

Hold on for a great ride, how to interpret scripture!

Bible interpretation can be difficult and confusing. For example, the Old Testament law commanded the Jews to stone those who blaspheme ([Leviticus 24:16](#))! The gospels also tell those listening to Christ wash each other's feet ([John 13:1-20](#)). Obviously, in our Christian society we do not do these things nor does the church recommend them.

Consequently, on what basis of interpretation do we ignore some laws and follow others? This is a very important question to answer to avoid confusion and frustration in interpreting God's precious word!

Here are basic rules of biblical interpretation:

- All of the Bible is true and God's word.
- Scripture is progressive in revealing more information about God and His great plan of salvation as you proceed reading through the Bible.
- Scripture should be interpreted in a normal, literal fashion. Otherwise, interpret as it would have been understood at the time and by the type of literature it entails. For example, normal interpretation of 1 Samuel as a historical book written 3000 years ago will be different than a letter in the New Testament after the time of Christ.
- Salvation is always by grace in scripture.
- However, God administers His people in different ways at different times. In other words, how He handled uneducated former slaves in the book of Exodus is different than how He handles those in the church. This leads to different commands.

Having mentioned some basic rules then let's look at different sections of scripture.

Old Testament law - There were three basic reasons for the Old Testament law:

- As a legal organization for the Jews coming out of Egypt.
- To provide a central place of worship to keep them away from alternative gods.
- To teach them about the coming Messiah and salvation.

The law was not intended to give salvation, but to teach about it. Salvation is based in the Abrahamic Covenant and completed by the coming of Christ ([Romans 4](#)). Consequently, the Old Testament law was temporary, meant for a specific people and time. Christ fulfilled the law and it is now inactive ([Romans 10:4](#); [Hebrews 7:11-12](#)).

Gospels - The gospels must be interpreted through Jewish eyes and ears!

Christ came initially to the Jews to present their promised kingdom ([Matthew 3:2](#); [4:17](#); [10:7](#)). Consequently, His presentation in the temple, teachings, temptation, miracles and Davidic ancestry are recorded to show that He was the promised Messiah.

He was rejected by the Jewish leadership ([Matthew 12](#)) and then most all of Israel ([John 12](#)). He then generally concentrated on teaching His disciples (Matthew 14-18) and confounding the Pharisees with His questions and teaching in parables ([Matthew 19-23](#); [Luke 10-18](#)). Consequently, the commands in the gospels were there to encourage the Jews to follow Him until his death and resurrection and to warn of God's righteous wrath to those rejecting Him. The commands were not directly to those in the church.

Church - The Epistles (from 1 Corinthians to Revelation 3) are teachings directly to the church from God through Christ and the Spirit to the apostles. Paul specifically was chosen to explain to the church the meaning of Christ's coming ([Colossians 1:25](#); [Ephesians 3:1-6](#)). In many instances commands from the law, such as 9 of 10 of the Ten Commandments, and 'love one another' from the gospels are repeated in the epistles. However, it is from the epistles that we derive our marching orders as Christians as God manages people through the church.

I hope this helps your Bible interpretation. Thank you again for participating in our survey.

We received 505 responses to the survey. Below the preferred biblical responses are noted by ***.

All the Bible is trustworthy and true. As Christians, which sections should we obey in our daily lives?

- New Testament epistles, such as Ephesians and Colossians***
- The Old Testament
- The gospels
- Only parts you think are true
- Only parts you want to obey
- All sections of the Bible

What is the purpose of the Old Testament law?

- Provide an organizational structure for the nation Israel***
- Provide for a unified worship process for Israel***
- Reveals the coming Messiah***
- Give commands and direction for Christians today
- No clear purpose

What is the current status of the Old Testament law?

- Christ is the end of the law so the Old Testament law is not to be followed by Christians***
- The law should be followed in its entirety
- The law should be followed in the sections that are practical today
- The law should be followed as my pastor or priest determines

What is the purpose of the Old Testament?

- There is no purpose for the New Testament believer
- Provides commands to the New Testament believer for daily living and holiness
- Provides practical wisdom***
- Prophesies the coming kingdom of God and its Messiah King***
- Teaches about Messiah through prophecy and types***
- Reveals the sinful character of man***
- Provides an interesting historical account of mankind
- Reveals the righteous character and actions of God***
- Provides an account of God's vengeance and judgment on mankind when they disobey***

What is the purpose of the gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)?

- Gives commands and directives for the church today
- Reveals the coming kingdom of God and its Messiah King***
- Provides a historical account of the man, Jesus
- Outdated, unhistorical and has no purpose
- Reveals salvation through Messiah***
- Gives revelation of God's plan for the ages ***

What is the purpose of the New Testament epistles (i.e., letters from Paul, Peter, etc.)?

- Completes the revelation of Jesus Christ in His coming and its meaning for the church***
- Provide directives, guidance and commands for New Testament believers***
- Reveals prophecy regarding the end times and Christ's second coming***
- No specific application as Christians should focus on the gospels
- Not historical and has no purpose

*** Preferred biblical response