

RULES OF INTERPRETATION

1. The Golden Rule of Interpretation:
When the plain sense of the text makes sense...that's it!
2. Interpret Scripture in the light of other Scripture:
 - Check the immediate context. "Text without context is pretext."
 - Check other scriptures on the same topic or with similar characteristics.
3. Remember writing conventions of the times:
 - Convention of Recurrence
Biblical writers often gave a general account of an event and then repeated the account with more detail. The event didn't happen twice!

For example: *Genesis 1 gives an overview of creation while Genesis 2 repeats aspects of the creation and gives more detail.*

- Characteristics of the Ancient Languages
The Old Testament is written mostly in Hebrew with smatterings of other languages such as Aramaic. There is an ancient translation of the OT into Greek (the Septuagint or "LXX") that has been very helpful to Bible translators. Biblical Hebrew uses no vowels, only consonants.

For example: *The name for God is translated "Yahweh" or "Jehovah", but it is really "YHWH" – an intentionally unpronounceable series of letters intended to be kept sacred and unable to be spoken in vain. Also, nouns are either masculine or feminine, so it is no accident that God is referred to in the masculine.*

The New Testament is written mostly in Greek. Greek has more verb flexibility than English does and this can sometimes provide a richness and perspective on the writer's intent that is lost in the literal English translation.

For example: *We only have an active or passive voice (I baptize or I am being baptized), but Greek has a middle voice in which the subject does the action out of personal interest or advantage (I baptize for myself).*

4. The Use of Symbols or Symbolic Language
 - Symbols are often explained immediately before or after the text where they are used. Look there first.
 - Symbols not explained in the immediate text are often explained elsewhere in Scripture. Look there next.
 - Use the Golden Rule of Interpretation to determine whether a text is symbolic or literal.