

From our position in the opening days of the 21st century, we can just begin to see a little of God's overall plan.

The Abomination of Desolation is not an antichrist in our future. It is a building built by Moslems that has stood on Mount Moriah for over 1300 years.

The "days" and "weeks" we have studied so far were not about literal 24 hour days. Instead, the Lord was using "days" and "weeks" in a figurative way, to depict years.

Most of the Bible was written in plain language. The Bible is not composed of "oral traditions" nor "stories," as the liberals would have us believe.

The poetic books, the gospels, and the epistles are primarily literal and should be accepted verbatim. They need no special interpretation and should be understood as actual historic accounts.

But God's plan, as recorded in Scripture, embraces many writing styles: prose as well as poetry, some literal, some figurative.

Some of Scripture is even visionary and allegorical. All the way back to Joseph's time, biblical visions used figurative language (Gen 37:5-9). Peter's vision of the sheet full of unclean beasts is a New Testament example of an allegorical vision (Act 10:9-23).

An allegory is an imaginative little tale on one subject, used to illustrate concealed truths.

The same is true for biblical allegories. Much of Daniel, most of Revelation, and all of Jesus' parables are allegorical.

It is just as wrong to insist on a literal interpretation for a figurative message as it is to figuratively interpret a historic record.

Here are the two vitally important points:

1. *A figurative interpretation of literal language will lead to faulty doctrine!*
2. *A literal interpretation of figurative language will also lead to faulty doctrine!*

Both errors lead to big-time heresy, just as church history shows. If we fail to interpret God's allegories figuratively, we totally miss the Lord's message.

So how can we know the difference? How can we tell when a passage of Scripture should be literally or allegorically interpreted?

The Bible itself tells us. Most figurative passages in the Bible contain sign posts that tell us they are figurative: "the kingdom of Heaven is *like*, or *like unto*, or *as* . . .

a "wedding feast," or a "mustard seed," or a "pearl of great price," or a "king going to a far country," or a "sower going forth to sow," etc.

Now the kingdom of Heaven is not literally a wedding feast, a king in a far country, a mustard seed, a pearl, or a sower. It is only *figuratively likened* unto one!

Apocalyptic books such as Daniel and Revelation are visionary in nature. These prophetic books were written in symbolic language because the Lord intended their messages to be hidden, not because they are unimportant.