

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (ORGANIZED BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

## Part VIII: Eschatology (Doctrine of the End Times)

### A. Guidelines To Accurate Prophetic Scripture Interpretation

#### I. Introduction

- A. Many have been embarrassed in setting dates for prophetic events to occur only to be proved wrong.
- B. This reveals the need to know just how to approach and thus interpret prophetic Scriptures so we know what will occur, and that in turn so we know how to prepare for the future (as follows):

#### II. Guidelines To Accurate Prophetic Scripture Interpretation (I am heavily indebted to J. Dwight Pentecost's book, Things To Come for most of this material.)

- A. As we noted before, Christ exemplified for us in Mark 12:18-27 that Scripture is to be interpreted using the **normal** method of interpretation (i.e., the literal, grammatical, historical guidelines to language).
- B. If we **consistently** follow this interpretive model for prophecy, we end up with the following conclusions:
  1. We conclude the use of this interpretation model brings us to hold to the Premillennial, Pretribulation Rapture of the Church as the only correct model of prophecy re: the Church's future (as opposed to Posttribulationism, Amillennialism, Partial Raptureism, Pre-Wrath Raptureism, etc.):
    - a. The Abrahamic Covenant which was first introduced in Genesis 12:1-3 has yet fully to be fulfilled: (1) This covenant provided that (a) Abraham would receive personal blessings of fathering a great nation, seeing nations blessed in his "seed" and having his name become eternally great (Gen. 12:2; 22:17-18); (b) his "seed" would be great forever (Gen. 22:17), (c) & the Gentiles as entities distinct from Abraham's "seed" would be blessed through his "seed," Gen. 22:18. Later expansions of this covenant are the Palestinian (Deut. 30:3-5; Ez. 20:33-37, 42-44), the Davidic (2 Sam. 7:11-16) and the New Covenants (Jer. 31:31-40), and all were made to the nation of Israel! (2) The Church **never** is promised the "seed," the Promised Land, an Earthly Dynasty, etc. as was Israel. Thus, prophecy must make room for God's work with the nation Israel as **distinct from** His work with the Church.
    - b. The purpose of the Tribulation Period to come is its function as the means of God's judgment on the world for its rejection of Christ, cf. 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Zech. 11:4-17. Since the believer has accepted Christ as his personal Savior and is thus not guilty of the sin that will elicit this wrath's expression, he is destined to escape the Great Tribulation and gain Christ's glory, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.
    - c. Thus, the only way to reconcile God's unfinished promises to Abraham and Israel with the truth of 2 Thessalonians 2 is to see the Church as raptured **before** the **Tribulation begins**, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
    - d. If we must make a distinction between Israel and the Church so the Abrahamic Covenant can be **literally** fulfilled, we also allow for a **literal** seven-year Tribulation and a **literal** 1,000 year reign of Christ to be consistent in our method of interpretation (Dan. 9:20-27; Rev. 20:6-7).
    - e. Summary: Our **consistent** application of the normal, or literal, grammatical and historical method of interpreting **all** Scripture, **including** its **prophetic** sections, leads us to hold **exclusively** to the Pretribulation, Premillennial Rapture of the Church.
  2. We also conclude using this interpretation model enables us to understand the symbols of Revelation:
    - a. The Apostle John wrote as a prisoner of conscience while in exile on Patmos, Revelation 1:9.
    - b. However, some of his information would have been too inflammatory to be released by his Roman captors as unflattering judgments were predicted in the Revelation on Rome, cf. Rev. 17:9 et al.
    - c. Thus, it would be logical to assume God would give John Old Testament symbols not understood and thus non-threatening to John's captors so his work would be released from Patmos, and that the Churches all having Hebrew believers in them could discern the meaning! When we assume as much, we find Revelation to be both clear and in prophetic agreement with the Old Testament!
    - d. Also, God's angel in Revelation 10:11 told John he would prophecy a second time about the Great Tribulation, going through the era with a second perspective! If we understand Rev. 4-10 as that first view and Rev. 11-20 as the second one, the book's flow of thought becomes quite clear!
    - e. Indeed, Revelation understood this way precisely fits the Pretribulation, Premillennial view!

***Lesson: (1) The NORMAL, or literal, grammatical, historical method of interpreting the Bible, when CONSISTENTLY applied to the Bible's prophetic writings, leads to the Pretribulation, Premillennial prophetic position. (2) We should thus live in hope that the Rapture could happen at any moment.***