



# How To Study Bible Prophecy

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## Chapter 1

# Principles of Prophetic Study

In using the following principles in conjunction with the historicist's method of study, the Bible student shall come to have a better understanding of the end-time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

### **PRINCIPLE 1: ALL OF SCRIPTURE**

The foundation from which all prophecy is to be studied is the belief and understanding that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). In using this principle, first gather together all scripture texts on the subject matter being studied. Second, using a Bible concordance, examine key words and phrases within the texts so as to know their true and proper meaning in the original language in which they were written. A Bible concordance is a valuable study tool for examining and interpreting translated words or phrases that were originally penned in the languages of Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament writings) or Greek (New Testament writings). Third, after evaluating their meaning and context, retain the Bible texts that are found to be most relevant to the subject matter being studied.

### **PRINCIPLE 2: SCRIPTURE AS ITS OWN EXPOSITOR**

Let scripture interpret scripture. This principle, which is sometimes called “Isaiah’s Principle,” is found in Isaiah 28:9-10: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? ... For precept must be upon precept...; line upon line...; here a little, and there a little.”

When using this “scripture upon scripture” principle, it is important to remember that it is not any one verse but precept upon precept and line upon line that helps build an understanding. An example of this principle is the Bible’s own interpretation of the word “sleep,” which is in reference to the state of the dead. See Acts 7:59-60; John 11:11-14; 1 Kings 2:10; Job 14:10-12.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: REPEAT AND ENLARGE**

Often the main points of a vision or parable are repeated and enlarged (magnified) by other more descriptive scriptures. An example of this principle can be found in the prophetic book of Daniel where the visions of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 7 and 8) repeat and enlarge upon King Nebuchadnezzar’s visionary dream (Daniel 2).

### **PRINCIPLE 4: SYMBOLISM**

All scripture in Bible prophecy should be taken literally, unless it defies nature (e.g., a leopard with four heads and four wings) or there is a justifiable reason to believe that its meaning is figurative or symbolic in nature. When trying to determine the literal or figurative meaning of a word or phrase in Scripture, first look for other scriptures that may identify and give further explanation as to its literal or figurative meaning. An example of this principle can be found in Revelation 17, where the phrase “many waters” (Revelation 17:1-2) is symbolic of “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15).

### **PRINCIPLE 5: TYPE-ANTITYPE**

In the Old Testament there are many types or patterns of things that have their antitype or fulfillment in the New Testament. A Bible type is essentially a historical truth (person, place, event, or thing) that foreshadows or points forward to a counterpart (antitype). A Bible antitype is usually broader in meaning (amplified), proving to be the “body” which was foreshadowed by the type. The key to understanding this principle can be found in the unity of the Scriptures themselves. An example of this principle is the earthly sanctuary, which was a type or pattern pointing to its perfect antitype, the

heavenly sanctuary. See Exodus 25:8-9, Hebrews 8:2, 9:24.

**PRINCIPLE 6: YEAR-DAY**

The timeline prophecies found in the books of Daniel and Revelation all follow the same principle of one prophetic day being equal to one literal year—a 360-day lunar calendar year. Several examples of this principle may be found in the Old Testament. See Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:5-6.

**PRINCIPLE 7: THESSALONIAN TEST (1 Thess. 5:20-21)**

“Despise not prophesying.”

When it comes to a new theory being presented as truth, one should always be cautious but, at the same time, not too hasty in rejecting it or having the Laodicean mindset that “I am rich [in understanding], and increased with goods, and have need of nothing [more]” (Revelation 3:17). To approach or maintain such an attitude will surely bind the mind, close the ears, and shut the eyes to the advancement of truth.

“Prove all things.”

When it comes to examining or testing a new or old theory, one must always weigh every point of controversy with the straight testimony of God’s Word. To allow one’s own opinion, culture, beliefs, or even the Spirit of Prophecy to be the measuring stick of truth is to make the Word of God the interpretation and not the interpreter of truth (principle 2). In other words, if it fits your theological understanding and is supported by your subscribed beliefs, feelings, or religious experiences, then it must be a correct interpretation—whereas in reality it may be a square peg (one’s own interpretation) fitting into a round hole (the Bible’s interpretation).

“Hold fast that which is good.”

When it comes to accepting or rejecting a theory (new or old), all opinion, without prejudice or fear, must rest upon the Word of God. If a theory is found to be in harmony with the Word of God, doesn’t violate the principles

mentioned, and can be supported by history (principle 8), then consider it to be truth unless proven otherwise.

### **PRINCIPLE 8: HISTORICAL APPLICATION**

When it comes to history affirming Bible prophecy, there are three basic applications that need to be made. First is to examine the prophecy in relation to the time period in which it was written. After attempting to answer the 5W's (Who, What, Where, When, and Why), one can better determine whether or not the prophecy has already had its fulfillment in history during the time of the prophet.

Second is to examine whether or not the prophecy has any set conditions. If so, then as a conditional prophecy it may have already had its place in history as being unfulfilled. An example of an unfulfilled conditional prophecy was the prophet Jonah's doomsday message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). Seeing that the people of Nineveh took Jonah's words seriously and quickly repenting from their wicked ways, God withheld His impending judgment upon the city and its inhabitants, thus making the prophet's words null and void (see Jeremiah 18:7-8).

The third application is to examine the prophecy in the light of history itself. If well-documented historical facts or events can be linked to the prophecy without violating or distorting the contextual meaning of the prophet's words, figures, or symbols, then the prophecy may be considered validated by history—unless further proven otherwise. An example of history validating prophecy can be found in the book of Daniel, where history affirms what the prophet Daniel predicted regarding the rise and fall of four earthly kingdoms: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

When examining any Bible prophecy and applying these or other principles of study, one must always approach God's Word with a humble and teachable spirit, along with the spiritual keys of faith and prayer in hand. In doing so, one may look to unlock the mysteries of God's Word. "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).