

Intro to Prophecy I

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] Father, we're grateful for the day that you've given us and for the opportunity to be here. Even more than that, we're grateful for a desire to be here because we want to look to you for things that you've been pleased to reveal so that we might understand them and add stability and assurance to our lives.

We thank you for making that provision for us. Thank you for the physical provision of the food that we'll be enjoying shortly, for the camaraderie and fellowship that we enjoy in Christ. Thanks for that as well.

We commit this time to you with thanksgiving in his name. Amen. Well, today we're going to continue our subject of biblical prophecy.

And in our previous session, we just kind of scratched the surface in dealing with the wherewithal of biblical prophecy and why we are studying it and so on.

And today we want to focus primarily upon the principles for interpreting prophecy, because interpretation is everything. You have heard it said, perhaps, that you can prove anything by the Bible.

[1 : 0 8] It all depends on how you interpret it. That's true. And it is also true that there are many different schools of interpretation, most of which are contradictory one to another.

So, why should we have any confidence that the school we are going to be presenting is the right one and the others are wrong ones? Well, that's a conclusion that you will have to reach.

I have come to a settled conclusion in my own mind and heart, but that isn't good enough for you. It shouldn't be good enough for you. You'll have to weigh and consider the evidence and see if you think it has merit.

And you ought not to believe it because I do, but you ought to believe it because you've examined the evidence, the rationale for it, and you've concluded that it is valid. And that's the important thing.

We won't be looking at a great deal of Scripture today. That will come later. We'll probably be dealing with a couple of references. But in the main, we want to get these principles out of the way and under our belts so that we'll be on the same page as we move on through the subject of biblical prophecy.

[2 : 1 9] So, I'm going to be just making some comments informally as we go through the material. So, please feel free to interrupt me at any point in time if I make a statement or something that you don't understand, you want clarification.

If it's something that you would like to discuss further, feel free to just raise your hand. I'll stop right there and we'll discuss it. That may be the most important thing of the morning as opposed to what I say.

So, we want any concerns or issues that you have to be addressed as well. And please don't be backward about bringing them up.

I want this to be very friendly, relaxed, informal, and more of a discussion if possible rather than just pure lecture. We looked at one of the references in our last session, and it was in Revelation 19.10, where the writer said that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

And literally, that simply means that the person and work of Jesus Christ, who he is, why he came, what he did, why it matters, that is the essence of prophecy.

[3 : 39] Jesus Christ is the central core person of all of Revelation of Scripture, including that which is prophesied. Temple Hay has described biblical prophecy as history written in advance.

That's a pretty good way of putting it. Biblical prophecy is history written in advance. And when you stop to think about that, the only logical explanation for the giving and fulfilling of prophecy is that the revealer of the prophecy possesses supernatural knowledge and power.

When we're talking about biblical prophecy, there are two areas specifically that I'd like you to just think about and categorize for a moment. And one is determinative prophecy.

The other is predictive prophecy. Now, the predictive prophecy sounds almost like an overkill, but what I mean by predictive prophecy is that there are portions of Scripture that are prophetic, that are revealed to us, that regards things that are going to pass, not necessarily because God is going to intervene and make certain that they do come to pass, but simply that he knows that they will come to pass and they are revealed.

In other words, there are a number of evil things that are going to transpire in the latter days. This doesn't mean that God caused them. It means that God revealed them. And that God says, this is what's going to happen.

[5 : 35] So, these are simply predictive prophecies where the prophecy is given just as an item of information, and God is revealing it because he knows that when this scenario develops, this is what's going to take place.

These are the key figures. These are the key places geographically. This is what's going to happen. And it isn't so much because God is going to make it happen. It's just because he knows the course that history is going to take, and he knows the choices that man will make when he is confronted with them, and that this is what man is going to do.

Therefore, this is what's going to occur. That's the predictive prophecy. And then there are those determinative prophecies where God is saying, this is what's going to take place.

