

“THE PRINCIPLES OF PROPHETIC INTERPRETATION”

The Most Important Principle of dealing with Biblical Prophecy is that the Bible is its own Interpreter and the Holy Spirit, Who is the true Author of the Scriptures will aid the honest in heart to understand its truths.

In the 1830s a man named William Miller set himself to study to discern whether the Bible was or was not a truly inspired document. In the process of his study he was led into searching out the Prophecies and also the Biblical Rules of Prophetic interpretation which we will list below. The results of his studies shook the religious world to its very foundations and resulted in the Great Second Advent Movement.

We live in the last days of earth's history and various prophetic view points abound on every hand. How can we know the true from the misleading? It is essential that we become familiar with the Bible's own rules of interpretation as then we can find solid rock for our feet.

Part 1

William Miller's rules to prophetic study.

RULES OF INTERPRETATION

William Miller

In studying the Bible, I have found the following rules to be of great service to myself, and now give them to the public by special request. Every rule should be well studied, in connection with the Scripture references, if the Bible student would be at all benefited by them.

RULE I—Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible.

PROOF: Matthew 5:18. “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

RULE II—All Scripture is necessary and may be understood by a diligent application and study.

PROOF: 2 Timothy 3:15–17. 15 “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

RULE III—Nothing revealed in the Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering.

PROOF: Deuteronomy 29:29; “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Matthew 10:26–27; “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.”

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1 Corinthians 2:10; “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

Philippians 3:15; “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”

Matthew 21:22; “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

John 14:13–14; “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

John 15:7; “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

James 1:5–6; “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”

1 John 5:13–15. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. 14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

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 an error.

PROOF: Isaiah 28:7–29; “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. 9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: 11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. 13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. 14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. 15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: 16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. 17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. 18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. 19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. 20 For the bed is

shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. 21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. 22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth. 23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. 24 Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? 25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? 26 For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. 27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. 28 Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. 29 This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

Isaiah 35:8; “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”

Proverbs 19:27; “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”

Luke 24:27; “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Luke 24:44–45; “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

Romans 16:26; “But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:”

James 5:19; “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;”

2 Peter 1:19, 20. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”

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.

PROOF: Psalm 19:7–11; “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the

honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”

Psalms 119:97–105; “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. 98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. 101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. 102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. 103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Matthew 23:8–10; “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”

1 Corinthians 2:12–16; “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

Ezekiel 34:18–19; “Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? 19 And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.”

Luke 11:52; “Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.”

Malachi 2:7–8. “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.”

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.

PROOF: Psalm 89:19; “Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.”

Hosea 12:10; “I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.”

Habakkuk 2:2; “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.”

Acts 2:17; "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:"

1 Corinthians 5:6; "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

Hebrews 9:9, 24; "Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;"

9:24 "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:"

Psalms 78:2; "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:"

Matthew 13:13, 34; "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

13:34 "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:"

Genesis 41:1–32; "And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. 2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4 And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6 And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. 7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. 8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. 9 ¶ Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: 10 Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: 11 And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 12 And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. 13 And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. 14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. 17 ¶ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: 18 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: 19 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: 20 And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: 21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

23 And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: 24 And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me. 25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. 27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: 30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; 31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. 32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.”

Daniel 2, 7, 8; “They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. 8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.”

Acts 10:9–16. “On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.”

RULE VII—Visions are always mentioned as such.

PROOF: 2 Corinthians 12:1. “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.”

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; beasts meaning kingdoms. Waters, meaning people. Lamp, meaning Word of God. Day, meaning year.

PROOF: Daniel 2:35, “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

Daniel 2:44; “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

Daniel 7:8, “I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

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Daniel 7:17; “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.”

Revelation 17:1, 15; “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:”

17:15 “And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”

Psalms 119:105; “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Ezekiel 4:6. “And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.”

RULE IX—Parables are used as companions to illustrate subjects, and must be explained in the same way as figures by the subject and Bible.

PROOF: Mark 4:13. “And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?”

See also; the explanation of the ten virgins: Miller’s Lectures, Number 16.

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.

PROOF: Ecclesiastes 7:14. “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.”

1. Indefinite.
2. Definite, a day for a year.
3. Day for a thousand years.

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

PROOF: Ezekiel 4:6; “And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.”

2 Peter 3:8. “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

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

PROOF: Revelation 12:1–2; “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

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Revelation 17:3–7. “So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”

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 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.

PROOF: Psalm 22:5; Isaiah 14:17–19; 1 Peter 2:6; Revelation 17:17; “For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”

Acts 3:18. “But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.”

