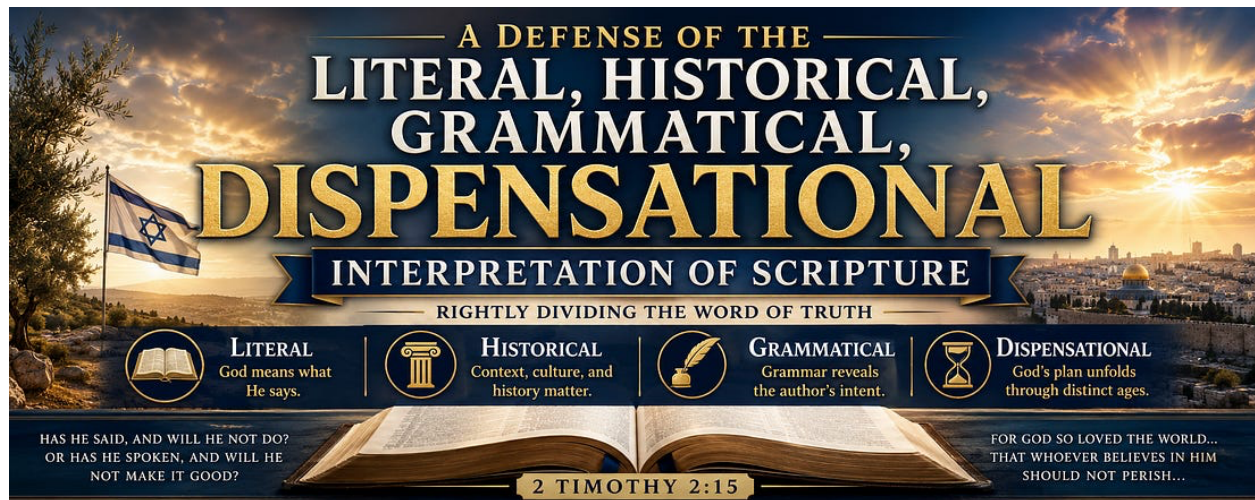


A Defense of the Literal, Historical, Grammatical, Dispensational Interpretation of Scripture



Dear friend in Christ,

I make no apology for believing that God means exactly what He says.

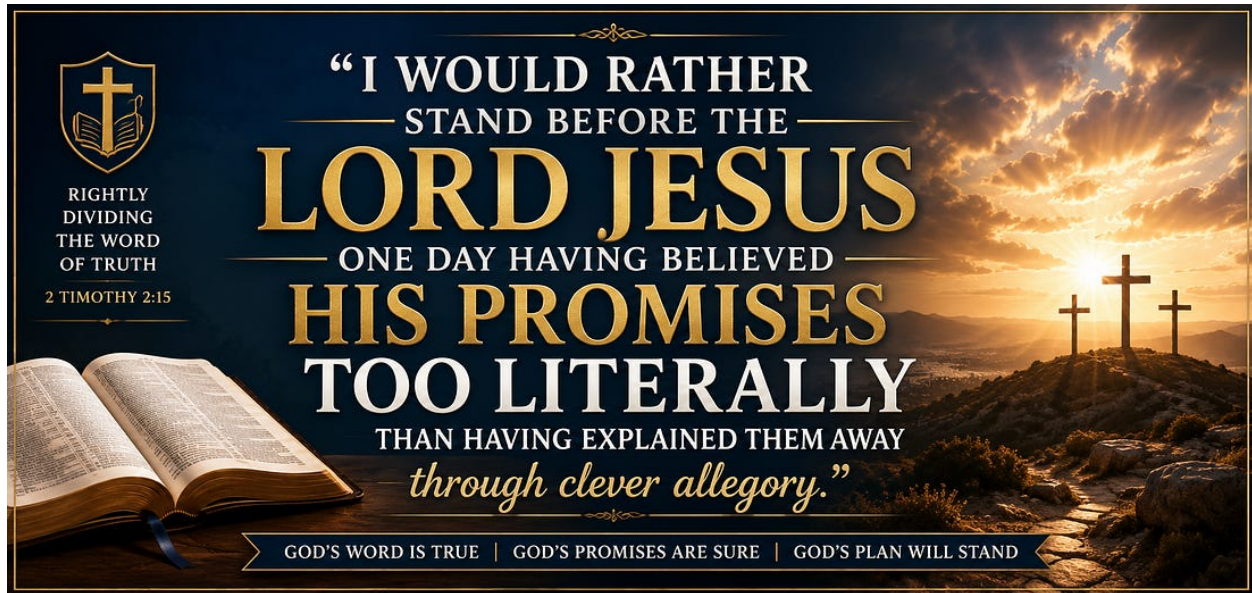
In a day when many voices seek to reinterpret, spiritualize, or soften the clear teachings of Scripture, I stand unashamedly on the conviction that the Bible is God's trustworthy revelation to mankind. The literal, historical, grammatical, and dispensational approach is not a modern gimmick, nor an attempt to force a rigid system onto the sacred text. Rather, it is the consistent and humble effort to read God's Word the way language itself is meant to be understood — with reverence for every word, every context, every historical setting, and every promise from our faithful God.

