

LAW OF HARMONY AND CONTEXT

The expression, "You can prove anything by the Bible," gains some validity when the Laws of Harmony and Context are not observed. These laws apply, not only to study of the Bible, but to any written or oral testimony. Carefully observing these laws enables one to draw out the true message.

Since we believe the Bible was written by men who were inspired by God, then God is actually the author, and the Bible is the product of one mind: God's. This being true, there will be no contradictions. If the Laws of Context and Harmony are followed, all apparent contradictions will be reconciled.

Some basic guidelines : (1) Approach the Bible as a divinely inspired book. (2) Aim to discover the original meaning. (3) Avoid reading something into a passage. (4) Note the literary form of a passage in determining its meaning. (5) Give preference to the interpretation which is clearest, simplest, and the most obvious.

THE LAW OF CONTEXT

WHO IS SPEAKING

Gen.2:17—God is speaking
Gen.3:4, Job 2:4—Satan is speaking
Joh.8:48—Jews are speaking
2Co.10:10—False teachers are speaking
Acts 19:35-36—The town-clerk is speaking

TO WHOM IT IS SPOKEN

Gen.12: 1—to Abraham
Exo.20:8—to Israelites (cf. Deu.5:1,2,15)
Acts 8:22—to Simon, who was a convert

THE SUBJECT MATTER

DESTRUCTION

Mat.24:1-3—destruction of the temple and Judaism
2Pe.3:10-13—destruction of the world

WORKS

Gal.2:16—works of the Law
Rom.4:4—works of merit
Jam.2:24—works of faith

TIME AND PLACE

Mat.6:9-13—"thy kingdom come" was spoken before kingdom established
Col.1:13—written after the kingdom (rule) of Christ established
Jesus worshiped in the synagogues, according to the Law as a Jew, before the Law was nailed to His cross. (Gal.4:4-5, Col.2:14ff)

The Law of Context prevents "verse-plucking."

That is, taking a verse or phrase out of its setting, divorcing it from the context and applying it to another subject, group of people, or another situation.

THE LAW OF HARMONY

The Law of Context must be kept in mind.

Difficult passages are to be understood in the light of clear passages.

One passage cannot be interpreted in a way which clearly contradicts another.
Rom.4:4-6 — cannot be understood so as to contradict Jam.2:21-24

General words (which have several meanings) must be defined by the context.

“End”, “last days”, “brethren,” “apostles” must be understood only as they are used in a particular text.

END

Luk.1:33 — “no end” — no limit

John.13:1 — “He loved them to the end” – the limit of His earthy stay

1Cor.15:24 — “then comes the end” the end of the Gospel age

LAST DAYS

Act.2:17 — “last days” refers to what was transpiring at that time

2Ti.3:1 — “last days” – final days, last dispensation (gospel dispensation)

Heb.2:1 — “last days” – the gospel dispensation

BRETHREN *adelphos* (1) a brother, (2) having the same national ancestor, (3) belonging to the same people, or countryman, any fellow or man, 4) a fellow believer, united to another by the bond of affection, (5) brethren in Christ, (6) apostles, (7) Christians, as those who are exalted to the same heavenly place.

Rom.1:13 — Christian brethren

Rom.9:3 — Jewish brethren

APOSTLE(S) *apostolos* a delegate; specifically an ambassador of the Gospel; messenger, he that is sent.

Luk.6:13 — Those chosen and sent out by Jesus

Act.1:24-26 — The one chosen to replace Judas

Gal.1:1 — The one chosen and sent out by the Lord

Act.14:14, 13:1-3 — Those chosen and sent out by Holy Spirit

2Co.8:13 — The messengers [*same Greek word*] sent out by the church

Phi.2:25 — The messenger [*same Greek word*] sent by the church at Philippi

Heb.3:1 — The one sent from God: Jesus

The meaning of a general word in one passage must not be given the same meaning in all passages.

JUDGMENT

Hos.5:1, Eze.36:19 — God’s punishment of Israel

Isa.34:5, Eze.25:12-14 — God’s judgment of nations

Heb.9:27 — The final judgment of all men

Joh.7:24 — Righteous judgment

Rom.14:10 — Unjust condemnation

Note on **kingdom**: *basileia* (Thayer Definition) royal power, kingship, dominion, rule.

–not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom

–of the royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah

–of the royal power and dignity conferred on Christians in the Messiah’s kingdom a kingdom, the territory subject to the rule of a king

–used in the N.T. to refer to the reign of the Messiah

(Mat 6:33, Mar 1:14, 15; Luk 4:43) = “kingdom of Christ”

(Mat 13:41; 20:21) = “kingdom of Christ and of God”

(Eph. 5:5) = “kingdom of David”

(Mar 11:10) = “the kingdom”

(Mat. 8:12; 13:19) = “kingdom of heaven”

(Mat 3:2; 4:17; 13:41), all denote the same thing under different aspects, viz.:

(1) Christ’s mediatorial authority, or his rule on the earth;

(2) the blessings and advantages of all kinds that flow from this rule;

(3) the subjects of this kingdom taken collectively, or the Church.

–Excerpt from Easton’s Bible Dictionary