

(Lessons learned from the book of Daniel)

The Bible (including Prophecy) should be read literally.

 ${f 2}$ The Bible Interprets itself.

 ${f 3}$ Biblical Symbols represent real things in the real world.

Bible Prophecy is complimentary NEVER contradictory.

Bible Prophecy shows different perspectives

6 Bible Prophecy uses Typology

Prophecy is ALL about Jesus

The Bible (including Prophecy) should be read literally.

The book of Daniel gives us an interpretive example of how we should read prophetic passages. In Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar receives a dream of a giant metal statue made up of differing metals. The wise men of Babylon are called upon by Nebuchadnezzar to tell him what he had dreamed and then interpret it, but no one can do this.

When Nebuchadnezzar orders the execution of the wise men of Babylon, Daniel and his friends pray to God for an interpretation. During the night the dream and its interpretation are revealed to Daniel. God then reveals the meaning to Daniel. God shows him that the various metals in the statue, Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Iron, represent real-world empires. Daniel's explanation of these empires spanning from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the time when Jesus sets up a Kingdom on this earth leaves for us an example to be followed.





Daniel's interpretation and subsequent fulfillment in history show that God gives prophecies that are fulfilled *literally*. This pattern is followed throughout Scripture showing how prophecies should be interpreted. Daniel chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10–12 consistently follow this literal method of identifying symbols and tying them to real-world empires.

Later in Revelation 1 Jesus himself follows this pattern when explaining the meaning of the golden lampstands in John's vision showing that the lampstands represent *literal* churches. These interpretations are given in the text. Many try to spiritualize Biblical prophecy and seek to explain away any literal meaning.

At the pool of Bethesda, Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years on the Sabbath for which the Jewish leadership began to criticize Him. In reply, Jesus said to them, **"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me..."** (John 5:39a). By using this argument Jesus acknowledges the *entirety* of the Old Testament, and affirms the historical validity of these events. Jesus also affirms that these things point to His very Person (Matthew 5:45-47, 1 Corinthians 10:11).

To reject the Old Testament is to reject Jesus (John 12:48-50). Jesus, the Apostles, and the Prophets always interpret the Old Testament literally when quoting it.

Daniel believed that Jeremiah's prophecy spanned 70 *literal* years (Daniel 9:2). Peter quoted Joel as being fulfilled when the Spirit was given at Pentecost (Joel 2:28-31).

This pattern is continually demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ and the writers of the New Testament. Jesus claimed that he was here to *fulfill* the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 5:17). He later revealed to the Apostles that the messianic prophecies written by Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms were *literally* fulfilled *by Him* (Luke 24:44–46).

Jesus and the Apostles NEVER allegorized the Old Testament texts when quoting them, *including* prophecies of Daniel (Matthew 24:15). Jesus, in Matthew 24 said that when **"the abomination that causes desolation"** spoken of **"through the Prophet Daniel"** is seen **"standing in the holy place"** then **"let the reader understand** ..." The sign of the abomination of desolation will be fulfilled in a way that a reader living *during the time* of that event (The Tribulation) will be able to better understand the Scriptures that predicted it (Matthew 19:4,5, Mark 10:6-8, John 8:56, Luke 17:32, Matthew 11:21-22, Matthew 8:11, Luke 10:26-37, John 6:31, Mark 2:25, 32 Matthew 12:1-3, Matthew 24:15, Matthew 12:40-42). Jesus didn't just confirm the *people* and *places* in the Old Testament, He also validated *their stories* just as they were recorded. Jesus confirmed the validity of these stories, as being historically true and accurate; that God created male and female at the beginning (Mark 10:6); that Noah, the animal kingdom, and eight people were saved through a worldwide flood (Matthew 24:37, Luke 17:26–28); that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and Lot's wife was turned to a pillar of salt (Luke 17:26–28,32); that God gave the bread from heaven (*mana*) to the children of Israel in the desert (John 6:30–32); that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible (John 5:45–47); that Jonah spent 3 days and nights in the belly of the great fish (Matthew 12:40–42).