As Dr. Charles Ryrie taught with such clarity, and as J. Vernon McGee explained so faithfully through his *Thru the Bible* ministry, this method simply applies the same principles we use in everyday communication. Words have meaning. Context matters. History matters. Grammar matters. And above all, God's promises matter eternally.

When Scripture speaks poetically — as in the imagery of the Psalms — we recognize poetry. When it employs symbolism — such as the lampstands in Revelation 1 — we acknowledge symbolism. But symbols still point to something real. The literal method

does not deny figures of speech; it rejects the reckless spiritualization that empties the text of its plain, intended meaning and replaces it with human imagination.

As Chuck Smith often reminded believers, we must let the Bible speak for itself rather than forcing it to conform to our traditions.



The Foundation: A Literal Hermeneutic Honors God's Faithfulness

At the heart of this approach is the unwavering belief that God is a covenant-keeping God.

Consider the unconditional covenants He made with Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. God promised Abraham a land, a nation, and worldwide blessing — promises sealed by a unilateral covenant in which only God passed between the pieces. These promises rested not upon Abraham's perfection, but upon God's unchanging character.

The prophets built upon this foundation.

Isaiah foretold a day when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains" and nations would stream to Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2 NKJV).

Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah, where God would write His law upon their hearts and remember their sins no more (Jeremiah 31:31–34 NKJV).

Ezekiel described the regathering of Israel from the nations, the cleansing of their sins, and the restoration of the land and temple (Ezekiel 36–37).

These prophecies were given to real people facing real exile, carrying the hope of real fulfillment.

If these promises are merely allegories reassigned to the Church, then what do we do with Balaam's declaration?

“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”
— Numbers 23:19 NKJV

This is the bedrock of our confidence.

A literal interpretation upholds the integrity of God's Word because it refuses to allow human theology to sit in judgment over divine revelation.

The issue is not whether the Bible contains symbolism — of course it does.

The real issue is whether fallen man possesses the authority to redefine what God has plainly declared.

Too often, theological systems developed centuries after the apostles have reinterpreted Israel as the Church, spiritualized the coming Kingdom into a vague present reality, and blurred distinctions Scripture itself carefully maintains.

