

INTRODUCTION

Interpretation of OT Prophecy

Many OT prophets foretell the future of Israel at the end of the age when Jesus returns. As the NT Church was not known to them, they could only speak indirectly about the nations worshiping the Lord. The prophecies concerning Israel, their land, and Jerusalem cannot be spiritualized or allegorized. God made promises to Israel on oath and the apostle Paul expected these promises to be fulfilled literally.

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion;
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.
And this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins” (Rom 11:25-27).

Their prophecies center on the following:

1. the regathering of Israel to the promised land and their end-of-age conversion
2. the Day of the Lord and the judgment of the ungodly with its worldwide earthquakes at the coming of the Messiah
3. the throne of David and the Messianic reign
4. the glorification of Jerusalem and its temple and the renewal of all of creation

The book of Revelation was written to the servants of Jesus Christ and foretells the future of the Church with little said about Israel:

1. letters are written by Christ to the seven churches in Asia Minor
2. the vision of the heavenly throne room depicts God and the Messiah sitting on the throne, and 24 elders representing the Church sitting on 24 thrones and wearing crowns. The Messiah is worthy to open the scroll and reveal the destiny of the world, because through the cross he conquered and ransomed people from every tribe, language, people, and nation, and he made them to be a royal priesthood who will reign with him on Earth. There is no mention of Israel.
3. The bulk of the book (Ch. 6-18) describes the judgments on the ungodly world system, with emphasis given to the Christian martyrs, those who are slain for the word of God and for the witness that they bear. Again, there is no mention of Israel.
4. When the Messiah arrives and begins his reign accompanied by his bride, the Church, who was resurrected and raptured at his arrival, they reign for a thousand years. There is little mention of Israel until Revelation 20:9 when Satan and the rebellious nations make a final assault on the “camp of the saints and (= even) the beloved city.” “Camp” alludes to the Israelite encampment in the wilderness, which is still God’s beloved city of Jerusalem at the end of history.

The other allusions to Israel in Revelation are the repentance of the survivors in Jerusalem (Rev 11:13) and the mention of the ‘woman’ who gave birth to the Messiah (Rev 12:5) and who is pursued by Satan when he is cast out of heaven (Rev 12:13-14). She will be protected in the wilderness for 3 ½ years before Jesus returns.

The prophecies of Jesus concerning his second coming and the end of the age given to his disciples are more complicated (Mat 24). His disciples were Jewish Christians, so his reply to them related to both Israel and the Church. He told them that they would be hated by all nations because they bear his name (i.e. Christians). But then he alludes to many OT prophecies about Israel:

24:15-22 The abomination that causes desolation (Dan 9:27)

24:29 The cosmic signs of the Day of the Lord (Isa 13:10)

- 24:30 All the tribes of the land will mourn when they see the Messiah coming in the clouds (Zech 12:12)
- 24:31 The gathering of the elect at the great trumpet call (Isa 27:12-13, Zech 9:14)
- 24:32-33 The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. When its leaves come out, summer is near. Israel's reappearance as a nation is a sign that the end of the age is near. Jesus cursed a fig tree previously in the same week as a sign of Israel's coming judgment for its fruitlessness (Mat 21:18-19). Luke says: Look at the fig tree and all the trees, when they sprout leaves, summer is near. If Israel is the fig tree, the other trees are the other nations, the majority of which have come into being since Israel in 1948.
- 24:36-44 The coming of the Son of Man (Dan 7:13)

God's plan all along has been for the whole world, not just for Israel. The OT prophets saw a lot of things about the future, but much remained a mystery to them and was only revealed to the NT apostles and prophets, especially Paul.

