portraying future events. Everything from Kennedy's assassination to the World Trade Center tragedy has been supposedly predicted by a system of anagrams and letter arrangements within God's Word. Ninety-nine percent of the prophecies related to America, of course. The Bible's portrayal of dusty, dry hills, where the fastest message is carried on a camel just doesn't have the same hook as what's going on in the ultra-modern USA.

Torah Codes became the latest hot topic when David Drosnin wrote *The Bible Code*.² He concluded that extraterrestrials had coded prophetic events and human DNA into the Bible. Professor Brendan McKay, who runs the Department of Computer Science at the Australian National University, authored *Scientific Refutation of the Bible Codes*, which refutes Drosnin's claims.

Dr. McKay used two famous novels, *War and Peace* and *Moby Dick* to duplicate identical results. Since his expertise is in computer science, he exposed that the software used to generate the algorithm had been tweaked by Jewish scientists who thought no one could understand Hebrew enough to see through their conclusions. Google his book or name to read a fairly lengthy and scholarly treatise on the subject.

Many such books have been foisted onto an ignorant and biblically illiterate society, making the authors a ton of money. Yet the unanswered question remains: Why is it that these hidden messages are never discovered until *after* the event has taken place? Bogus.

Stuff like this engages people to waste their time on nonsense instead of being interested in how Jesus Christ can save their souls.

² Available at Amazon. Wikipedia has a succinct analysis of Drosnin's so-called discoveries.

Samson Was Built Like A Weightlifter

When folks read the account of Samson, they automatically assume he was some huge guy with bulging muscles. The Bible paints a different picture if you read between the lines.

The rulers of the Philistines went to Delilah and said, "We want to know what makes Samson so strong. Try to trick him into telling you his secret. Then we will know how to capture him and tie him up. Then we will be able to control him. If you do this, each one of us will give you 28 pounds of silver." (Judges 16:5) ERV

If Samson was built like a guy who could bench-press 500 lbs, they would not have said, "We want to know what makes Samson so strong." Instead, they would have chalked it up to huge muscles and a powerful physique. They knew it wasn't because of his physique, rightly suspecting that supernatural resources were helping him out.