

RULES OF INTERPRETATION.

By William Miller

IN studying the Bible, I have found the following rules to be of great service to myself, and now give them to the public by special request. Every rule should be well studied, in connection with the scripture references, if the Bible student would be at all benefited by them.

RULE I.

Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible.

PROOF

Matt.v.18.

RULE II.

All scripture is necessary, and may be understood by a diligent application and study.

PROOF

2Tim.iii.15,16,17.

RULE III.

Nothing revealed in the scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering.

PROOF

Deut.xxix.29. Matt.x.26,27. 1Cor.ii.10. Phil.iii.15. Isa.xiv.11. Matt.xxi.22. John xiv.13,14. xv.7. James i.5,6. 1John v.13,14,15.

RULE IV.

To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in an error.

PROOF

Isa.xxviii.7-29. xxxv.8. Prov.xix.27. Luke xxiv.27,44,45. Rom.xvi.26. James v.19. 2Pet.i.19,29.

RULE V.

Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound it to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed or wisdom is my rule, not the Bible.

PROOFS

Ps.xix.7,8,9,10,11. cxix.97,98,99,100,101,102,103,104,105. Matt.xxiii.8,9,10. 1Cor.ii.12,13,14,15,16. Eze.xxxiv.18,19. Luke xi.52. Mal.ii.7,8.

RULE VI.

God has revealed things to come, by visions, in figures and parables, and in this way the same things are often time revealed again and again, by different visions, or in different figures, and parables. If you wish to understand them, you must combine them all in one.

PROOFS

Ps.lxxxix.19. Hos.xii.10. Hab.ii.2. Acts ii.17. 1Cor.x.6. Heb.ix.9,24. Ps.lxxviii.2. Matt.xiii.13,34. Gen.xli.1-32. Dan.ii. vii. and viii. Acts x.9-16.

RULE VII.

Visions are always mentioned as such.

PROOFS
2Cor.xii.1.

RULE VIII.

Figures always have a figurative meaning, and are used much in prophecy, to represent future things, times and events; such as mountains, meaning governments; beasts, meaning kingdoms. Waters, meaning people. Lamp, meaning Word of God. Day, meaning year.

PROOFS

Dan.ii.35,44. vii.8,17. Rev.xvii.1,15. Ps.cxix.105. Ezek.iv.6.

RULE IX.

Parables are used as comparisons to illustrate subjects, and must be explained in the same way as figures by the subject and Bible. Mark iv.13. See explanation of the ten virgins, Miller's Lectures, No.xvi.

RULE X.

Figures sometimes have two or more different significations, as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time.

PROOFS

Ecc.vii.14.

1. Indefinite.
2. Definite, a day for a year.
3. Day for a thousand years.

If you put on the right construction it will harmonize with the Bible and make good sense, otherwise it will not.

PROOFS

Ezek.iv.6. 2Pet.iii.8.

RULE XI.

How to know when a word is used figuratively. If it makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, then it must be understood literally, if not, figuratively.

PROOFS

Rev.xii.1,2. xvii.3-7.

RULE XII.

To learn the true meaning of figures, trace your figurative word through your Bible, and where you find it explained, put it on your figure, and if it makes good sense you need look no further, if not, look again.

RULE XIII.

To know whether we have the true historical event for the fulfilment of a prophecy. If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event. But if one word lacks a fulfilment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future development. For God takes care that history and prophecy doth agree, so that the true believing children of God may never be ashamed.

PROOFS

Ps.xxii.5. Isa.xlv.17,18,19. 1Pet.ii.6. Rev.xvii.17. Acts iii.18.

RULE XIV.

The most important rule of all is, that you must have faith. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires, character, living, occupation, friends, home, comforts, and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of

God's word, it would show our faith to be vain. Nor can we ever believe so long as one of these motives lies lurking in our hearts. We must believe that God will never forfeit his word. And we can have confidence that he that takes notice of the sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, will guard the translation of his own word, and throw a barrier around it, and prevent those who sincerely trust in God, and put implicit confidence in his word, from erring far from the truth, though they may not understand Hebrew or Greek.

