

THE TRUTH ABOUT PROPHECY

Series: The Truth About Prophecy

Title: How To Interpret Prophecy,
Part 1

Lesson: 1

Text: Assorted Texts

Date: September 13, 2026

Luke 12:40 “You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

A methodology for determining the original
author’s intended meaning.

Covenantalism / Dispensationalism

“ _____ - _____ - _____ ”

Method of Interpretation.

“Literal” - We seek to understand the text according to the normal meaning of the words as intended by the original author.

This commitment to the author’s intended meaning is at the heart of dispensational hermeneutics.

“authorial intent”

“Grammatical” - We arrive at the author’s meaning by carefully examining the words, grammar, and sentence structure of the text.

“Historical” - We interpret the words of the prophet within the historical circumstances in which they were written.

Genesis 13:14–15 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

Did God mean this as a literal promise, or was He communicating something symbolic with a different meaning?

How would Abram and his descendants have understood this promise?

How would we interpret the creation account if we were applying the same principles of interpretation?

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

5 God called the light **day**, and the darkness He called night. And there was **evening** and there was **morning**, **ONE DAY**.

8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was **evening** and there was **morning**, a **SECOND DAY**.

(13) There was **evening** and there was **morning**, a **THIRD DAY** 14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for **days** and **years**;

(19) There was **evening** and there was **morning**, a **FOURTH DAY**.

(23) There was **evening** and there was **morning**, a **FIFTH DAY**.

(31) God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was **evening** and there was **morning**, the **SIXTH DAY**.

Figurative language is normally recognizable from the context.

John 10:9 "I am the **door**; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 15:1 "I am the true **vine**, and My Father is the vinedresser.

Genesis 2:1–3 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 By the **seventh day** God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the **seventh day** from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the **seventh day** and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

1 Thessalonians 4:9–12 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The difference between the two systems for interpreting prophecy is a _____ hermeneutic

John's description of the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 11:2–3 “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for **forty-two months**. 3 “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for **twelve hundred and sixty days**, clothed in sackcloth.”

Revelation 12:6 Then the **woman** fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**.

14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent.

“a time” = 1 year

“times” = 2 years

“half a time” = ½ year

Total = 3½ years

Revelation 13:5 There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for **forty-two months** was given to him.

John describes the Great Tribulation in four different ways:

- Nations will attack Israel for - **“forty-two months”**
- Two witnesses will witness to Israel for - **“twelve hundred and sixty days”**

- Israel will be nourished for - **“one thousand two hundred and sixty days”**
- Israel will be protected for - **“time and times and half a time”**

All of these numbers describe how the Great Tribulation will be **3 1/2 years**.

John describes the Millennium.

Revelation 20:2–7 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and **bound him for a thousand years; 3** and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, **until the thousand years were COMPLETED;** after these things he must be released for a short time.

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and **reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**

5 The rest of the dead did not come to life **until the thousand years were COMPLETED;**. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a **thousand years.** 7 When the **thousand years are COMPLETED;**, Satan will be released from his prison,

Implications

Why should we apply the Literal-Grammatical-Historical method when we interpret prophecy?

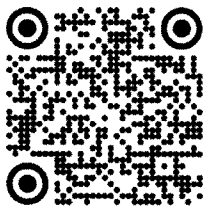
1. It allows every inspired word to carry the weight of _____ it deserves.
2. It preserves the _____ (authorial intent) of each biblical writer.
3. It upholds God's _____ to every promise He has made.

Discussion Guide

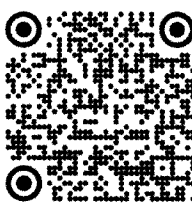
1. What does the term “Literal-Grammatical-Historical” mean, and why is determining the original author’s intended meaning so important when interpreting Scripture?
2. How can we recognize the difference between properly interpreting figurative language and improperly “spiritualizing” a passage in a way that changes its intended meaning?
3. Why is consistency important when interpreting prophecy? What problems can arise when we use one method of interpretation for most of Scripture but a different method when we come to prophetic passages?
4. How does our approach to biblical prophecy ultimately reveal whether we trust God to keep His promises?



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ANSWERS: Hermeneutics, Literal-Grammatical-Historical, consistent, authority, meaning, faithfulness