Jesus used these events that occurred in the lives of the Old Testament saints as the foundational examples on which His teaching is based (Mark 12:24-27). Jesus corrected the teachers of the law for spiritualizing or allegorizing the Scriptures, calling them "badly mistaken" (Mark 12:27). The crowds were "astonished" at his teaching because He taught with authority (Matthew 22:29-33). Jesus told the teachers, that to spiritualize or allegorize the Bible was to make the Word of God of no effect or nullify it (Mark 7:9-13). Jesus also implied that to be worthy of taking part in the age to come, one must believe his teachings literally and act on them (Luke 20:35, John 5:23-25). To allegorize the story of Johan and the great fish, Noah and the flood, or Naaman's cleansing of leprosy would be to undermine Jesus' literal teaching (Matthew 24:37, Matthew 12:40-42, Luke 4:27). Jesus didn't just use stories of the Old Testament as object lessons; He also referred to the prophecies as having a literal fulfillment in the future (Matthew 24:12). Jesus pointed out that the Old Testament prophecies about *Himself* were being fulfilled in their very presence (Luke 4:16-30)!

After Jesus revealed to his servants the prophecies contained in the book of Revelation, He said, **"Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll"** (Revelation 22:7). To *keep* God's Word means to *continually obey* or *live out* the reality of what has been revealed to us; to live it out or obey it, we must interpret it *literally*. **"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock"** (Matthew 7:24). It's interesting to see all the ways the phrase **"puts them into practice"** is translated; "*Puts into practice*" (NIV), "*listens to my teaching*" (NLT), "*does them*" (ESV), "*acts on them*" (BSB), "*and doeth them*" (KJV), "*and does them*" (NKJV), "*and acts on them*" (NASB, NASB77, NASB95). One who takes Jesus' words literally, as He Himself did will listen, obey, act, keep, and put into practice what He has said. Jesus not only expects His words to be taken literally, he gives his disciples down through the ages a *command* to be *obeyed* until a time they will be fulfilled. **"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father** and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19,20).

2 The Bible Interprets itself.

All the wise men of Babylon in Daniel 2 could not interpret the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. And in chapter 4, when Nebuchadnezzar revealed to the wise men *another* dream, they were *again* unable to interpret it. The visions in these chapters show us that interpretations of prophetic visions do not come from the dreamers themselves (Daniel 2:1), neither do they come from wise men (Daniel 2:27), or even from a prophet of God (Daniel 2:17, 18, 2 Peter 1:20,21), but rather they come from God Himself (Daniel 2:30).

When Joseph was in prison in Egypt with the chief baker and cupbearer, he learned they both had had troubling dreams. Seeing their distress, he said to them **"Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams"** (Genesis 40:8). Later the dreams of the cupbearer and chief baker came true. As we'll see in this event, the Bible contains *within it* the keys to understanding its symbols, and it provides examples of how prophecy is fulfilled, so we know can recognize what constitutes that fulfillment.

For example, in Daniel 2, the *toes* of the statue are referred to by the phrase "In **the times of those kings**", but we are *not told* that those toes represent kings until Chapters 7 and 8. Not until then is it revealed that the final world empire will be made up of 10 kings. Chapter 2 is now better understood from chapters 7 and 8.

Pharaoh acknowledged that God gave Joseph the interpretation of his dream (Genesis 41:39). The Old Testament saints, having received from God prophecies concerning the coming Messiah *searched* the Scriptures, longing to understand them (1 Peter 1:10,11) as did the Angels (1 Peter 1:12). Why did they search the Scriptures? They searched them because it was the *written text* of the Bible that *contained the words* that foretold the coming of the Messiah. Daniel was able to understand from the *Scriptures* that the time of Israel's captivity in Babylon was about to come to an end (Daniel 9:2, Jeremiah 29:10).

It was not just the Old Testament saints to whom God gave prophetic revelation, but also to New Testament believers. They were given ahead of time (Matthew 24:25) to show his servants what must soon take place (Revelation 1:1) because the secrets of God have been revealed to the believer (1 Cor 2:6– 10), on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come (1 Cor 10:11). His servants have been entrusted with these secrets because we are God's children (Psalm 25:14, John 15:15). The believer is privileged to see and *understand* the very secrets of God. "But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Matthew 13:16,17). Today we are blessed to see and hear the *written* prophecies of God's Word against the backdrop of Jesus' first coming, with an eager expectation of His second.

${f 3}$ The Bible uses Symbols to represent real things.

When Daniel is given the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream he told the king *plainly* what the symbols in the dream mean (Daniel 2:38). Later in Chapters 7, and 8 the Angel again explained to Daniel several of the *symbols* included in his dreams (Daniel 7:17,23,24, Daniel 8:20,21). In the New Testament during the Olivet discourse, Jesus further explained some of the symbols in Daniel's vision, found in Daniel 9:26,27 (Matthew 24:15). Jesus does not allegorize or spiritualize these symbols but points to them rather as markers of time. Jesus interpreted both Daniel's 70 Sevens and the abomination of desolation *literally*.

