

Before we continue with our discussion of these sections of Daniel I want to look at the assignment for today. The assignment is important for itself, but I think more important for the principles of Bible interpretation that are invited in connection with it.

As you know in this class we are not trying to find out what does the Bible tell us about the future. We are trying to examine methods of looking at the book of Daniel to see what can we say with certainty about it; what are the points at which there are various possibilities of interpretation. And what are the widespread ideas about it that are false? We are trying to look at it very carefully from those viewpoints. On some matters we will not get dogmatic answers. I think we are better not to.

I find that where you take a verse or a passage of the Scripture and say, I've got to learn everything that this means is not the right approach. You do that and you get many things from it that are very valuable, and if you study Hebrew you get more. But there is a danger that you take certain things and you jump to conclusions. Then those conclusions that you jump to you later on think have been proven.

I think it is much better that you say, Here's something I don't know the answer to, here's something I don't know the answer to but you keep those things in mind. Then as you study some other part of Scripture, the answer to it is there and you would even have noticed it if you did not have the question in mind. So it is always helpful to get undertaintites in mind in order that they can be clarified from other passages rather than jumping to conclusions, where we are not sure we have sufficient evidence.

The assignment for today I want to look at before we go on. The first thing was the question as to what is literal and what is symbolic. We use figurative language in ordinary speech. A considerable amount. Most of it is quite clear to us whether it is figurative or not. Often there are cases where it may be uncertain whether it is a figure or not.

When you get a vision where Daniel saw a statue or Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue or Daniel saw four animals come up from the sea, you have absolutely no way to know what those symbols means. Unless it is explained to you. After you have the interpretation given you may have certain principles that may be helpful to you in looking at other passages. A figurative expression may be used as a figure and if it is used a great deal it can come in our minds to literally mean something different from what the words say. So it becomes literal language, but it is not accurately (?) actually what we say.

For instance I might have a discussion with someone and he didn't like what I said and got rather impassioned about it and I'd say, He tore into me. If you take that literally, he pulled off my arms and my legs! Perhaps he cut me. That's what the phrase actually says.