

GENERAL PRINCIPLES (PART III)

THE CONTEXT (continued):

Two things should be kept in mind when considering the context of the entire Bible.

1. An obscure or ambiguous should never be interpreted in such a way as to make it contradict a plain one. The words, "baptized for the dead" should not be interpreted to mean we can be baptized for dead people in order to obtain salvation for them. It would be a plain contradiction of Hebrews 9:27 and all the other verses on baptism. It would also establish a new doctrine. Never build a doctrine on an isolated or obscure passage of Scripture.
2. A complicated or clever interpretation should not be given preference over a simple and more natural explanation. A good example of this is found in Matthew 16:28, "I tell you the truth, some who are stand here will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." Since all who heard those words died, it is obvious that Jesus could not be referring to the coming millennial kingdom. If one continues reading to Matthew 17:1-13, Jesus was referring to His transfiguration, where the disciples got a glimpse of His glory only six days after the words were spoken.

Is context always important in interpreting Scripture. Yes, although there are some sayings in the book of Proverbs which have no immediate context. However there may be parallel proverbs. Sometimes in the gospels there is no apparent context, but a close look reveals connections which might not be noticeable at first. If there are passages where the context can't be clearly seen, remember two things: Do not automatically assume there is no connection to the overall passage. Further study may reveal it. The other important thing is not to try to produce a connection that is not there. Never read meaning into a context. Even though there may be exceptions, always seek to interpret a scripture in the light of its context.