

Principles When Studying Bible Prophecy

Bible & Bible Prophecy Literary Methods

Repeat & Enlarge:

When God wants to reveal a critical truth in bible prophecy, He will repeat the matter ($\geq 2x$) using different imagery or symbols. With each repetition, additional details are provided that enlarge upon the understanding of the established truth.

Types & Antitypes:

Types are symbols for, or representations of an object. For example, every lamb, bull, goat or dove sacrificed was a “type” of Christ. Jesus is the antitype, or actual object. The terms “figure”, “shadow”, “pattern” and “example” often signify types are being employed in the bible text.

Summary Followed by Detail:

Often the bible will provide the complete summary of an event and immediately follow with the details of the event. The Creation Story is summarized in the first verse of Genesis and expounded upon in the following two chapters. (Ex: Genesis 1, 2; Leviticus 16; Daniel 9:24-27)

Symbols & Imagery:

The bible uses the techniques of imagery and symbolism to represent different themes or motifs. God provided imagery and symbolism in the bible for the following reasons:

- Similar to parables, imagery helps the reader better understand and relate to the specified theme
- To weed-out the casual reader for the more diligent student who hungers and thirsts for righteousness (Mark 4:9-12)
- To protect the writing from intentional tampering and modification

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Line-by-Line, Precept-by-Precept (Isaiah 28:9-13)

God gives specific counsel by which His Holy Word, the Bible, should be studied. Again, not pleased with the casual reader, God seeks those who will “diligently seek Him” Hebrews 11: 6. Therefore, the student of the bible must compare line-by-line, and scripture by scripture in order to understand precepts (doctrinal teachings) and principles when drawing conclusions for God’s Word. This method of bible study and understanding is called *proof-texting*.

On the Testimony of Two or Three Witnesses (2 Cor 13:1; Matt 18:16)

God instructs that only after two or more witnesses are produced, bearing the exact same testimony, could a person be charged with a crime under the Jewish system of government (Deuteronomy 17:6). Similarly with God’s Word, only with the testimony of two or more scriptures can a teaching, precept (doctrine), or principle be established as truth when reading the bible (Genesis 41:1-32; Deut 17:2-7).

Light is Progressive (1 Corinthians 3:10-13)

God shines forth the light of truth in a gradual and progressive manner such that light builds upon light (Proverbs 4:18). Never should *new light* contradict foundational truths (Isaiah 58:11, 12) but should compliment and build upon the established truths (2 Peter 1:19). We are to walk in the light while we have the light, lest darkness come upon us (John 12:35, 36)

The Natural is Followed by the Spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:45, 46)

The bible offers natural or literal people, figures, events and situations that serve as object lessons, allegories, types and symbols for spiritual application for the end times (1 Cor 10:1-11) [i.e. Literal Adam/Spiritual Adam; Literal Egypt/Spiritual Egypt; Literal Israel/Spiritual Israel; Literal Babylon/Spiritual Babylon; Earthly Sanctuary/Heavenly Sanctuary]. Understanding and discernment of these truths is given by inspiration of God (1 Cor 2:6-14; John 4:22-24)

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Written for Our Admonition... Ends of the World (1 Cor. 10:1-11)

The writings and admonitions of the bible prophets, notwithstanding specific predictions relative to their time, were written especially for those upon whom the ends of the age have come. All of the bible prophets who wrote within the canonical 66 books of the bible have made predictions for the end times and/or their prophecies serve as allusions to current or future events

1 Literal Year for 1 Prophetic Day (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:4-6)

In understanding prophetic time, God at times appoints a prophetic day to signify a literal year. As with the Hebrew spies who surveyed the land of Canaan for 40-days, the Children of Israel would remain in the wilderness for 40-years (1 generation) because of their rebellion against God. Further, in conveying a message to His prophets, God often used the life of the prophet to be an object lesson to the people who are to receive the message. Ezekiel was told to lay on his side for 390 days, signifying the 390 years of captivity appointed for the people of God.

