Scripture in the Classroom

IS THE BIBLE TRUE? Types of truth in the Bible

That question can only be answered if we understand that there are different kinds of truth.

RELIGIOUS TRUTH: The Bible is primarily religious truth. Religion is concerned with man's (sic) relationship with God, and the Bible is the record of the relationship between God and his chosen people, the Hebrews. It tells how God treated them and how they responded (or failed to respond) to Him.

MORAL TRUTH: The Bible also contains much moral truth. Moral truth tells us what is right and wrong.
· *What we must do;*
· *And how we must live*
If we want to be good people and close to God. However, the Old Testament reflects the morality of the Hebrew people, and their standards were very different from ours. For instance, according to Hebrew morality,

· *If a person poked out your eye, you were permitted to poke out one of his,*
· *If he knocked out your tooth, you could knock out one of his.*
The New Testament tells us that Jesus expressly raised the moral standards. *"It was said of old …, but I say to you …".*

SYMBOLIC TRUTH: Much of the truth in scripture is told in symbols, parables, myths and allegories. We have to read between the lines to discover the truth being presented. The story of the tree of good and evil is an example of such a symbol. There is truth there, but it is a religious truth, not factual truth about apples and snakes.

PROVERBIAL TRUTH: Much of the Bible, especially the Wisdom books, is the kind of folksy truth contained in proverbs, like:
· *Do unto others as you would have others do unto you;*
· *A stitch in times saves nine.*

HISTORICAL TRUTH: The Bible contains the history of the Hebrew people from about 2000 BC to 100 AD. Though much of this history was passed down orally for generations before it was written, it is, nonetheless, surprisingly accurate. There are, however, some historical errors in the Bible.

SCIENTIFIC TRUTH: The biblical writers reflect the scientific understandings of their day, which – we now know – were very primitive. for instance:
· *The Bible describes the earth as flat,*
· *Says the sun stood still,*
· *Says the world was created in seven days.*

We are able to read right through the scientific errors in the Bible to find the religious truth the writer was trying to get across. There was no need for God to reveal a more accurate understanding of science to His people. Revelation is concerned with religious truth not scientific truth. The Hebrew people didn't have to know that the world was round in order to be close to God.

K. Sawyer: Developing Faith of Adolescents