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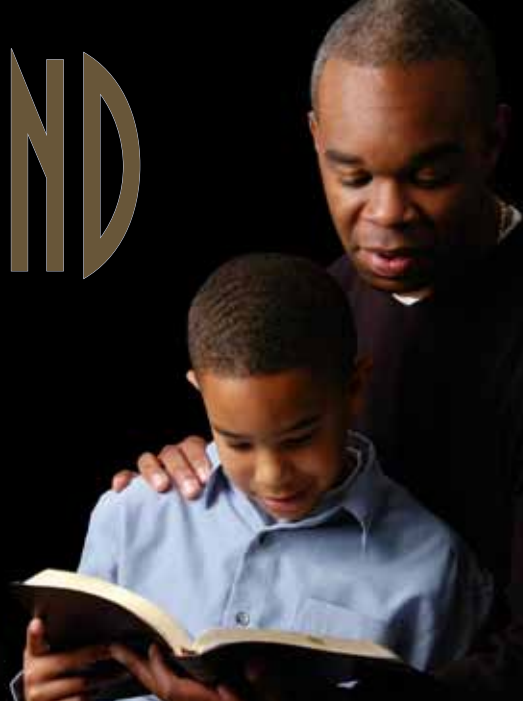
Volume 22:05

Discovery

Scripture & Science for Kids



WRAPPING YOUR MIND AROUND THE BIBLE



KYLE BUTT

A figure of speech is a special way that words are used to mean something.

We use figures of speech all the time. For instance, the title of this article contains the phrase “wrapping your mind around the Bible.” What does that mean? Does it mean you are taking your brain out of your head and wrapping it around the Bible? Of course not. It is a figure of speech that means “understanding the Bible.”

While most people understand figures of speech, some are surprised to learn that the Bible is filled with figures of speech. In one verse, Jesus calls King Herod a “fox” (Luke 13:32). Did Jesus really mean Herod was a small, dog-like animal with a bushy tail that eats rabbits and birds? No. He meant Herod was sly and cunning. If we don’t understand the figures of speech in the Bible, we may miss the real meaning.

For example, one figure of speech is called hyperbole (high-PER-bow-lee). Hyperbole is the

intentional exaggeration of something to make a point. An example would be if a person said, “I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.” Could one person really ever eat an entire horse in one meal? No way. (And I don’t know a whole lot of people who would even eat one bite). But the point is that the person is very hungry. Another example of hyperbole is when a child says, “Mom, can I go to the party? Everyone is going to be there.” Is it true that “everyone” is going to be there? Surely not. There are almost seven billion people in the world. They can’t all make it to the party. All the child means is that lots of people who the parents know will be there.

The Bible often uses hyperbole. For instance, Matthew 3:5 says that “all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan” went out to John the Baptizer and were baptized by him. Does that mean that every person in Judea was baptized by John, even the tiny babies, children, the Roman soldiers, and Jewish rulers? No. It is a hyperbole that means lots of people from those areas. In fact, later we read that some of the Jewish leaders did not believe John (Mark 11:27-33).

Remember, it is not always easy as pie to make heads or tails of what the Bible is saying. Sometimes it is hard as nails, but if you keep your nose to the grindstone, you will be able to put the pieces together and wrap your mind around the figures of speech in the Bible.

Sunrise? or Earthrise?

JEFF MILLER

The Bible comes from God. That means there should be no errors in it. However, some people claim that the Bible **does** have errors and was not written by God. They say that the Bible was written by mere human beings without God’s guidance. Are these claims true?