I know this is what's going to take place because I'm going to see to it that it happens. I am going to directly intervene, and I am going to bring this thing about so that this I, Zechariah, we are told in chapter 12, I will gather all nations together unto battle in Jerusalem.

So, it is predictive in that it's going to happen, but it's determinative in that God determines that it is going to happen. Determinative prophecy is also predictive, but predictive is not necessarily determinative.

[7 : 03] Any questions about that, or is it clear? See what I'm saying? Doesn't he just allow the bad things? That's what I always thought. That he just, he didn't do it, he just allowed it.

That is, that is an area, Harley, you're right. That is an area that we regard as the permissive will of God as opposed to the directive will of God. The permissive will of God is that he knows full well certain things are going to transpire.

They are not according to his will. They are evil. But he permits them. Question is, why? Why does he permit them? And the only answer we can give is, because even in the permission of evil things, God is able to orchestrate that and bring it to ultimate good.

Probably a crowning illustration of that is in those famous words that Joseph uttered to his brothers when they discovered who he was. And he said, remember, when you sold me into slavery and you betrayed me as your brother, you meant it to me for evil.

But God meant it to me for good. Did God cause the brothers to do that? No. Absolutely not. They are responsible for what they did. They were culpable and guilty of that.

[8 : 32] But God was able to orchestrate and bring those things to pass that turned out for the ultimate good, not only of Joseph, but for the nation of Egypt and for the Israelites as well.

No thanks to the brothers who sinned when they did what they did to Joseph, but God is able to make all things come to pass in accordance with his own good will.

So that's the permissive will of God. And we have difficulty with that. But if you do not understand that and you do not accept that, then about the only thing that is left to you is determinism or fate or life is just a crapshoot.

And nobody is in charge. So we feel that we've got ample biblical evidence to demonstrate that God is able to make even the wrath of man to praise him.

God is able to turn ashes into beauty. God is able to bring something good out of chaos and something that is very, very painful.

[9 : 45] But he does it in his timetable, not ours. And that's the thing that really rubs us. And not only that, but when he doesn't let us in on what he's doing, and it seems like he has forgotten about our corner of the world, that's frustrating and that's difficult.

So what does God want us to do? Same thing I've been preaching for a long time. He just wants us to believe him, to trust him, to relax in him, to rest in him, that he knows what he's doing.

That's the permissive will of God. The determinative will of God or the direct will of God is when he actually directly intervenes and brings to pass certain things. And he does that.

He does that in many ways that we can't appreciate. God is active and working and orchestrating and bringing to pass all things according to the counsel of his own good will.

But most of the time we cannot see how that tapestry is being woven, how it is being put together.

[10 : 53] All we know is when we go through certain areas that are painful to us, we have real difficulty with them. And God wants us to recognize that I know it's difficult.

I know it's heartbreaking. I know that it's something that is very heavy on your heart. But I want you to trust me in this and I know what I'm doing and I'm going to bring it for your ultimate good.

Your ultimate good may not be realized to glory. Do we have choices? Absolutely we have choices. We not only have choices, but we have a responsibility for the choices that we make.

We are accountable. And you see, the reason this has all come about, and I feel very strongly about this, is because God created us with a volition, with a will, with a capacity.

And the reason he did, I am convinced, is because only a voluntary obedience is worth anything. An involuntary obedience is nothing.

[12 : 06] That's puppetry. That's robotics. If we do not have the ability to obey or disobey, then there is no basis for accountability.

Then our obedience, such as it is, is worthless. Obedience is the same way as love.

Only a love that is voluntary is worth anything. If somebody loves you because they have to, you don't get much comfort out of that.

But you want to be loved because they choose to love you. And it is no different with God. So, any other areas, questions about that before we move on?

Do you think we're the only creatures that have that? I'm sorry? Do you think we're the only creatures that have that? Are we the only creatures that have that? I think that we are the only ones who have the capacity for exercising a volition or a will.

