

Synthetic study is highly desirable, but it is a further step, and can often produce serious error if the earlier procedure, which this book is attempting to perform, has not first been carried to its conclusion.

### 3. Failure to Differentiate Levels of Certainty

Two remaining dangers in Bible study need to be briefly mentioned. The first of these is the danger of failing to differentiate between levels of certainty. In the study of the Bible, as in any field of history or of science, some facts are well established while others are far less certain. Failure to differentiate can do great harm, both in affecting the results of the study and in giving readers a false impression.

In this connection the writer often thinks of a book on the ancient history of an important country that appeared several years ago. It was written by a professor in a great university who had devoted many years to the study of ancient history. He was probably as familiar with the many archaeological activities that had been carried on in that particular country as any man living. The book was well illustrated and beautifully printed. The writer's ideas were clearly expressed. At first sight it seemed to be an ideal book to introduce readers to the study of this very important area. Yet the book failed completely in its purpose. The book contained a great many statements about facts that were well known and recognized by all students in this field. These statements were made almost incidentally, with no attempt to give evidence for them or to support them. Upon reading these statements a person unfamiliar with that field of study would think that they were only incidental and were unimportant. On all matters on which various viewpoints are possible the author selected a particular viewpoint and expressed it dogmatically. The less certain the view, the more positive would be his statements in its favor. When the author would present a new theory of his own of which no one else had yet heard, or even if he desired ironically to present an idea that he felt sure no sensible person would take seriously, he would state the