

The Importance of a Harmonious Bible To Profitable Study

- I. Consider some principles of communication and thought.
 - A. In order for information to be profitably communicated, it must be in a language common to source and receiver.
 - B. Information in written form is virtually useless to an illiterate man and is only useful in a literate man to the degree that he is able to understand it.
 - C. Clarity and precision in language best express its intent and facilitate its profitable reception.
 - D. Things that are different are not the same.
 - E. To hold a thing as true while simultaneously holding a contradiction to that thing as true renders reasoning and conclusions invalid.

- II. Consider some rules for Bible study that facilitate its profitable reception.
 - A. Attach to words their primary meanings. **NEH 8:7-8.**
 - B. There are no contradictions in the Bible. **2PE 1:20.**
 - C. Heed the grammar. **2TI 1:13.**
 - D. Heed the context.
 - E. Compare spiritual things with spiritual. **1CO 2:13.**
 - F. Distinguish between a proof text and a reference text.
 - G. Heed the argument from silence. **HEB 7:13-14.**

- III. Consider the weightiness of the rule, *There are no contradictions in the Bible.*
 - A. **2PE 1:20-21.**
 1. prophecy: The action, function, or faculty of a prophet; divinely inspired utterance or discourse...
 2. private: Withdrawn or separated from the public body.
 3. The *public body* is in context the Scripture. No part of Scripture is to be interpreted apart from or contrary to the rest of Scripture.
 4. "...holy men (*plural*) of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (*singular*).
 - a. All Scripture comes from a single source: the Holy Spirit / Holy Ghost.
 - b. The various books of Scripture all have a single Author. **ECC 12:11.**
 - (1) The words are "...as nails (*plural*) fastened by the masters (*plural*) of assemblies, which are given from one (*singular*) shepherd."
 - (2) The several writers of Scripture (the masters) all received their words from a single source (the Shepherd).
 5. Therefore, all the parts of Scripture must fit together to form a single body of truth.
 - B. There is only one truth, one doctrine of God.
 1. The word *truth* is always in the singular in the Bible.
 - a. **(PSA 119:151)** Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments (*plural*) are truth (*singular*).
 - b. Jesus Christ declares that He is THE truth, not truths or A truth. **JOH 14:6.**
 - (1) All Scriptures (*plural*) testify of Him (*singular*). **JOH 5:39.**
 - (2) His testimony is the spirit of prophecy. **REV 19:10.**
 2. The word *doctrine*, when referring to God's doctrine, is always in the singular. Whenever *doctrines* appears, it is always in a negative context or evil association. **MAT 15:9; MAR 7:7; COL 2:22; 1TI 4:1; HEB 13:9.**