[13:10] And that is part and parcel of our being made in the image and likeness of God. We are imbued not only with that capability, but with that responsibility. And with that blessing as well.

Someone else? Now, I know we can assign certain levels of intelligence to animals, those of you who are pet lovers. But I see that, frankly, on a different plane.

I think that animals are gifted by God with an incredible instinctive capacity. But that is not volitional. And they do not have responsibility or culpability in the same way that we human beings do.

They do not experience guilt in the same way that we do. Because animals do not have a capacity for morality. They do have a capacity for obeying or disobeying. You all know that.

But they do not have morality that is connected with it. In other words, you will never see a lion out in the African Serengeti.

[14:14] Sitting down after a big meal and stuffing himself on a zebra that he killed. You will never see him sitting there and thinking to himself, I really shouldn't have killed that poor zebra.

That poor thing was no match for me. And I brought it down and I just ate it up and chomped on that thing and called all the relatives in to feed on that zebra.

And I really feel rotten about having done that. You know, animals don't have that ability. But man does. Frank. It's like a funny line from the 60s or 70s.

God made the devil, the devil made me do it. Yeah. Flip Wilson. Yeah. The devil made me do it. The devil made me do it. We can use that as a cop-out. One of my professors in college said that Christians can commit sins and lay the blame at the devil's doorstep that would make him blush.

And I think that we are capable of that. Anything else on that particular area? It is related to biblical prophecy, even though it's not directly related.

[15:19] All right. I want you to consider this point. The greatest validation of biblical prophecy is realized in prophecies having already been fulfilled.

A track record is thus established and confidence is increased that yet unfulfilled prophecies will be fulfilled. Are you aware that there are approximately 50 prophecies that were fulfilled regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ?

Most of them within a 72-hour period fulfilled in detail. Prophecies having been given hundreds of years in advance of their fulfillment.

The mathematical odds of these things being coincidental and just happening that way represents a number that is so astronomical that you cannot pronounce it.

If you do the math and figure the mathematical probabilities. So the greatest validation that biblical prophecy, which has not yet been fulfilled, will be fulfilled, are those prophecies that have already been fulfilled and are now historical.

[16:37] So today's consideration is going to relate to interpretation. Great diversity of opinion exists between Christians in approaching prophecy and none more than how we are to interpret prophecy.

You can read a passage of scripture and easily understand what it says. And there is seldom any argument about that.

If you can read the English language and you're reading an acceptable English translation, there will be vast agreement across the board about what it says.

The problem is, what does it mean? What does it mean by what it says? And there are two principal schools of thought.

There is, first of all, the literal. And this has a number of synonyms that I wish you would keep in mind.

[17 : 45] Because when you use the term literal, and when you talk about the literal interpretation of the Bible, many times Christians are accused of going to extremes with this.

And I have heard this over the years. I do not know how many times. It always irritates me every time I hear it. Because there is no truth in it. And there is no validity in it at all. But it so often comes up.

You even hear those on television and commentators and different programs talk about, oh, these right-wing Christians are people who take everything in the Bible literally.

I have never met anybody who takes everything in the Bible literally. That's nonsense. The Bible is filled with non-literal language that should be interpreted in a non-literal way.

So, I use the expression, we do not take everything in the Bible literally. We approach the Bible from a literal standpoint.

[18 : 57] Recognizing that there are numerous figures of speech that were never intended to be taken literally. Yet, they add flavor and color and, what shall I say?

They add a dimension to the language that the literal does not express. And one of my favorite sayings of this is found in Isaiah where Isaiah is describing the omniscience of God.

And he says, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro on the earth. Well, it's nonsense to take that literally. What are you thinking? A couple of big eyeballs out rolling around the globe?

But what he is conveying is a beautiful expression and a way of saying, God sees everything. Everything is open and naked before him with whom we have to do.

Nothing escapes him. It is as though God has eyes that are running around the whole earth. And nothing escapes him. It's a beautiful expression of figurative language.