“To the saints God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

The mystery is the Church, which is comprised of the faithful from all nations. The Church is the body of the Messiah, people born of God's Spirit and indwelt by him, believers whose sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ and who are assured of salvation and glorification in the future. Apart from Daniel and his prophecy about the saints of the Most High, the prophets knew precious little about the Church. It wasn't something that had existed before Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down to dwell with God's people. Israel lived under the old covenant, the law of Moses, but Jeremiah prophesied that God would one day make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, he would put his law within them and write it on their hearts (Jer 31:31-37). He would then be their God and they would be his people, because they would all know him, from the least of them to the greatest. That day of Israel's conversion has not yet come,

and yet God said, “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight, will Israel ever cease being a nation before me. Only if the heavens can be measured and the foundations of the Earth be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel.” In Luke Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). The prophecy was fulfilled at that time for many Jews, and since then for many millions of people from all nations. However, the salvation of the latter through the blood of Christ does not annul the promise made to all Israel.

There is a very important lesson for us to learn here. As the OT prophets were not enlightened about the Church, it is a huge mistake to interpret their prophecies as if the prophets were talking about the Church. In Romans 15:9-12, Paul mentions a few OT verses that emphasize the inclusion of Gentiles among the faithful, but they had no concept of a majority Gentile community who would believe in the Messiah from all the nations of the world. This was a mystery that even Jesus did not say much about. Only at his ascension did he command his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. His ministry had been almost exclusively to Israel. If Jews of that era wanted to follow Jesus and be a part of his community, they had to believe in him as the Messiah and be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Different starting points of Interpretation

Unfortunately, Christian doctrine concerning the end times and the prophecies God gave to inform us about the various events that will occur are interpreted in different ways, using different methods of interpretation. Often it depends on different theologies, whether one is Roman Catholic, Reformed, Traditional, Baptist, Pentecostal, or Liberal. When it comes to prophecy, there are three current interpretations – amillennial, premillennial, and post-millennial, each one with its variations. The Church is lumped with Bible commentaries that give no consistent teaching on the subject and study Bibles that attempt to please everyone. As a result, when it comes to prophecy, there is no clear voice, and in most churches, there is very little preaching on the second coming. With the two-thousandth anniversary of Pentecost coming up shortly (2030 or 2033), eschatologists need to go back to the drawing board and check up on their methods of interpretation.

Is the Bible verbally inspired?

Should it be interpreted literally whenever possible?

In what circumstances should it be allegorized or spiritualized?

The Bible is the word of God and as expressed by Peter: “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20-21).

If we begin with that premise, we will agree that the Bible, and more specifically for our purpose in this book, the prophecies, have their origin in God. Too many commentators emphasize the author’s contribution and forget that God is the ultimate author.

There are thousands of languages in the world and the way people understand each other is to take the normal literal meaning of what is communicated, according to the vocabulary and grammar. The general rule is that we should take the plain literal meaning of a passage at face value. I say the general rule because all languages have idioms, proverbs, metaphors, and words that are used symbolically. The Bible has many instances of ambiguity, whether deliberate or accidental, especially in prophetic utterances. Hebrew and Greek both have a word meaning “earth/land” and it is the context that determines which one is meant. Jesus often made use of hyperbole to get the attention of his listeners. “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.” The interpretation is clear enough, but it is not literal. Jesus also used metonymy. When he said “The Kingdom of God is near,” he was talking about himself, not God’s reign. Proverbs are often very hard to interpret because the words themselves don’t express the full meaning. When Jesus said, “Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather,” he may have simply meant that his coming would be visible for all to see.

Preachers often illustrate their messages with stories from the Bible. For example, they may use the account of Abraham offering up his son Isaac on the altar, to illustrate the love of God in offering up his Son on the cross. But when it comes to interpreting biblical text and especially prophetic material, it is dangerous to rely on spiritual or allegorical interpretations.

Prophetic revelations often come in the form of visions and dreams, so symbolism and metaphor have to be interpreted correctly; you can’t assume that the literal meaning is the correct one. This is where you need ‘spiritual discernment,’ and Holy Spirit enlightenment, without clinging to theological

baggage, which we all carry. Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is a disaster that previous generations have not taken the OT prophecies literally. Many of them came from a culture that had anti-Jewish sentiment and they couldn't believe that God had a glorious future for the people and the city he chose to be his own forever, throughout the history of this world. This includes both Roman Catholic and reformed interpretations of the end times. I plead with you to take the OT prophecies at face value. Don't spiritualize them and in so doing lose the message that God intended. There are many things said about Israel that can be applied to the Church, because we are all God's people, but to go a step further and say the Church has replaced Israel or that the end-time prophecies only refer to the Church, will leave you in the dark as far as end-time events are concerned. The prophets did not write with the Church in mind; they were thinking of Israel which is normal for the whole OT.