3. Therefore, the Bible is not a collection of *independent truths*.
 - a. It is a revelation of *interconnected truth*.
 - b. Everything in the Bible must harmonize so as to form a single fabric of doctrine or truth.
- C. Consider **ROM 12:6**.
 1. proportion: A portion or part in its relation to the whole, a comparative part, a share.
 2. Each portion of Scripture must be studied and declared in relation to the whole of Scripture.
 3. Each prophecy must accord with the whole body of faith, since there is only one faith. **EPH 4:5**.
 4. **DEU 13:1-4**. Mark how a prophet was not to be regarded if his prophecy did not accord with other prophecy that had been established.
- D. All the *words* of God so harmonize as to be called collectively the word (singular) of God!
 1. There is such harmony in the law of God that it can be expressed in a single phrase. **GAL 5:14**.
 2. Note again that Jesus Christ is the Word of God (*singular*) of Whom the Scriptures (*plural*) testify. **JOH 5:39**.
- E. There is only one truth because there is only one God. **DEU 6:4**.
 1. The whole of true religion is hinged on the oneness of God (**MAR 12:28-34**). All of the understanding, the will, the emotions and the strength are to be devoted to that fact.
 2. God declares Himself in Jesus Christ. **JOH 1:18**.
 - a. Remember, Christ is THE Truth. **JOH 14:6**.
 - b. Since there is only one God, there could consequently only be one truth!
 - c. **JOH 14:6** is a tacit declaration of Christ's deity.
 3. Therefore, there can be no real understanding of the word of God without the recognition of the unity of God and thus the unity of truth.
 - a. A plurality of gods leads to a plurality of ways and truths.
 - b. In the spirit of unqualified tolerance, any number of ways and truths are thus equally valid, though totally contradictory. NOTE: To hold a thing as true while also holding its opposite as true is not the height of intellectualism and tolerance, it is the height of insanity!
 - c. The end of such chaos is the conclusion that there is no absolute, final truth or authority. Truth then becomes bendable and transitory, a chameleon that adjusts itself to its circumstances.
 4. Blindness to the teaching of Scripture may well stem from a failure to recognize the singularity of truth.
 - a. Many approach the Bible with the idea that each has the right to believe as he wishes and that it really doesn't make any difference what one believes so long as all are sincere and are sweet to one another.
 - b. In such an approach, tolerance becomes the principal virtue and dogmatism the principal vice.
 - c. Mind that the tolerance is usually not extended to anyone who does not subscribe to the party line of "flex-truth."
 5. Scripture does NOT teach that each man has the right to believe what he wishes. It rather asserts that each has the responsibility to believe what God has revealed. And, God forces this very issue in His judgements.

- a. Consider the judgements that befell Israel because they followed their own thoughts instead of God's revelation. **JER 9:13-16.**
 - b. A curse rests upon any gospel other than the ONE that God revealed. **GAL 1:8-9.**
 - c. Judgement will be meted out on those who did not obey that ONE gospel that God revealed. **2TH 1:7-10.**
6. Since there is only one truth, believers are exhorted to unity of mind and judgement. **1CO 1:10.**
- a. One of the purposes for the ministry is to bring believers into this unity. **EPH 4:11-14; PHIL 1:27.**
 - b. Where alien “truths” are entertained, division results. **1CO 11:18-19.**

IV. Consider how other rules of Bible study relate to the rule of *No Contradictions*.

- A. Compare spiritual things with spiritual. **1CO 2:13.**
- 1. This rule is essentially the application of the *No Contradictions* rule of study. Since every part of Scripture must harmonize with the rest, then comparing Scripture with Scripture *must* be done.
 - 2. Subjects in the Bible are presented piecemeal (**ISA 28:10**). Various passages must be collected and compared to get the whole picture. Example:
 - a. All the particulars for a valid baptism are not found in one passage.
 - b. **MAT 7:7** must be compared with **JOH 16:23; MAR 11:24; JOH 15:7; 1JO 3:22; 5:14-15** to ascertain the scope of the promise.
 - c. **JOH 6:27** must be weighed with **2TH 3:10**. Christ is not teaching that men should not work for food, but that their work for food should not crowd out spiritual concerns. **MAT 6:31-34.**
 - 3. Comparing Scripture with Scripture can dissolve apparent contradictions.
 - a. **MAT 8:8** appears to contradict **LUK 7:6**.
 - b. But by comparing this with **JOH 4:1-2** and **2SAM 10:18**, we find a perfectly reasonable resolution to the “contradiction.”
- B. Heed the context.
- 1. This rule is an application of the *No Contradictions* rule.
 - a. By considering a verse in relation to its setting, one is only relating one part of Scripture to another so as not to form a private interpretation.
 - b. One is thus considering a prophecy proportionately, per **ROM 12:6**.
 - 2. This rule is also a special case of the rule, “Compare spiritual things with spiritual.”
 - a. It refers to considering a passage in relation to the setting where it occurs.
 - b. *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual* entails this and also relating the passage to passages elsewhere in Scripture.
 - c. *Example*: Note the setting of the phrase, “every man” in **HEB 2:9-17**. “Every man” is explained as referring to:
 - (1) many sons. **v. 10.**
 - (2) the brethren. **v. 11.**
 - (3) the children God gave to Christ. **v. 13.**
 - (4) the seed of Abraham. **v. 16.**
 - d. *Example*: The appeal “To day if ye will hear his voice...” in **HEB 3:15** is seen in context to be an appeal to children of God, not the unregenerate sinner. **HEB 3:1.**
- C. Attach to words their primary meanings. **NEH 8:7-8.**

