

William Miller - Principles of Bible Interpretation

RULE I.

Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible. Matthew 5:18

RULE II.

All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by a diligent application and study. 2 Timothy 3:15-17

RULE III.

Nothing revealed in the Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering. Deuteronomy 29:29; Matthew 10:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Philippians 3:15; Isaiah 45:11; Matthew 21:22; John 14:13; James 1:5-6; 1 John 5:13-15

RULE IV.

To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error. Isaiah 28:7-29; Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 35:8; Proverbs 19:27; Luke 24:27,44-45; Romans 16:26; James 5:19; 2 Peter 1:19-20

RULE V.

Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound it to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed or wisdom is my rule, not the Bible. Psalms 19:7-11; Psalm 119:97-105; Matthew 23:8-10; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16; Ezekiel 34:18-19; Luke 11:52; Malachi 2:7-8

RULE VI.

God has revealed things to come, by visions, in figures and parables, and in this way the same things are often time revealed again and again, by different visions, or in different figures, and parables. If you wish to understand them, you must combine them all in one. Psalms 89:19; Hosea 12:10; Habakkuk 2:2; Acts 2:17; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Hebrews 9:9, 24; Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:13, 34; Genesis 41:1-32; Daniel, chapters 2, 7 & 8; Acts 10:9-16

RULE VII.

Visions are always mentioned as such. 2 Corinthians 12:1; Acts 10:9-16; 11:5; Daniel 4:10; 8:2; 9:21; 10:8.

RULE VIII.

Figures always have a figurative meaning, and are used much in prophecy, to represent future things, times and events; such as mountains, meaning governments (Daniel 2:35,44); beasts, meaning kingdoms (Daniel 7:8,17); waters, meaning people (Rev 17:1,15); lamp, meaning Word of God (Ps 119:105); day, meaning year (Ezek 4:6).

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RULE IX.

Parables are used as comparisons to illustrate subjects, and must be explained in the same way as figures by the subject and Bible. Mark 4:13

RULE X.

Figures sometimes have two or more different significations, as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time.

1. Indefinite. Ecclesiastes 7:14
2. Definite, a day for a year. Ezekiel 4:6
3. Day for a thousand years. 2 Peter 3:8

If you put on the right construction it will harmonize with the Bible and make good sense, otherwise it will not.

RULE XI.

How to know when a word is used figuratively: If it makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, then it must be understood literally, if not, figuratively. Revelation 12:1-2; Revelation 17:3-7

RULE XII.

To learn the true meaning of figures, trace your figurative word through your Bible, and where you find it explained, put it on your figure, and if it makes good sense you need look no further, if not, look again.

RULE XIII.

To know whether we have the true historical event for the fulfillment of a prophecy: If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event. But if one word lacks a fulfillment, then you must look for another event, or wait for its future development. For God takes care that history and prophecy doth agree, so that the true believing children of God may never be ashamed. Psalms 22:5; Isaiah 45:17-19; 1 Peter 2:6; Revelation 17:17; Acts 3:18

RULE XIV.

The most important rule of all is, that you must have faith. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires, character, living, occupation, friends, home, comforts, and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of God's Word, it would show our faith to be vain. Nor can we ever believe so long as one of these motives lies lurking in our hearts.