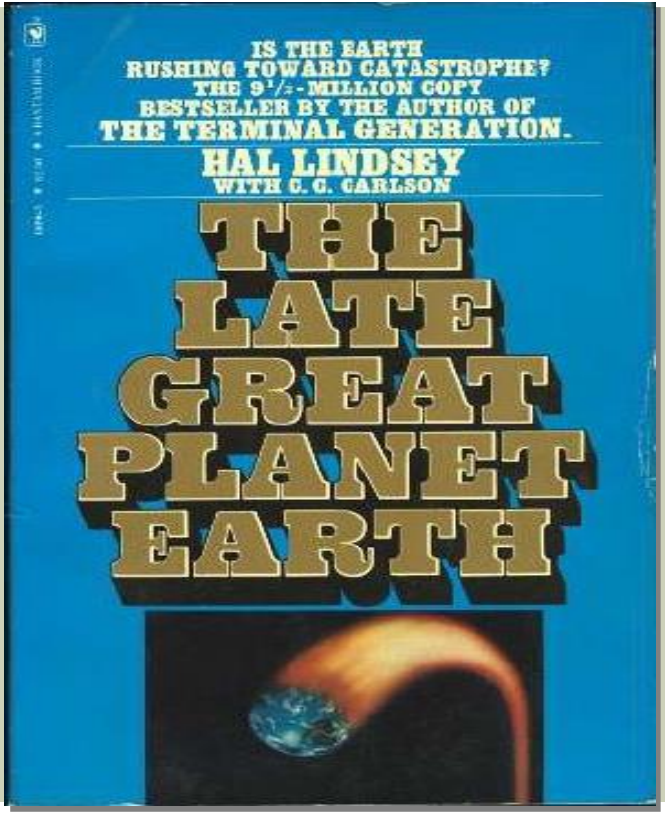
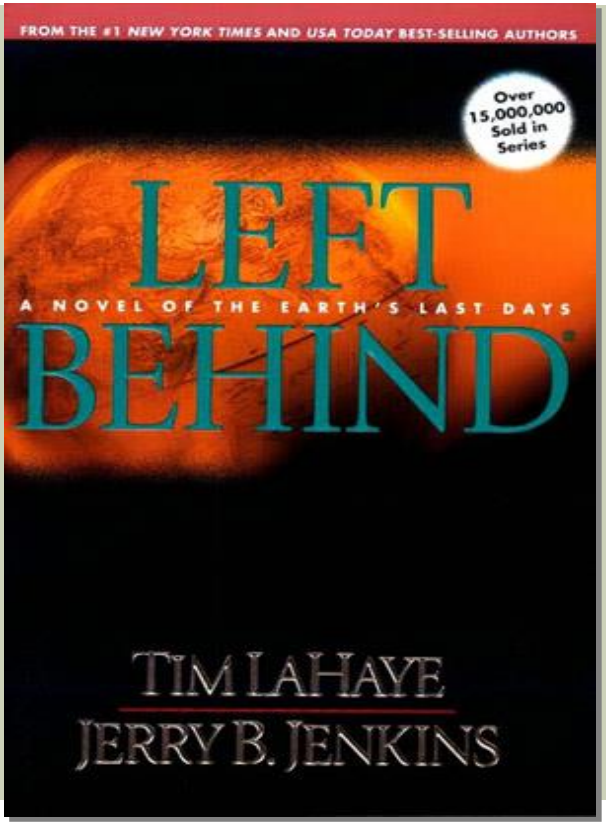
PREACHING PROPHECY: THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF PREDICTIVE PROPHECY

(Part 1)

THE LATE, GREAT PLANET EARTH



LEFT BEHIND SERIES



I. THE KEY DEFINITIONS

- Prophecy
  - *Prophetes* (profh,thj)
  - From two Greek words:
    - *Pro* = before
    - *Phemi* = to speak
  - Means “to speak before” or “to speak for another”
  - Ex. 7:1-4; 4:10-16
  - Two distinct forms
    - 1) Predictive revelation
    - 2) Moral or ethical revelation

I. THE KEY DEFINITIONS

- Eschatology
  - *Eschatos* = last
  - *Logos* = speech or discourse
  - "a speech or discourse about last things"
  - Based on the biblical expressions:
    - "Last days" (Is. 2:2; Mic. 4:1)
    - "Last time" (1 Pet. 1:5)
    - "Last hour" (1 John 2:18)

II. THE COMMON PITFALLS

- A. Being preoccupied with eschatology
- B. Satisfying curiosity without personal application
- C. Being sensational
- D. Being overly and equally dogmatic about every
- E. Setting dates
- F. Ignoring or undervaluing prophecy
- G. Refusing to interpret and take a position