These are some of the most important rules which I find the word of God warrants me to adopt and follow, in order for system and regularity. And if I am not greatly deceived, in so doing, I have found the Bible, as a whole, one of the most simple, plain, and intelligible books ever written, containing proof in itself of its divine origin, and full of all knowledge that our hearts could wish to know or enjoy. I have found it a treasure which the world cannot purchase. It gives a calm peace in believing, and a firm hope in the future. It sustains the mind in adversity, and teaches us to be humble in prosperity. It prepares us to love and do good to others, and to realize the value of the soul. It makes us bold and valiant for the truth, and nerves the arm to oppose error. It gives us a powerful weapon to break down Infidelity, and makes known the only antidote for sin. It instructs us how death will be conquered, and how the bonds of the tomb must be broken. It tells us of future events, and shows the preparation necessary to meet them. It gives us an opportunity to hold conversation with the King of kings, and reveals the best code of laws ever enacted.

This is but a faint view of its value; yet how many perishing souls treat it with neglect, or, what is equally as bad, treat it as a hidden mystery which cannot be known. Oh, my dear reader, make it your chief study. Try it well, and you will find it to be all I have said. Yes, like the Queen of Sheba, you will say the half was not told you.

The divinity taught in our schools is always founded on some sectarian creed. It may do to take a blank mind and impress it with this kind, but it will always end in bigotry. A free mind will never be satisfied with the views of others. Were I a teacher of youth in divinity, I would first learn their capacity and mind. If these were good, I would make them study the Bible for themselves, and send them out free to do the world good. But if they had no mind, I would stamp them with another's mind, write bigot on their forehead, and send them out as slaves!

EXPLANATION OF PROPHETIC FIGURES.

ADULTERY. Idolatry. Jer.iii.9. Eze.xxiii.37.

AIR. Spirit of piety - false theories. Eph.ii.2.

ALTAR. Christ. Ps.xliii.4. Heb.xiii.10.

AMON. A people, or son of my people.

ANCIENT OF DAYS. God. Dan.vii.9.

ANGEL. Christ, or messenger of God. Ex 23:20. Rev 1:1, 20:1.

ARK. Christ. Ps.cxxxii.8. Num.x.33.

ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN. Dignity and honor. John vi.62. Isa.xiv.13,14. Rev.xi.12.

ASLEEP. Death. Acts vii.60. 2Pet.iii.4. 1Cor.xv.18.

AWAKE. Resurrection. Job xiv.12. Ps.xvii.15. John xi.11. Dan.xii.2.

BABYLON. Confusion, mixture, worldly.

BALAAM. Their destruction without the prophet.

BALANCE. Justice. Daniel v.27. Worldly mind. Rev.vi.5.

BANNER. Gospel ensign, love. Cant.ii.4.

BEASTS. Kingdoms, or powers. Dan.vii.3,17. Rev.iv.6-8. v.8,9.

BEHELD or BEHOLDING. Joy, or grief, according to the circumstances. Ps.cxix.158. Rev.xi.12.

BED. A place of confinement. Rev.ii.22. Isa.xxviii.20.

BELLY. Practical part. Rom.xvi.18. Job xv.35. Rev.x.9,10. Luke xv.16. John vii.38.

BIND. To judge and condemn. Matt.xiii.30. xxii.13.

BIRD or FOWL. Warriors and conquerors. Isa.xlvi.11. Jer.xii.9. Rev.xviii.2.

BIRTH. Deliverance from heavy judgments. Isa.xxxvii.3-20. lxvi.9.

BLACK. Error, cruelty, death. Jer.iv.28. Rev.vi.5-12.

BLASPHEMY. Idolatry. Isa.lxv.7. Eze.xx.24-27.

BLESS or BLESSED. Saved from sin and from death. Ps.xxviii.9. xxxvii.22. Isa.lxi.9. Rev.xiv.13.

BLIND. Those who are willfully ignorant and prejudiced. Isa.lvi.10-12. xlii.18-20. Matt.xxiii.16. xv.14. 2Cor.iv.4. 1John ii.11.

BLIND. Self-righteousness. Matt.xv.14. xxiii.16 to 26.

BLOOD. Death, war and slaughter. Matt.xxvii.24. Isa.xv.9. xxxiv.3. Rev.vi.10. viii.8. xi.6. xiv.20.

BLOWING OF THE WIND. The Holy Spirit doing its office in regeneration. Cant.iv.16. John iii.8. Rev.vii.1.

BOOK. God's designs, knowledge and counsel. Ps.cxxxix.16. Is.xxxiv.16. Reading, is to make his designs known. To Seal, is to shut up, or make sure.

BOW AND ARROWS. Victory over enemies. Isa.xli.2. Rev.vi.2.