[20 : 06] And it carries a punch to it that isn't realized when you just say, God sees everything. So, that's a poetic expression. And we'll be looking at some of those a little later on.

So, when we use the word literal, I want you to think of these as synonyms. When you approach the Bible literally, including prophecy, it is the literal interpretation or the normal interpretation or the ordinary interpretation, the customary interpretation, that which is common.

I've often said, you ought to read the Bible just like you read the daily newspaper. Now, we realize that the origin of the newspaper is one thing.

The origin of the Bible is something else. Because God is the author of the scriptures. But when I say you ought to read the Bible just like you read the newspaper, I mean you approach it from the same standpoint.

When you read on the front page about a terrific automobile accident that happened at the corner of Fountain and Main in downtown Springfield, Ohio. And that there were three people injured and one was fatally injured.

[21 : 24] You don't read that article and say, hmm, I wonder what that really means. Well, it really means what it really says. When you take it at face value, that's the way you are to take the Bible.

That's the way you are to approach the scriptures. And more often than not, when it is not to be taken literally, the context will make that very clear. And there's usually no disputing it.

Then there is the literal or common customary normal approach versus the spiritual or the allegorical.

And the allegorical approach to scripture or the non-literal approach to scripture simply suggests that we see what the words say. But what they mean is a lot more than what they say.

For instance, and one of the classic examples of this, of an allegorist, and by the way, probably the most outstanding allegory in all of literature is John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

[22 : 34] A tremendous, tremendous piece of literature. Probably the second best seller in all of the world, only to the Bible itself. If you've never read Pilgrim's Progress, it is amazing.

You ought to read it. It is an allegory. And it's a beautiful allegory. It is an example of poetry in its finest form. And to give you just an example by what I mean by an allegory, Pilgrim starts out.

And what is his problem? What is his dilemma he has? It's this burden on his back that he's carrying. And he's trying to find a way to get rid of this burden.

It is weighing him down. And it is so heavy. And it is so depressing. And he goes to all of these different lengths and avenues and confronts all of these different characters about how is he going to get rid of this burden that he is carrying.

He needs to be free of this thing. And the allegory is, it isn't an actual burden that he's got. It isn't a physical burden. The man is laden down with sin.

[23 : 43] He's looking for a release. He's looking for some way, someone who can roll this burden off of him so that he can be free of it. And we know that he finally finds that at the cross of Jesus Christ.

And he is released from his burden. So, the literal expression is, he's got a burden. Just figure this big heavy pack that he's carrying around.

That would be a literal interpretation of it. But that isn't what it means. What does it mean? What is it getting at? It's getting at something that is beyond the obvious.

It is this burden of sin. That's an allegorical approach. And there's nothing wrong with that because there is allegory in the Bible.

And we'll look at some later. And there are lots of figurative expressions in the Bible. Thousands of them. Thousands of figurative expressions in the Bible that are not to be taken literally. But let me say this.

[24 : 45] Even a figurative expression is based upon the literal for its understanding. Otherwise, you can't even understand that.

If we were to say someone was beaten severely and they are black and blue or beaten black and blue or we talk about reigning cats and dogs.

You have no idea what that means, reigning cats and dogs, if you don't know what a dog is. And you don't know what a cat is. Literally. Then you can't appreciate the figurative expression.

So even figurative expressions are based upon the literal. And we'll see how that plays out in prophecy as well. Many years ago, one of the famous allegorists, his name was Arjun, one of the church fathers.

He was 4th century, back around the time of St. Augustine. Was probably the most flagrant allegorizer of scripture that there ever was. And he did a lot of damage, really.

[25 : 47] A lot of theological damage. But he had quite a following. And to give you an example of what I'm talking about with allegory. He interprets the four rivers that are flowing out of the Garden of Eden.

The Tigris, the Euphrates, the Pishon, the Gihon rivers. And Genesis says, and these are the four rivers that flowed out of Eden.