When Jesus explained the parables of the Kingdom to his disciples privately, he said "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:" (Matthew 13:18). He began by explaining the *symbols* used " Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels" (Matthew 13:36-39). Finally, in Revelation, we see this same practice consistently upheld where Jesus himself explains the symbols revealed to John in his vision (Revelation 1:20,21). In every case whether the dreams of Joseph, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, or Daniel, all used symbols to represent *real* things in the *real* world. And the *symbols themselves* are clearly explained *within the text*.

4 Bible Prophecy is complimentary NEVER contradictory.

When reading the Bible we tend to compartmentalize each chapter as if it was its own book. However, notice that in Daniel chapter 2, he is given a vision by which he is able interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four coming empires. Then later, in chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10–12 he receives additional insight into these four empires by means of *further visions*. Each of these respective visions builds on the *previous* ones. Daniel is not a collection of 12 books but a single book that was later *partitioned* into 12 chapters.

In chapter 7 we learn that the ten horns, which correlate to the ten toes of the statue described in chapter 2 (Daniel 2:44) represent 10 Kings, but this was not revealed until chapter 7 (Daniel 7:7,24).

In chapter 8 we learn that the Ram and the Goat correlate to the chest and arms of silver, and the belly and thighs of bronze of chapter 2 (Daniel 8:20, 21). These represent the Medo-Persian and Grecian empires respectively. Because of this emerging revelation, we can now recognize the *chronology* of these empires in fulfilled history.

We further discover in chapter 9 that the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay depicted in Chapter 2 refer to the Roman empire (Daniel 9:26) (the empire responsible for the destruction of the temple and crucifixion of our Lord) Although these later visions may seem redundant, they actually build on the earlier visions, providing new information about them. These visions as a whole represent real human history; they do not contradict each other but rather they reveal God's perfect plan played out in history. The astute Bible scholar will seek to harmonize these passages rather than pit them against each other.

5 Bible Prophecy shows different perspectives

When modern Christians read the Bible we have a tendency to read it very *selfishly*, as if it's all about *us*. This attitude cannot help but confuse the reader, leading to uncertainty and doubt concerning many passages. However, The Bible is actually about *God*, written from *His* perspective. It reveals to us His heart and character; what *He* thinks on different matters. Daniel Chapter 2 was given to Nebuchadnezzar, and so represents man's perspective, while the subsequent visions in Chapter 7–9, and 10–12 are given to *God's prophet*, Daniel and therefore represents God's perspective.

In Daniel 2 the vision given to the self-centered Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar is that of precious metals (Daniel 2:1). God seeks to *warn* Nebuchadnezzar about his pride, to preserve his life from the pit (Job 33:14–18). When Daniel reveals to him that **"You are that head of gold."** (Daniel 2:38) it *literally* goes to his head! We see the manifestation of his pride in Chapter 3, as he constructs a statue that represents *his* kingdom and overlays it *entirely* with gold, in defiance of God. When Nebuchadnezzar is informed that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow to his image, or worship his gods, he becomes furious (Daniel 3:12). The fact that these three men were specifically involved in the interpretation of his dream in Chapter 2 no doubt fueled his anger even more.

His pride eventually causes God to humble Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 turning him into a wild beast until he acknowledges that heaven rules (Daniel 4:26).

When God's overthrow of Babylon in Chapter 5 comes true, Daniel receives *another* vision in Chapter 7. This vision refers to *the* same four kingdoms as Nebuchadnezzar had previously dreamt, however this one is from God's perspective, as it is given to His prophet (1 Samuel 16:7). In this new vision, Rather than precious metals, these 4 kingdoms are pictured as wild beasts. Nebuchadnezzar is shown as changing from a *beast* to a *man* and given a new *heart* (Daniel 7:4). When men humble themselves before God, acknowledging their sin and in faith accepting Him, they are transformed from wild beasts (2 Peter 2:12), now bearing the likeness and image of the immortal God. (1 Corinthians 15:49).

