

GENERAL RULES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Basic Assumptions Behind Interpreting God's Word:

1. We have one all-wise consistent God behind the Bible.
2. God cannot be frustrated by human sinfulness or culture (Isaiah 55:11).
3. We expect a fundamental harmony with other parts of the canon.
4. All scripture is profitable for our instruction.

General Rules of Interpreting God's Word (needed to forestall heresy):

- A. We are not limited only to the meaning of the original writer.
- B. A text should not be interpreted in a way to contradict another text.
- C. The *historical grammatical** sense is the basic sense of scripture, but not necessarily the only sense of scripture.
{*historical grammatical strives to discover the author's original intended meaning in the text as it would have been understood by others at the time}
- D. The *literal sense** is the basic way to interpret the Bible, but not the only way.
There is also poetry and imagery (Psalms 36:7,63:7).
{literal sense* upholds the exact or primary meaning of a word or words}
- E. The writer may not have understood the meaning of what he wrote, especially in prophetic scripture.
- F. A biblical text should never be interpreted in a way which excludes the supernatural.
{Thomas Jefferson removed all references to the supernatural in his translation of the Bible}
- G. The Bible is God's *progressive revelation** of what He wants mankind to know.
The Newer Testament is our guide in interpreting the Older Testament.
Generally speaking, the epistles shed light on the gospels.
{*Progressive revelation** affirms that the sections of the Bible that were written later contain a fuller revelation of God and His commands compared to the earlier sections}
- H. Passages addressed to individuals should be interpreted in light of passages addressed to all the called-out-ones (such as to Philemon).
- I. Descriptive passages should be interpreted in light of *didactic** (teaching) passages.
{didactic* passages express the will of God or commands of God—things that demand our obedience}
- J. Incidental references in a text should be interpreted in light of *systematic** passages (1Corinthians 15:29).
{systematic* passages deal at length with a particular topic, such as Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12-14}