

Discipleship Course

Interpretation of the Scriptures (II Peter 1:16–21) Part One

When we refer to interpretation of the Scriptures, we are speaking of determining the meaning of a passage of Scripture. Just like every other discipline of life, there are rules and principles that guide us in finding what God intended for us to learn.

I. There is no _____ interpretation to get to the truth

- Private—of one's own
- Interpretation—to _____, exposition

Private interpretation is finding the meaning of passage, or exposing truth based upon a private source in ourselves.

II. There is always a _____ literal, grammatical interpretation of a passage.

- Interpreting the Scripture grammatically is essentially interpreting according to the usual meaning of its English words and the normal rules of English grammar.

A. _____ meaning—every passage is to be understood literally and taken to mean exactly what it says unless the immediate context or the use of obvious figures of speech point to another meaning.

“If the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense, or it will become nonsense.”

“Therefore take every word in its primary, ordinary, usual meaning unless the facts of the context indicate clearly otherwise.”

- Example: Jeremiah 31:31–37 is the Lord’s covenant with the nation of Israel, but many try to teach that Israel has been replaced by the church, and the church is now the nation of Israel.

B. _____ mention—every passage must be studied considering its context.

“A text taken from its context becomes a pretext.”

1. _____ context—the text that immediately precedes or follows the passage being studied
2. _____ context—the Book in which the passage is located

- b. The word "faith" means to believe the Word of God and act upon it, yet there are different shades of meaning of the word found in the Scripture. Studying the context reveals the correct interpretation.
- 1) Ephesians 2:8 refers to faith as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - 2) Jude 3 refers to faith as being the body of doctrine taught in the Word of God.
 - 3) In Romans 14:23 the word "faith" refers to the convictions based upon the Word of God.

- a. I Corinthians—rebuking a carnal church
 - b. Galatians—exposing Judaism infiltrating the church
 - c. Ecclesiastes—seeking the meaning of life from man's perspective.
3. _____ context—the Testament in which the passage is located
- The broad context will place the passage being studied in the context of the whole Bible. Knowing which Testament, it is located will help one understand the historical, prophetic, and dispensational ramifications.
4. _____ context—the parallel passages in other sections of the Bible
- Scriptural topics are consistent. One must cross reference words from other parts of the Bible.
5. _____ context—the relative doctrinal passages in the Word of God

- Passages containing fundamental doctrines should be related to other passages to see if there is harmony throughout. Fundamental doctrines are never resting upon one or two passages.

Many examples can be given of false teachers that have established their doctrines by violating these laws of context.

1. Job 7:9 is used by the Jehovah's Witnesses to establish their doctrine of annihilation.
 - The immediate context is Job's earthly perspective of the grave.
 - The secondary context is that Job does speak of life after death in other chapters (Job 14:12–15; 19:25–27).
 - The broad context being the Old Testament we must see that saints that died did not go into the presence of the Lord until after the resurrection of Christ.
 - The doctrinal context is violated in that the Scriptures speaks of life after death in numerous places (II Cor 5:8).
2. Ecclesiastes 3:18–22 is misinterpreted to establish the doctrine of soul sleep. If one keeps in mind the secondary context, which is "life under the sun", we see the context of the passage is not revealing eternal truth but looking at death from man's perspective.

3. Philippians 2:12 is misinterpreted to establish a works salvation. If one would keep reading in the immediate context it is clear that it is speaking of working out the salvation you have received freely in all aspects of our lives.
4. Matthew 25:31–46 is believed to be a general judgment at the Great White Throne. The immediate context reveals that this is the judgment of nations that occurs at Christ's Second Coming (verse 31) in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:18) prior to the Millennium (verse 34).
5. I Corinthians 15:29 is used by the Mormons to teach a baptism for dead people that will help them to be saved. The chapter is dealing with the topic of the resurrection. Baptism pictures, death and the resurrection. Why would we baptize picturing the resurrection of Jesus Christ that did not take place?
6. There are many words that get misinterpreted due to a failure to study the context of the word.
 - a. Acts 2:38 is misinterpreted by the Cambellites to teach the need for baptism for salvation, by misunderstanding the word "for". Luke 5:14 reveals two usages of the word "for." One means "in order to" while the other teaches "because of." Understanding the clear teaching from the broad context, one can determine the context of the word "for" in Acts 2:38 to mean "because of."