Rule 3: Compare Scripture

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Hermeneutics: How to Read and Understand the Bible

RULE #3: Compare Scripture with Scripture.

I. The Holy Spirit revealed the things of God by His own use of words and concepts (I Cor 2:13).
   A. It is important to read the whole context of this spiritual revelation of God's hidden mysteries to men (2:6-16). See the sermon outline "Mysteries of Hidden Wisdom."
   B. Man's natural ideas of both words and concepts are highly dangerous in the Scriptures.
   C. It is a spiritual book by a spiritual Author, and only spiritual men will comprehend it.
   D. God has purified His words completely, and every one is very important (Psalm 12:6).
   E. Every one of them is necessary for the right interpretation (Proverbs 30:5; Luke 4:4).
   F. We must argue for every one of them. See the sermon outline "Every Word of God."

II. We compare things in Scripture by words (verbal comparisons) or concepts (real comparisons).
   A. For example, the word "quickened" in Ephesians 2:1 may be compared in I Peter 3:18, and by doing this we are able to learn that quicken means to resurrect or make alive.
   B. For example, this concept of being made alive may be compared to equivalent concepts.
      1. Being born again is an equivalent concept found in John 3:3,7 and I Peter 1:23.
      2. Being begotten again is equivalent in I Peter 1:3; James 1:18; and I John 5:1.
      3. Being resurrected to life from death is equivalent in John 5:25-29 and Rev 20:6.
      4. Being regenerated is an equivalent concept by Titus 3:5 and Matthew 19:28.
   C. A concordance has every occurrence of every word for word (verbal) comparisons.
   D. Both the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge and Nave's Topical Bible compare concepts.

III. This rule assumes the Scripture itself to be internally superior to any outside interpretative help.
   A. The Holy Spirit's connections of words and concepts exceed all men's opinions.
   B. So the Bible is superior and rules over commentaries, dictionaries, and encyclopedias.
   C. We boldly conclude that the Bible itself is the best commentary on the Bible.
   D. We reject Ptolemy's and Usher's chronologies as corrupting Persia's kings by 80 years.
   E. We reconcile all "contradictions" by comparing for God's key of wisdom elsewhere.
   F. But we still allow the careful use of commentaries to quickly find Bible comparisons.

IV. Words should be understood in their Scriptural and spiritual sense rather than dictionary sense.
   A. Word meanings change over time and are formed by sinful men, so we use caution.
   B. God chose to communicate with words, but we want His meanings, not foolish man's.

C. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Dictionaries are but fallible works of men.

D. The two previous rules are first to force us to limit words by the Bible and the context.

E. “Cleave” in Genesis 2:24 may be understood internally (Job 38:38; Ps 137:6; Jer 13:11).

F. “Dog” is only understood by analyzing the context. It means sodomite (Deut 23:17-18).

G. “Know” in Matthew 7:23 is best understood by comparing Genesis 4:1 and Amos 3:2.

H. “Easter” in Acts 12:4 is best understood by considering the context (Acts 12:3). It clearly means the Passover rather than Astarte Day, or our Easter Bunny Day.

I. “Instant” in II Timothy 4:2 is best understood by comparing Luke 7:4; 23:23; Acts 26:7; and Romans 12:12. Speaking at a moment’s notice anywhere is interpretational folly.

J. “Flesh” in I Peter 3:21 is best understood by Rom 7:18; II Cor 7:1; and Gal 5:16-24. We understand it to mean the sinful propensities that are part of our bodies and old man.

K. “Baptist” in Matthew 3:1 is best understood by Matt 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39; Rom 6:3-5; I Cor 15:29; and I Pet 3:21. If you read one-tenth of the linguistic debates over man’s opinions of this word in English and Greek, you would soon be an agnostic!

V. The illustration of this rule gives popular texts that are corrupted and other texts simply misunderstood by not comparing the Scriptural usage of the words or concepts.