1. This rule is interlaced with the *No Contradictions* rule.
 2. Most words have multiple subordinate meanings which flow from the primary meaning. Further, there are figurative usages of many words.
 3. The further one strays from relying on primary meanings of words, the greater the potential for error and confusion. Error loves ambiguities.
 4. There are three exceptions to the rule of primary meanings.
 - a. If Scripture tells us that a word should not be understood in its primary sense, we are justified to not use the primary sense. *Example:* Jesus used “sleep” to describe “death” in **JOH 11:11-14**.
 - b. If a primary sense creates an absurdity, we are justified to not use the primary sense. *Example:* “kept” in **1PE 1:5** does not mean “Maintained or supported by a paramour. Also of a man or boy maintained or supported in a homosexual relationship” (the primary definition in OED).
 - c. If a primary sense creates a contradiction with plain statements made elsewhere, we are justified to not use the primary sense. *Example:* Timothy was not Paul's son in the primary sense of the word (**1TI 1:18**) since *son* means “a male child or person in relation to either or both of his parents” and *child* means “the unborn or newly born human being; foetus, infant.” Other Scripture plainly shows that Timothy was not Paul's biological child. **ACT 16:1; 1CO 7:8 c/w 1TI 1:2; PHIL 2:22**.
 5. God has communicated to us in identifiable languages for which reliable sources of definitions (dictionaries, etc.) are generally available. The “gold standard” in English is the Oxford English Dictionary.
 6. But there are times when the dictionary must take a back seat to the Bible. **MAT 11:19; ROM 3:4**.
- D. Heed the grammar. **2TI 1:13**.
1. This rule is also connected to the *No Contradictions* rule and even subject to it.
 2. *Example:* “is passed” in **JOH 5:24** is the *present perfect tense* which denotes past completed action with yet present effects.
 - a. This verse proves that passing from death unto life precedes both hearing and believing which are in the present tense.
 - b. However, such an argument from the present perfect tense could not be made from **GEN 17:5** (“...have made...”).
 - (1) Abraham only had one son at the time of the utterance.
 - (2) Therefore, to rely only on the grammar of “have made” would create a contradiction.
 - (3) Applying “Compare spiritual things with spiritual” brings **ROM 4:17** into the picture. God was calling those things which were not as though they were.
 3. *Example:* The book, “Grammar For Smart People” says, “Most readers will automatically connect a pronoun with the noun or pronoun that immediately precedes it in the sentence---whether that noun or pronoun is the antecedent or not. To make sure this reflex doesn't produce confusion, look to see that the pronoun and its antecedent are not separated by a word or words that could conceivably be mistaken for the antecedent.” (pp. 52-53). Another grammar book says, “Save him [the reader] the annoyance of searching for the antecedent.”
 - a. However, God commands us to SEARCH the Scriptures. **JOH 5:39; PRO 2:4**.