III. ITS CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE

- A. The Percentage of Revelation
- B. The Priority in the Ministry of Jesus
- C. The Ministry Example of the Apostles
  - Paul
  - John
- D. The Purpose of Eschatology or Prophecy

D. THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

1. Rebukes sin & calls for repentance (Jer. 18:1-11)
2. Produces purity of life (1 John 3:1-3)
3. Provides comfort (1 Th. 4:14-18)
4. Creates spiritual stability (1 Cor. 15:58)
5. Stimulates a desire for service (2 Cor. 5:9-10)
6. Produces conversion (Acts 3:12-23)

IV. THE FUNDAMENTALS IN ESCHATOLOGY

- 1) The eternal soul of every human being.
- 2) The temporary separation at death of the material and immaterial parts of man.
- 3) The present existence of a literal heaven and hell.
- 4) The immediate passing of the soul at death into either heaven or hell.
- 5) The consciousness of all the dead.
- 6) The literal, bodily return of Jesus Christ.
- 7) The physical resurrection of every human being.
- 8) The future judgment of every human being.
- 9) The eternal, conscious existence of every human either in the lake of fire or the new heavens and the new earth.

V. THE CREATION OF AN *ORDO ESCHATOS*

- A. Understanding the Different Views
  - 1. Distinctions in Eschatology
    - The timing of the rapture of the church
    - The nature of the Tribulation
    - The nature of the millennium
    - How many resurrections
    - How many and what judgments
    - The place of Israel in prophecy

V. THE CREATION OF AN *ORDO ESCHATOS*

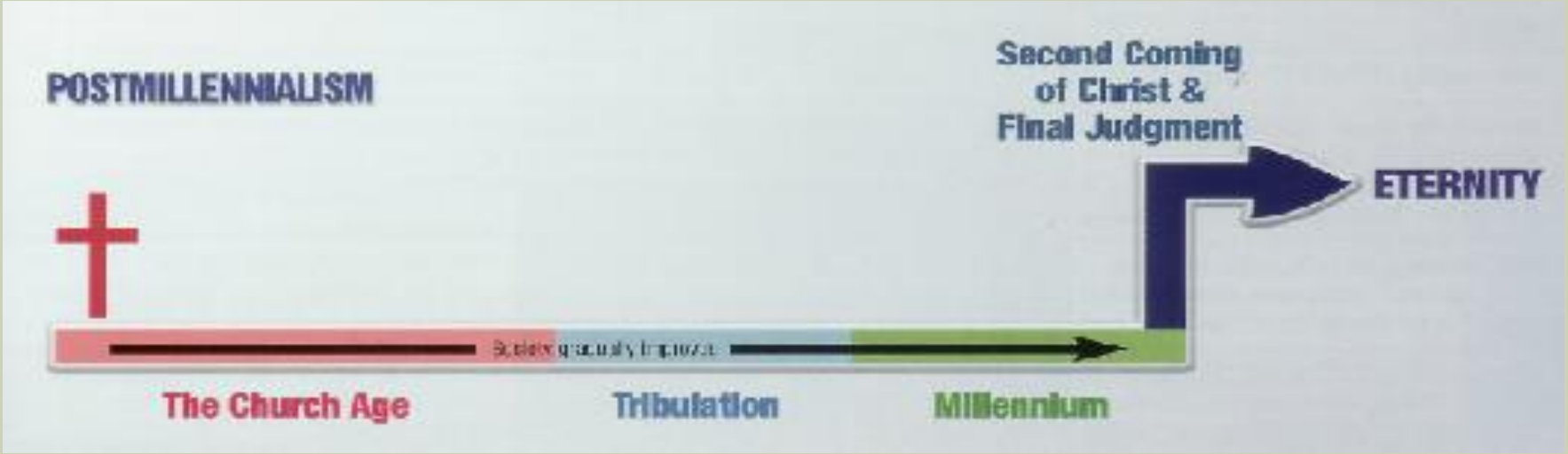
- A. Understanding the Different Views
  - 1. Distinctions in Eschatology
  - 2. Basic Views of Eschatology

BASIC VIEWS OF ESCHATOLOGY

- Postmillennialism
- Amillenialism
- Historic Premillennialism (Classic)
- Pre-tribulational Premillennialism (Dispensational)

