

"Tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"-1King 22:16

Bible Principles of Interpretation

There are many methods of studying the Bible. Among the most popular are the mystical method, allegorical method, superstitious method, spiritual method, apologetic method, ecclesiastical method, hierarchical method, dogmatic method, inductive method, deductive method, rationalistic method, and literal method. The method we choose to interpret the Bible changes the conclusions we reach.

One method will lead us to conclude baptism *is not essential* to salvation. And a different method will lead us to conclude baptism *is essential* to salvation.

Choosing the correct method to interpret the Bible can mean the difference between salvation and damnation.

The solution is not to choose a man-made method of interpretation, but to study the Bible, as taught by the Bible. God's word equips us with everything we need to know, including the proper manner to interpret His word ([2 Tim. 3:16-17](#)).

Bible Principles of Interpretation

For the remainder of the article, I want to talk about basic principles of interpretation from the Bible.

God's Word is Truth

The Lord's church recognizes that God's word is the only standard of truth. Jesus, when praying to the Father, said, "Your word is truth" ([Jn. 17:17](#)).

In contrast, other churches recognize sources of authority other than God's word. Some churches have a catechism, creed, or church manual. Others place oral tradition above God's word. Some make the writings of men more authoritative than God's word, and others have their own Bible.

As Christians, God's word is our standard of truth. Therefore, our responsibility is to learn it, and obey.

We Can Understand God's Word

To interpret God's word correctly, we must realize it can be understood ([Eph. 3:4](#); [5:17](#)). We know we can interpret His word, coming to the correct conclusions, whereby we can render obedience and serve Him faithfully.

Today, false teachers tell people we can't understand God's word. They lead people astray, convincing them they're right with God, as long as they "think" they're doing right.

We Must Reason

We must reason to draw proper conclusions from God's word, forming sound judgments based on the principles of reasoning revealed in God's word.

God calls making these judgments "rightly dividing the word of truth" ([2 Tim. 2:15, KJV](#)).

For example, God called Israel to repentance, saying, "Come now, and **let us reason together**," ([Is. 1:8](#)).

And Paul, when he preached, reasoned with people:

- from the Scriptures ([Acts 17:2](#)).
- every day ([Acts 17:17](#)).
- trying to persuade people ([Acts 18:4](#)).
- persuading them about the kingdom of God ([Acts 19:8-9](#)).

No Contradictions in God's Word

Interpreting God's word based on the fact it doesn't contain a contradiction is vitally important. Perfect harmony of God's word demands perfect harmony in logic and interpretation.

God is not the author of confusion, because it's impossible for Him to lie ([1 Cor. 14:33](#); [Heb. 6:18](#)). Therefore, His word is harmonious, without any contradictions.

Note: There are a few scribal errors, but nothing that changes the meaning of God's word in matters concerning worship, service, or salvation. Copyists and translators are not perfect, but God's word is perfect.

HAVE YOU STUDIED YOUR BIBLE TODAY?

Interpret Scriptures In Context

We can make God's word mean almost anything, if we take Scriptures out of context.

One common illustration is: Judas "went away and hanged himself" ([Matthew 27:5](#)). You "go and do the same" ([Luke 10:37](#)).

When we take Scriptures out of context, we twist (distort) the Scriptures, resulting in destruction ([2 Pet. 3:16](#)).

Jesus criticized the Jews for taking Scriptures out of context and twisting them. On one occasion, the Sadducees used a story of a woman who had seven husbands. Each husband died without fathering a child, requiring the woman to marry one of his brothers, under the Mosaic Law.

The Sadducees tried to use this story, applying the Mosaic Law to a set of circumstances, thinking it proved there wasn't a resurrection, because a woman couldn't be married to seven men in the resurrection.

Jesus told them their conclusion was false, because they didn't understand the Scriptures.

- "You are **mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures** nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" ([Matt. 22:29-30](#)).

Take Into Account The Precise Meaning of Words

When talking to the Sadducees about the resurrection, Jesus proved there is a resurrection by the precision of a few words, in context, which they overlooked.

"But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: '**I am the God of Abraham**, and the God of **Isaac**, and the God of **Jacob**'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living" ([Matt. 22:31-32](#)).

Jesus used the words in [Exodus 3:6](#), where God spoke in the first person, using the present tense, to show that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had eternal souls and

were alive (cf. [Lk. 16:19-31](#)). Thus, He proved there's a resurrection.

God's word is absolutely precise. Therefore, we should understand it and teach others, based on this fact.

- God's word "is living and active and **sharper than any two-edged sword**, and **piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit**, of **both joints and marrow**, and **able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart**" ([Heb. 4:12](#)).

An Interpretation Can't Contradict Other Scriptures

I can't think of a case where a false doctrine doesn't contradict the Scriptures.

For example, Jesus proved the Sadducees' doctrine of the resurrection was incorrect by presenting a Scripture that contradicted it, showing it was a false doctrine.

From this we learn that an interpretation must be consistent with all the Scriptures. If it's not, the interpretation is false.

For example, we often hear people teach that baptism is not essential to salvation, because the thief on the cross was saved without baptism.

There are many reasons why this isn't true, but we can simply prove it's false by showing it contradicts Scriptures like [Matthew 16:16](#), [Acts 2:38](#), and [1 Peter 3:21](#).

Establish Authority

Jesus never recognized the need to adopt a particular hermeneutic, as people do today. Rather, He recognized the need to establish authority ([Matt. 21:23-27](#)).

Today, our responsibility is to establish authority from God's word, and do those things in our lives.

Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, we must establish authority and do the things He authorizes ([Matt. 28:18](#); [Col. 3:17](#)).

- Allan McNabb

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