- b. God did not write the Bible as a man would write a book. **ISA 55:8-9.**
 - c. In **PSA 105:37**, the antecedent of the pronoun “them” is “Israel” way back up in v. **23**.
- E. Distinguish between a proof text and a reference text.
1. This rule also ties into the *No Contradictions* rule.
 - a. A proof text by its grammar and definition of its words proves a position.
Example: JOH 5:24 proves that:
 - (1) the person who in the present hears and believes *has* everlasting life.
 - (2) such a person *shall not* come into condemnation.
 - (3) such a person *is passed* from death unto life.
 - (4) passing from death to life *precedes* this hearing and believing.
 - (5) hearing and believing therefore is *not the cause* of passing from death to life but rather an evidence of already having passed from death unto life.
 - (6) other Bible verses which appear to teach that the sinner's belief is the cause or procurement of his everlasting life cannot in fact be teaching that because *there are no contradictions in the Bible*.
 - b. **EXO 20:13** *proves* a proscription against killing. But what it does not state is what is not to be killed, nor whether this is speaking of murder. That information must be found elsewhere by comparative study.
 - c. Error sets in when we assume things not stated in a text for which there is not corroborative information elsewhere that rightly may be imported into the text, or against which there are clear statements elsewhere in Scripture.
 - d. Otherwise stated, a verse must be considered in relation to the rest of Scripture in order to establish if it is a proof text for a particular position not stated in the verse itself. Again, *No Contradictions*.
 2. *Example: 1JO 2:2* is used by some as a proof text that Jesus died for all mankind without exception.
 - a. propitiate: To render propitious or favourably inclined; to appease, conciliate (one offended).
 - b. appease: To bring to peace, pacify, quiet, or settle (strife or disorder)...To pacify or propitiate (him who is angry).
 - c. However, by comparing this verse with other verses that use the word “world,” we find that the word does not necessarily mean “all mankind without exception.” **JOH 15:19; 17:9.**
 - d. Thus, **1JO 2:2** is not a proof text for the proposition that Jesus died for all mankind without exception.
 - e. If **1JO 2:2** is a proof text for universal atonement, the verse actually teaches that NOBODY will eternally perish under the wrath of God.
 - (1) The verse teaches that Jesus *is*, not *may be*, “the propitiation for our sins.”
 - (2) John, the other apostles (v. **1**) and those to whom he is writing are included in the expression “our sins.”
 - (3) The verse teaches that Jesus is not only the propitiation for *their* sins, but *also* for the sins of *the whole world*.
 - (4) Hence, if the whole world is *all the rest of mankind*, then the rest of mankind are in exactly the same condition as John, the other apostles, and those to whom he was writing.

- (5) In that case, all mankind would be eternally saved.
- (6) But Scripture in other places teaches that not all mankind without exception will be eternally saved. **REV 20:15.**
- (7) Scripture elsewhere teaches that there are those for whom Christ did not die. **JOH 10:11, 26.**
- f. By comparing this passage with others, we find:
 - (1) John was an apostle to the Jews. **GAL 2:9.**
 - (2) The word “world” is used to denote God's people among the Gentiles. **ROM 11:11-12.**
- g. John is teaching that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of God's elect among the Jews and also his elect among the Gentiles.
 - (1) This was a concept which was radical to the Jewish mind. **ACT 10:28, 34-35; 22:21-22.**
 - (2) Mind how this all fits with **JOH 11:51-52; ACT 15:6-17.**
- 3. *Example:* Comparative analysis shows that the *world* of **JOH 3:16** is the *world of those chosen in Christ*. **EPH 1:4; JOH 17:2.**
 - a. The ruined race of the present heaven and earth under the headship of the *first Adam* are called “the world” in **ROM 3:19.**
 - b. The redeemed race under the headship of the *last Adam* (**1CO 15:22, 45**) are the heirs of a new heaven and a new earth (**REV 21:1**) which is called “that world” (**LUK 20:34-35**).
 - c. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that they (the elect) should be called “the world”?
 - d. Many approach the Scripture seeing only the present world under the first Adam. They see only that which can be seen naturally. They see only what humanists see.
 - (1) They do not see Christ and God's purpose in Him.
 - (2) They do not see that separate order chosen out of the world and redeemed from the world. **JOH 15:19; GAL 1:4.**
 - (3) No wonder John says of false teachers, “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (**1JO 4:5**).
 - e. What **JOH 3:16** proves:
 - (1) God's existence.
 - (2) God's love of the world.
 - (3) God has an only begotten Son.
 - (4) God gave His Son because of His love for the world.
 - (5) Believers in the Son have everlasting life.
 - (6) Believers have everlasting life because God gave His Son.
 - f. What **JOH 3:16** does *not* prove:
 - (1) The identity of the world.
 - (2) That the sinner's belief is the cause of his everlasting life.
 - (3) That all unbelievers perish without everlasting life.
 - g. **JOH 3:16** fits perfectly with **JOH 10:11, 26** and **ROM 9:13** without holding to two irreconcilable positions: there are *no contradictions in the Bible*.
- F. Heed the argument from silence. **HEB 7:13-14.**
 - 1. Simply stated, “What the Bible does not teach, it does not teach.”

