

Bible Study Skills

Is the Bible Historically Accurate?

- It is clear that the biblical writers were interested in historical events as a medium of revelation. (Standing stones, remember what God has done. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, our faith is useless.)
- It is clear that the biblical writers believed that historical claims must be true in order for them to be significant (1 Corinthians 15:16-17)
- It is clear that the biblical writers did not feel free to invent historical "events" when it was convenient.
- It is clear that the biblical writers did not feel free to omit significant historical events even when it was inconvenient to acknowledge them.
- No properly understood historical statement in the Bible has ever been shown to be false (though there are statements for which no verification exists). We've not verified everything, but archaeology continues to confirm historical claims of the Bible.

However, it should be remembered that the Bible is not "simple" history. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all write differently and have different chronologies. But they all have different points and different emphases.

Is the Bible scientifically accurate?

- There can be no doubt that the Bible lacks a great deal of the kind of scientific precision that modern readers are often looking for, but lack of precision is not lack of accuracy.
 - Something can be accurate without being precise. It's not necessarily attempting to give the level of precision that we're used to.
- It is clear that the biblical writers used phenomenological language, but this is common today even among the scientifically literate.
- Certainly the Bible claims that miraculous events occurred, but there is nothing inherently "unscientific" about a miracle (although it depends, to some extent, on how one defines "science.") They can't be tested, but that doesn't mean that they're not real.
- Since scientific theories often undergo radical revision as new evidence comes to light, we should be cautious about radically revising our interpretation or view of Scripture to accommodate scientific claims.
- In spite of claims to the contrary, there is no scientific statement in the Bible which contradicts established scientific knowledge. There aren't a lot of scientific

statements anyway, but there are some. Scientific statements in the Bible do seem to be borne out by observation.

So how do we account for apparent “contradictions” between the Bible and non-biblical sources or within the Bible itself?

- The non-biblical source may be in error. (Just because we don't have outside records doesn't mean the Bible is wrong. Or even contradicting sources—why assume the Bible is the incorrect source?)
- There may be an interpretive problem leading us to misunderstand the Scripture. (We've had to change views before. People used to think the earth was flat and believed the Bible supported it. But they read it wrong. They were incorrect in their understanding of Scripture.) Sometimes we bring something to Scripture and then search for things to back it up within the Bible.
 - Translation difficulties
 - Failure to understand authorial purpose (God created sun, moon and stars. All Egyptian gods. God is telling the people to worship Him—He made those things.)
 - Imposition of modern standards on ancient writers (looking for modern precision)
 - Failure to recognize figurative or phenomenological language.

There may be an error in the modern text that was not present in the autographs.