Present Truth (Gospel) Message

God assures us that He will bring about no [great] thing without revealing a knowledge of the thing to His prophets (Amos 3:7). Further, out of love and compassion, God repeats the message, providing an early message and a *Present Truth Message*. The early message is to bring reformation to prepare for the coming event. The Present Truth Message is a life or death conveying of the same message that has both temporal and eternal consequences. Below are examples of the giving of early and Present Truth messages in scripture:

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| • Enoch/Methuselah (early messengers) | Noah (present truth messenger) |
| • Angels of God (early messengers) | Lot (present truth messenger) |
| • Moses (early messenger) | Isaiah/Jeremiah/Ezekiel (present truth messenger) |
| • Moses/David/Isaiah (early messengers) | John the Baptist (present truth messenger) |
| • All the prophets (early messengers) | the last-day Remnant (present truth messengers) |

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4:3 Pattern

Definitive patterns can be seen when reading and understanding bible prophecy. The pattern of 4 followed by 3 is seen in the following occurrences:

There are 7 seals mentioned in the book of Revelation

- 4 of the seven seals are identified as horses (Revelation 6:1-8)
- 3 of the seals are experiences

There are 7 trumpets mentioned in the book of Revelation

- 4 of the seven trumpets are given as trumpets (messages)
- 3 of the seven trumpets are called “Woe, Woe, Woe”

Triple Application of Prophecy

The bible affirms that there is nothing new under the sun and the Lord has made known to men last day events in light of past prophetic revelation (Ecclesiastes 3:15). Prophetic truths are at times made known in triplet sets where the first two occurrences of a truth provides light for the fulfillment of the third event or mathematically : $\text{event 1} + \text{event 2} = \text{event 3}$. The Triple application of prophecy is seen in the experiences or references to the following and are established on the testimony of 2 or more witnesses:

- Three Elijah’s (Elijah, John the Baptist, God’s Remnant Church)
- Three Rome’s (Pagan, Papal, Modern)
- Three persecutors in the time of Christ (Greek, Hebrew, Latin)
- Three “Woes”
- Three Abominations
- Three pair of Sanctuary Cleansings (Christ ‘s Time, Millerite History, End Time)

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Rule of First Mention

When interpreting symbols, imagery and allusions in bible prophecy, the first instance or mention of the symbol, image is the most comprehensive and complete. All subsequent allusions to the prophetic symbol or image compliment the first mention and may add additional detail, but the first mention bears the greatest weight. Examples of this rule are as follows:

The Angry Wild Horse of Islam is first described through Ishmael (Genesis 16:12)

- “And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him”

The East Wind that brings the scourge of locusts, both of which portray Islam, is first described through the Plagues of Egypt (Exodus 10:5-15)

- Locusts shall cover the face of the earth
- “And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day”
- The land is darkened (falsehood is spread) by the Locusts
- Locusts fill the earth and are a scourge to those who lack the seal of God (Revelation 9)

Worshipping the Image to the Beast is first described with Israel setting up the golden calf in the wilderness (Exodus 32)

- The apostate people of God collectively call for an Image to the Beast
- Image to the beast was in celebration of a counterfeit feast unto the Lord
- Those who worshipped the image to the beast were naked (spiritually)
- God’s wrath was upon those who worshipped the image to the Beast
- The Sons of Levi remain faithful and are purified to be the priests of God

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Rome comes-up 8th

Once again, another definitive pattern can be seen when reading and understanding bible prophecy; the pattern of Rome, whether Pagan or Papal, arising 8th in a series or sequence of events is seen reflected in bible prophecy. The number eight has significance in its representation of a resurrection [Jesus was resurrected on the “8th day”; circumcision, a symbol of baptism that itself involves a resurrection, was performed on the 8th day of life for a male child, etc.] and is therefore indicative of the fact that Rome too is resurrected historically and in the last days:

Daniel 7:7, 8

- The beast with 10 horns arises
- Three horns are removed by the Little Horn leaving 7
- The Little Horn (Papal Rome) is the 8th to arise

Daniel 8:3-9

- Medo-Persia is represented as a Ram with 2 horns
- Greece under Alexander, is represented as a Goat with 1 horn
- The one horn is broken and 4 less prominent horns arise from the one
- The Little Horn is the 8th horn to arise

Revelation 13:1-3

- The beast with 7 heads receives a deadly wound to a head
- The head is resurrected, representing the 8th head

Revelation 17:11

- “The beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven” (Papal Rome) whose deadly wound is healed.