

Interpreting the Bible

I. The Word of God

- a. The Living Word—Jesus
- b. The Written Word—The Bible
- c. The Word Proclaimed—Preaching

II. The Bible as “The Word of God”

- a. Authority comes from its unique witness to the revelation of God
- b. The devil can quote scripture to serve his purposes (see the temptations of Christ)
- c. Is the Bible the Word of God, or does it contain the Word of God?
 - i. Q. 3 of the Westminster Larger Catechism: What is the Word of God? The holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments **are the Word of God**, the only rule of faith and obedience.
 - ii. Q. 2 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? The Word of God which is **contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments** is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

III. Rules of Interpretation

- a. Scripture is interpreted in light of its own purpose—who God is and how we live faithfully in response to God. Not a science or history textbook
- b. Scripture interprets itself. “The Bible says ...” Is that all the Bible says?
- c. The Christological Principle. Scripture is to be interpreted through the lens of Jesus Christ.
- d. The Rule of Faith.
 - i. We are not the first people to think about all this—we must look to the interpretations of Scripture throughout the history of the church.
 - ii. The Spirit helps us in our weakness. (Prayer for Illumination)
- e. The Rule of Love. The fundamental expression of God’s will is love of God and love of neighbor.
- f. The study of Scripture in its literary and historical context. From the Confession of 1967:

The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to God’s work of reconciliation in Christ. The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken his word in diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that he will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture.