

## 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 private: Withdrawn or separated from the public body.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. 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 **ROM 11:11**, the antecedent of the pronoun “they” is “the election” back in v. 7.
  - d. 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 passing from death to life precedes hearing and believing, therefore hearing and believing is *not* the cause of passing from death to life.
    - 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*.