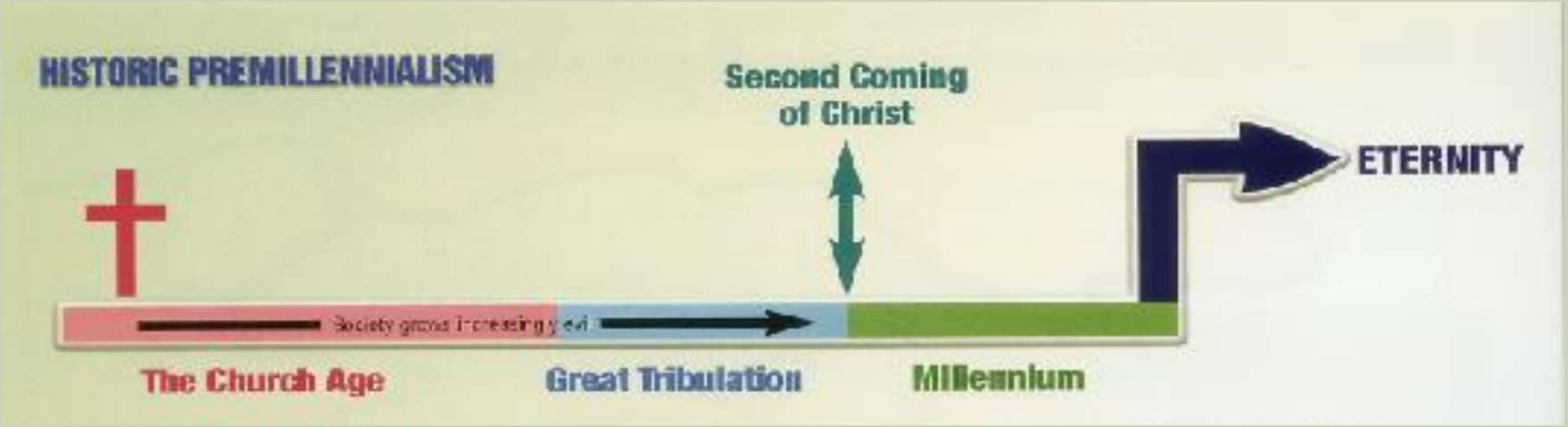
* Following charts from *Rose Book of Bible Charts*