In the past, some people believed that the Sun revolved around the Earth (a belief called **geocentricity**). We have learned in modern times that **heliocentricity** correctly describes our solar system (the Earth and other planets from our solar system revolve around the Sun). In Psalm 19:6, the Bible says that the Sun rises “from one end of heaven... to the other end.” Because of this verse, critics of the Bible claim that the writer of Psalm 19 incorrectly believed in geocentricity. We use the same kind of language today, however, when we mention “sunrise” and “sunset,” knowing full-well that the Sun does not actually rise and set. The psalms are full of poetic, figurative language not intended to be taken literally, in the same way that many poems today are not intended to be

taken literally. In truth, the psalmist is using figurative, accommodative wording known as “phenomenal” language—language that is used to describe “phenomena” as people see them. He is not intending to state scientific truths about the nature of our solar system.

John 4:24 says that God is spirit. He does not have a physical body. But Exodus 31:18 says that the Ten Commandments were “written with the finger of God.” How can God have a finger without a body? Is this an error in the Bible? In this passage Moses used another type of accommodative language that is often used in the Bible known as **anthropomorphism** (ann-throw-poh-MORF-ism). This language is used to describe God to humans in ways that we can understand, but which is not supposed to be taken literally. We use the same kind of language when we say things like, “The hand of Rome reached all the way across the known world in its influence.” Did the Roman Empire literally have a hand that could reach? Of course not, but we still use such language figuratively. When the Bible is studied fairly, without bias, it proves to be flawless in every way.



Point of View



ERIC LYONS

Twice a year for the past few years I have visited the offices of a tax advisor in Montgomery, Alabama. Since I rarely went to his place of business (or even the area in which his business is located), I had a difficult time remembering exactly what side of the road it was on. When I expected to see it on my right, it would strangely appear on my left. Then, just as sure as I thought it might be on my left, I would find it on my right.

Maybe I was just confused. Perhaps my memory was failing

me. For whatever reason, I never took the time to figure out why I had the distinct impression that sometimes this building was on the right, and sometimes on the left. Whenever the time came for me to see my tax advisor, I simply headed in the direction of his office. I was always confident that I could find it, but unsure on which side of the road it would appear.

Recently, I finally learned why sometimes the building was on my left and other times it was on my right. I had not realized that the street on which this office is located is a long, slow-curving semi-circle. Both ends of the street eventually meet up at the same road, just one intersection apart from each other. Since the two intersections look very similar, I never realized that I sometimes turned left at one intersection and other times turned left at the **next** intersection. When I took the first left, the office building always appeared on my right. When I took the second left, the building was always on my left. For whatever

reason, I had never paid close enough attention. I had failed to consider that the seeming contradiction was merely the result of two different points of view: one from the North, and one from the South.

Sadly, many people approach a study of the Bible as carelessly as I approached the

tax advisor's office building: they fail to see the various viewpoints of the Bible writers.



- Approximately 40 different inspired men from all walks of life wrote the Bible over a period of 1,600 years.
- Sometimes Bible writers focused on a group of people (Luke 23:55-24:1); at other times they targeted a particular person within the group (John 20:1).

Hebrew



- They wrote in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages.
- Sometimes the Bible writers recorded events in chronological order (Genesis 1). At other times, they were less concerned about the exact order of events, and they focused more on the main theme of the passage (Genesis 2).

Aramaic



- These men lived (1) at different times, (2) in different places, (3) among different people, and (4) in different cultures.
- The original recipients of their writings varied greatly—from Jewish, to Greek, to Roman, to all men.