It is important to recognize who is receiving a vision or revelation, in order to better understand the perspective from which it comes. God alternates between Man's perspective and God's in order to reveal just how much higher His thoughts are than ours (Isaiah 55:9). While it is easy to disparage Nebuchadnezzar for his self-centered pride, it is important to recognize that he actually served as an object lesson for the nation of Israel. Israel had rebelled against God, worshiping and serving Idols (Jeremiah 3:8-13), and despising the land that God had blessed them with by refusing to keep the sabbatical year (2 Chronicles 36:21). They became filled with pride and were focused only on themselves. Daniel's nation, like Nebuchadnezzar was, at this time focused on their own Kingdom, not much different than these Gentile world powers that the Jews despised, seeking their own glory. For this reason, God sent them into the *heart* of idol worship, even Babylon to be subject to a King that was just like them, Nebuchadnezzar. Israel will continue in their rejection (Matthew 12:43-45) eventually becoming just like Babylon. (Revelation 17:5) until they repent and receive their King (Hosea 5:14-6:3), Jesus as Messiah and Lord. So just as Nebuchadnezzar went from being a beast to a man based on His willingness to acknowledge God. Israel has gone from a man to a beast (Isaiah 1:3) in their rebellion to God.

6 Bible Prophecy uses Typology

In Daniel chapter 8, it is revealed to Daniel that the vision of the little horn that "...takes away the daily sacrifice" is about "the time of the end" (Daniel 8:17). This is an indication that the vision of the temple being desecrated by the 8th king in the Seleucid dynasty (Antiochus Epiphanes, a future event from Daniel's perspective) was not actually *about* Antiochus. Rather, it was about "the time of the end" (Daniel 8:17), in other words, a *future* Antichrist. This is later confirmed in verse 26 when Daniel is told, "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the *distant* future."(Daniel 8:26).

When God said to Hosea "**out of Egypt I have called my son**" (Hosea 11:1) He was referring back to the prophecy He had given to Abraham that the nation of Israel would be in captivity in Egypt (Genesis 15:13). Matthew later quotes Hosea but instead of applying it to *Israel* he applies this to *Jesus* (Matthew 2:15). What happened to Israel was a *type* of what would happen to Jesus. God told Abraham that Israel would be *called out* of Egypt after a 400 year sojourn there. Later made known that these things happened to Israel in a *predictive way*, showing what would later happen to Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:11). This is an example of *typology* in action; there is only one *fulfillment*, but *both* the **type** and **prophecy** demonstrate God's prediction. In both aspects of the fulfillment, the object is Jesus. What happened to Israel was really about Jesus (John 5:46,47, John 8:56–59).

Another example of this in scripture is in the life of Joseph. He lived out a life that typologically foreshadowed Christ. Joseph was not the fulfillment of things that were prophesied about Jesus; rather he magnified them. He is, therefore a type of Christ in the sense that, like Jesus, he was rejected by his brothers (Genesis 37:20), stripped of his clothes, and put in a pit (figuratively, in death) (Genesis 37:23,24). Later Joseph is "numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12) in prison where one lives, and one dies. (Genesis 40:20,21). Joseph takes a gentile bride (Genesis 41:45), is exalted to the 2nd highest ruler in Egypt (Genesis 41:39,40), and is worshiped by his brothers (Genesis 42:5-7). Jesus likewise was rejected by his brethren (John 1:11) (Israel) and stripped naked (Matthew 27:35) (like Joseph and Potiphar's wife) and then crucified between two criminals, one of whom lived and the other died. (Luke 23:43) After rising from the dead on the third day, Jesus took a Gentile bride (the Church) (Ephesians 5:22–33), and will one day be exalted to the 2nd highest place next to God the Father (Philippians 2:10,11, Ephesians 1:22,231 Corinthians 15:27), and will *ultimately* be recognized and worshiped by his brethren (Israel) (Zechariah 12:10, Hosea 6:2).

In this comparison of Joseph and Jesus, Joseph magnified *typologically* what Christ would ultimately fulfill in the future. All the events of Jesus' life that Joseph lived out <u>typologically</u> were *also* prophesied in the Old Testament <u>prophetically</u>. (*too many to list*).

Some explain this as a *dual* fulfillment of one prophecy. But both the type *and* the prophecy are about Jesus, not two different people. Jesus Christ fulfilled both typologically and prophetically what Joseph's life magnified and the Old Testament prophesied.