POSTMILLENNIALISM

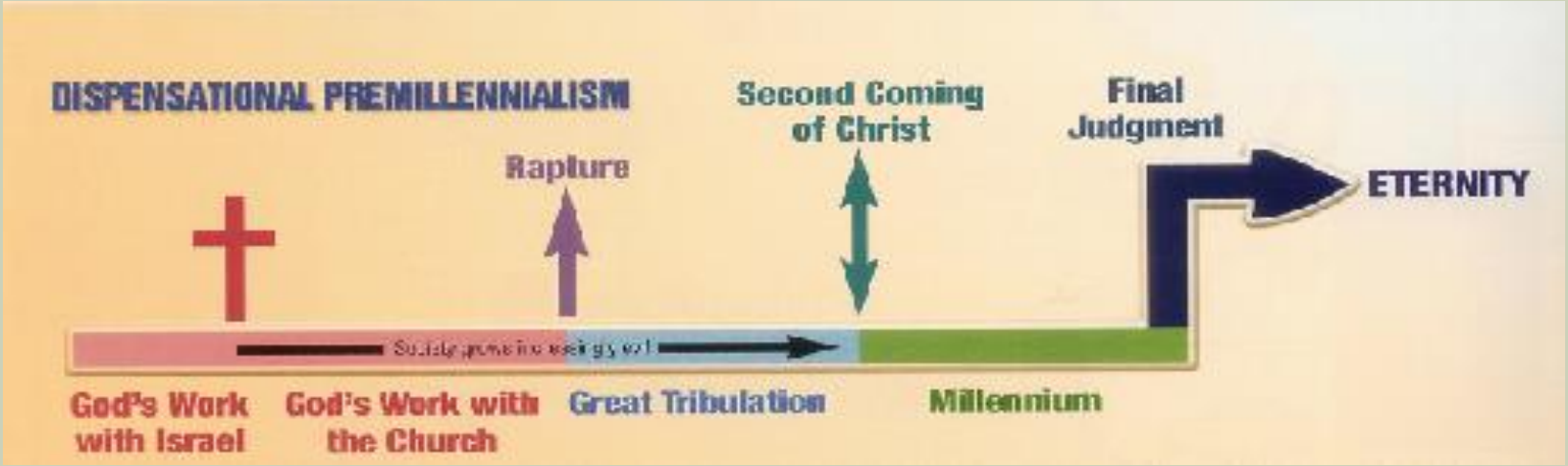


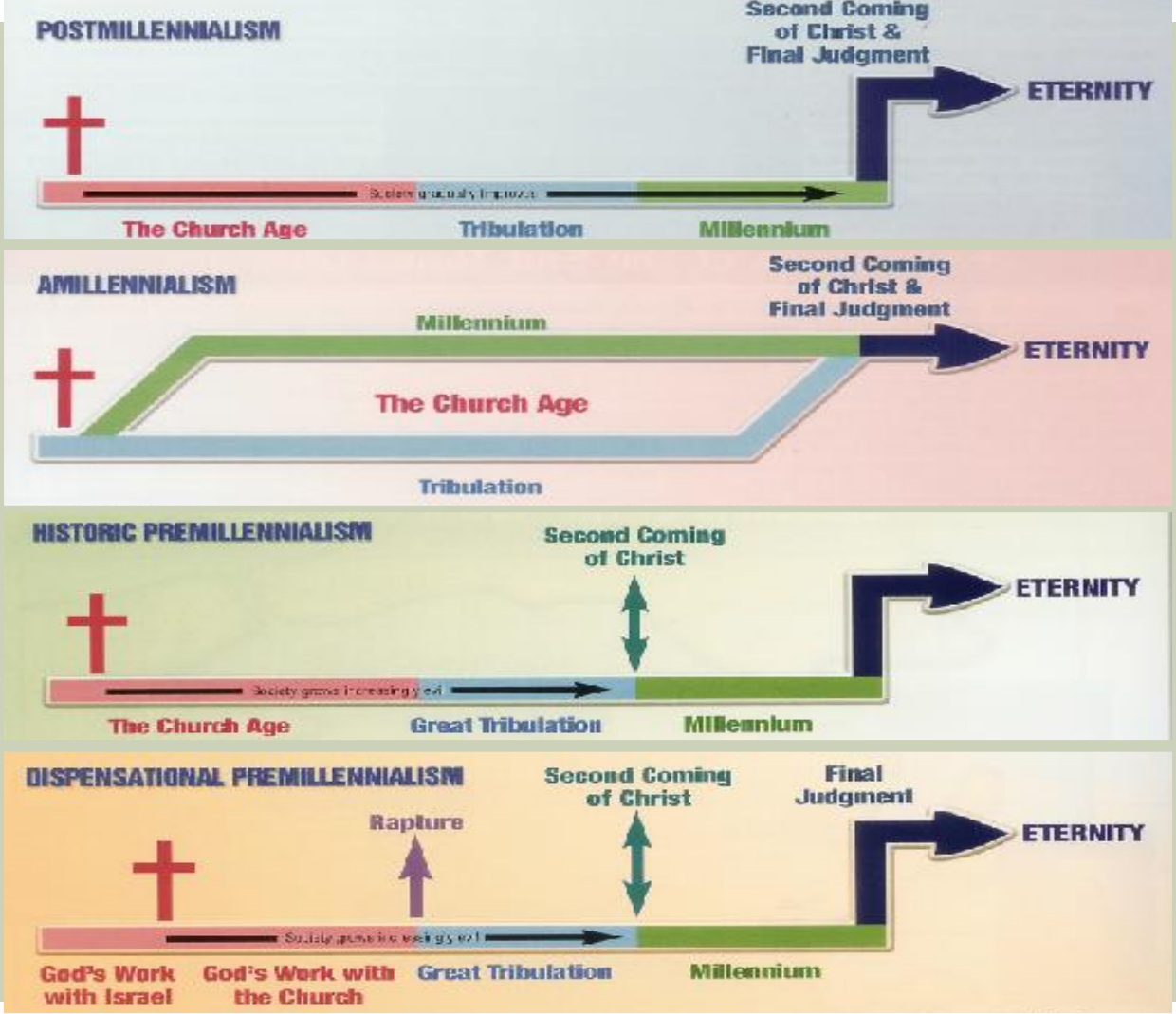
AMILLENIALISM

HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM (CLASSIC)



PRE-TRIBULATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM (DISPENSATIONAL)




POSTMILLENNIALISM
Second Coming of Christ & Final Judgment
ETERNITY
The Church Age
Tribulation
Millennium
AMILLENNIALISM
Second Coming of Christ & Final Judgment
Millennium
ETERNITY
The Church Age
Tribulation
HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM
Second Coming of Christ
ETERNITY
The Church Age
Great Tribulation
Millennium
DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM
Second Coming of Christ
Final Judgment
Rapture
ETERNITY
God's Work with Israel
God's Work with the Church
Great Tribulation
Millennium

