

Rules of Interpretation

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THE BASIS FOR A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S WORD

In order to fully understand the Word of God (the Bible), there are certain requirements that you must yield to. The Bible is a spiritual book, and it must be spiritually discerned. "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually examined" (I Corinthians 2:14).

- I. The spiritual requirements for a clear understanding of the Word of God are as follows:
 - A. One must love God: Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; I John 2:7-11.
 - B. One must have the will to do God's will: John 7:17; Psalms 40:6-8.
 - C. One must be willing to lay aside human theories and practices of men which are contrary to the will of God: Ezekiel 14:4,5; Acts 17:10,11.
 - D. One must pray to the Lord, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalms 119:18). Prov 2:3, Dan. 4:37.
- II. The intellectual requirements are as follows:
 - A. One must study the Word in order to get its messages. II Timothy 2:15.
 - B. One must discipline one's mind to memorize the Word. Psalms 119:11.
 - C. One must worship the Lord with all one's heart. Proverbs 1:7; Job 28:28.

THE USE OF LANGUAGE

In order to understand the Scriptures one must know the use of language: the grammar, the specific meaning of words, and the fundamental laws of speech especially the principles which are characteristic of the Scriptures.

- I. A knowledge of the use of language is important because:
 - A. Intelligible language expresses a logical process of the mind.
 - B. There are certain definite fixed laws of the mind according to which all normal persons think and act.
 - C. Language either written or spoken is governed by definite specific laws that are just as real as the laws governing physical matter.
- II. In the Bible, which is God's revelation to man, the thought and also the very words by which the ideas were expressed in the original tongues were given infallibly by the Holy Spirit of God.
 - A. In the Scriptures the Lord said exactly what He meant and meant just what He said.
 - B. The prophets and apostles spoke and wrote in the language of the people to whom they ministered.
 - C. The Lord had a very definite idea to convey whenever He made a statement.
 - D. A careful and honest appraisal of any statement found in the Scriptures will reveal that it has a definite and specific meaning; and a solemn and sincere purpose should be exercised to learn exactly what is said in the Scriptures and to arrive at the precise idea of the inspired writer.

THE LAWS OF INTERPRETATION

The knowledge of certain rules of interpretation and the observance of these rules when studying the Scriptures is very important and helpful in arriving at a clear understanding of God's Word.

- I. The first rule of interpretation is to DISCOVER THE AUTHOR THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED AND THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN A GIVEN CASE.

- II. The second rule of interpretation is to DISCOVER THE FACTS AND TRUTHS PRESENTED IN A GIVEN PASSAGE AND NOTE THE EXACT WORDING OF THE TEXT.
- III. The third rule (**THE GOLDEN RULE**) of interpretation is as follows: WHEN THE PLAIN SENSE OF SCRIPTURE MAKES COMMON SENSE, SEEK NO OTHER SENSE; THEREFORE, TAKE EVERY WORD AT ITS PRIMARY, ORDINARY, USUAL, LITERAL MEANING UNLESS THE FACTS OF THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT, STUDIED IN THE LIGHT OF RELATED PASSAGES AND AXIOMATIC AND FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS INDICATE CLEARLY OTHERWISE.
- A. Seek the plain, literal meaning of the Scriptures.
 - B. Seek the figurative meaning only when the facts demand such an interpretation. (Modernism and rationalism are the logical outgrowth of forcing a figurative meaning upon a passage that is clearly literal, or vice versa.)
 - C. Study every statement of the Scriptures in context. ("A TEXT APART FROM ITS CONTEXT IS A PRETEXT.") Then study the facts of the context in the light of related passages and axiomatic fundamental truths. "... No prophecy of scripture is of private (special) interpretation" (II Peter 1:20).

(The Golden Rule of Interpretation is one of the most important principles governing us in our interpretation of the Scriptures. If we follow this rule, we shall never go very far wrong; but if we fail to follow it, we shall never go right.)

- IV. The fourth rule of interpretation is THE LAW OF FIRST MENTION.
- A. The meaning of the law of First Mention: The Law of First Mention may be said to be the principle that requires one to go to that portion of the Scriptures where a doctrine is mentioned for the first time and to study the first occurrence of the same in order to get the fundamental inherent meaning of that doctrine.
 - B. When this law is applied the simple precedes the complex.

NOTE: The Book of Genesis is the seed plot of every doctrine found in the Scriptures for every doctrine is found there in simple form.

- V. The fifth law of interpretation is THE LAW OF DOUBLE REFERENCE.

The Law of Double Reference is the principle of associating similar or related ideas which are usually separated from one another by long period of times, and which are blended into a single picture like the blending of pictures by a stereopticon.

- VI. The sixth rule of interpretation is THE LAW OF RECURRENCE

The Law of Recurrence involves the recording of an event and the repetition of the account which gives added details. This principle may be illustrated by the artist who "blocks out the portrait" of a person at the first sitting and adds detail at subsequent sittings.

- VII. The seventh law of interpretation is the LAW OF PARANOMASIA or A PLAY ON WORDS.

- A. Paronomasia consists of our laying down beside one word or idea that has been used a similar one with a little variation.
- B. The following are example of paronomasia: Amos 8:1,2 Hebrew word "kayits" (translated "summer fruit") and "kets" (translated "the end"). In Micah 2:1-3 there is a play upon the word "evil." Daniel 9:24 has a play upon the words "seventy sevens." Other Examples: Isaiah 28:1-8; John 3:5; John 6:28,29.