

The Azimuth Institute

Directional Study Notes

Bible Doctrine

11/18/15

B. Principles of Bible Interpretation

There are six principles used in Bible interpretation

2 Tim 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

“The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible.”

1. Literal Principle

This means that the words should be interpreted in their normal, natural, proper way, unless otherwise indicated by the context.

Phrases like “as it were” or “something like” obviously means that the writer is making a metaphor.

It’s been said that “when the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.”

2. Historical Principle

We must view the passage in its original cultural and historical setting.

There are things that are written that must be interpreted in their proper cultural and historical context.

E.g., Ye are the salt of the earth which is a reference to the salt covenants of the Old Testament

3. Contextual Principle.

Each verse must be studied in its context (I.e. Judas hung himself).

Did you know that the Bible actually says that there is no God?

Psa 14:1 *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.*

4. Grammatical Principle

We must have some grasp of the English language.

Cf. 1 John 1:10 and 1 John 5:18

They appear to be a contradiction. No – the present tense of the verb sin in 5:18 indicates continual or habitual sin.

5. Synthetical Principle

All Scripture must be translated in light of other Scripture.

Obscure passages should be interpreted in light of clear passages.

I.e. One verse may seem to teach salvation by works, but it should be considered in light of the many verses that clearly say that salvation is by grace.

Cf. James 2:14-19

Gal 2:16 *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

Eph 2:9 *not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Tit 3:5 *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,*

The cults are masters of taking verses out of context and making them the basis for false doctrine.

No doctrine can be based on one isolated verse. It must be considered in the context of the Scripture as a whole.

6. Practical Principle

This must start with the question, “What does this passage mean to me today?”

There is an old saying, “Don’t preach on Sunday what they can’t use on Monday.”

To me that is the difference between teaching and preaching.

Interpretation must precede application.