B. CREATING A BIBLICAL *ORDO ESCHATOS*

- **1. The Book of Revelation**
  - Rev. 1:19 – "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.
  - Prophetic or predictive prophecy when it was written
  - Various interpretative methods

FIVE COMMON INTERPRETATIVE APPROACHES

- 1) **Idealist (Symbolical)**
- Definition:
  - a timeless depiction of the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil; not predictive; by symbol, it teaches spiritual principles that should be true of the church in every age.
- Objections:
  - Disregards the clear prophetic claims
  - Complete Subjectivism

FIVE COMMON INTERPRETATIVE APPROACHES

- 2) **Preterist**
- Definition:
  - a description of events already occurring in the 1st century throughout the Roman Empire, including the persecutions of Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem; only the last few chapters were predictive.
- Objections:
  - Open to complete subjectivism
  - Disregard for the book's direct claim to be prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19)
  - In its extreme form it is heresy.
    - Hyper-preterism, full preterism, or realized eschatology.
    - 2nd Coming, the resurrection, and Great White Throne are all past events.
    - No prophecy remains unfulfilled
    - The existing universe is the New Heavens and the New Earth.
    - Cf. 2 Tim. 2:18 – Hymenaeus and Philetus.

FIVE COMMON INTERPRETATIVE APPROACHES

- 3) **Historist**
- Definition:
  - a panorama of church history from the time of the apostles until the end of time.
- Objections:
  - Complete subjectivism
  - Disregard for the book's own internal timelines (11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5)

FIVE COMMON INTERPRETATIVE APPROACHES

- 4) **Recapitulationist (progressive parallelism)**
- Definition:
  - "the seven sections of Revelation cover the period of the church age between Christ's first and second advents from repeated (but in some ways different) perspectives in ascending, climatic order, with special emphasis on end times." Reymond
- Objections;
  - Subjectivism
  - Ignores a literal hermeneutic

FIVE COMMON INTERPRETATIVE APPROACHES

- 5) **Futurist**
- Definition:
  - the events of 6-22 are predictive and are all yet in the future; literally and symbolically describe actual people and events.
- Support:
  - Consistent with prophetic claims throughout
  - Consistent with the devastating apocalyptic images
  - Built on the grammatical-historical approach
  - Consistent with the interpretation of the Early Church

THE BASIC FLOW

- The Tribulation (6:1—19:10)
- The Second Coming (19:11-21)
- The Millennium (20:1-6)
- The Great White Throne (20:7-15)
- The New Heavens & New Earth (21:1—22:21)

WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

- **1-3** –the church is on earth; word *church* occurs 19x
- **4-5** –the church is in heaven (the elders represent the church)
- **19:1-10** –the church in heaven but returning with Christ
- **19:7** – the wife of the Lamb
- **19:11-21** –the church returns with Christ at His Second Coming.
- **21:9** –the wife of the Lamb
- **22:17** –the bride
- The implication: the church is caught away before the 2nd Coming.
- When?
  - Not on earth from the end of chapter 3 until the 2nd Coming in chapter 19

2. A FINAL DRAFT OF THE *ORDO ESCHATOS*

- Death
- Intermediate State
  - Related issues: purgatory; soul sleep
- Rapture
  - Related issues: resurrection; and Judgment Seat of Christ
- Tribulation (7 years)
  - Related issues: main characters – Beast, False Prophet, & Satan; Daniel's 70th week; Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls
- 2nd Coming
  - Related issues: Armageddon; salvation of Israel; Judgment of the Nations;
- Millennium (1,000 years)
  - Related events: Millennial Temple (?); role of Israel and the church;
- Great White Throne
  - Related Issues: one judgment or several; who is judged;
- Eternal State
  - Related issues: New Heavens & Earth; lake of fire; annihilationism

A BIBLICAL *ORDO ESCHATOS*

Unknown duration		Event	7 Years	Event	1000 Years	Event	Eternity
Death	Intermediate State	Rapture	Tribulation	2nd Coming	Millennium	Great White Throne	Eternal State
Soul in Heaven Body in Grave		Resurrection	Heaven	Return to Earth	Earth	Present	New Heaven/ Earth

C. APPLYING OUR *ORDO ESCHATOS*

- 1. An Impetus to Holiness (2 Pet. 3:11-14, 17-18)
- 2. A Cause for Worship
  - God's future plan for the salvation of Israel calls for the adoration of God's Wisdom (Rom. 11:33ff).
  - God's Glory is the stated goal of the plan (2 Pet. 3:18)
  - Other examples from Revelation

A CAUSE FOR WORSHIP

- God's Power
  - 11:17-18 – "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. 18 "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time *came* for the dead to be judged, and *the time* to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."
- God's Holiness
  - 15:3-4 – they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! 4 "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED."
- God's Justice
  - 16:5 – I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things.

