

9 MOST IMPORTANT RULES OF INTERPRETATION

In priority order

Mistakes at the top of this list
have greater negative impact on accuracy
than mistakes at the bottom.

1) **Non-contradiction**

There are no contradictions in Scripture. Questions sometimes arise when comparing OT & NT, or Mosaic & Church doctrine, or different Dispensations, or forgetting that Jesus' words are all in the context of Mosaic Law not Church precepts.

2) **Context**

Ask yourself if the surrounding each verses clearly state the particular context. Two paragraphs on each side of the verses in question, i.e. Church matters, or OT Law, or doctrinal matters, etc.

3) **Compare Scripture with Scripture**

Rarely is any important teaching mentioned in only one place. Example: there are 37 ingredients in the Abrahamic Covenant: 9 different chapters, spoken to Abr, Isaac, and Jacob, spoken to Abraham in 7 different places each time adding a new element or two.

4) **Literal/grammatical/historical**

All 3 aspects are important. The Bible is to be read primarily as literal **not allegorical** or “**spiritualizing**.” Normal grammar rules. Expect all events occur exactly as written in specific geographical locations.

5) **Only one interpretation**

What did God have in mind as He wrote it? Sometime there are several applications for you or me, but only one meaning. It is not accurate to ask, “What does this verse **mean to you?**” It is probably okay to ask, “How can you apply this verse to the situation you face this week?”

6) **Same author**

There are several weights used to express the term “talent.” 9 different OT books, 2 different NT books. Several different things “weighed.” Consider: country, culture, year, & materials. Other vocab covers different meanings of words, saved, wicked, forgiveness, repent. Some apply different ways when speaking to believers or unbelievers. Usage covers thousands of years.

7) **Clear verses & unclear verses**

Use clear verses to explain unclear verses. If it's fuzzy, go find a clear verse.

8) **T.B.D.S. - The Bible Doesn't Say**

You and I are able to ask more questions than God has decided to answer. Don't make up answers to all your questions. Sometime we have to say, “TBDS, but it's just my opinion that the answer might be. . . .”

9) **Bible words often have narrow meanings**

Be careful you aren't using “American” definitions.

Example: repent in Bible means “change you mind” - American dictionary means “change your lifestyle” and/or “be sorry” Big difference.

i.e. change your mind = Stop depending on good works, start depending on Jesus' death in your place.

For a more complete list of 20 rules of interpretation

see: [20 Principles of Bible Study \(hermeneutics\)](#)

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(arranged alphabetically or chronologically)

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