A. Teetotalers teach that wine is sometimes grape juice and sometimes an alcoholic drink.

1. They pervert language in order to promote a social agenda to condemn all wine.
2. Many lengthy books have been written to “prove” this point from many angles.
3. The linguistic and scientific arguments on both sides are nothing but “Babel.”
4. Of course, it is grape juice when commended and alcoholic when condemned!
5. But Melchizedek used the same wine as Noah and Lot (Gen 9:21; 14:18; 19:33).
6. Our Lord Jesus and Timothy used the very same wine Paul feared (John 2:1-11; I Tim 5:23; Rom 14:21; Eph 5:18). Such teetotalers are plainly liars.
7. Strong’s Concordance confirms the same Hebrew and Greek words are used.
8. They will argue loud that “new wine” is definitely and certainly not alcoholic.
    a. New wine causes drunkenness also (Hos 4:11; Joel 1:5; Acts 2:12-15).
    b. Haven’t these liars ever heard of a new or recent vintage? New wine!
    c. All wines are classified by kind, vineyard, location, and/or vintage year!

B. Mark and Luke reject divorce and remarriage altogether (Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18).

1. But Matthew twice records an exception for fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).
2. And Paul adds a clear exception for desertion (I Corinthians 7:12-16,27-28).
3. Though “not under bondage” is also understood by comparison (15 cp 27-28).
4. And further comparison yields other examples (Gen 21:9-13; Ezra 10:1-44; Jer 3:8-11) and principles (Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28) ignored by Pharisees.

C. Peter certainly writes like he did not believe in limited atonement (II Pet 2:1). Do you?

1. The conclusion appears unavoidable – wicked, God-denying reprobates, whom He would

swiftly destroy, were bought by the Lord: Jesus died for them as well.

2. We know this cannot be true by using our first rule, but what does Peter mean?
3. By comparing Scripture, we know Peter was an apostle to the Jews (Gal 2:9).
4. By comparing Scripture, we find Peter using Moses' warning (Deut 32:5-6).
5. By further comparison, we learn "bought" describes God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Deut 4:34-35; 7:8; 15:15; 24:18; Psalm 106:21-22; Isaiah 43:3-4).
6. Peter warns of false teachers so wicked they would deny the very God that had delivered their nation, thus magnifying their profane character as Moses had.

D. The Campbellites with their fantasy of Acts 2:38 cannot prove baptismal regeneration.
   1. We know they cannot be right by using our first rule; but what does Peter mean?
   2. These stepdaughters of Rome must force "for" to mean *in order to obtain*.
   3. So the Lord Jesus gave us Mark 1:40-44, where it means *in testimony of*!
   4. Which agrees perfectly by comparison with the fullest baptism text, I Peter 3:21.
   5. Which agrees perfectly by comparison with another baptism text, I Cor 15:29.
   6. Our .66 magnum just blew their "axe and two .38s" to smithereens (Jer 23:29)!
   7. We don't use invalid word games of altering "Christ" to *the one anointed*.
      a. The preposition *for* is modifying *baptized*, not *Christ*, as in Luke 3:3.
      b. We are not going to cave in and give Alexander's sons their definition.

E. We can prove a clear case for regeneration before faith in I John 5:1 from the English.
   1. We already know regeneration precedes faith by our first rule (John 3:3; 8:47).
   2. Comparing similar constructions by John, we see the order (I John 4:7 cp 3:14).
   3. Further comparisons reject righteousness before regeneration also (I John 2:29).
   4. Then we find a further clincher of John's to set the order straight (I John 4:15).
   5. We can do this without appealing to the Greek aorist tense, which vindicates us; as a simple reading of a Greek interlinear will prove our verb interpretation.

F. Jesus Christ is not the propitiation for all the sins of all men by virtue of our first rule.
   1. Therefore, I John 2:2 must be using the "whole world" in some limited sense.
   2. Just a little comparison shows "world" as very limited (Luke 2:1; John 12:19).
   3. Furthermore, we remember that John was a minister to the Jews (Galatians 2:9).
   4. He used "world" to indicate redeemed among the Gentiles also (Rom 11:12,15).