BRASS, is used for impudence and sin, warlike. Isa.xlviii.4. Jer.vi.28. Mic.iv.13.

BRANCH. A descendant, or offspring. Isa.xi.1. Jer.xxiii.5. Dan.xi.7.

BREAD. Doctrine of life. Amos viii.11. Matt.iv.4.

BREAST-PLATE. Defense, or armor. Isa.lix.17. Rev.ix.9.

BREASTS. Consolation, word of God. Isa.lxvi.11.

BRIDLE. The restraining power of God. Isa.xxx.28.

BRIMSTONE. Curse of God. Isa.xxx.33. xi.4.

BURNING WITH FIRE, is to destroy, or change their state completely. Mal.iv.1-3. 2Pet.iii.10,11. Rev.xx.9.

BUY, or BUYING, is used as an act of giving or receiving religious instruction. Isa.lv.1. Rev.iii.18. xiii.17.

CANDLE, is light. Jer.xxv.10. Matt.v.15. Luke xi.36. xv.8.

CANDLESTICKS. The means of light; as the kingdom of Christ, the two witnesses, and seven churches, are called candlesticks. Dan.v.5. Zech.iv.2,11. Rev.ii.5. xi.4.

CARMEL. The vineyard of God. Mich.vii.14.

CHAIN, signifies the laws of God; or man, in prophecy. Ps.cxliv.8. Acts xxviii.20. Jude 6.

CHITTEM. Those that bruise. Dan.xi.30.

CITY OF GOD. New Jerusalem. Heb.xii.22. Rev.iii.12.

CITY OF NATIONS. Antichrist, or Babylon. Rev.xvi.19. xvii.18.

The streets of the great city are the ten kings. Rev.xi.8,13.

CLOUD, or TO RIDE ON A CLOUD, is an emblem of power and great glory. Matt.xxiv.30. Sometimes it means heavy judgments, as in Joel ii.2. Zeph.i.15.

CROWN. Dignity and honor. Prov.xvi.31. Isa.xxviii.1-5. lxii.3.

CRY or CRIED. To be sensible of want. Prayers and petitions for relief; or forerunner of war. 2Kin.iv.40. Ps.xxx.2-8. Rev.xiv.18.

DARKNESS. Ignorance, unbelief, and every evil work, confusion and horror. Prov.iv.19. Isa.lx.2. Eph.v.11.

DAY, is one year - revolution of the earth in its orbit. Num.xiv.34. Eze.iv.5,6. Dan.ix.24.

DAY OF THE LORD. Judgment day, or 1000 years. 1Thes.v.2. 2Pet.iii.8-10. Rev.xx.4-7.

DEATH. Separation from body, from holiness, from God; inactive, separate from former state. This is the proper sense.

DESERT, or WILDERNESS. Paganism, or away from the force of the laws of the Romish Church. Isa.xl.3. Eze.xlvii.8. Rev.xii.6.

DEVIL. Roman government; pagan and papal, when used as a symbol. Rev.ii.10. xii.9. xx.2.

DEW AND RAIN, signify the pouring out of the Spirit and heavenly blessing. Ps.cxxxiii.3. Prov.xix.12. Hos.xiv.5.

DOGS. Wicked men and teachers. Isa.lvi.10. Rev.xxii.15. Phil.iii.2. Ps.lix.6-14.

DRAGON. Rome pagan. Rev.xvii.8. Afterwards papal. Persecuting governments.

DRUNKENNESS. Intoxicated with worldly riches, pleasures and honors. Isa.xxix.9. Matt.xxiv.49. Luke xxi.34.

EAGLE, denotes a people hid, or out of sight. Rev.xii.14. iv.7. Matt.xxiv.28.

EARTH. The Roman kingdom. Rev.xiii.12, and xix.2.

EARTHQUAKE. Revolutions. Hag.ii.21,22. Rev.vi.12. xvi.18.

EAT. To consume or destroy. Rev.xvii.16. Jam.v.3. Rev.xix.18.

ELDERS, TWENTY-FOUR, denote the whole priesthood, taken from twenty-four courses. 1Chron.xxiv.

FIRE, is used to denote destruction, and justice of God. Ps.lxviii.2. Heb.xii.29. Word of God. Jer.v.14.

FLESH. Riches and honors of the world. 2Pet.ii.10-18. 1John ii.15,16. Rev.xix.18.