C. APPLYING OUR *ORDO ESCHATOS*

- 1. An Impetus to Holiness
- 2. A Cause of Worship
- 3. A Reason for Courage (2 Tim. 4:18)

PREACHING PROPHECY: THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF PREDICTIVE PROPHECY

(Part 2)

REVIEW OF PART ONE

- I. The Key Definitions of Eschatology
- II. The Common Pitfalls of Eschatology
- III. The Crucial Importance of Eschatology
- IV. The Fundamentals in Eschatology
- V. The Creation of an *Ordo Eschatos*

VI. INTERPRET IN THE CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE'S OVERARCHING THEME.

- Eph. 3:11 – God's "eternal purpose"
  - Lit., "the purpose of the ages"
- **The unifying theme of Scripture: God is redeeming a people for His Son, by His Son, to His own glory.**
  - OT: He's Coming
  - Gospels: He Came
  - Epistles: Why He Came & What He's Doing Now
  - Revelation: He's Coming Again

VII. USE A CONSISTENT HERMENEUTIC.

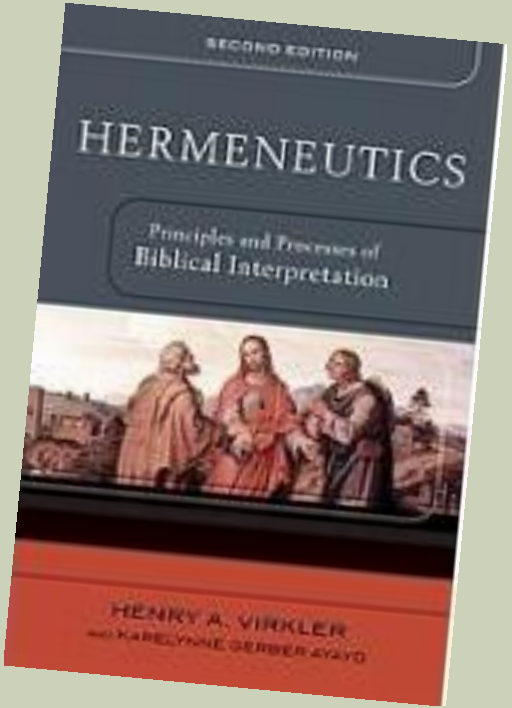
- Bible study ultimately has three objectives:
  - 1) What does it say?
    - The process of discovering this is called exegesis.
  - 2) What does it mean?
    - The science for determining the meaning of a passage is called hermeneutics.
  - 3) What should I do with it?
    - This is called application.

THE MEANING OF INTERPRETATION

- **Definition**: Interpretation is the proper use of generally accepted principles to determine the one, divinely-intended meaning of the passage.

A. THE NORMAL, GRAMMATICAL/HISTORICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

- Recommended resources…
  - 1) *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart.
  - 2) *Knowing Scripture* by R.C. Sproul.
  - 3) *Hermeneutics* by Henry Virkler.
  - 4) *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* by Bernard Ramm.



A. THE NORMAL, GRAMMATICAL/HISTORICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

- **1. Interpret based on authorial intent.**
  - Matt. 22:29 - Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.
  - John 5:39 - "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;
  - 2 Pet. 3:15-16 - regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

A. THE NORMAL, GRAMMATICAL/HISTORICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

- **2. Interpret Scripture with Scripture.**
  - "The Analogy of faith"
  - "Scripture interprets Scripture."
    - 1st occurrence = the total Scripture.
    - 2nd occurrence = any part of Scripture, such as a verse or passage.
    - Restated the principle is: The entire Scripture is the context and guide for understanding any particular passage of Scripture.

