

Scripture Interpretation, Basic Guidelines for

Can you give me some basic guidelines for interpreting Scripture?

(1) Always let Scripture interpret Scripture. Many things in the Bible can often be understood by looking at a variety of verses. If we consider God to be the ultimate author, then there are no (significant) contradictions in the text, and if something looks like it contradicts something else, it must be reconciled in some way. In all things, **Yeshua the Messiah's words stand as the final revelation.**

(2) Make regular use of Hebrew and Greek lexicons and dictionaries. Remember that there are limitations with English Bible translations. This is true of both Christian and Jewish Bibles. Always be sure to consult the meanings of original language words, which you will find often have a wide array of meanings.

(3) Never forget the historical context of the writing of Scripture. Know what was going on in the world or in the region of a Scriptural event. It is important, for example, to understand about Ancient Egypt to understand the Exodus. Know something about Ancient Assyria, Babylon, and Persia to understand the division and dispersion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms and Judah's return to the Land of Israel. Be especially familiar with Israel at the time of Yeshua and the divisions that existed between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Knowing about Ancient Greece and Rome is imperative to understand what Paul encountered on his missionary journeys and the letters he wrote to specific congregations.

(4) Take into account various idioms or expressions, especially in the Gospel accounts. In many cases, misinterpretations of Scripture have occurred because people have failed to understand a specific expression or saying that has been translated literally into English, and because a knowledge of the times has not been emphasized, people have often misinterpreted it. A modern day example would be like saying "Bob Smith is a cool guy" and in Spanish saying that "Bob Smith es un hombre frío," and Spanish-speakers assuming that his body has a temperature control problem, not that he is a good person. The same can often be said of various expressions in the Gospels. We must know the history behind them.