

Biblical Interpretation

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“The literal meaning is the simple meaning of the words. When you read a news article in the newspaper, it may tell you basic facts about something that happened. For example, the sports page might say that the Detroit Tigers were going to New York to play the Yankees. You would simply realize that one baseball team was travelling to play a baseball game with another team. You would not understand this as some kind of code language to indicate the movement of foreign spies west to east. On the other hand, you would not “literalistically” assume that the Detroit Zoo was sending ferocious animals (tigers) to New York, either. The context is the sports page. The Detroit Tigers is a baseball team. The simple, literal (some might say obvious) meaning is that two teams will play a baseball game in New York” (Keller, Brian. Bible, p. 183).

What dangers are there in seeking out mysterious coded meanings from the Bible? Can you think of any examples?

Why does Keller warn against a “literalistic” interpretation?

Explain the importance of context in interpreting Scripture.

If we have trouble interpreting a particular passage, how should we proceed?

Why are there so many misinterpretations?

1 Thessalonians 2:13: And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

John 17:17: Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Deuteronomy 4:2: Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.