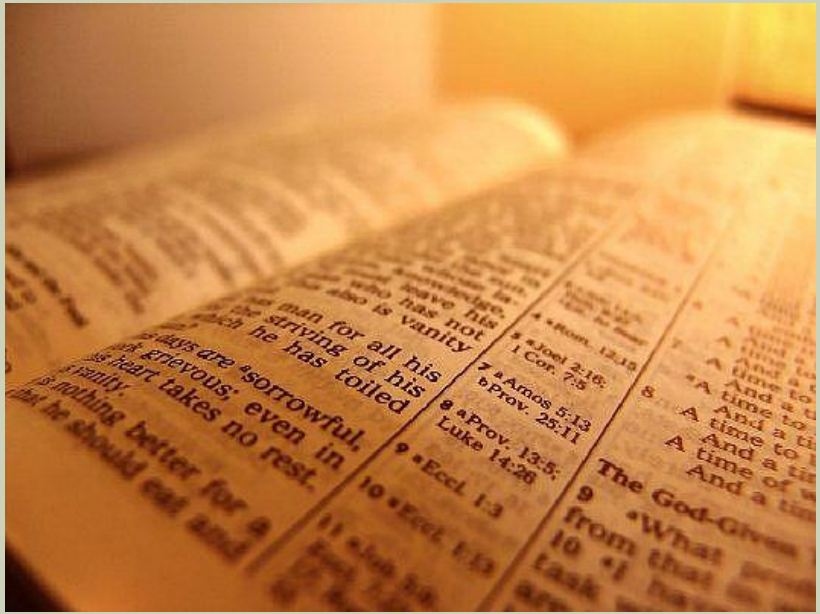
A. THE NORMAL, GRAMMATICAL/HISTORICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

- **2. Interpret Scripture with Scripture.**
  - 2 Tim. 3:16 - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
  - 1 Cor. 2:10-13; 2 Pet. 1:20-21
  - Implications…
    - 1) Don't interpret a text in isolation from rest of Scripture.
    - 2) The clear should interpret the obscure.

A. THE NORMAL, GRAMMATICAL/HISTORICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

- **3. Interpret literally.**
  - The grammatical-historical method
  - As with other literature, we must interpret the Bible in the simplest, most literal sense, unless there is indication in the context not to do so.
  - Implications…
    - **1)** Context rules.
    - **2)** Pay attention to the words, syntax, culture, and history.
    - **3)** Pay attention to genres (Fee & Stuart)

GENRES OF SCRIPTURE



- a) Law
- b) Narrative
- c) Poetry
- d) Proverbs
- e) Prophecy
- f) Parables
- g) Epistles

A. THE NORMAL, GRAMMATICAL/HISTORICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

- 1) Interpret based on authorial intent.
- 2) Interpret Scripture with Scripture.
- 3) Interpret literally.

B. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- Virkler: “the majority of evangelical scholars (Ramm, Berkof, Tenney, Pentecost, Payne, et. al) concur that the interpretation of prophecy starts with the procedures we have labeled as contextual, historical-cultural, lexical-syntactical, and theological analyses."

B. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- 1) Identify the speaker/prophet/preacher.
- 2) Identify the original audience.
- 3) Survey the historical context of the prophecy.
- 4) Determine the overarching theme of the book in which the prophecy appears.
- 5) Consider how the prophecy fits into the book's overall theme and into the context of earlier revelation.
- 6) Study the prophecy using the normal, grammatical/historical method.

B. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- 6) Study the prophecy using the normal, grammatical/historical method.
- Who is the prophecy about?
  - Israel? Judah? The Messiah?
- When was the prophecy expected to be fulfilled?
  - Before during or after the first advent? At the second advent?
- What are the local, temporal, cultural issues in the prophecy, and what is the fundamental idea still awaiting fulfillment?
  - E.g., Horses and chariots in the battle of Armageddon may refer to the transportation available at that time.
  - E.g., Swords and spears may refer to contemporary armaments.

B. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- Some special issues to be aware of…
  - Pay close attention to these poetic features…
    - Imagery, figures of speech, parallelism, symbols, and the emotion.
  - Beware of prophetic telescoping.
    - J Barton Payne: "biblical prophecy made leap from one prominent peak in predictive typography to another, without notice of the valley between, which may involve no inconsiderable lapse in chronology."
  - Be aware of developmental fulfillment.
    - E.g., Genesis 3:15 and the bruising of Satan's head.
    - When was that prophecy fulfilled?
      - It begins with Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension (John 12:31-32; Rev. 12:5, 10).
      - It continues in the church (Rom. 16:20).
      - It will end with Satan's imprisonment for thousand years (Rev. 20:3) and the Lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).
  - If the New Testament uses, interprets, or applies a specific prophecy, make sure that you use that in your explanation.

B. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- 7) Write out the essence of the prophecy's message:
  - a) immediate (already) or future (not yet).
  - b) conditional or unconditional
  - c) theology proper — the permanent theology in the passage is always the most crucial element in preaching a passage of prophecy.
- 8) Consider how the author wanted the original readers to apply the prophecy.
- 9) Apply the prophecy to your own audience, as much as possible staying close to the original application.

