

A Simple Lay Potato's Commentary on the Bible

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Contents

Preface	2
Introduction	3

Preface

Over the last few years, my theology has changed quite a bit. I was raised in a conservative evangelical tradition. Conservative evangelicals have a very particular reading of the Bible, which supposedly comes from reading it literally, or according to the “plain” meaning of the bare text. But this also typically means reading without (a good) consideration of the context of the broader Biblical text, the purpose for which particular parts of the Bible were written, or the cultural context in which the words would have been received. In other words, I was originally taught to read what the Bible “says” rather than what it “means”, if that makes sense.

I’ve learned a lot since then. I’ve learned a lot about myself. I’ve learned that I basically have the values I was raised with, but I disagree with what that translates into specifically politically and theologically. I’ve learned about the process that brought us the Bible we have today. And I think I’ve learned a lot about what some of this text should mean for us today.

Some of this came from reading scholarly work or talking to others. Some came from prayerful reflection. There’s a lot of the Bible I’ve re-read since or as a part of this transition, but I’ve yet to go through from cover to cover since my outlook started changing. So this project is me going through the entirety of the text now that my perspective is different since the last time I visited some of these passages, and making notes on the whole thing.

I don’t claim to be a theological or biblical expert. I don’t have a seminary degree, I don’t have experience as a pastor. What I have is a few decades’ experience as a Christian and a human, a deep desire to learn as much from God’s Word as I can, and to get it right, and lots of reading and thinking done toward that end. So if someone other than me ends up reading these notes, take them for what they are, and I hope they help.

Introduction

This “book” represents my own personal notes on a full read through of the Bible. In terms of what translation to read, there’s of course a lot of difference of opinion on that, and different translations have different strengths. I usually read in the New International Version (Zondervan 2011). This is a decent translation that tries to balance thought-for-thought, or *dynamic equivalence*, translation with word-for-word, or *formal equivalence* (though the NIV does have some issues, which is fine when you’re aware of them). Some prefer the New Revised Standard Version for a translation that balances formal and dynamic equivalence, but it does tend just a little bit more toward formal than dynamic equivalence. The English Standard Version is a decent translation that falls in the formal equivalence camp, as is the New American Standard Bible. No matter what, the best translation is the one you will read! When writing up these notes, I’ll often try to point out translation issues to the extent I can find out they exist. I’m not a Hebrew or Greek scholar, though I have tried to learn about the languages biblical texts were written in and become comfortable researching issues of translation in academic sources so that I can better understand the Word.

Bibliography

Zondervan (2011). *The Holy Bible, New International Version*.