

Practical Theology – Lesson 9 – “Scripture”

“Natural Interpretation”

2 Peter 1:20-21

- No private interpretation
- Inspired by God, not the words of men

Inerrancy

Work from an assumption of internally consistency throughout the entire Bible.

Matthew 5:17-19 - Establishes authority, timeliness, and plenary inclusion of the Word of God

Personal Applicability:

The Holy Spirit, which indwells the believer, communicates with us by Scripture. How specific Scriptures apply to the modern believer is a matter of careful consideration.

Psalms 119:9-11 - This is a meditative prayer written by King David about 1000 BC, yet it applies to the modern believer because it relates aspects of God and His Word, and our relationship to Him.

Matthew 10:1...5...8-9...14 – The key to historical context is verse 5. Anyone not part of this group is NOT the target audience for these recorded texts and cannot claim these abilities or instructions as directly applicable.

Colossians 1:1-2 – Church Age apostolic instruction to the church – addressed specifically to a particular body. Some content of the Book applies specifically to that body only (**examples 1: 4, 7, 4:7-18**), but the bulk of the content describes how Christians should live, not based on living in Colossae in AD 60, but based on faith in Christ (**2:6, 9-12+**) which must Directly apply to the modern believer, not only the local assembly in Colossae. Further, the qualifiers of (**3:1 and 3:12a**) makes **3:18-24** applicable to all who meet those qualifiers.

Normal Grammatical Language – or else you’re twisting Scripture

The written Word must be taken as written, including normal literal passages, symbolic expressions such as use of metaphors, and poetic language – just as any other book would be interpreted using normal language.

Matthew 3:7-8 – John calls people vipers, and tells them to bear fruit, but the normal interpretation of this symbolic language is obvious in this case.

Single Meaning – or else you’re making stuff up

Do not allow a literal or symbolic passage to have multiple meanings.

Matthew 13:1-9...18-23, 24-30...36-43 – Two examples of interpretation, notice Jesus gives the interpretations and each are single-meaning illustrations of a particular truth, the second of which is prophetic of an actual (literal) future event. The interpretations are NOT symbolic.

Context – “Take the text out of context, leaves only the con.”

Interpret in grammatical context with the sentence, paragraph, and passage.

Interpret in context with the original purpose and the original historical audience, as the text would be understood situationally and culturally.

Proverbs 29:18 – One of the most often misinterpreted verses – used for church-growth fundraisers, based on inappropriate modern word usage without regard to the intended meaning.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” – KJV

Still abused, even though modern translations are better than the KJV, , interprets “vision” as ambition or goal-setting, when the word ‘vision’ is really meant as in prophecy from God (compare 1 Samuel 3:1), as is indicated by the last part of the verse (29:18).

Interpret in context with other relevant Scripture – especially immediately preceding or following text.

Purpose – Communication from God – Holy Spirit to us today

Understand the original purpose of the Scripture, and interpret for the purpose of personal application.

Isaiah 55:11 – Good example of this principle. Context is OT, but expresses a reality of the nature of God which is timeless and applies to our study of Scripture.

Ask, Don't Tell

Honest interpretation does not look for Scripture to confirm foregone conclusions, but cultivates unbiased observation to understand the correct meaning.

Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 – All specify each day as being comprised of evening and morning, yet these are still interpreted as ‘possibly’ not being literal days, but much longer periods – from the standpoint of natural interpretation, the idea is ludicrous.

Revelation 20:2, 3, 4, 56, 7 – All specify one thousand years for the reign of Christ at the end of the Tribulation, yet the vast majority of modern churches are Amillennial.