

Hermeneutics session 12 Interpretation of Prophecy, Part 2

Symbols in prophecy

- Example: the symbol of a mountain.
- Mount Zion as being both a physical reality and a symbol of God's government.
- Interpreting symbols
 - First: Recognize that it is a symbol (obvious, but important!)
 - Second: There are two elements to a symbol.
 - The physical reality of the symbol; the symbol is a physical "thing," which can either be viewed by everyone, or is viewed by the prophet in vision.
 - The concept that "stands behind" the physical "thing" that is a symbol.
 - Third: See if Scripture interprets the symbol, either in the immediate context or in wider context.
 - Remember the principle of the Analogy of Scripture: Scripture is a unified whole, more clear passages should interpret more obscure passages, New Testament should interpret Old Testament.
 - A symbol can be used as a theme in Scripture, such as the example of a mountain representing a kingdom, government, or empire; but be careful, because "sometimes a mountain is just a mountain."
 - Fourth: If we can't interpret a symbol, it's best not to try to speculate.
 - Don't try to assign modern meanings to a symbol that would have been entirely foreign to the original hearers.

The New Testament will many times directly quote the Old Testament prophecy, and provide the interpretation.

Messianic prophecy

- Messianic prophecy is an Old Testament foretelling of the coming of Jesus and His work of accomplishing redemption for His people.
- Why study the Old Testament at all, since the New Testament is more clear?
 - Old Testament prophecy brings glory to God.
 - The multitude of details involved in Old Testament Messianic prophecy all had to come together exactly right; this proves that God, unlike idols, declares the end from the beginning and guides all of history.
 - Old Testament prophecy gives us assurance.
 - Only Jesus fulfills all Old Testament Messianic prophecy; since God brought all these predictions, we know that God will fulfill the prophecy of the return of Christ and our resurrection.
 - The Old Testament is the foundation for New Testament understanding of salvation.
- Messianic prophecy as an example of progressive revelation; prophecy began as less detailed, and progressed to more detail.