

Misreading Scripture With Western Eyes: Exploring Cultural Biases in Biblical Interpretation

The Bible, a collection of ancient texts, has had a profound influence on Western civilization. However, when these texts are interpreted through the lens of Western culture, it is possible to overlook or misunderstand their original meaning. This article explores the concept of "misreading Scripture with Western eyes," examining how cultural biases can lead to incorrect or incomplete interpretations of the Bible.

The Impact of Western Culture on Biblical Interpretation

Western culture is characterized by a number of key features, including:

- **Individualism:** The emphasis on the individual over the collective.
- **Rationalism:** The belief that reason and logic are the primary means of understanding the world.
- **Linearity:** The concept of time as a straight line, with a beginning and an end.
- **Progress:** The belief that society is constantly improving and advancing.

These cultural biases have shaped the way that Western Christians have interpreted the Bible. For example, individualism has led to an emphasis on personal salvation, while rationalism has encouraged a literal and historical approach to biblical interpretation.



Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible

by E. Randolph Richards

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Examples of Misinterpretations

There are numerous examples of how Western cultural biases have led to misinterpretations of Scripture. Here are a few:

- **The Creation Account:** The Western understanding of Genesis 1 as a six-day creation event is influenced by a linear view of time. However, in the ancient Near East, time was often understood in a more cyclical manner, and the creation account may have been intended as a symbolic description of the ongoing process of creation.
- **The Role of Women:** Western culture has traditionally viewed women as subordinate to men. This bias has led to interpretations of biblical passages that support male dominance, even though the Bible itself contains numerous passages that affirm the equality of women.
- **The End Times:** Western Christians have often interpreted biblical prophecies about the end times as predicting a literal battle between

good and evil. However, these prophecies may have been intended as metaphorical descriptions of the ongoing struggle between faith and unbelief.

Dangers of Misinterpretation

Misinterpreting Scripture can have serious consequences. It can lead to:

- **Error:** Believing and teaching incorrect doctrines.
- **Division:** Creating divisions within the church.
- **Harm:** Justifying violence, discrimination, or other harmful actions.

Avoiding Misinterpretation

To avoid misinterpreting Scripture, it is important to:

- **Be aware of your own cultural biases.**
- **Study the Bible in its original cultural context.**
- **Read Scripture with a critical eye.**
- **Listen to the voices of Christians from other cultures.**
- **Seek guidance from the Holy Spirit.**

Misreading Scripture with Western eyes is a real danger that can lead to incorrect or incomplete interpretations of the Bible. By being aware of our own cultural biases and by reading Scripture in its original context, we can avoid this danger and better understand the true meaning of God's Word.

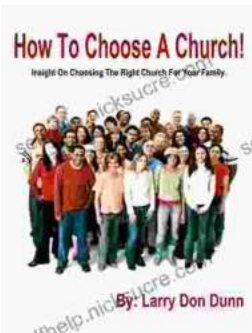
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