

Keith Ward

**What the Bible Really Teaches:
*A challenge for fundamentalists***

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'I am a born-again Christian. But I do not believe what born-again Christians are supposed to believe . . .'

Professor Ward has had a distinguished career in academic theology but this book emerges from something much simpler. He seems to have become aware from his earliest days as a committed Christian that the Bible simply doesn't say what many of his friends told him it said, and as he explores that theme here he distinguishes beliefs which are 'properly evangelical' from those fundamentalist views that he argues are not really Bible-based at all. He admits that this is an adversarial book, and attacks Christian fundamentalism for being highly selective in its emphasis on a few favourite biblical texts which are then often distorted or given a very implausible meaning in order to fit a set of beliefs already held.

So, in this readable and engaging book Ward challenges the reader to look again at what the Bible says. Sometimes this can be quite provocative, as when he establishes quite clearly that either what Matthew says is false - that Jesus taught the Torah should be kept in the fullest rigour - so there are definitely false statements in the New Testament, or else, if Matthew is accurate, then 'Christians do, and should, disobey the clear moral teaching of Jesus', which is exactly what he forces the reader to acknowledge that we all do. Either way it follows that some moral injunctions in the Bible, even if they are said to be issued by Jesus himself, are in fact not binding upon Christians!

Here, as in other chapters, Ward finds a way forward through the principle of sublation, the cancelling of an obvious or literal meaning of a text by a later teaching which leads us to discover a deeper spiritual interpretation. This is one of six principles of interpretation that he outlines very clearly in a helpful early chapter. What follows in later chapters are concrete examples of these principles in action, as he interprets biblical teaching about the Coming of Christ in Glory, about Salvation, about Judgement, Heaven and Hell - eight such themes in all.

My own reactions varied. On some points I rejoiced when Ward crystallized conclusions that I had been tentatively reaching towards myself for some time, and there are other moments when I've been delighted to find satisfactory solutions to problems that have previously perplexed me. The whole thrust is towards optimistic, inclusive and positive interpretations that really do sound more like Good News than do most fundamentalist teachings! In places though, I found myself thinking, 'Yes, but what about . . .?' as other passages of scripture came to mind, and there are times when what he regards as fundamentalist might be seen by many as mainstream, or at least to have been so in the fairly recent past. In the end, on each particular matter, readers will have to judge for themselves whether Ward succeeds in his aim of being more biblical than those he disagrees with, but to acknowledge that is perhaps to concede one of his main points, that there is not 'just one correct interpretation, which is obvious by just reading the Bible ... the Bible contains some shocking facts for fundamentalists.'

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- The Bible-a book from God -- What is God's purpose for the Earth? - - Who is Jesus Christ? - - The ransom-God's greatest gift -- Where are the dead? - - Real hope for your loved ones who have died -- What is God's Kingdom? - - Are we living in "the Last Days"? - - Spirit creatures -- How they affect us -- Why does God allow suffering? - - Living in a way that pleases God -- A Godly view of life -- How to make your family life happy -- Worship that God approves -- Take your stand for true worship -- Draw close to God in prayer -- Baptism and your relationship with God 7 Day Prayer Challenge for Spouses. A Different Kind of Christian. Jesus Is Love. Pastors and Church Leaders.Â I was contacted recently by someone who was looking for a meme that illustrated how fundamentalist Christians, who claim to rely on the Bible alone, are thoroughly dependent on academic work on the Bible in ways that they either fail to notice or simply refuse to acknowledge. Two memes came to mind, which I had shared on my blog previously. But I also thought that perhaps I ought to turn something that I myself wrote back in 2010 into a meme. Here's the text of that excerpt from my earlier post: Just read the Bible for yourself, without the aid of scholarship. Sounds simple, right? Sounds like The Bible Teach book is a free Bible study tool that answers Bible questions. What does the Bible say? What does the Bible teach? Download the book, read it online.Â This Bible study tool is designed to help you learn what the Bible says on various topics, including why we suffer, what happens at death, how to have a happy family life, and more. Is This What God Purposed? You may wonder why there are so many problems today.