

## Interpreting the Holy Scriptures

### December 7: *Hermeneutical Principles*

Some basic principles of proper interpretation:

1. *Sola Scriptura*. This deals with the authority of Scripture over and against other forms of authority in the Church claiming equal footing. It is not *nuda Scriptura*, that is, Scripture divorced from history or its context (as in some Protestant denominations). History *informs* our translation of Scripture.
2. Context. Understanding the contextual circles are important in interpretation.
3. *Scriptura literalis unis est*- Scripture has but one literal meaning: The meaning intended by the author. It is the interpreters job to examine the evidence, both within Scripture and its context, to seek to discover that original meaning. Sometimes this is easy; other times it is challenging.
4. *Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*- “Scripture is its own interpreter.” Sometimes referred to as the principle of “Scripture interprets Scripture.” Sometimes this is direct (For instance, as found in the Gospel of Matthew); sometimes this is indirect (i.e. one discovers different passages in separate parts of the Scriptures that deal with the same issue, etc...)
5. Interpret the unclear in light of the clear. For instance, we do not base end-times doctrines on the Book of Revelation (as do the Dispensationalists). Rather, we understand Revelation in light of what Jesus says in His Olivet Discourse, and what the rest of Scripture testifies about it.
6. The Older Text is often the better text. It is closer to the source. However, this is not always true, as some older texts may have been discarded by the Early Church and others because of their inferiority or other issues
7. The more complicated text is often the better text. This is true because in translation, it is not uncommon for the editor to try to make things clearer for the readers, while at the same time not rendering correctly what the text actually says.
8. Scriptural translations produced by the Church, or by committee (Like the *Septuagint*) tend to be more accurate because there are checks and balances. Avoid Scriptures that are translated by one person (e.g. the *Beck Bible*). Often such translations reveal the prejudices of their translators.
9. The Analogy of Faith: All Scripture is centered in Jesus Christ. One cannot properly interpret the Scriptures unless he understands this fact.
10. Be careful to hold those opinions of the Scripture which are consistent with the historic creeds and councils of the Church. We follow not our private interpretations, but those which have been held by all, in all places at all times.
11. The Old Testament is a *Christian*.
12. Modern teachings attempt to separate the Divine/Human element of Scripture (e.g. denying miracles). However God’s Word is both Divine and Human (2 Natures of Christ).
13. The Scripture must be understood by the two great doctrines of Law and Gospel.

14. *Simul Justus et peccator* (Simultaneously saint and sinner). Until the Second Coming we are both sinner and saint in one being. Not only is this declared by Scripture, but assists in our understanding of it.
15. The finite is capable of the infinite.