G. We do not care for the narrow minds that say, "*All* means all, and that's all *all* means!"
   1. They are hoping "all" might lead them to universal redemption (I Timothy 2:4).
   2. But we already know that universal redemption is heresy by our first rule.
   3. And we cannot accept Paul was a practicing sodomite by three *alls* (I Cor 9:22).
   4. Neither do we think loving money causes men to use prostitutes (I Tim 6:10).
   5. We understand this word by its context, often meaning *of all sort* (I Tim 2:1-2).

H. The “abomination of desolation” of Matthew 24:15 is no great mystery if we compare.
    1. It is not a Starbucks Coffee shop opened in the foyer of a rebuilt Jewish temple!
    2. Jesus told us to read Daniel to understand it, thus teaching us Bible comparison.
    3. And we find, in Daniel 9:26-27, this is a foreign army making them desolate!
    4. Luke tells us clearly by comparing his version of the prophecy (Luke 21:20)!
    5. What foolish and ridiculous speculation could have been avoided by comparing!
    6. The abomination of desolation is a foreign army desolating the city in 70 A.D.!

I. Some speak very often of Jesus being slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8).
    1. And we agree that He was foreordained to come and die for us (I Peter 1:20).
    2. But we disagree strongly that this point is taught in Revelation 13:8 at all.
    3. “From the foundation of the world” is a prepositional phrase modifying the writing of our names in the Book of Life, as seen clearly in Revelation 17:8.

J. When Jesus said, “Drink ye all of it,” He was not worried about leftovers (Matt 26:27).
    1. He was condemning the Catholic heresy of restricting the wine from the laity.
    2. A Southerner might figure this out by reading the verse, “Drink ya’ll of it.”
    3. But the rest must compare Scripture to understand it (Luke 22:17; Mark 14:23).

K. How do the violent take the kingdom by force (Matt 11:12)? By pressing in (Lu 16:16).

L. When Revelation describes two resurrections and deaths (20:6), we read John (5:25-29).

M. By comparing Luke 14:26 and Matthew 10:37 we properly understand that hating our relatives means not letting our affection for them compete with Christ.

N. Since I Corinthians 4:15 cannot possibly teach gospel regeneration, we give this verse the same sense as Paul’s statements in Galatians 4:19 and Titus 1:4.

O. Since Luke 2:48 and John 6:42 cannot teach that Joseph was Jesus’ biological father (rule #1), we find two other senses in which he was His father (Matt 1:16; Luke 3:23).

P. By comparing the figurative language of fulfilled prophecies (Is 13), we can accept the powerful similitudes and hyperbole used by the prophets in other places (Hos 12:10).

VI. Comparing Scriptures can be abused easily and result in severe wresting of God’s intentions.

A. We must compare Scriptures only where the comparison and connection are valid.

B. A popular illustration we used earlier illustrates the danger of poor connections.
    1. We may read in one place that Judas went out and hanged himself (Matt 27:5).
    2. We read in another place that Jesus told a man to go and do likewise (Lu 10:37).
    3. Then we find Jesus saying elsewhere, “That thou doest, do quickly” (Jn 13:27).
    4. Should we all rush out impetuously and hang ourselves to obey the connections?

C. Consider the issue of footwashing as practiced by a few Baptists and Mennonites.
    1. They get all excited about our Lord washing the disciples’ feet in John 13:1-17.
    2. Using their concordances, they think they have witness two in I Timothy 5:8.

3. But the text there proves that footwashing was not a public ordinance for all.
4. Their connection, by which they “prove” their practice, marks them as heretics.
5. And they do not dare compare too far, or they must pray and kiss differently!

D. Some teach church membership by baptism by connecting Rom 6:4 and Hebrews 10:25.
1. They greatly err by connecting Rom 6:4 and Heb 10:20 as obvious parallels.
2. But to then move to a connection of Rom 6:4 and Heb 10:25 is totally absurd.

E. Some try to calculate the number of the redeemed by comparing Rev 7:9 and Gen 5:27).

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