And if you take that literally, these are four rivers. That means they are elongated beds of water.

Maybe of differing depths and of differing widths. But they are rivers of H₂O that's on the move from this place to this place.

And Arjun looks at those four rivers and says, yes, but. What is the real meaning of those four rivers?

[26 : 59] The real meaning is, these four rivers are not four rivers at all. They are four virtues. Love, joy, peace, and goodness.

That's what those rivers and that verse actually means. That's the real meaning. And you scratch your head and look at that and say, how did he get that?

I'll tell you how he got that. He got that from an overactive imagination. And if they represent four virtues, why those four virtues?

Why not some other virtues? Who says they are those virtues? And yet, and this troubles me because there are Christians who look at something like that and look at an interpretation like that and they say, wow.

Wow, boy, how did he get that? That is some Bible student. Man, that is deep. Well, my response is, it's deep, okay.

[28 : 13] Deep what? You see, when you depart from a straightforward meaning of the text, you venture into an area of individual imagination where there is no check and no balance on what the individual can come up with.

And people can be pretty creative sometimes. We are talking about the importance of understanding the meaning. And the reason this is so important.

The reason this is so important is once you determine the meaning of a text, that's what provides you with a mandate for, first of all, what you are supposed to believe about what that text says.

And secondly, does it require some kind of action on your part? So your interpretation will be involved in establishing your motivation and your agenda.

Not only what you are going to believe, but what you are going to do about it. If you believe, as some do, regarding some prophecies that we'll be looking at later, why are you not busily engaged in storing a huge amount of water, foodstuffs, supplies, putting them away in a cache someplace where you will be able to utilize them because you are going to need them?

[29 : 52] And one of the interpretations of the prophecies that we're going to be looking at creates that scenario. And doing that is the only responsible thing you can do.

If you go with that particular interpretation. Interpretation means everything. Because it establishes your game plan. It also provides you with any peace or comfort or stability that is to be derived from it.

It can provide you with incredible peace of mind. Relaxation. Contentment. Not necessarily, what shall I say?

Complacency, but contentment. Complacent is a negative thing. Contentment is a positive thing. All Christians ought to be content. Well, let us go on.

Any other questions about the allegorical or the spiritual approach? Remember, the allegorical or the spiritual interpretation looks beyond what is literally stated and attempts to extract from behind the surface a meaning that is not there on the surface.

[31 : 15] And I'm reminded of the story about two psychiatrists who were at this conference and they were out, both of them were out taking an early morning walk before breakfast.

And as they passed each other, one said to the other, Good morning. And the other one said, Good morning. He walked on by and then he said to himself, I wonder what he meant by that.

Well, what he meant by it was, Good morning! No, no, that's not what he meant. What did he really mean?

That's insisting on the allegory. That's insisting on take nothing at face value. Everything has a hidden meaning. You just have to have the skill, if you can call it skill, you have to have the skill in ferreting out what the real meaning actually is.

Now, you know, there is an interesting aspect to this, and it is this. The greatest, the greatest single distinction that is to be made regarding the interpretation of prophecy throughout all the Bible, Old and New Testament, the greatest distinction that is to be made has to do with the nation of Israel.

[32 : 45] And you've heard me talk about Israel so many times. It is so key. So key. It goes all the way back to Genesis 12, and it colors everything from Genesis 12 on through Revelation.

Israel is the key nation. of the whole scriptures, and of the whole plan and program of God. Israel is the key nation. Jesus Christ is the key individual, or the key person.

And if you understand that, you've come a long way just in having something to work with in biblical prophecy. Because here is where the distinction comes in among evangelicals.

And I'm talking about people, all of whom are born again, love the Lord, going to be in heaven when they die, and all the rest. They are true believers. But they see this issue radically different.

Because their approach to the interpretation of Scripture is this. They interpret all the rest of the Bible, just like we do.

