

Internal Laws of Biblical Interpretation

or How to Interpret the Bible

by Clifford McLain

Law #1

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16). Since all Scripture is inspired of God (God breathed) all Scripture is of equal authority.

Law #2

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God *that the man of God may be perfect (fitted) thoroughly furnished* unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16). This verse shows that the Bible student is completely furnished with what he needs, and this furnishing or out-fitting is the word of God.

Law #3

"Study to show thyself *approved unto God, a workman* that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing* the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). Three things stand out in this verse. (a) "*Approved unto God*". This is your frame of mind as you approach the Word. You desire His approval as you read and study. (b) "*A workman*". You have to work at it. (c) "*Rightly dividing the Word of truth*". This indicates there must be careful attention to context so that each truth is placed in its proper place. Otherwise, Scriptures may appear contradictory.

Law #4

"No prophesy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (II Peter 1:20). Thus, if we would arrive at the proper interpretation we must consider all the scriptures on that subject. This is to say that 'a text without its context is a pretext'.

Law #5

"...the dispensation of God which is given me (Paul) for you to *fulfil (complete, fill to the full so no more can be added)* the Word of God; even the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but is now manifest to His saints" (Col. 1:25,26). This 'mystery' was given to the Apostle Paul as the body of truth to *complete* the Word of God. Thus, there are no revelations from God since that time. This fact should cause the serious student of Biblical chronology to re-think the *internal* evidence of each book of the Bible as to when it was written, rather than accepting the traditions of men.

Law #6

"...I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, 'Go', and he goeth, and to another 'Come', and he cometh; and to my servant, 'Do this', and he doeth it...". When Jesus heard it, he marvelled and said to them that followed, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (as this Roman Centurian has...) Matthew 8:8-10. Law #6 simply stated, is that all authority must be under authority. The Word of God is the *final* authority.

Law #7

"Faith cometh by *hearing* and hearing by *the Word of God*" (Rom 10:17). Faith must rest on the Word of God, not the tradition of men, our experiences, etc.

Law #8

"That you approve things that are (more) excellent" (Philippians 1:10). Literally, "to test the things that differ". We "test the things that differ" by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

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Many books have been written attempting to explain how to get at the real meaning of scripture. Theologians call the study of this subject, hermeneutics. However, the Bible itself explains this and thus our title, The Internal Laws - or Principles - of Biblical Interpretation. We have chosen eight principles contained in the Divine Library listed on the other side of this page. These are tools by which the Holy Spirit enables the honest workman to discover the proper interpretation of the Word.

Miles Coverdale, who gave us our first complete English translation of the Bible, had in the fly-leaf of his Bible the following words concerning the laws of interpretation:

*"It shall greatly helpe ye
to understande Scripture,
if thou mark not only
what is spoken, or
wrytten, but of whom,
and to whom, with what
words, at what time,
where, to what intent,
with what circumstance,
considering what goeth before, and what
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