Yet the Bible consistently distinguishes:

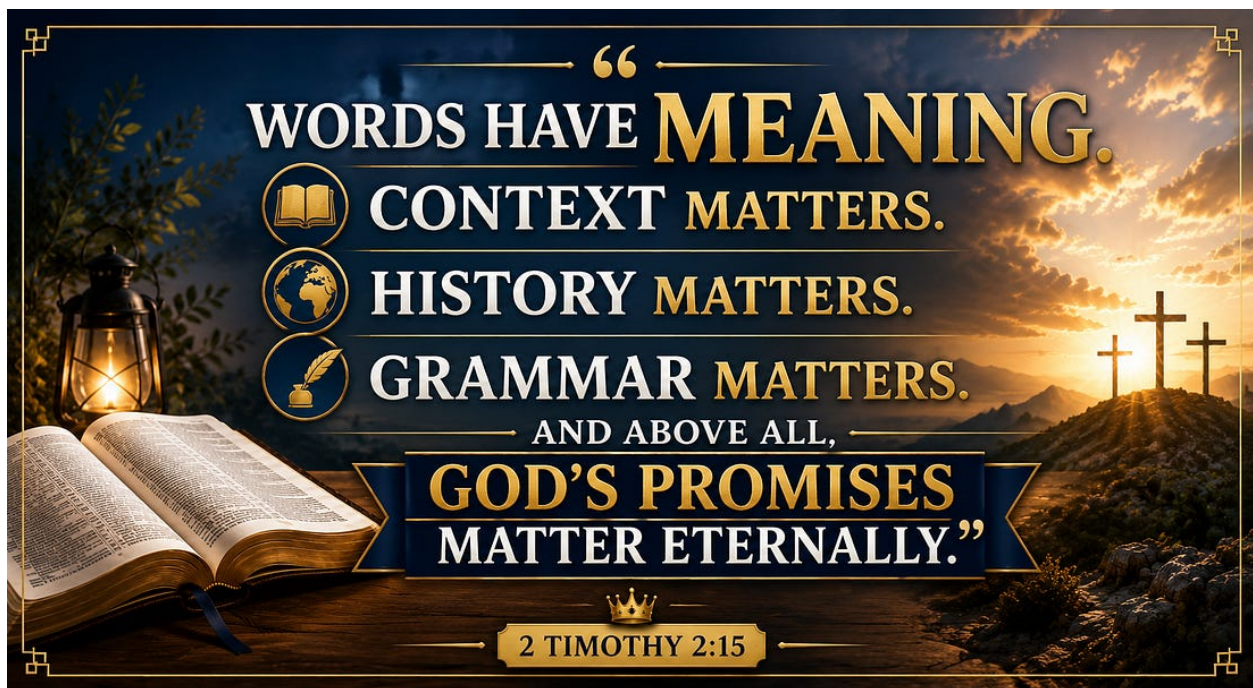
- Israel from the Church (Romans 11:1–2, 25–29; 1 Corinthians 10:32)
- The Age of Law from the Age of Grace (John 1:17; Galatians 3:23–25)

- Earthly promises to Israel from heavenly promises to the Church (Genesis 15; Ephesians 1:3; 2:6)
- Christ's suffering at His First Coming from His glory at His Second Coming (Isaiah 53; Zechariah 14:4; Revelation 19)
- The Rapture of the Church from the visible Second Coming in judgment (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; Revelation 19:11–16)

Dispensationalism did not invent these distinctions.

It simply recognizes what the text already reveals when read in its normal, plain sense.

This is the approach championed by faithful teachers and institutions such as Talbot School of Theology and Biola University, where careful exegesis and a high view of Scripture continue to be upheld.



Progressive Revelation and the Unfolding Plan of God

One of the great strengths of the dispensational framework is how beautifully it traces God's progressive revelation throughout history.

As Ryrie explained so systematically, God has administered His dealings with mankind in different ways throughout the ages, while salvation itself has always been by grace through faith.

We see this unfolding clearly:

- **Innocence** (Genesis 1–3): Man walked with God in the Garden until sin entered.
- **Conscience** (Genesis 4–8): Humanity governed by inward moral awareness.
- **Human Government** (Genesis 9–11): Authority established after the Flood to restrain evil.
- **Promise** (Genesis 12–Exodus 19): God’s covenant dealings with Abraham and his descendants.
- **Law** (Exodus 20–Acts 2): Israel under the Mosaic covenant, pointing ultimately to Christ.
- **Grace** (Acts 2–Revelation 3): The present Church Age, where Jew and Gentile are one in Christ through faith.
- **Kingdom** (Revelation 20): The future millennial reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

A LITERAL, HISTORIC, GRAMMATICAL, DISPENSATIONALIST INTERPRETATION

THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S WORD

"Rightly dividing the word of truth." – 2 Timothy 2:15

WHY THIS IS THE CORRECT APPROACH



1. LITERAL

God's words mean what they say in their normal, ordinary sense unless context indicates otherwise.