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. We must believe that God will never forfeit his word. And we can have confidence that he that takes notice of the sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, will guard the translation of his own word, and throw a barrier around it, and prevent those who sincerely trust in God, and put implicit confidence in his word, from erring far from the truth, though they may not understand Hebrew or Greek.

These are some of the most important rules which I find the word of God warrants me to adopt and follow, in order for system and regularity. And if I am not greatly deceived, in so doing, I have found the Bible, as a whole, one of the most simple, plain, and intelligible books ever written, containing proof in itself of its divine origin and full of all knowledge that our hearts could wish to know or enjoy. I have found it a treasure which the world cannot purchase. It gives a calm peace in believing, and a firm hope in the future. It sustains the mind in adversity, and teaches us to be humble in prosperity. It prepares us to love and do good to others, and to realize the value of the soul. It makes us bold and valiant for the truth, and nerves the arm to

oppose error. It gives us a powerful weapon to break down infidelity, and makes known the only antidote for sin. It instructs us how death will be conquered, and how the bonds of the tomb must be broken. It tells us of future events, and shows the preparation necessary to meet them. It gives us an opportunity to hold conversation with the King of kings, and reveals the best code of laws ever enacted. This is but a faint view of its value; yet how many perishing souls treat it with neglect, or, what is equally as bad, treat it as a hidden mystery which cannot be known.

Oh my dear reader, make it your chief study. Try it well, and you will find it to be all I have said. Yes, like the Queen of Sheba, you will say the half was not told you. The divinity taught in our schools is always founded on some sectarian creed. It may do to take a blank mind and impress it with this kind, but it will always end in bigotry. A free mind will never be satisfied with the views of others.

Were I a teacher of youth in divinity, I would first learn their capacity and mind. If these were good, I would make them study the Bible for themselves, and send them out free to do the world good. But if they had no mind, I would stamp them with another's mind, write bigotry on their forehead, and send them out as slaves.

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Part 2:

BIBLE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION:

PASTOR LOUIS WERE

THE UNIVERSALITY OF LAW

1. Laws of Science help scientific comprehension.
2. Laws of Nature must be studied to learn the secrets of nature.
3. Laws of Health are an essential study for healthful living.
4. Laws of interpretation are infallible tests in studying Bible prophecies.

"There are great laws that govern the world of nature, and spiritual things are controlled by principles equally certain" (9T.221).

BIBLE PRINCIPLES

(1) The Interpretation Must Reveal Christ and Make Him the Centre.

"Search the Scriptures . . . they are they that testify of Me" (John 5: 39).

"The whole Bible tells of Christ. From the first record of creation . . . to the closing promise we are reading of His works and listening to His voice" (SC.92, 3).

(2) Compare Scripture with Scripture for Clearer Light

"Compare spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor.2:13).

"Here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:10,13).

“The prophets have enquired and searched diligently...Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet. 1:10,11: see Dan. 8:27; 9:2; etc.).

“I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another” (EW.221).

“Scripture is explained by Scripture” (1SM.42).

(3) The Things of Israel Now Belong to the Church

This principle is positively fundamental to the understanding of the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation--it is the foundational principle of God’s last-day Message. The Lord gave Paul the special commission of showing how the church became “the Israel of God”, that the promises to literal Israel were to be fulfilled in the experiences of the church:

“They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom. 9: 6-8). “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”;

“They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:29, 7). “We brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise” (Gal. 3: 29, 7; 4: 28). People previously classified as “Gentiles” become “fellow citizens of the saints” in “the commonwealth of Israel” (Eph. 2:12-22; 1 Pet. 2:10, etc.). This is the consistent teaching of all the New Testament (after the rejection of national Israel).

(4) The Gospel in Every Passage and Prophecy

“All Scripture” is given by God “for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:15, 16).

“The burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme-man’s uplifting-the power of God, ‘which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor. 15:57). He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field for study: He has the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure-house of God’s Word” (Ed. 125, 6).

(5) The Law of Growth or Development: the Principle of Repeat and Enlarge-the Repetition Contains an Explanation.

A wise teacher takes his pupils so far, then, by a series of repetitions, goes from the known to the unknown. The Bible is based upon this wise principle. Later chapters or books develop the themes introduced earlier: “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4: 28). There is a remarkable parallel or similarity between Christian experience and nature, and the Scriptures. Plants grow from seed or bulb to the flower, fruit, or head.

