

Fixed Principles

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The word Interpret, in its most usual sense signifies, to explain the meaning of words to one who does not understand them. It may be accomplished either by expressing the sense of those words by others that are better understood in the same language, or by translating them into a different language.

Interpretation properly means the act of interpreting. Both imply an understanding of what is to be explained. The theory or science of Interpretation is, properly speaking, the theory or science of language, considered as a medium for the communication of ideas. It embraces the principles and rules, according to which, language is constructed; and by which it is to be understood and explained.

Were there no fixed principles of language, there could be no certain rules of Interpretation. Were these principles incapable of being accurately determined, the rules of Interpretation would be equally incapable of development.

But language has of necessity fixed principles of construction, that are capable of being perfectly ascertained; and these, and these only constitute the basis of an intelligent and intelligible use of it. By these only is it rendered significant of ideas, and by these only, can it be understood or explained.

(The Elements of Biblical Interpretation... by Leicester A. Sawyer, New Haven: Published by A. H. Maltby, 1836, e-book, 24-25)