

From time to time we as believers in Jesus get a question that goes something like this: “Is the Bible correct, accurate and true?” or “Doesn’t the Bible contradict itself?”

Many of the people that ask these types of questions have little experience with the Scriptures. They haven’t had the opportunities to learn that the Bible has many different ways of speaking to the reader.

Just as in our literature, there are places where the information is historically or scientifically accurate; but in other places the form may be in a story or parable, which may or may not be an accurate account of an event but still tells a truth about life. There are times when we speak or write in idioms or figurative language. The Bible is not that different than our own literature. It too speaks in various forms. The key is to recognize the form in which it is speaking in any portion one is reading. Then to gain the understand using that form of writing.

To add to our misunderstanding of the Scriptures are the facts that it was 1) written in a different culture, 2) different time in history, and 3) in a different language. Translating from one language to another is difficult enough but translating from the way one culture sees the world to another culture that see it differently is much more difficult. Language only conveys part of the understanding but adding the culture brightens that understanding.

Paul in his writing to Timothy said: “*But you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, recalling the people from whom you learned it; and recalling too how from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which can give you the wisdom that leads to deliverance through trusting in Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah (Christ). All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work.*” (2 Timothy 3:14-17 CJB)

So our answer to people with these types of questions may draw the questioner closer to God or push them further away. It would be wise for us to have an answer ready that will result in the former. To be able to do that, we need to be studying on a regular basis, and be in close contact with the Holy Spirit.

Our study should be first to be as familiar with the Scriptures as our time and talent allow. Next, and this can only be gained with study of commentaries and historical cultures, is to become as familiar with the culture and the people in the Bible; the writers and the actors.

This is a lifelong pursuit. And I am sorry to tell you it will never be finished.

Below is a very short list of some of the publications that have helped me. I am not advocating that you go out and blow your next paycheck and get all of them, but as you find the opportunity I would recommend any of these. You can save a little money by finding these books used online or on the web. Amazon and Abebooks have been the most useful to me.

Study Bibles:

These 3 Study Bibles have copious notes and some have short essays.

“The Complete Jewish Bible – Insights for Jews and Christians”
©2016 Hendrickson Publishers ISBN 978-1-61970-867-9

“NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible”
©2016 Zondervan ISBN 978-0-310-43158-9

“The New Interpreter’s Study Bible”
©2003 Abingdon Press ISBN 978-0-687-27832-9

Books:

“Epic of Eden” by Sandra Richter ©2008 IVP Academic – Intervarsity Press
ISBN 978-0-8308-2577-6 Great overview of Old Testament times, places and major characters.

“The Cultural World of Jesus” by John Pilch.. ©1995 Liturgical Press
ISBN 0-8146-2286-0 3 volumes. These are arranged around the Catholic Liturgical Calendar, but each of the 3 page reflections on a scripture is loaded with information on the Hebrew culture.

Web:

Gateway.com Many translations of the Bible, Topical Indexes & more

Blueletterbible.com Fewer translations but great linking to Strong’s Concordance.

**If you have a suggestion for a topic for the
“Bite Size Bible Study”**

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