

INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- I. The “Allegorical” Method
 - A. Attempts to find a “DEEPER, SPIRITUAL” message
 - B. DANGERS in this method
 - 1. It does not INTERPRET Scripture, but REDEFINES it
 - 2. Makes the MIND of the interpreter the AUTHORITY
 - 3. Allows no means to TEST the TRUTH of the conclusions
- II. The “Literal” Method (a.k.a. “Grammatico-Historical”)
 - A. Allows the message to MEAN what it actually SAYS
 - B. DEFENSE of this method
 - 1. Interpretation of ANY language is by finding LITERAL meanings
 - 2. SECONDARY meanings are based on the LITERAL
 - 3. Most of the Bible makes SENSE when interpreted LITARALLY
 - 4. Allows for FIGURES of speech, SYMBOLS, ALLEGORIES and TYPES
 - 5. Provides a (sane and safe) CHECK on the interpreter’s IMAGINATION
 - 6. The Holy Spirit uses LANGUAGE to guide into TRUTH and away from ERROR
 - 7. God’s revelation should be SPECIFIC and EXACT rather than MISLEADING
 - 8. Scripture consistently interprets ITSELF LITERALLY
 - 9. Any prophecy said to have been COMPLETELY fulfilled has been LITERALLY fulfilled

- C. ADVANTAGES of this method
 - 1. Interpretation is grounded in FACT not CONJECTURE
 - 2. Interpretation is CONTROLLED
 - 3. Interpretation succeeds in OPENING UP God's Word
 - 4. Interpretation may be TESTED authoritatively
 - 5. Interpretation is not based on REASON or on MYSTICISM

III. Understanding the NATURE of prophecy

- A. It is often IMPRECISE (e.g., Gen. 49:5-7)
- B. Its CHRONOLOGY is often UNCLEAR (e.g., Jer. 25:11; 29:10)
- C. Requires FAITH for understanding (e.g., 2 Kings 7:2)

IV. Understanding the PURPOSES of prophecy

- A. Testifies to God's SOVEREIGN CONTROL
- B. Encourages FAITH
- C. Inspires HOLINESS and SERVICE

V. Understanding RULES for interpreting prophecy

- A. Determine the HISTORICAL background
- B. Determine the full MEANING of the WORDS
- C. Determine if the text is intended to PREDICT or INSTRUCT
- D. If predictive, determine if it is COMPLETELY fulfilled, PARTIALLY fulfilled, UNFULFILLED or CONDITIONAL
- E. Determine if same CONCEPT is treated ELSEWHERE
- F. Pay attention to textual CONTEXT
- G. Note any elements limited to a specific TIME, PLACE, or PEOPLE
- H. Use the LITERAL MEANING as your guide