

THE BIBLE

HYPERBOLES IN THE BIBLE



SUMMARY: There are some statements in the Bible that reflect a phenomenon or broad generalization which must be interpreted with the whole of the scriptures in view. These are hyperboles and are commonly used, e.g., the revolutionary war expression “the shot heard around the world” was not ever understood to be a literal statement. It was true in a figurative sense.

A hyperbole is an exaggerate statements or claim not meant to be taken literally. It is a standard figure of speech in language.

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The following verses are listed as being extraordinary in scope. Some may well be intended to be understood literally and some may be hyperboles.

Psalms 50:1 The Mighty One, God, the Lord, has spoken and summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Matt 5:45 “He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good...” The sun does not rise, it only appears to rise from our point of view. It is a phenomenal statement.

Matt 13:31-32 “a mustard seed...and this is smaller than all the other seeds sown in the garden” (NAS) – smallest seed in the restricted context of the middle East gardens – an orchid seed is actually smaller but the audience had never heard of an orchid, and the orchid seed is not sown and would not be in a garden. It may sound like a hyperbole, but it is a true scientific statement.

Col 1:23 “gospel...which was proclaimed in all creations” NAS, “was preached to every creature” KJV. A hyperbole (exaggeration) to explain that the gospel had reached the extents of the world as they understood it, not that every single person (or creature) had heard the gospel.

Genesis 1 The six creation “days.” A metaphor or a scientific statement?

Genesis 7:19 Regarding the Flood “and all the high mountains everywhere were covered”. Universal or restricted statement?

Matt 21:21-22 And Jesus answered and said to them (disciples), “Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it shall happen. 22 “And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” (NAS) (No records of any mountains being cast).

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Mark 11:24 “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be {granted} you. (NAS) Speaking to the Apostles only or to everyone?”

John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (NAS)”

John 16:23 “And, in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. (NAS) (not yes, no, or maybe)”

Acts: 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they {began} rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (NAS) (Predestination?)

Acts 16:31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.” (NAS) (Saving others or natural assumption?)

Rom 11:29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (NAS) (Can’t fall from grace or the offer won’t be retracted?).

1 Cor 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. (NAS) (Saving others or just increases the chance?).

1 Cor 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (NAS) (Saving others or just increasing the chance?).

John 16:25 “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.” (NAS)

Luke 2:1 “Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.” All the Roman empire? (NAS)