

# PRECEPT-UPON-PRECEPT OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

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## RULES FOR REASONING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

### INTRODUCTION

How do we discover what the Bible is telling us? God does not hide His teaching from those who earnestly seek the meaning of His word: 1 John 5:13 says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life". Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." We find encouragement in James 1:5, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Begin with prayer that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you what the text says and keep in mind these rules of reasoning through Scripture.

### I. **BASE DOCTRINE ON:**

- A. Entire Bible and only the Bible (we do what we believe)
- B. Clear, repeated teaching of God's Word (not isolated verses)
- C. Sound evaluation of text (not inferred; not opposite, negative, or reverse)
  1. Not inference
  2. Not tradition
  3. Not solely on experience
  4. Not based on silence (when scripture doesn't say anything about a subject)
  5. Not on extra-biblical sources (novels, commentaries)
  6. From biblical emphasis (not distorted)
- D. The full counsel of the Word of God
  1. Clear teaching is preferred over the obscure
  2. Later revelation takes precedence over earlier revelation

### II. **REASON THROUGH SCRIPTURE, EVALUATING:**

- A. Immediate context (words/verses before and/or after)
- B. Remote context (other parts of scripture)
- C. Grammatical and time phrases (verb tenses, e.g.)
- D. Historical context

### III. **REASON THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE, REMEMBERING:**

- A. Scripture does not contradict scripture
- B. The Bible was written in natural, human language
- C. The obscure does not do away with the clear
- D. You cannot make up your own rules; be consistent

### IV. **REASON THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE, IDENTIFYING:**

- A. The type of literature
  1. Historical
  2. Prophetic
  3. Apocalyptic
  4. Narrative
  5. Poetic
- B. The author's purpose
- C. The clear (usually repeated)
- D. The obscure (seldom mentioned; unclear on the surface)

### V. **INTERPRET LITERALLY**

### VI. **RECOGNIZE YOUR PRESUPPOSITIONS (YOU HAVE THEM!)**

### VII. **CONTEXT RULES INTERPRETATION (NOT EXPERIENCE, NOT PRESUPPOSITIONS, NOT HISTORY)**

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# PRECEPT-UPON-PRECEPT INTERPRETATION

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## STEPS IN ACCURATELY HANDLING DIFFICULT TEXT

### INTRODUCTION

Accurate interpretation of difficult Bible verses, passages, or subjects is accomplished by careful observation, interpretation, and application. Begin with prayer that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you what the text says and use this step-by-step process that begins within the Bible and expands to outside commentaries to achieve clear understanding.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE SUBJECT?

Only one statement can be true when there are seemingly conflicting statements. Scripture never contradicts Scripture.

### EIGHT STEPS IN ACCURATELY HANDLING DIFFICULT VERSES, PASSAGES, OR SUBJECTS:

#### Within the Word of God:

##### *Step 1*

Overview the book in which the subject was mentioned the most  
Use a good concordance, such as Strong's or NASB Exhaustive Concordance  
Find out the type of literature the book is  
If an historical book, evaluate the main events, setting, and people

##### *Step 2*

Focus on the repeated elements of the book to identify its context. Use the 5Ws and an H to determine context (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How)

##### *Step 3*

Examine each mention of the subject and related key words

##### *Step 4*

Cross reference to other books in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments using the Concordance or cross-references in the margin of the Bible

##### *Step 5*

Examine related subjects in other Bible books about the topic, such as Covenants, Feasts in Israel, and Jesus' parables and sermons, etc.

#### Once all resources within the Word of God are examined:

##### *Step 6*

Study other references or outside commentaries

##### *Step 7*

Draw your conclusions  
Based on clear, repeated teachings of the Word  
Remember that scripture does not contradict scripture

#### The goal of Bible study is a changed life. Apply what you learned:

##### *Step 8*

Examine your own life in the light of truth you have learned

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