FLOOD. Great numbers. Isa.lix.19. Dan.ix.26. Rev.xii.15,16.

FOREHEAD. Public profession, or character. Jer.iii.3. Eze.ix.4. Rev.vii.3. xiii.16.

FROGS. The symbolic meaning of frogs (say some) is flatterers or impostors. See Rev.xvi.13.
 GARMENTS, denote the character, as white denotes purity or righteousness; rags, filthy; sackcloth, mourning. Dan.vii.9. Zec.iii.3,4. Rev.xvi.15.
 GOD, when used as a symbol, denotes a prince, ruler, or magistrate. 1Cor.viii.5. Gal.iv.8.
 GRAVE. To hide in secret; put out of memory. Job xiv.13.
 GRASS, means people, as green the righteous, dry or stubble the wicked. Isa.xl.6,7,8. 1Pet.i.24. Rev.viii.7. ix.4.
 HAIL, denotes wars, slaughter and desolation, by some Northern government. Isa.xxviii.2,17. xxx.30,32. Rev.viii.7.
 HAND. Symbol of action and labor. Isa.x.13. xlvi.13. Rev.xx.1. Dan.viii.25.
 HARLOT. An idolatrous community, or church. Isa.i.21. Jer.iii.1-8. Rev.xvii.5.
 HARVEST. The gathering of men to their final destiny. Matt.xiii.39. Jer.li.33. Joel iii.13.
 HEAD. The supreme power of the object. Dan.ii.38. Eph.i.22. Rev.xix.12.
 HEAT. Anger, calamity. Deut.xxix.24. Ezek.iii.14. Rev.xvi.9.
 HEAVEN. Government of God with his people. Deut.xi.21. Isa.xlix.13. Matt.xvi.19. xxv.1,14. Dan.vii.18,22.
 HILL. Kingdoms. Isa.ii.2. v.25. Mic.vi.1,2.
 HORN. Kings. Dan.vii.24. viii.20,21. Rev.xvii.12,16.
 HORSE. War and conquest. Prov.xxi.31. Jer.viii.6.
 White, victory. Rev.vi.2. xix.11.
 Black, distress and calamity. Rev.vi.5.
 Red, war and hostility. Rev.vi.4.
 Pale, death and destruction. Rev.vi.8.
 IRON. Strength. Dan.ii.33-41. Rev.ii.27.
 ISRAEL. Christian church. Isa.xlv.4-25. Gal.vi.16.
 ISLANDS. Small governments in Roman states. Ezek.xxvi.15,16. Zeph.ii.11. Rev.x.20. vi.14.
 JERUSALEM. The church of God. Isa.lii.9. Gal.iv.26.
 JEZEBEL. Antichrist. 1Kin.xviii.19. Rev.ii.20.
 KILLING. Depriving of power. Ps.xliv.22. Rom.viii.36. Rev.vi.4. xi.7.
 KING. Forms of government or power. Dan.viii.23. Rev.ix.11. xvii.10.
 LAMB. Messiah. Isa.xvi.1. John i.29. Rev.v.12.

LAMP. Word of God or Mahometan Bible.

Ps 119:105. Rev 8:10. Hit #21,115 from APL CD

LEOPARD. A cruel, fierce, and quick conqueror. Hos.xiii.7. Hab.i.8. Rev.xiii.2.
 LION. Valiant, strong, courageous. Prov.xxviii. i. xxx.30. Rev.x.3. xiii.2.
 LOCUSTS. Great armies. Isa.xxxiii.4. Nah.iii.15,17. Rev.ix.3-7.
 MARK. To profess allegiance. The Roman soldiers had marked foreheads and hands. Ezek.ix.4. Rev.xiii.16,17. xiv.9,11.
 MEASURE. Completed, finished. Ps.xxxix.4. Jer.li.13. Matt.xxiii.32. Rev.xi.1.
 MERCHANTS. Professed ministers of Christ. Isa.xxiii.8,18. Jer.xiv.18. Rev.xviii.11,12,23.
 MOON. Gospel. Isa.xxx.26. Rev.xii.1. Or church. Cant.vi.10.
 MOUNTAIN. Governments. Isa.ii.2. Dan.ii.35.
 MOUNTAIN, HOLY. The gospel kingdom. Isa.xi.9. The seat of Antichrist. Ezek.xxviii.14. Dan.xi.45.
 MORNING. Resurrection of the just. Ps.xlix.14.
 MOUTH. Commands, or laws. Dan.vii.8. Rev.xiii.5. xvi.13. 1Thes.ii.8.
 NAKED. Shame and disgrace. Mic.i.8,11. Rev.iii.18. xvi.15. xvii.16.
 NIGHT. Moral darkness or wickedness. Isa.xxi.8. Rom.xiii.12. 1Thes.v.5. Rev.xxi.25.
 NUMBER or NUMBERED. Finished - end. Ps.xc.12. Dan.v.26. Ezek.iv.4-6. Rev.xiii.17,18.
 OIL. Faith. Matt.xxv.8. Cant.i.3. Heb.iv.2.
 OX, denotes a people for slaughter. Prov.vii.22. Jer.xi.19. Num.xxiii.1.
 RAIN. Reformation, grace, refreshing. Deut.xxxii.2. Hos.vi.3. Jam.v.7.
 RED. Persecuting, bloody. Rev.vi.4. xii.3.
 RIVERS. People living on the rivers, mentioned Isa.viii.7. Rev.viii.10. xvi.4.
 ROD OF IRON. Power of Christ. Ps.ii.9. Isa.xi.1. Rev.ii.27.