2. The Savior upheld this principle in **MAT 12:1-4**.
 - a. God had expressly stated that the shewbread was for Aaron and his sons (the priests). **LEV 24:9**.
 - b. God didn't even say the shewbread was *only* for the priests.
 - c. But since there is no mention of anyone else having a right to the shewbread, it could be said that it was *only* for the priests, even as Christ concluded in **MAT 12:4**.
3. This rule is also based on the “no contradictions in the Bible” rule. Comparative study is needed to discern what the Bible has to say on a given subject versus what it does *not* say on a given subject.
4. *Example:* Some try to argue that the Ethiopian eunuch (**ACT 8:26-40**) was not added to a church when he was baptized because the passage says nothing about his being added to a church.
 - a. This ignores what Scripture elsewhere says about the result of baptism. **ACT 2:38-47**.
 - b. This is a case of using the rule of silence to the neglect of the rule that “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.”

- V. The fact that each part of Scripture must be weighed in its relation to the rest of Scripture requires reading and study. **NEH 8:8; EPH 3:4; 1TI 4:13; ACT 17:11; 2TI 2:15.**
- A. God wrote His book in such a way that it must be approached on His terms if it is to be understood. It is written to conceal truth from those who do not approach it on God's terms and to reveal it to those who do. **ISA 28:9-16**.
 1. The person who approaches God's word trusting that it is truly God's word will reap much benefit from it. **1TH 2:13**.
 2. The person who approaches God's word as if it were only the words of men:
 - a. will not derive the profit from it he should. **HEB 4:2**.
 - b. will get tripped up by it. **1PE 2:7-8**.
 - B. Because each part of Scripture must be compared with the whole, no part of Scripture should be treated indifferently. **PSA 119:128**.
 - C. One must be willing to forsake his own will, his own ways and his own thoughts in order to understand God's word.
 1. **JOH 7:17**.
 - a. If one's interest is only the pursuit of his own desires, then the Bible will be very uninteresting.
 - b. God did not write the Book so as to make it interesting to those with the wrong interests. Only those whose wills are bent to doing the will of God will know the doctrine. **PSA 111:10**.
 2. **PRO 18:2**.
 - a. The fool is only concerned with discovering his own heart. His own thoughts and feelings are his only concern.
 - b. Hence, he will not understand the Bible. **PRO 10:21**.
 - c. He will read the Bible with preconceived notions of what he thinks it should teach.
 - d. Peter describes such as wresting the Scripture unto their own destruction. **2PE 3:16**.
 3. One must forsake his worldly wisdom in order to understand the wisdom of God. **1CO 3:18-19; 1:21-24**.

- D. One must forsake his pride in order to understand the word. **PRO 1:7; 8:13.**
1. If one thinks himself too good to ever be deceived, he will surely be deceived.
1JO 1:8.
 2. In fact, he is already deceived!
- E. One must apply himself in order to find the knowledge of God. **PRO 2:2-5.**
1. God rewards them who **DILIGENTLY** seek him. **HEB 11:6.**
 2. It takes effort to study God's word and neither create contradictions nor lazily default to holding contradictions as equally valid and true.
 3. No wonder the slothful is equated with a man "void of understanding"
(PRO 24:30).