

ISRAEL: Yesterday, Today, & Forever ***(Principles of Interpretation)***

In rightly dividing the Word of God there are several interpretive principles we must follow.

a. Interpret Scripture LITERALLY or NORMALLY.

This means that we take Scripture for what it plainly says unless there is good reason not to do so. Of course, this means we allow for figures of speech, etc. – just like we do in the normal communication of language.

The golden rule of interpretation says, “When plain sense makes good sense, then seek no other sense.” That is a good, general rule of interpretation.

b. Interpret Scripture IN CONTEXT.

I often say that a text without a context is a pretext. When Satan tempted Christ, he quoted Scripture; but he quoted it out of context. In Luke 4:10, Satan quoted from Psalm 91:11-12 about how the angels would protect Jesus if He threw Himself down from the temple. But in doing so, the devil omitted one little phrase that changes the nuance. He left out the phrase “**in all your ways**”. God’s protection applies to those who walk in all His ways.

If the Bible is taken out of context, one can make it say most anything. Always read to the end of the sentence. Read the sentence in the context of the paragraph and then read the paragraph in the context of the book. And then read it in the context of the whole counsel of Scripture. I like to say, “It’s not how many verses you know that counts, but how many you understand in proper CONTEXT.”

The story goes: A man seeking for God’s will randomly opened his Bible and putting his finger on Mt. 27:5 read “went and hanged himself”. Quickly flipping to another passage, his finger landed on Lk. 10:37, “Go and do likewise.” In frantic desperation, he flipped yet to another passage with his finger landing on Jn. 13:27, “What you do, do quickly.” Note: Consideration of the context is ALL IMPORTANT!

c. Understand that REVELATION was PROGRESSIVE.

Scripture builds on Scripture. God develops what He wants to say to us. He gave us the Old Testament and then the New Testament builds on that. In proving that Jesus is the Messiah, the New Testament writers quoted the OT and then showed how Jesus fulfilled those OT prophecies. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 Paul says that the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again “**according to the Scriptures**” – meaning the OT Scriptures.

When you get to the book of Revelation, (the last book in the Bible) you find that in the book there are 404 verses. Of those 404 verses, 278 of them allude or directly tie to the OT Scriptures. In order to properly understand Revelation, you have to have a good grasp of all the previous revelation. The book of Revelation builds on and completes all the previous revelation. Keep this in mind in regard to your study of Israel. The NT does not replace the Old Testament, rather it builds upon it.

Many people start with the New Testament and then read it back into the Old Testament. For example, they see in the NT that the people of God are called the Church, so they read back into the OT that Israel was the Church. That is WRONG. The Church was not in the OT. The Church is a NEW thing that was a mystery before the time of the apostles (cf. Eph. 3:3-6). Again, Israel means Israel, and the Church means the Church. Those two are always two separate things.

Israel [Church Age] Israel

Imagine a train going along at 60 miles an hour down a stretch of track toward a certain destination. Suddenly, it pulls over onto a side track. In my analogy, this train is called ISRAEL. This allows another train to pass by on the main track. This other train is called CHURCH. When it has passed, the original train again pulls back on the main track and resumes the journey intended by the engineer.

This illustrates what is happening during this age. Israel was on the main track in the OT, but they have temporarily been sidetracked until the

Church passes by – then they will resume the journey to God’s pre-determined end.

d. Don’t confuse INTERPRETATION with APPLICATION.

There is ONE interpretation of Scripture, but many applications. Note a couple of examples:

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV)

14 if My people **[Israel]** who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

CONTEXT is all-important in properly understanding any passage. In context 2 Chronicles 7:14 is clearly addressing Israel regarding judgment of the land because of disobedience in the form of drought, locusts, or pestilence. Israel as a nation was unique in its covenant relationship with God. 2 Chronicles properly interpreted applies strictly to Israel; but in terms of application, God responds to humble prayer on the part of the repentant.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, **[Judah]** says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Often people quote Jeremiah 29:11 as a direct promise to them; but in context, God spoke this to Judah regarding His promise that they would return from the captivity of Babylon. Of course, there is wonderful application to individual believers; but properly speaking, this was addressed specifically to Judah.

A person’s hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) are all-important because rightly dividing the word is dependent upon it. Consistency in the application of sound hermeneutics results in a clear distinction between what God says in relation to Israel and what He says in relation to the Church.

Luther got Israel WRONG and railed against the Jews terribly. Hitler picked up on this and ran with it to holocaust conclusions. The ramifications of wrongly dividing the word regarding Israel can be disastrously horrendous!

To Abram, the father of the Jews God said...

Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
