

Lesson Twelve: Rules of Interpretation IV

The Meaning of Words and Statements

14. **Know the meaning of words and sentences.** If one wants to know the exact meaning of God's word, he certainly must know the exact meanings of the words He chose.

Rules to Determine the Meaning of Words

1. Seek the original meaning of a word. Modern usage of it is meaningless. One must see the words strictly from the viewpoint of the writers.
2. Each word in a given instance has but one meaning.
3. The definition of the writer is always the best.
4. Of a word with many meanings, determine which meaning the author intended.
 - a. Use that shade of meaning in use at the time of the writing.
 - b. Look at the context where the word is found.
 - c. Observe closely the purpose of the writer or the general scope of the writing.
 - d. Use comparison by consulting similar or parallel passages where the same word occurs, especially passages in the same book.
5. Recognize some words as having a specific Biblical meaning ("Good news," conversion, saint, church, deacon, elders, apostle, fellowship, repent, faith, etc.).

The Meaning of Sentences

A sentence is words in a definite arrangement so that they compose a unit of thought. Two steps are necessary to determine the meaning of sentences:

1. Observe all the simple rules of grammar and rhetoric.
2. Use all the rules of comparison as advocated in the case of individual words.

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Why is modern usage of a word "useless" when it comes to understanding its Biblical use? Cite examples.
2. If a word has many meanings, how can one determine which meaning the author had in mind?
3. What are the non-Biblical meanings of the following words?
 - a. Church.
 - b. Fellowship.
 - c. Elder.
 - d. Saint.
4. Why is a knowledge of grammar and rhetoric important to an understanding of Scripture? Cite a specific example.
5. Is it important to have an understanding of the languages, and their rules of grammar, in which the Bible was originally written?