SCARLET. Bloody, cruel. Rev.xvii.3,4.
 SEA. A large body of people. Isa.lvii.20. Dan.vii.3. Rev.vii.2,3.
 SHIELD AND BUCKLER. Ps.xci.4.
 STARS. Ministers in the church, or rulers in the world. Rev.xii.1. Dan.viii.10. xii.3. Jude 13.
 SUN. As in the natural, so in the moral world, source of all light, Christ or his word. Gen.xxxvii.9.
 Ps.lxxxiv.11. Mal.iv.2.
 SWORD. Slaughter. Jer.xv.3. Ezek.xxi.28.
 SWORD, TWO-EDGED. Word of God. Ps.cxliv.6. Heb.iv.12. Rev.i.16. ii.12.
 TAIL. Subordinate officers or provinces. Isa.ix.14,15. Rev.xii.4.
 TEETH, LARGE IRON. Strong devouring enemy. Dan.vii.7,19. Rev.ix.8.
 TEMPLE. The church professedly of Christ or Antichrist. Mal.iii.1. 2Cor.vi.16. Rev.vii.15.
 THUNDER. Sudden dispersion of armies or kingdoms. 1Sam.ii.10. Isa.xxix.5,6. Ps.xviii.13.
 TREE OF LIFE. Jesus Christ. Rev.ii.7. xxii.2.
 VINE. A class of people, as wicked or righteous. Hos.x.1. Rev.xiv.18.
 VOICES. Many people engaged in the same cry to be eased of burdens, or rejoicing. Luke xxiii.23.
 Rev.viii.5. xi.15,19.
 WALK WITH GOD, is to live with and be in communion with him. 2Cor.vi.16. Rev.iii.4.
 WATERS. Flesh, or people. Num.xxiv.7. Isa.xlviii.1. viii.7. John v.8. Rev.xvii.15.
 WHIRLWIND. Heavy judgments of God. Ps.lviii.9. Prov.i.27. Isa.lxvi.15.
 WILDERNESS. Outlawed from the great city. Deut.xxxii.10. Jer.xii.10. Rev.xii.6.
 WIND. Doctrine, good and bad. Cant.iv.16. Isa.xxvi.18. Eph.iv.14.
 WINE, is consolation, and anger, and justice. Cant.v.1. Isa.lv.1. Rev.xvi.19. xvii.2.
 WINGS. Protection, defense. Ex.xix.4. Ps.xvii.8. xxxvi.7. Rev.ix.9. xii.14.
 WITNESS. Christ, prophets and apostles. Isa.xliii.10. Acts i.8,22. Rev.i.5. iii.14. xx.4.
 WITNESSES, TWO. Two testaments, scriptures, figured
 by the two cherubims. Rev.xi.3,4. Zach.iv.3-6. John v.39. 1John v.9. Ex.xxxi.18.
 WOMAN. The true church and anti-christian church. Isa.liv.6. Jer.vi.2. Rev.xii.1. xvii.3,7.
 WOOD. People. Jer.v.14.
 WORDS OF GOD. Fire. Jer.v.14.
 WRATH, DAY OF. Judgment day. Job xxi.30. Ps.cx.5. Zeph.i.15. Rom.ii.5. Rev.vi.17.