We are admonished to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ”. The Church is also to develop “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . . grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head” (Eph. 4:13-15). As all the nerves of the body lead to the brain, so do all the books of the Bible lead to the book of Revelation:

“In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end. Here is the complement of the book of Daniel. One is a prophecy; the other a revelation” (AA.585).

Thus the book of Revelation borrows upon all the preceding books and must in itself be interpreted with remembrance of all the books that have preceded it. Some have not done this and have consequently misinterpreted some of its important prophecies.

“The Word of God includes the Scriptures of the Old Testament as well as of the New. One is not complete without the other”. “The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old” (COL. 126, 128).

(6) The Law of the World-wide Symbolized by the Local

All the prophets employed the principle of the world-wide symbolized by the local.

“His [Zephaniah’s] prophecies of impending judgment upon Judah apply with equal force to the judgments that are to fall upon an impenitent world at the time of the second advent of Christ” (PK 389).

“Christ saw in Jerusalem a symbol of the world . . . hastening on to meet the retributive judgments of God”. “The Saviour’s prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfilment . . . the doom of a world” (GC. 22, 37).

(7) The Law of the Significance of Bible Names

A decided connection exists between the proper names of the Bible and its history and doctrines. The Hebrews attached great importance to the meaning of proper names—the meaning determined the name—a fact which must be remembered when studying the Scriptures, for often there is a deliberate play upon the meaning of a word.

Dr. Angus states: “Nearly all the names in Hebrew are significant, and a knowledge of their meaning throws a light upon its context” (Bible Handbook, p. 185).

(8) The Law Governing “Spiritual” Interpretations

God is the Author of “spiritual” interpretations. It is a mistake to think that “spiritual” interpretations take one into an unreal world, a world of fancy, conjecture, imagination, for they take one into a world of actuality—they are mental pictures—imagery—of spiritual truths which are based upon things that have actually happened. It is God’s principle of preaching per pictures, “similitudes” (Hosea 12: 10), “acted parables”.

(9) Observe the Deep, Inner Meaning—Not Alone What is on the Surface.

“One may read the whole Bible through, and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning” (SC. 95).

“His words are truth, and they have a deeper significance than appears on the surface. All the sayings of Christ have a value beyond their unpretending appearance. Minds that are quickened by the Holy Spirit will discern the value of these sayings. They will discern the precious gems of truth, though these may be buried treasure” (COL. 110).

“We do not go deep enough in our search for truth . . . God wants our minds to expand” (TM. 119).

“While some portions of the Word are easily understood, the true meaning of other parts is not so easily discerned. There must be patient study and meditation, and earnest prayer” (TM. 107).

“The truth of the Bible . . . must be searched, dug out by painstaking effort” (ISM. 20).

“Investigate, compare Scripture with Scripture, sink the shaft of truth deep into the mine of God’s Word” (TM. 476).

How do we “sink the shaft of truth deep into the mine of God’s Word” and thus comprehend its “deep and hidden meaning”? The Heavenly injunction for us to “study”, “search”, “rightly

divide”, “investigate”, “sink”, “sink the shaft of truth deep” are equated with “compare Scripture with Scripture”.

(10) The Design of the Book of Revelation-All the Laws of Interpretation show that the Gathering of the Nations to “Armageddon” Must Commence Before Probation Closes.

The Infinite Architect of the Universe is “The Revelator” (Rev. 22: 16; GC. 342). “This book [Revelation] demands close, prayerful study, lest it be interpreted according to the ideas of men, and false construction be given to the sacred word of the Lord, which in its symbols and figures means so much to us . . . In the Revelation the deep things of God are portrayed” (Letter 16, 1900). “In figures and symbols subjects of vast importance were presented to John . . .

The names of the seven churches are symbolic . . . The number seven indicates completeness, and is symbolic . . . the symbols used” (AA. 583-586).

“By a variety of images the Lord Jesus represented to John” (TM. 118).

“He (Jesus) sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant. John” (Rev. 1: 1).

“Henry Moore observes ‘that there never was a book penned with such artifice as this of the Apocalypse, as if every word were weighed in a balance before it was set down’ . . . Every sentence of it is pregnant with meaning . . . in order to understand its visions, the best method is to examine diligently every word of the Apocalypse”-Bishop Wordsworth.

(11) New Testament Principles Determine the Interpretation of the Latter Portion of Daniel XI.

Some have concluded that as the first part of Daniel XI deals with literal or national, military wars around Jerusalem, so the ending of the prophecy must likewise refer to military wars near or around Jerusalem. However, this line of reasoning is contrary to the Scriptures. All SDA expositors agree that the Papacy is brought into the prophecy from verse 31 and onwards.