C. THE TYPES OF THE PROPHECY

- **1) Judgment**
  - **a)** The woe oracles
    - Begin with the Hebrew word *hoy*, which can be translated as “Woe” or “alas.”
    - E.g., Is. 5; 10:1-11; 28:1-4, 15; 30:1-3; 31:1-4; Amos 5:18—6:7; Micah 2:1-4; Hab. 2:6-19
  - **b)** The prophetic lawsuit (or *rib*)
    - YHWH summons Israel to court to hear His case against them.
    - Is. 41:21-29; Micah 6:1-8
  - **c)** The oracles against foreign nations.
    - In the Major prophets over 25 chapters are devoted to this form.
    - E.g., Is. 13:-23; Jer. 46-51; Ezek. 25-32
    - Also, Nahum (Nineveh) and Obadiah (Edom)
    - Either judgment and/or salvation.
    - Either near future or distant future
- **2) Salvation**
  - Temporal or spiritual
- **3) Restoration**
  - Near future or distant future
- **4) Apocalyptic**
  - The name comes from Revelation 1:1, from which the title of the book of Revelation was taken.
  - In Greek, *revelation* is *apocalypsis*, or "uncovering."
  - Kaiser: “A specialized form of prophecy that focuses on events surrounding the second coming of Christ and the last things that God will do in history before he ushers in the eternal state.”
  - Often characterized by the principle of already/not yet.

D. THE NORMAL MEANING OF WORDS

- 1) Unless there are clues that the language is figurative…
  - If there are no clues of figurative language in the context, take it literally.
    - E.g., 1,000 years in Revelation 20.
  - If there are clues in the context, then interpret the language figuratively.
    - E.g., a woman sitting on 7 hills (Rev. 12:1).
    - E.g., a sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus (Rev. 19:15).
- 2) Unless the explicit teaching of the NT justifies the symbolic or typological interpretation.

E. THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST & HIS ATONEMENT

- **1) The Person of Christ**
  - In Unger's *Guide to the Bible*: "The theme of Scripture is human redemption. The principal character is the world's Redeemer, Jesus Christ, God incarnate.

CHRIST PERMEATES PROPHECY.

- Would be a Human Being
  - Gen. 3:15 – I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."
- From one man and nation
  - Gen. 12:1-3 – the Seed who will bring blessing upon all the nations will come through the descendants of one man, Abraham, and the nation that comes from him.
- From one tribe in Israel
  - Gen. 49:10 – “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples.

CHRIST PERMEATES PROPHECY.

- From one family in Judah
  - 2 Sam. 7:16 – "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."'"
- Born in one particular town
  - Micah 5:2 - "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."
- Born of a virgin and both human and divine.
  - Is. 7:14 - "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.
- Accomplish redemption by the sacrifice of Himself.
  - The Servant Songs of Isaiah.
  - Especially Is. 53.

CHRIST PERMEATES PROPHECY.

- The sermons in Acts…
  - Acts 10:43 – “of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins”
  - Acts 26:22 – “stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles”
  - Acts 28:23 – “trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets”

CHRIST PERMEATES PROPHECY.

- **Examples of NT prophecy about Jesus…**
- Zacharias (Luke 1); Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1); Simeon (Luke 2); John the Baptist (Luke 3:16-17).
- Jesus prophesied about Himself…
  - His own death (Mark 9:30-32; 10:32-34)
  - The Tribulation and His Second Coming (Matt. 24-25; Mark 13)
  - His sitting in Judgment (John 5:25-29)
- The entire book of Revelation is about the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

E. THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST & HIS ATONEMENT

- **1) The Person of Christ**
- **2) The Work of Christ – the atonement**
  - Rom. 3:21 - But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.
  - Rom. 4:1-26 – uses Abraham & David to show that the OT taught justification by faith alone.

E. THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST & HIS ATONEMENT

- **1) The Person of Christ**
- **2) The Work of Christ – the atonement**
  - Rom. 4:23-24 - Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,
  - Rom. 16:25-26 - Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.

E. THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST & HIS ATONEMENT

- **1) The Person of Christ**
- **2) The Work of Christ – the atonement**
  - Gal. 3:16-29
    - The Abrahamic Covenant included the gospel message and the promise of Christ (6-16).
    - The Law was a temporary provision until the Seed had come (17-22).
    - It was a tutor to lead us to Christ (23-24).
    - To belong to Christ is to inherit the spiritual promise of the Abrahamic covenant (25-29).
  - 1 Pet. 1:10-12

E. THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST & HIS ATONEMENT

- Rev. 19:10 - Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. **For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."**