

"Eight Laws of Bible Interpretation"

Text: Ecclesiastes 8:1 says: Who is as the wise man? And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.

2 Peter 1:20 says: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

We are not too young or old to learn. Whether it be a spiritual thing or a natural thing. It is our responsibility to study the scripture. We must discipline ourselves to be students of the Word of God. II Timothy 2:15 says: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Truth is not surface. We must dig beneath the surface in order to find Truth. The quest for truth is a progressive journey in which we must give ourselves to, in order for us to find the jewels of God's Word. John 5:39 says: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

There are eight laws that we must follow when interpreting the Bible.

1. Definition
2. Usage
3. Context
4. Historical Background
5. Logic
6. Precedent
7. Unity
8. Inference

Truth is what sets men free. Freedom is doing what we should do, NOT what we want to do. Knowledge is so important. If we are rooted and grounded in the word of truth, then when the storms of life come against us we will be able to stand like a tree planted by the river of water.

1. **RULE OF DEFINITION**

Any Study of Scripture... must begin with a study of words. Define your terms and then keep to the terms defined. In the last analysis, our theology finds its SOLID FOUNDATION only in the grammatical sense of Scripture. The interpreter should conscientiously abide by the plain meaning of the words. (The author) confines the definitions strictly to their literal or idiomatic force; which, after all, will be found to form the best, and indeed the only safe and solid basis for theological deductions of any kind.

2. **RULE OF USAGE**

The whole Bible may be regarded as written for "the Jew first," and its words and idioms ought to be rendered according to Hebrew usage. Christ then accepted the usage He found existing. He did not alter it. Interpreting very many phrases and histories of the New Testament, it is not so much worth what we think of them from notions of our own... as in what sense these things were understood by the hearers and lookers on, according to the usual custom and vulgar dialect of the nation.

3. **RULE OF CONTEXT**

Many a passage of Scripture will not be understood at all without the help afforded by the context; for many a sentence derives all its point and force from the connection in which it stands! Every word you read must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it! (Bible words) when used out of context can prove almost anything. (Some interpreters) twist them from a natural to a non-natural sense.

4. **RULE OF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Even the general reader must be aware that some knowledge of Jewish life and society at the time is requisite for the understanding of the Gospel history. The moment the student has in his mind what was in the mind of the author or authors of the Biblical books when these were written, he has interpreted the thought of Scripture. If he adds anything of his own, it is not exegesis. I have said enough to show the part which the study of history necessarily plays in the intelligent study of the law as it is today. Our only interest in the past is for the light it throws upon the present!

5. **RULE OF LOGIC**

Interpretation is merely logical reasoning. The use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture is everywhere to be assumed. The Bible comes to us in forms of human language, and appeals to our reason...it invites investigation, and it is to be interpreted as we interpret any other volume, by a rigid application of the same laws of language, and the same grammatical analysis. What is the control we used to weed out false theological speculation? Certainly the control is logic and evidence...interpreters who have not had the sharpening experience of logic.. may have improper notions of implication and evidence. Too frequently such a person uses a basis of appeal that is a notorious violation of the laws of logic and evidence. Charles G. Finney said he interpreted a Bible passage as "he would have understood the same or like passage in a law book." The Bible must be understood on "fair principles of interpretation such as would be admitted in a court of justice!"

6. **RULE OF PRECEDENT**

Precedent - that which takes higher position. It is that which is given the most importance in a certain instance! We must not violate the known usage of a word and invent another for which there is no precedent!

7. **RULE OF UNITY**

It is fundamental to a true interpretation of the Scripture, that the parts of a document, law, or instrument are to be construed with reference to the significance of the whole, where a transaction is carried out by means of several documents so that together they form part of a single whole, these documents are read together as one. They are to be read so that, that construction is to be preferred which will render them consistent. Deuteronomy 17:6, Deuteronomy 19:15, II Corinthians 13:1, Matthew 18:16, Hebrews 10:28

8. **RULE OF INFERENCE**

In the law of evidence, and inference is a fact reasonably implied from another fact. It is a logical consequence. It is a process of reasoning. It derives a conclusion from a given fact or premise. It is the deduction of one proposition from another proposition. It is a conclusion drawn from evidence. An inferential fact or proposition, although not expressly stated, is sufficient to bind. This principle of interpretation is upheld by law courts.