Greek

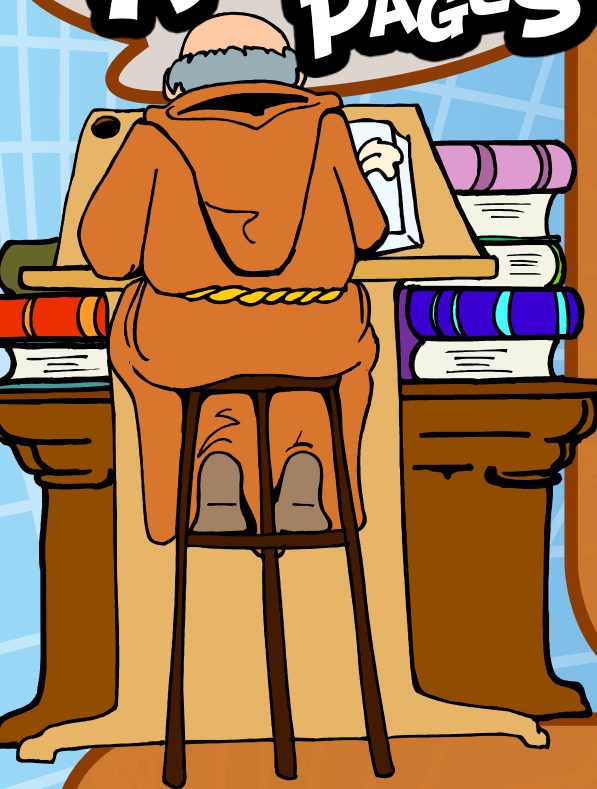


Oftentimes when two or more Bible writers differ in their description of a certain event, skeptics claim they have contradicted each other. In reality, however, the skeptics have merely overlooked the fact that the inspired penmen wrote from different viewpoints. For example, many have asked the question, "How did Judas die? Did he hang himself as Matthew wrote (27:5)? Or, as Luke stated (Acts 1:18), did he fall headlong and 'burst open in the middle' and all his entrails gush out?" The answer: Judas hanged himself, **and later** his body fell (from wherever it was hanging), and burst open. Are Matthew and Luke's accounts different? Yes. Are they contradictory? No. They simply wrote about two different, specific moments during the same general event.

If we fail to see the valid reasons for differences in life, we will find ourselves dazed and confused. I was perplexed for years over the exact location of an office building, because I had not taken the time to consider the exact direction from which I approached the building. Similarly, skeptics and others will never come to a proper understanding of the Bible until they recognize that differing viewpoints play a major role.



ACTIVITY PAGES



FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The original recipients of Scripture varied greatly—from _____, to Greek, to Roman, to all men.
2. When Jesus said, "Whoever eats My _____ and drinks My _____ has eternal life" (John 6:54), He was not talking literally.
3. Anthropomorphisms are often used when Bible writers describe _____ to humans in ways that we can understand, but which are not supposed to be taken literally.
4. Exodus 31:18 says that the _____ Commandments were "written with the _____ of God."
5. _____ use words to give a meaning that cannot be understood from the individual meanings of the words.

TRUE OR FALSE

1. The Bible was written mostly in Hebrew and Greek.
2. About 1,600 different inspired men from all walks of life wrote the Bible over a period of 40 years.
3. Matthew and Luke disagree over how Judas died.
4. The Bible writers always wrote from the same viewpoint.
5. Hyperbole refers to the false belief that the Sun revolves around the Earth.
6. The Bible contains a variety of figures of speech.
7. The inspired writers only made nine errors when penning Scripture.
8. Even though some sections of Scripture are more difficult to understand than others, it is possible to understand the Bible if we study it carefully.

SOLVE, FIND, AND CIRCLE

1. Belief that the Sun revolves around the Earth _____
2. Belief that the Earth and other planets from our solar system revolve around the Sun _____
3. The intentional exaggeration of something to make a point _____
4. A funny, even strange, way to say something that the actual words do not seem to say _____
5. Approximate number of inspired men who wrote the Bible _____
6. Jesus referred to the sly and cunning Herod as this animal _____
7. The idiom "sons of God" _____
8. Language used to describe God to humans in ways that we can understand (but which is not supposed to be taken literally) _____

S D J T C K A M F T T Y Y
 C M F M Y E E S E A F T T
 X R V E T E I I F Z E I R
 N V K Y I L G H Q X L C O
 L N S G C O I P E I D I F
 U K H L I B L R U N D R A
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 M P O J H B A A A G M H O
 G C X H M H H K L B E A O