Matthew 5:18



2. HISTORIC

Scripture is grounded in real history—events, people, covenants, and promises fulfilled in real time.

Luke 1:1-4



3. GRAMMATICAL

Meaning is determined by proper grammar and the author's intended meaning in the context.

2 Peter 1:20-21



4. DISPENSATIONAL

God deals with humanity in distinct periods ("dispensations"), with different responsibilities and promises.

Ephesians 3:2



5. GOD HONORING

This approach preserves the integrity of God's promises and His sovereign plan through the ages.

Isaiah 46:9-10

GOD'S PLAN REVEALED THROUGH THE DISPENSATIONS



Each dispensation is distinct. We must not confuse Israel and the Church, Law and Grace, Earthly and Heavenly promises.

WHY THIS APPROACH CORRECTLY INTERPRETS SCRIPTURE

	RESPECTS CONTEXT Considers the historical, cultural, and literary context of each passage. <i>Acts 17:11</i>
	KEEPS SCRIPTURE CONSISTENT Harmonizes all of Scripture without forcing one meaning for all passages. <i>2 Peter 3:16</i>
	PRESERVES GOD'S PROMISES Honors the unconditional promises God made to Israel. <i>Romans 11:29</i>
	EXALTS THE GOSPEL OF GRACE Clearly distinguishes the Church age message of grace from Israel's program. <i>Galatians 2:7</i>
	GLORIFIES GOD'S SOVEREIGN PLAN Reveals God's perfect plan unfolding through time for His glory. <i>Ephesians 1:11</i>

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
– 2 Timothy 2:15



THE DANGER OF WRONG APPROACHES

	ALLEGORIZING Spiritualizes away plain meaning and God's literal promises.
	EISEGESIS Reads personal ideas into the text instead of letting Scripture speak.
	DISPENSATIONAL CONFUSION Mixes Israel and the Church, Law and Grace—causing contradiction.
	DOUBTS GOD'S PROMISES Leads to denying the future fulfillment of God's covenants with Israel.
	UNDERMINES ASSURANCE Destroys the clear message of salvation by grace through faith.



HOLD FAST THE PATTERN OF SOUND WORDS. RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH.
THE LITERAL, HISTORIC, GRAMMATICAL, DISPENSATIONALIST APPROACH
EXALTS CHRIST, HONORS GOD'S WORD, AND REVEALS HIS GLORIOUS PLAN.

2 TIMOTHY 1:13



Salvation has never been earned through works.

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6).
The same truth echoes through Ephesians 2:8–9:

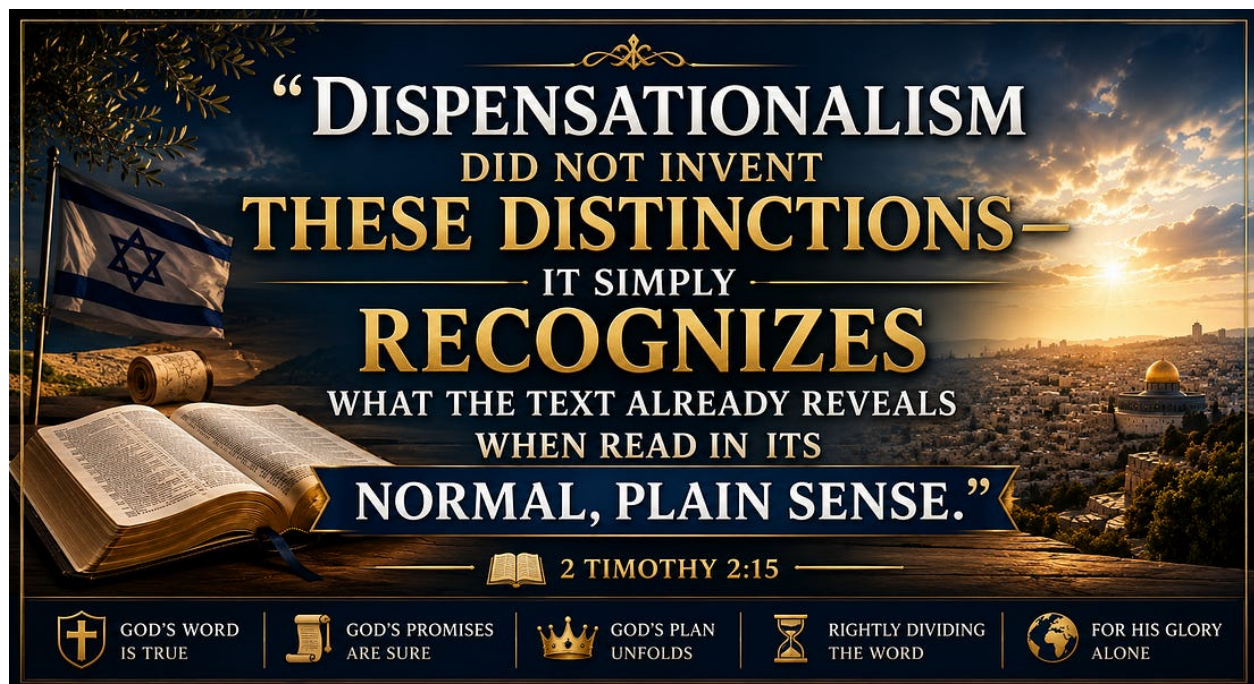
“For by grace you have been saved through faith... it is the gift of God.”

Yet God’s prophetic program for Israel remains distinct from His present work through the Church, the Body of Christ.

This is not confusion.

It is divine order.

As McGee often illustrated, the Bible is like a great jigsaw puzzle — every piece fits perfectly when placed where God intended.



Why Abandon Literal Interpretation Only in Prophecy?

We already apply literal interpretation everywhere else in Scripture without hesitation.

We believe Jesus literally died upon the cross, literally rose from the dead, literally ascended into heaven, and will literally return.

We accept that Jerusalem was a literal city, Babylon a literal kingdom, and David a literal king.

Why, then, do some suddenly abandon literal interpretation when prophecy enters the discussion?

The moment interpretation becomes untethered from the normal meaning of words, theology drifts into dangerous subjectivity.

One scholar allegorizes Israel.

Another redefines the resurrection.

Another softens future judgment.

Eventually, certainty dissolves beneath human opinion.

A faithful hermeneutic protects us from this.

Historical interpretation asks:

What did this mean to the original audience?

Grammatical interpretation asks:

What do the words actually say?

Literal interpretation asks:

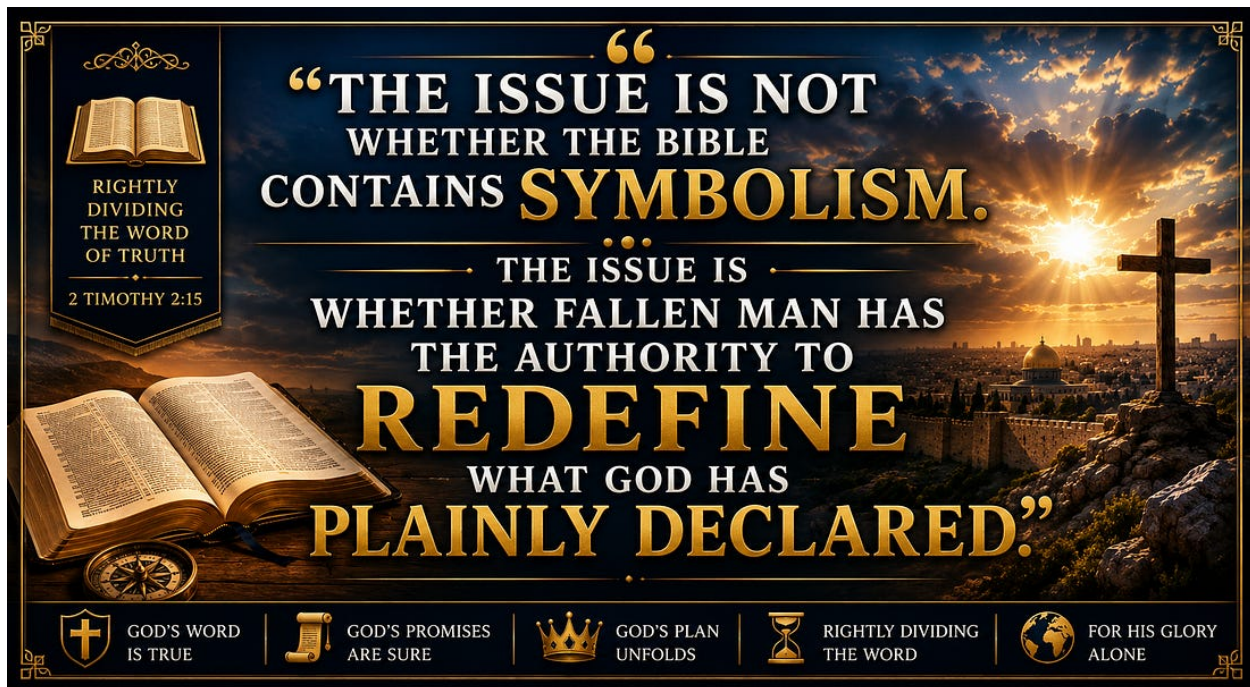
What is the normal meaning unless the context clearly indicates otherwise?

Dispensational interpretation asks:

Where does this fit within God's unfolding redemptive program?

Together, these principles form a consistent, intellectually honest, and Spirit-led approach to biblical interpretation.

They compel us to submit to the text rather than reshape it to fit preconceived theology.



Addressing Common Criticisms with Grace and Clarity

Some sincere believers criticize dispensationalism as mechanical, pessimistic, or overly recent.

Yet the core convictions — distinctions between Israel and the Church, a future earthly Kingdom, and Christ’s imminent return — are deeply rooted in Scripture itself.

Far from diminishing the Gospel, this framework magnifies:

- the faithfulness of God,
- the centrality of Jesus Christ,
- the future hope of Israel,
- and the urgency of evangelism.