[33 : 53] Take it at face value. Very literal interpretation. Just like we do. All the doctrines, doctrine of salvation, all the rest of it, they interpret it just like we do.

But, when it comes to the area of prophecy, they jump ship. They spiritualize the prophecies.

They do not take them literally. Why do they do that? And the answer is very simple. Because if you take the position that the church, which is the body of Christ, is the replacement of the people of Israel, then you have to interpret all of the promises that were given to Israel in a spiritual sense to have them fulfilled in the church.

If you don't do that, then you have to do as we do with our dispensational theology. You take all of the promises that are given to Israel and you keep them.

with Israel. You do not seek to apply them to the church, but you recognize that the church, which is the body of Christ, of which we are all members, is an entirely different thing from the nation of Israel.

[35 : 18] Israel has prophecies concerning it. They are to be fulfilled literally. The church has prophecies concerning it. They are to be fulfilled literally.

Neither should be forced into a spiritual interpretation. And when you do that, you maintain a consistency all throughout Scripture.

And in my way of thinking, this is the only acceptable thing to do. You've got to take the Scriptures at face value and keep it in context and let it say what it is saying.

The literal or the normal or the customary interpretation or approach to Scripture, the literal is the language of common usage.

we speak in a literal way to be understood in a literal way. And have you ever talked to someone and you're carrying on a conversation with them and you get the feeling, just in talking with them, you get the feeling that they're not really opening up to you.

[36 : 36] And have you ever found yourself, if not saying it, then at least thinking it in your mind as you're trying to pick up and read what they're saying?

Have you ever felt like saying, what is it you're trying to say? Why don't you just come right out and say it? What are they doing? They're trying to say what they want to say, but they don't want to be blunt.

They want to be diplomatic. They want to say it in a nice way so that it won't hurt your feelings. And there is something to be said for that.

We ought not to be strident or blunt or hurtful in what we tell people, but sometimes we can couch our language in such a way that we never do get across what it is we're trying to say.

And they never do understand what we were saying. And do you know what the need there is for? Plain talk. Just say it. Just get it out.

[37 : 43] Because if you don't make clear to the other person what it is that you're trying to tell them, you're not communicating. Communication is when I say something to you and what is in my mind as it goes forth to you and is received by you in your mind, you are understanding the same thing that I am understanding in my mind and there is a connection.

And when that happens, we have communicated. communication. But when you've got something different in your mind than what I've got in my mind, that's miscommunication.

You don't get the point. And communication has not taken place. So we use expressions like, just give it to me straight. Have you ever heard anyone say this?

Don't beat it around the bush. Just tell me what you've got to say. This is a common thing with men. I've I remember more than once I would have to tell Barb, honey, I am obtuse at times.

I know that. So just lay it on me and don't worry about my feelings. Just tell me what you want me to know. You know. And just be straightforward about it. And Her Majesty just trying to be so kind and diplomatic and preserving of my delicate ego you know would sometimes go around Robin Hood's barn and I'd say sweetheart get out your two before and let me have it you know and I'll I can take it and sometimes that's what it took.

[39 : 30] But that's called telling it like it is. And there are things that require us you know to to kind of well we'll kind of play games.

I remember about these two brothers in a telephone conversation and one of them was in France and hadn't been home for a couple of years and his brother back in the States called him and in the course of the conversation he says oh by the way I want to tell you your cat died.

And the guy said a cat died? And he said yeah your cat died. And he said boy what a shock he said I've I just I've had that cat for so long I just don't know how I can deal with this and I wish you hadn't I wish you hadn't told me that way you know it's such a shock to me and his brother said well what do you want me to do?