Dear Digger Doug,
 Why didn't Jesus take Himself off the cross?
 —Abby, Killen, AL



Dear Abby,

That is a great question. We know that Jesus didn't want to endure the misery of the cross. In Mark 14:36, Jesus said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from me...." We also know that Jesus had the ability to avoid the cross. In Matthew 26:53 Jesus said, "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" One of these angels would have been more than enough to destroy all of Jesus' enemies. So, if Jesus didn't want to die on the cross, and He could have avoided it, why didn't He take Himself off the cross? Our answer can be found in the second half of Mark 14:36 when He prayed to the father, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." It was God's plan. Even though He knew He was going to suffer, Jesus was so submissive to the will of His Father that He died on the cross anyway. So, why would God will that His only son die such a horrible death? John 3:16 tells us the answer: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." He did it because He loved us so much. Because of sin the world owed a debt that it could not pay. However, Jesus loved us so much, that He paid the debt with His own blood. That is why He did not take Himself off the cross.



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Bible Idioms: Did You Mean What I Think You Said?

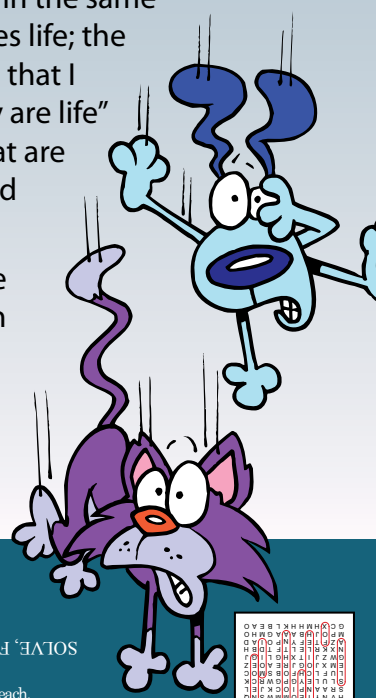
DAVE MILLER

The Bible is an amazing book. It was written by men who were guided by God. Yet, God “moved” (2 Peter 1:21) those men to use human language with all of its unusual features. One of those characteristics of human language is **idioms**. Idioms are funny, even strange, ways to say things that the actual words do not seem to say. Some idioms we have in English include: “It’s raining cats and dogs,” and “I have a frog in my throat.” Idioms use words to give a meaning that cannot be understood from the individual meanings of the words. The people who grew up speaking English understand these idioms. But people who were not reared speaking English cannot easily understand what meaning is intended by the idioms.

The Bible was written mostly in Hebrew and Greek. Those two languages use lots of idioms. For example, the expression in the book of Job, “the sons of God” (1:6; 2:1), is a Hebrew idiom that refers to angels. The phrase “breaking of bread” in the Hebrew mind meant to eat food or have a meal. Lamentations 4:4 says, “The young children ask for bread, but no one breaks it for them.” That is, no one gives them any food. In the early church, the same phrase came to have another idiomatic meaning: to partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7).

When Jesus said, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (John 6:54), He was not talking literally. He did not mean that people must eat His physical flesh. He was using a Hebrew idiom that means to receive, understand, and apply His teaching. To eat Christ’s flesh means to consume His words and live by them. As Jesus made clear later in the same chapter: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). It is Jesus’ words that are of value and so must be received and obeyed.

The Bible contains many more idioms. If we learn them, we can understand our Bibles much better. Then we can know how God wants us to live so we can someday live with Him!



ANSWERS

TRUE OR FALSE: 1. T; 2. F; 3. F; 4. F; 5. F; 6. T; 7. F; 8. T
 SOLVE, FIND, AND CIRCLE: 1. geocentricity; 2. heliocentricity; 3. hyperbole; 4. idiom; 5. forty; 6. fox; 7. angels; 8. anthropomorphism
 FILL IN THE BLANKS: 1. Jewish; 2. flesh, blood; 3. God; 4. Ten; 5. Idioms
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