The persecutions of God’s people in Europe, the wearing out of the saints during the 1260 years of Papal supremacy (Dan. 7: 25), are brought to view in Dan. 11: 33-35. In Dan. 8: 9 Rome (in its two-fold character: Pagan and Papal)- is said to come from the West. When Paul quotes from Dan. 11: 36 (see marginal references) and applies this prophecy to “that man of sin, the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 3, 4), he says that this power “as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God”. Jerusalem was the only place where God commanded that His temple be built (Deut. 12: 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 1 Chron. 21: 18, 28; 22: 1, 2; 2 Chron. 3: 1).

This Western power, this European “king”, which persecuted God’s people in Europe, Paul declared was to sit “in the temple of God”, and the only place where the literal temple could be built was in Jerusalem. Obviously, then, according to New Testament principles, Daniel’s prophecy concerning the king of the north and the temple in Jerusalem, is not to be understood in a literal-Jerusalem setting. By the term “the temple of God” the inspired Paul referred to the Christian church, see 1 Cor. 3: 16; 2 Cor. 6: 16; Eph. 2: 22; etc. The Lord Jesus, in Rev. 11: 1, 2, employs the term “temple” and “the holy city” to refer to His church.

(12) “Double” and “Triple” Applications of Prophecy `Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

It is vital for S.D.A. Bible students to be familiar with “double” and “triple” applications of prophecies concerning Israel and Jerusalem: without employing these essential principles the student will not be able to heed the Divine injunction to “rightly divide” the Word of truth. Failure to heed these principles lies at the foundation of many last-day errors, including those revealed in the “military” interpretation of Armageddon.

The Bible is written on the principle of “multum in parvo”, or much in little. It is a book written on definite principles, harmonizing logic with spiritual vision. The principles of enlargement by repetition, of the first things foreshadowing the last, the worldwide symbolized in the local things of the past, types and antitypes, past events “acted parables” of future things, “double” and “triple” applications, etc., prove that nothing in the Scripture is useless or wasted: that the past and the future are profitable for the present.

The principle of going back to where a thing commences and returning by means of a progressive cycle on an ascending scale, is clearly seen in Scripture and in nature.

(13) The Principle of the “Triple” Application Revealed in the Apocalypse.

The Revelation deals with the past, present, and the future see 1: 19; 4: 1. The things of ancient Israel are repeated, but on a vaster scale. The same terminology is employed throughout. However, a careful analysis reveals a different application before or after the second Advent. The term, “The holy city”, of Dan. 9: 24; Mat. 4: 5; 27: 53 (referring to the literal Jerusalem) is employed symbolically in Rev. 11: 2 to refer to the church (GC. 266). The same term “the holy city”, mentioned in Rev. 21: 2; 22: 19, refers to the literal capital--the New Jerusalem of the eternal kingdom. This illustrates the principle of the triple application of Scriptural terminology of the things of Israel:

(1) Literal in relation to the literal Jews and the literal land of Israel;

(2) Symbolical in relation to the spiritual kingdom of Christ;

(3) Literal again when referring to the eternal kingdom of Christ. The term, “temple”, designated the building in Jerusalem. In Rev. 11: 1 the “temple” (in its earthly application) refers to the church. Other references in the Revelation to the “temple” refer to the temple in heaven where Christ pleads for His people. Thus again is revealed the triple use of that term:

(1) Literal in the days of literal Israel;

(2) symbolical in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit”;

(3) Literal in the heavenly kingdom. Following the divinely-given principle of interpretation, we know that the words in Rev. 14: 20, “And the winepress was trodden without the city”, depict the slaughter of the wicked outside the symbolic city, the church, before the millennium, and the slaughter of the wicked outside the literal New Jerusalem after the millennium (Rev. 20: 8, 9).

THE CERTAINTY OF OUR MESSAGE

“It is as certain that we have the truth as that God lives” (4T.59). We “ought not to guess at anything” (GC.598).

“ How did the pioneers of our Movement obtain the advanced understanding of the Word of God? “We would search the Scriptures with much prayer . . . Sometimes whole nights would be devoted to searching the Scriptures, and earnestly asking God for guidance” (GW.302). “We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for truth as for hidden treasure” (RH.25-5-1905).

God’s last-day Message is so fully established upon principles of interpretation that by these we can prove it to be of God.

“I saw that the word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another” (EW.221). Any misinterpretation will break the “perfect chain”.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1: 20, 21).

