

**GENERAL LAWS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**  
**PART 1-THE SUPREME RULE**  
**“INTERPRET SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE.”**

**Introduction**

There is a lot of confusion today among those who name the name of Christ. Satan is using some of this confusion to keep those who are lost blinded to the truth of the Gospel.

There are many Believers who are ignorant of **“the whole counsel of God,”** especially as it relates to Church truth. Much of the confusion that prevails today stems from faulty interpretation of the Word of God.

There are many differences over doctrine that are rooted in the methods of Biblical interpretation that are used. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to be grounded in the basic principles of correct Biblical interpretation.

Let’s begin with what is known as **THE SUPREME RULE OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION– “INTERPRET SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE.”**

**2 Peter 1:20–“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”**

**1 Corinthians 2:13–“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”**

Scripture is its own interpreter! A passage of the Bible should be interpreted by comparing it with other parts of the Bible.

**I. WHAT IS “PRIVATE INTERPRETATION” OF SCRIPTURE?**

- A. A “Private Interpretation” Can Be One In Which A Scripture Passage Is “Isolated” Or “Kept Private” From, And Interpreted Without Any Reference To The Rest Of Scripture.**

**Example–John 16:23**

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Interpreting this verse privately could easily lead to a **“name it and claim it”** teaching whereby all a Christian needs to do to receive anything he wants is just to ask for it in Jesus’ name.

However, taking time to compare Scripture with Scripture shows that prayer is conditional, and to ask in Jesus’ name means:

- 1. To ask according to His will. (1 John 5:14-15)**
- 2. To ask in faith—that is, according to the Word of God. (James 1:6)**
- 3. To ask as one who is abiding in Christ. (John 15:7)**

- B. A “Private Interpretation” Can Be One Whereby The Interpreter Himself Establishes The Meaning Of A Scripture According To His Own Definition.**

*“private” = “pertaining to self, that is, one’s own; by implication private or separate”*

**Example–John 3:5**

A common private interpretation of this passage is that baptism is essential for salvation.

**Applying the rule of “comparing Scripture with Scripture:”**

- 1. Many other Scriptures clearly separate baptism from regeneration.**  
*1 Corinthians 1:17–“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”*
- 2. The context shows that it refers to the physical**

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birth.

*John 3:6 contrasts the watery womb with the work of God’s Spirit.*

3. **The symbolism of water indicates the new birth to be a work of the Spirit of God through the Word of God.**

*Ephesians 5:26–“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”*

*1 Peter 1:23–“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”*

II. **ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE?**

Quite frankly, NO! Understand though that there are instances where a word occurs in only one place in the Bible. This makes direct comparison impossible.

**All the essential doctrines of the Word of God are based upon numerous Scripture references and passages.**

Some things mentioned in the Bible may not be fully understood, but these do not affect areas of doctrine.

Some of these things will remain in the realm of speculation on this side of Glory.

An example of this is the “*Urim and Thummin*” of *Exodus 28:30*. All that can be determined from this and the other references (*Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65*) is that they were some means by which God indicated His will to Israel through the High Priest. No one can say for certain exactly what they were and how they

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functioned. In these instances:

A. **Check The Context.**

Often the immediate context will show what is meant by a particular word.

B. **Check A Dictionary.**

1. If the word is one of the few archaic words in the *Authorized King James Version*, refer to:

- a. *The Oxford English Dictionary.*
- b. *The 1828 American Dictionary Of The English Language by Noah Webster.*

2. If the word is a noun, a Bible dictionary may shed light on its meaning. This especially applies to places and objects of Bible lands.

3. Find the word in the *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* and look up the definition in the Hebrew Dictionary for the Old Testament or Greek Dictionary for the New Testament.

C. **Check A Manners And Customs Of The Bible Resource.**

III. **A TRUTH WE CAN DRAW FROM OTHER TRUTHS:**

The Word of God is inerrant and infallible, therefore no passage in the Bible will ever contradict another passage!

*Psalms 119:160–“Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.”*

*John 17:17–“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”*

Skeptics are always claiming the Bible is full of contradictions. It is true that the Bible does have some **apparent** contradictions.

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But, it is also true that the application of this “*Supreme Rule*” will resolve any difficult or problem text.

Some of the Bible is like milk—easily digested and understood. Much of the Bible is like strong meat—requiring diligent searching and study.

**Some examples of apparent contradictions and difficulties:**

**A. Salvation By Grace Versus Works.**

*Romans 4:5*—“*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*”

*James 2:24*—“*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*”

This is an apparent contradiction that has been imagined by some. But, this is resolved when we see that in the Book of Romans the apostle Paul is speaking of God’s work of grace in us, while James is speaking of the work of God through us (which is the evidence of God’s grace in us!)

*Philippians 2:12-13* brings out both of these facets. See *2 Peter 1:3-9* also.

The faith that saves is a faith that works. Anything else is a dead faith!!!

**B. The Israelites In Egypt.**

A numerical discrepancy has been imagined by some when comparing: *Genesis 46:26* (66); *Genesis 46:27* (70); *Acts 7:14* (75)

This is resolved when we see that:

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1. 66 people came with Jacob **into** Egypt.
2. These 66 people, together with Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph’s two sons made a total of 70 people **in** Egypt.
3. These 70 with Joseph’s 4 grandsons and 1 great-grandson (*Genesis 50:23; 1 Chronicles 7:14-22*) making another five, we arrive at the total of 75 who were **in one room** with Joseph.

**C. The Deaf Adder.**

A Scientific error has been imagined in *Psalms 58:4* which speaks of a deaf adder. Here, deafness is defined in *verse 5* as refusing to follow the music of the snake charmer. This illustrates the truth that a man may have perfect physical hearing, yet be spiritually deaf (unresponsive) to the Word of God.

**D. The Purchase Of The Temple Site.**

A numerical error has been alleged between *2 Samuel 24:24*, where David purchased Araunah’s threshing floor for 50 shekels of silver, and *1 Chronicles 21:25*, where David paid 600 shekels of gold.

A careful reading of both passages shows that David paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor. And he paid 600 shekels of gold for the place of the threshing floor—the whole field!

**E. Abraham’s Purchase.**

In *Acts 7:16* we read that Jacob and Joseph were buried in the sepulcher which Abraham had purchased from the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem.

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In *Joshua 24:32* we read that Joseph was buried in the ground which Jacob had purchased from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem.

This apparent contradiction is resolved when we notice that Abraham purchased a **sepulcher** from Ephron (*Genesis 23*) who was the son of Zohar (*Genesis 23:8*), the son of Sychem, the son of Emmor—who were the **HITTITES** (*Genesis 50:13*). Jacob bought a **field** from Hamor (*Genesis 33:19*) the father of Shechem (not Sychem)—who were **HIVITES** (*Genesis 34:2*). Abraham’s sepulcher was in Jacob’s ground.

**Careful study of the Bible is required at all times.**

The student must realize that different people in the Bible have the same name—There are 10 *Simons*, 6 *Mary’s*, 4 *John’s*, etc.

Some people have more than one name—*Peter/Cephas/Simon/Simeon, Levi/Matthew, Daniel/Beltshazzar*, etc. There are some places that have more than one name—*Mt. Sinai/Mt. Horeb, Bethel/Luz, etc.*

**A thorough acquaintance with the Word of God is essential.**