And he said well he said you could have let me down gently you could have you could have you could have called me and you could have said you know your your cat is on the roof but we're trying to get it down and we think everything is going to be okay and then the next day you could have called me back and said well the cat fell off the roof and injured itself but we took it to the vet and the vet said that he thought it would recover and then the next day you could have called me back you know I would have been preparing myself and knowing that all this was coming you could have called me back the third day and say the vet did everything that he could possibly do but your cat died and I'm really sorry and the brother says well gee he says you know I'm sorry I had no idea that it would be such a shock to you like that I'm sorry if I had to do all over again I would have done it differently he says and by the way how's grandma getting along he said grandma is on the roof sometimes just plain language is not appreciated so you have to let them down gently and you do that figuratively

I do want to consider one quick verse with you and it's in Matthew's gospel chapter 24 and verse 15 and it's in the Olivet Discourse a passage that we'll be considering in some detail as time goes on and it has to do with it has to do with a prophecy that I regard as a very key prophecy it's kind of like the linchpin of all that is going to transpire as regards the future and our Lord is speaking and he said in verse 15 therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place now I want you to look here if you've got a red letter version like I do most of them are you'll see the next phrase in black letters indicating that our Lord didn't say it but Matthew the writer did and it's in parenthesis and it says let the reader understand now that's really significant and what that is suggesting is this is meant to be understood the Bible including prophecy was not given to be a riddle given to be a revelation it is given to disclose not to conceal we are expected to understand this because to the extent that God gave this word and it is not understandable it is to that extent that it is not profitable but all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable in order for it to be profitable you have to be able to understand it now this does not mean that I certainly

[44 : 00] I do not understand all of the Bible like I want to I certainly do not I have wrestled and struggled with the wheel within a wheel in Ezekiel chapter 1 and I have given up on it 4 times or 5 times and I keep coming back to it for curiosity but I have never gotten a handle on it and that's just one there are whole lots of other things that I don't understand but they are intended to be understood and they are given with a view that they will not only be understood but be appreciated and be responded to and prepared for you can't respond to it if you can't understand it now in a book I've had here by Paul Lee Tan there are some principles that he's given a prophetic interpretation I just want to get these on the table because they're very valuable and very important and they tie in what we're talking about these are considered regular principles of hermeneutics and hermeneutics is just a fancy theological word for the study and interpretation of scripture and he gives eight principles and they are just priceless number one follow the customary usage of language that means you take the expression at face value you take it for what it says and if it does not mean what it says directly usually the context will indicate that secondly commit no historical cultural blunder that means when you read the scriptures including prophecy you have to realize that there is a separation historically of 2000 years plus between where we are and where the scripture is coming from you have to take that into account also there is a vastly different culture in place in the

Bible Old Testament and New as opposed to what we have today when you look for instance at the parable of the wedding guest and the parable of the foolish virgins and the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins in the prophetic scriptures without an appreciation of cultural mindset and what's taking place in their day in the wedding etc you'll never be able to put a handle on that and the worst thing you can do is take things from our present day weddings and our culture and try to push them back into that and make them fit they'll never fit they're not supposed to fit so commit no historical cultural blunder and three make christ central in all interpretations because he is the testimony of jesus is the spirit of prophecy revelation 19 10 be conscious of the context the context is king and you've always got to interpret on the basis of context interpret by the analogy of faith and that simply means our confidence level in the scriptures is supposed to be such that we recognize the totality of scripture being given by inspiration of

God and it is all profitable and this means that everything in the word of God is connected to everything in the word of God and it all has a coherence and a cohesiveness to it because there is one source many writers one author and scripture interprets scripture the bible is its own best interpreter we will see that when we engage these series on biblical prophecy every time without exception the prophecy we will be looking at we will find the bible has already provided its own interpretation all we have to do is utilize it it is a beautiful thing recognize the progress of revelation and we talked about that in time past how that scripture is gradually revealed from genesis through revelation it is doctrine on the move revelation on the move and we are still in process for that matter and grant one interpretation to each passage and this is really important when you read a verse of scripture whether it's prophecy or regular scripture the thing that ought to always come to mind is what does this mean first of all what does it say and sometimes there's a problem with translations so that even what it says isn't what it really says because there's a translation difficulty so you've got to determine first of all what does it mean to me that personalizes it all scripture has one interpretation just one just one has a lot of applications it may bring a lot of things to mind that are similar but it has one meaning and the meaning is always the same it is the meaning that the writer intended it to have the meaning that the writer intended to convey that's what it means that's the interpretation it's not the interpretation that we give it it's the interpretation that is within the text what did the writer intend to convey and those to whom he was writing what did they understand him to say meaning that's the meaning of it and applications are manifold we'll see how there's many illustrations of that so there is one interpretation to each passage and then the last one is choose the simplest alternative explanation more more more often than not it is the right one reminds me of