Prophecies given by the Holy Spirit must be explained by the Holy Spirit. “He shall teach you all things” (John 14: 26).

“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16: 13). Paul declared that he was taught by the Holy Spirit: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2: 13, 14).

The Holy Spirit taught him by guiding him to compare one Scripture with another: one verse not being sufficient on its own; rather, much study being required to bring together the links in the chain of truth. This procedure is not acceptable to “the natural man”. The more we yield to the Spirit’s guidance the more we will like the Pioneers of our Movement-employ this method of ascertaining the “perfect chain” of truth to be found in the Scriptures, and the less we will rely upon the method of “the natural man” in merely reading a verse and giving his opinion of it.

“We should make the Bible its own expositor” (TM.106).

“Compare Scripture with Scripture” (TM.476).

“The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with Scripture” (ED.190).

“The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another” (4T.499).

Rules of Biblical Understanding

How to Study the Word of God

”Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

IN ORDER TO STUDY THE BIBLE AND ARRIVE AT AN ACCURATE INTERPRETATION, WE MUST BE WILLING TO ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

1. We must believe that the whole Bible is the inspired word of God, and we must be willing to abide by its teachings, even if they go contrary to our own personal ideas and practices.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4.

2. We must be humble and teachable. However great and extensive our knowledge and educational achievements, we must come humbly to the word of God, not seeking to study it from a secular standpoint as a scientific or philosophical work, and with a dependence upon human intellect.

Trusting in intellectual pride and humanistic opinion will prevent us from being able to understand the deep spiritual truths of the Bible. God requires us to come humbly and with a teachable attitude, sincerely and prayerfully seeking to understand His word. Jesus said, “I thank

Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Matthew 11:25

3. We must compare scripture with scripture, letting the Bible explain itself. It is not uncommon to find individuals and groups of people who build a whole theology upon one single statement of the Bible. This can be very dangerous and misleading, depending upon the method of interpretation employed in their Biblical research. The only correct and safe way of securing an understanding of a particular truth is to study everything that the Bible has to say about that specific topic.

“Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine?... For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little.” Isaiah 28:9,10. We must study broadly, permitting the Bible to define its own terms.

This will preserve us from the practice of some, in taking an isolated passage and twisting it to fit or “prove” their own ideas. We should always approach the Bible with an open and honest attitude, willing to lay aside any established beliefs and practices, whenever we find them to be without scriptural foundation.

4. We should ask the Holy Spirit to guide us as we study the Bible. Though written by men, the Bible has been supernaturally inspired. We therefore need the Holy Spirit, the author of all scripture, to guide and instruct us as we study.

Prayer for divine instruction and enlightenment should always precede a study of God’s word. Without heaven’s assistance to render our minds spiritually receptive, it is not possible to properly interpret and appreciate the truths of the Bible, which are often “hidden beneath the surface” and readily missed by the casual, superficial approach.

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:10-14.

5. We must truly want to know the truth before we can know the truth. Our motives for studying the Bible must always be honorable and acceptable to God if we would receive instruction and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

If it is our determined purpose to research the Bible in order to find an argument against the truth, God will leave us to our own devices. For example, some people use a few scriptural verses to supposedly prove that God’s law was abolished when Jesus Christ died upon the cross.

A proper method of research will clearly demonstrate that such is not the case, and the verses used to substantiate this idea are found to be unsupportive when placed in their proper context.

Only those who are willing to love and accept the truth when it is made plain, and do not seek to construct arguments against it, will be preserved from the dangers of self deception. God will not force us to believe anything against our will. However, His word clearly describes what will happen to those who still choose to believe, contrary to what He has plainly said:

“Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” 2 Thessalonians 2: 10,11.

6. Bible study must become a priority in life. Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to “. . . a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” Matthew 13:45,46. We must earnestly search for truth, recognizing that it is worth more than anything else in life. This quest must be made priority, especially when other things seek to crowd out the time that should be allocated to Bible study. God’s promise to us is that, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13.

Our desire, our relish and our love for the Bible will strengthen and deepen as we discipline ourselves to study it every day.

7. We must live up to all the light we have before God will teach us more. As truth is opened to our understanding, we should determine by God’s grace to walk in its light. God has set before us an upward pathway and it is His will that we should walk in His footsteps.

As our Savior therefore leads us further along the pathway of advanced truth, we must determine to follow if we would keep in step with Him and remain His disciple. Also, living according to the truth that we already have qualifies us to receive more light and truth from God.

“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31,32.