

RULES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Rule # 1 WHAT DID IT SAY TO THE ORIGINAL READERS?

- How would the original recipients of this book or letter understand what it says?
- What was the historical setting for the readers?
- What was happening in the life of Israel or the Church at this time?

Rule # 2 WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

- What comes before and what comes after the verse in question?
- What were the cultural issues of the day?
- What customs or practices were relevant for the original readers?
- Summarize the "thought" of the verses in review.

Rule # 3 READ MULTIPLE TRANSLATIONS

- Review the Hebrew/Greek or compare four to five translations.
- A.T. Robinson and R.C.H. Lenski are great resources for the Greek Text of the New Testament.
- What words or phrases stand out in the text?

Rule 4 IDENTIFY THE LITERARY STYLE

- **Narrative:** *"narrative is the recounting of a series of facts or events and the establishing of some connection between them."*
- **Poetry:** Hebrew poetry often uses "parallelism." Parallelism is most commonly found in the book of Psalms and Proverbs but is found throughout the Hebrew Bible. Parallelism is the expression of one idea in two or more different ways.
- **Parable:** A *parable* is a simple story that helps us understand a spiritual or moral concept.
- **Simile:** A *simile* uses "like" or "as" to give us a mental picture of something by comparing it to something else. "As the deer pants for water, so I long for you, O God." (Psalms 42:1)
- **Metaphor:** A *metaphor* is just a simile with the "like" or "as" left out. "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11) does not mean Jesus herds sheep. It is a metaphor meaning Jesus is our master and protector in the same way *as* a shepherd is master and protector of his sheep.
- **Hyperbole:** *Hyperbole* is deliberate exaggeration to make a point and is very common in the Bible. Examples include "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law." (Psalms 119:136)
- **Apocalyptic:** *Apocalypse* comes from a Greek word meaning "uncovering" or "revealing." Apocalyptic literature uses elaborate visions, powerful symbols and numbers to reveal heavenly secrets.

Rule # 5 SCRIPTURE INTERPRETS SCRIPTURE

- Search scripture for other passages that speak to the same issues.
- How is the same words used in other contexts?

Rule # 6 THE SIMPLEST INTERPRETATION THE IS USUALLY THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION

- Keep it simple and plain in its context.
- Let the first impression of the text guide your interpretation.

Rule # 7 WHAT IS THE QUESTION OR ISSUE BEING ADDRESSED?

- The New Testament was written to churches addressing specific issues or questions. We must discern the question in order to determine its complete meaning for today.
- Answer the "who, what, why, when and how" questions.

Rule # 8 MAKING CHURCH DOCTRINE (BINDING TRUTH)

- Two different passages must speak to the same issue in order to make it binding doctrine for the church. John 8:13-18

Rule # 9 THE CLEAREST STATEMENT RULES!

- When a second or third passage appears to make a doctrinal statement in conflict with other passages, compare all passages to see which statement is the most encompassing.

Rule # 10 THE OLD TESTAMENT VERSUS NEW TESTAMENT

- Old Testament statements or promises must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament since Jesus clarified and fulfilled the Old Testament. Matthew 5:17 "fulfill" = "Overflowing" "In total".
- The Bible is unfolding revelation. It must always be read in context as to what Jesus and the Testament said and did.
- Would an Old Testament statement or prophecy have found its fulfillment in the eyes of the New Testament writers.
- Always keep in mind the two major Old Testament pillars: The Covenant and the Temple.
- Always keep in mind the two major New Testament pillars: Jesus is God in the flesh. He truly died and truly rose bodily from the dead.