

***Overview of Basic Hermeneutical Principles***  
**Adapted from the CTCR Report on “The End Times” – 1989**  
**with supplementation for clarification purposes**

1. **The Bible is the Word of God.** In this principle we believe that the Bible as originally written by the writers in their original languages is the Word of God. It is without error. We also believe that God has miraculously preserved His Word and that the Bible is complete. We will admit that when the Bible is translated to other languages, sometimes errors in translation can occur. However, any errors in translation throughout the ages are minor in nature and do not affect our faith or doctrines in any way.
2. **Scripture interprets Scripture.** In this principle we believe that clear passages of Scripture should be used to interpret less clear passages. We also believe in the unity of the Scriptures in terms of purpose and understanding.
3. **Christological Focus of Scripture.** It is the position of the LCMS that the central figure of the Bible is our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. The central theme or purpose of the Bible is to reveal that we are justified (and therefore saved) by grace through faith in Christ.
4. **Symbolic vs Literal Interpretation of Scripture.** The Scriptures contain many types of literature. Scripture can be apocalyptic, poetic, historical, epistolary, etc. Although all Scripture has unity, the type of literature of a particular book needs to be considered when it comes to literal vs symbolic interpretation.
5. **There is a Type/Antitype nature to Scripture.** For instance, Joshua in the Old Testament is a “type” of Christ in the New Testament. Another example would be that Old Testament Israel prefigures Christ and His Church and the land of Israel prefigures Christ and the New Heaven and New Earth.
6. **Shortened Perspective** (telescoping of time), especially when interpreting prophecy. This means that a verse may be referring to more than one period in the history of mankind. “Events in the near and the distant future are often telescoped into one picture...Sometimes the prophets focus on the immediate future and at other times on the distant future; however, both are seen at the same time. - CTCR”
7. **Historical Perspective** – what did the passage mean at that time in history to the people to whom it was written? However, it is the position of the LCMS that “For each passage of Scripture, there is one literal meaning.” (*Sensus literalis unus est.*) Scripture was not written to mean different things to different people at different times. The task of studying Scripture is not, “What does this mean to you today?” but simply, “What does this mean?” This is what sets Historical **Critical** hermeneutics apart from Historical **Grammatical** hermeneutics. The latter method of hermeneutics is what is employed by the LCMS and other conservative church bodies who believe that the Bible is the Word of God.