We see this same Typological fulfillment in Daniel 8, **"The vision of the** evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision,

for it concerns the distant future" (Daniel 8:26). In Daniel 8, Daniel is given a vision of the altar and sacrifice being desecrated. From Daniel's perspective this *future* event that would take 2,300 mornings and evenings to rectify was about the Antichrist. Daniel 8:13,14 says this vision would be "fulfilled" after the 2,300 evenings and mornings. But which 2,300 evenings and mornings? The challenge here is that the vision was related to a *future* type that had not appeared on the scene. That type would be Antiochus Epiphanes, who was still in Daniel's future. Antiochus was an offshoot of the Grecian empire and not the Roman empire (Daniel 8:23), from which the Antichrist will come. But although it did take 2,300 mornings and evenings to re-consecrate temple and altar of sacrifice after Antiochus desecrated them, he was only a type of a future Antichrist who will ultimately do the same thing during the tribulation period (Daniel 8:9,10). The vision was not fulfilled in *totality* after the 2,300 mornings of re-consecration (Hannukah) during Antiochus' day, as Jesus makes clear in Matthew 24. The *fulfillment* of the vision includes both the *type* and the prophecy. The ultimate fulfilment must include rebellion of the people, and repentance and restoration of the nation.

In Jesus' day, Antiochus Epiphanes was a historical figure long since passed. The Apostles knew of Antiochus and saw the prophecies of Daniel 8 as having been historically fulfilled by him. But, as the apostles were marveling at the temple structure (Matthew 24:1,2), anticipating Christ's ascending the throne and ushering in the Kingdom (Luke 19:11), Jesus corrected their eschatology by explaining that Daniel 8:13,14 was *not* fulfilled by Antiochus; he was simply the *precursor* of a future antichrist who would fulfill the vision and destroy the temple. By placing the fulfillment of Daniel 8 in the future, Jesus rewrites the Apostles' eschatological understanding.

This then triggers the Apostles' questions about the timing of the Lord's return in Matthew 24. What Jesus was saying to them was that he would not ascend the throne at that time, but rather be *rejected* by a rebellious nation (Daniel 8:12,13, 23) bearing a cross and returning to heaven (Hosea 5:15) until a time when that nation would repent and admit their guilt (Hosea 5:15-6:3).

Therefore, the ultimate fulfillment of Daniel 8 will take place during the Tribulation, when the Antichrist destroys the city and the sanctuary. At the end of that tribulation Jesus will return, crushing the statue of Daniel 2 (Antichrist), and finally ascending the throne, will rule from Jerusalem.

Without a clear understand how typology is interwoven into prophetic fulfillment, it becomes very difficult to interpret prophecy because failing to distinguish the type from the prophecy leads to errorneously assuming the

wrong fulfillment, just as the apostles did in Matthew 24. This is probably the most difficult concept to grasp in understanding Biblical prophecy.

7 Prophecy is ALL about Jesus

Although distinguishing between types and prophecies may be the most difficult concept to grasp, it is not the most common mistake made when reading the Bible. It's possible to get so focused on the dramatic events the Bible predicts for our future that we miss the forest for the trees. We can get so focused on the details of prophecy "...search (*ing*) intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances" (1 Peter 1:10b-11) that we miss Who those times and circumstances are pointing to! Prophecy is all about Jesus (Revelation 19:10).

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar thought the vision was about him and his kingdom. However, the real intent of the vision was to reveal that Jesus and His everlasting Kingdom *will* come, replacing all other Kingdoms (Daniel 2:42).

This sovereignty is demonstrated in Chapter 3 when Nebuchadnezzar defiantly challenges the dream of Chapter 2, but is *unable* to burn the servants of the living God in the fire.

Then in Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is turned into a beast (the way God knew him to be inside) until he acknowledges Jesus, that *His* Kingdom will rule (Daniel 4:25,26, 32, 34,35).

In Chapter 5 when Belshazzar ignores the revelation that his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had received (Daniel 5:22,23), and challenges the God of Heaven, God *removes* him from office.

The conclusion of Chapter 6 is all about the sovereignty and greatness of Jesus and his future Kingdom (Daniel 6:26–28).

The final visions, found in chapters 7 and 8 reveal the time when Jesus reigns in his Kingdom on this earth, worshiped by his people (Daniel 7:27, 8:25).

In chapter 9 we discover that the prophecies will not be concluded until Jesus is anointed King over his people Israel (Daniel 9:24 c.f. "*Most Holy one*"). Again, the purpose of prophecy is to point us to Jesus and his Kingdom.

The Bible tells us to "... seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33). Prophecy is *not* about predicting the future; it's about a *relationship* with the *King* of the future.

And God has desired to share His secrets, namely His own Son with His people (John 15:15, Revelation 1:1). Bible prophecy is about Jesus revealing Himself to us *personally*. If we understand this, we will read the Scriptures *Christologically*, meaning we will understand that these prophecies point to Jesus *Himself*. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."(Luke 24:27). "Even so come Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20 KJV).

May we be like those disciples on the road to Emmaus, and like them say "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)