Occam's razor William of Occam institute a little philosophical thing like when you're exploring the meaning trying to get an understanding of a problem or trying to solve a situation or see what is responsible for something more often than not the simplest explanation is the right one the most obvious thing is usually the right one rather than some far fetched off the wall way out meaning the one that is most common sense ordinarily reached arrived at is the simplest one and that's that's the eighth and the last one so we've got just a couple of minutes and have you been able to make sense of this and do you have any questions right remember the literal the normal cultural the customary ordinary interpretation is designed to eliminate obfuscation it is designed to remove ambiguity so so that in the literal it means this or this and it doesn't mean a half dozen other things you know where you see this all the time the most boring reading in the world the most boring reading that you can ever engage in when you go home take take out the insurance policy on your house or your automobile you talk about boring reading and I'll tell you something else you will not find any figurative language in those documents everything is literal everything is to be taken at face value the language that is used is very very simple

I mean they have their own terminology you know and you get into legalese and the party of the first part and the party of the second part and all that stuff but the language the language of commerce the language of industry the language of engineering the language of discourse common discourse is all literal language it is intended to be that's the way we communicate and when you get into poetry and expressions like that that is designed to provide flavor and color and emphasis and diversity that's where you get into the figurative but you won't find that in your insurance policy it's all spelled out black and white very plain very literal very common and to a certain degree that's the way much of the bible is but the bible also has beautiful poetic melodic expressions especially you get into the psalms and that's why they're called the poetical books you get into psalms and proverbs and some of the prophetic writings they're just beautiful beyond description but by and large they are to be approached literally questions or comments

[53 : 27] I'll talk until the food comes John back to this all scripture has one interpretation there are scriptures that in the old testament where they were actual people actual kings and actual people that were at that time but they also represent like types of Christ or future events so the meaning that is described to the scripture has to do with like a king of so and so right absolutely so it has a two fold or maybe even more meaning in the one scripture right right you're talking about symbolism and typology which are akin to prophecy but not the same thing as prophecy and yet there are beautiful expressions of that too symbolism is a form of figurative language and you find it many many places in the scripture for instance

Melchizedek in Genesis chapter 14 Melchizedek is presented as a historical figure and when you come over to Hebrews in the New Testament that's where you find the real light regarding Melchizedek in Hebrews chapter 5 and 7 and I think it's 9 where Melchizedek is presented as a type of Christ and it's just a biblical typology is a different study in and of itself but it is it is it is a form I wouldn't say allegory but it is a form of figurative language biblical symbols and we'll see this when we get into our study on biblical prophecy because so much of Revelation utilizes symbolic language and describes things that are otherworldly I mean we've got beasts with seven heads and ten horns and things like well what do these really mean well they don't mean horns as we think of horns and the beasts are not what we would think of as beasts but the bible has an interpretation of those two and we'll be looking at that someone else anyone just go right ahead and start serving and ignore me and when your food comes don't let it get cold we've already blessed it so go ahead and eat anybody else well for the benefit of people who cannot be here they asked me to tape these so I told them that we would and they'll be available actually I should have had copied last week and brought it today but I didn't

I'm sorry I'll try to do better about that and we'll get them together so thank you for your kind attention and enjoy your meal go go go go go go go go go