

When I came to see that there are mistakes in the Bible, I did not jettison it all as a waste of time. Not at all. On the contrary, I continued to value and cherish it, as a book that could reveal truths about God. Yes it had discrepancies, contradictions, historical errors, glaring scientific mistakes, and so on. Of course it did. But that for me was not the ultimate point. The Bible It was a product of its own time, a very human book. Even so, it was a book through which God continued to speak.

I came to think that the Bible was more important for the valuable lessons it conveyed than for the factual (or problematic) information it contained. This view worked on two levels. For one thing, I came to see it was important to realize that even for ancient readers what mattered about the Bible was not its factual accuracy in its details, but for the ideas that it was trying to present. And for me personally, it was important to see how the Bible could speak to the issues of my own day, as those ideas could be translated to my own life and time.

To get a sense of how the first point works, I lift here a section from my book [The Bible: A Historical and Literary Introduction](#), where I explain to my readers how the Bible's opening chapters (Genesis 1-11), called the Primeval History, can be understood not as a lesson in history or science, but as a meaningful set of myths.

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### The Primeval History as Myth

From a literary perspective, it should be clear that it is a real challenge to consider the Primeval History either as science or as history, in the normally accepted meanings of the terms. But that is not to denigrate the narrative. Not in the least! These are terrific, moving, and powerful stories. But they are probably best understood to be stories, not scientific explanations or historical accounts. More specifically, these stories can be best appreciated when they are recognized as "myths."

The term myth should not be taken in a negative sense. It can be used in a very positive sense. A brief working definition of **myth** would be...

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