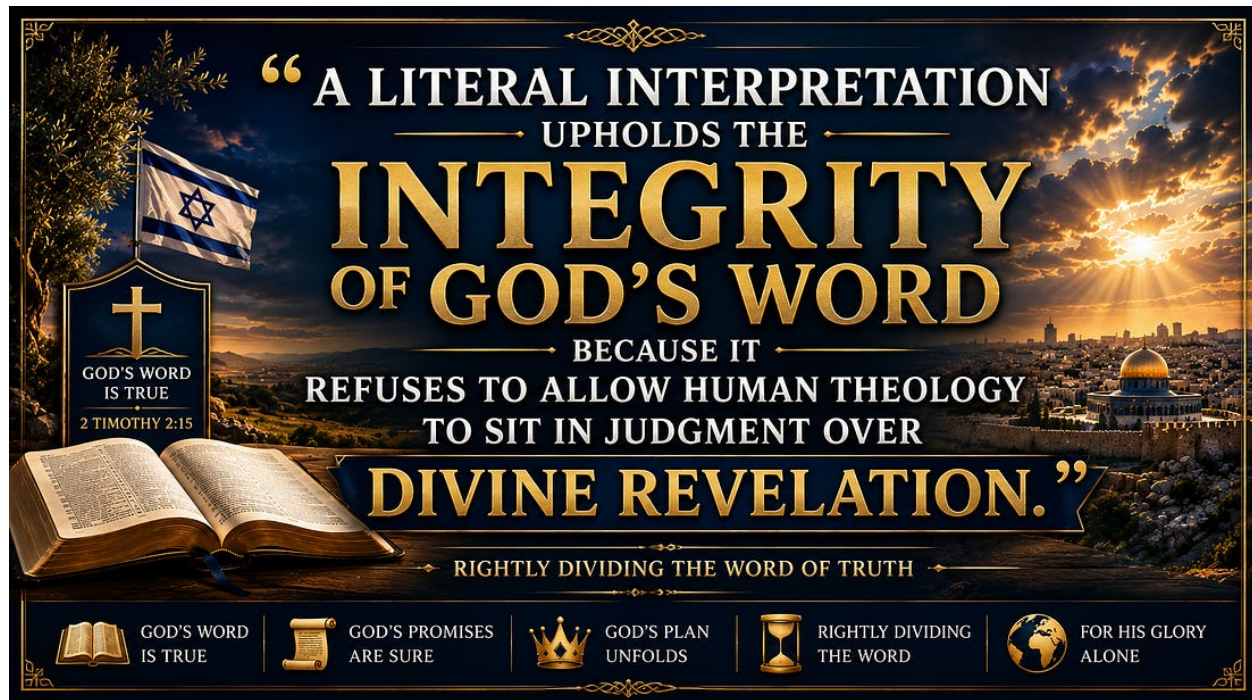
It inspires holy living because “the Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5 NKJV).

It comforts believers with the Blessed Hope — the imminent return of Christ for His Church.

We understand that Matthew 24 primarily concerns Israel during the coming Tribulation period, not the Church. The Church is not appointed unto wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Daniel's seventieth week concerns Israel's prophetic timeline, with the final week still future.

These truths, rightly divided, bring clarity rather than confusion, hope rather than fear.



The Practical Power for Daily Living

This interpretation is not merely academic.

It changes how we live.

It reminds us that world events — particularly concerning Israel — are not random, but unfold beneath the sovereign hand of God. Israel's regathering in 1948 stands as a powerful testimony to God's covenant faithfulness and a reminder that the prophetic stage is being set.

It calls us to evangelism with renewed urgency.

As Billy Graham faithfully proclaimed for decades, the Gospel must go forth while the door of grace remains open.

It also calls us to personal holiness, discipleship, and expectancy.

“The King is coming.”

And above all, this framework keeps Jesus Christ at the center of everything.

He is:

- the promised Seed of Abraham,
- the Lion of the tribe of Judah,
- the coming King who will reign from Jerusalem,
- and the eternal Bridegroom of the Church.



A Personal Challenge and Gospel Invitation

My dear friend, I would rather stand before the Lord one day having believed His promises too literally than having explained them away through clever allegory.

As the Apostle Paul charged Timothy:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

— 2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV

Will you join me in this commitment?

Approach God’s Word with humility and reverence.

Compare Scripture with Scripture.

Trust the Holy Spirit to illuminate truth.

Study the covenants.

Trace the promises.

Watch how every road in the Bible leads to Jesus Christ.

And if you have never trusted in Christ alone for salvation, I invite you today.

The same Jesus who died for your sins and rose again offers forgiveness and eternal life as a free gift of grace.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

— John 3:16 NKJV

Salvation is by grace through faith.

Nothing more.

Nothing less.

And for those of us who know Him, may the Blessed Hope purify our hearts and strengthen our mission.

Jesus is coming soon — perhaps today.

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

— Revelation 22:20 NKJV

May the Lord richly bless you as you study His Word, walk in His truth, and look for His glorious appearing.

To Him be all glory, now and forever.

Amen.

Robert Rousseau

Candlefish Ministries John 1:5

https://candlefish.substack.com/p/a-defense-of-the-literal-historical?publication_id=5761924&post_id=198923000&isFreemail=true&r=izcsb&triedRedirect=true