Don't believe that Israel has been replaced by the Church unless you can explain Romans 11:25-27. Paul says, ever so clearly, that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way, all Israel will be saved. They too will receive mercy (Rom 11:31). Don't believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, unless you can explain 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 where, it clearly says, that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him will not happen unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. That event must happen first!

The Bible has many ambiguities and they are there for a reason. Words, phrases, and whole passages can have a double meaning and they may both be valid. Genesis 3:15 is the first verse in the Bible that contains a Messianic prophecy and it provides a theme for the whole Bible.

“I'll place hostility between you and the woman,
between your offspring and her offspring.
He will strike you on the head, and you'll strike him on the heel”
(Gen 3:15).

God is talking to the serpent who tempted Eve, but is the curse meant for snakes or Satan? The previous verse refers to a snake moving on its belly, and the basic meaning of the prophecy is the fear that exists between snakes and mankind. Snakes usually bite a man on the leg, and if a man wants to

kill a snake, he crushes its head. But this verse is not just talking about snakes. It sets the scene for an ongoing battle between good and evil, between the sons (heirs) of God's kingdom and the sons of the evil one (Mat 13:38). On one side there is Cain, who killed his brother Abel, and his descendants, including Lamech who was also a murderer. On the other side is Seth, who was a divine replacement for the murdered Abel, and his descendants including Enoch and Noah, who walked with God. It was in the days of Seth's son Enosh that people began to call on the name of the Lord. So, from the very beginning, the message of the Bible concerns the godly seed in contrast to the ungodly. After the flood, the story follows the descendants of Shem who have the Lord as their God (Gen 9:26), and then we come to the Jewish patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Symbolism

In the book of Revelation, John's revelations came in the form of visions and these visions contain a lot of symbolism. It is not an easy job to interpret the symbols. Sometimes an angel does it (Rev 1:20, 19:8). The meaning is often clarified by earlier Scriptures alluded to in Revelation. The Lamb was declared by John the Baptist to be Jesus (John 1:29). He is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:9) and the Root of David (Isa 11:1). These clues are found in Bibles that have cross references. Revelation has hundreds of allusions to OT passages that are key to understanding the symbolism or background of a passage.

What about the allegorization or spiritualization of words or passages of the Bible? How reliable are they? In Galatians, 4 Paul uses allegory to illustrate how Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants, the law which bears children for slavery and the promise which bears children who are free. Origen interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan allegorically: The victim is Adam, and the good Samaritan is Christ. Jerusalem is paradise and Jericho is the world. There is a danger in reading your own beliefs into a perceived allegory and then thinking you have scriptural support.

Amillennialism and allegorical interpretation

Amillennialism and premillennialism are the two major systems of interpreting prophecy, one being allegorical and the other literal. As far as terminology is concerned, it all concerns the thousand-year reign of the Messiah mentioned six times in Revelation 20. One says it is literal, the other

spiritualizes it so that that it no longer means a thousand-year reign of the Messiah when he returns. “A” means no, no millennial reign. The apostle John says, and God also says, that Satan will be bound for a thousand years (Rev 20:2) so that he cannot deceive the nations until the millennium is over. He adds that those who were martyred because they refused to receive the mark of the beast on their foreheads or hands came to life and ruled with the Messiah for a thousand years. Then he says the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection because they will reign with Christ for a thousand years. Finally, he says that when the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the Earth. These are all clear statements with a plain literal meaning. The question is, why do Amillennialists interpret these verses in a non-literal manner? What is the motivation behind it? What is wrong with the idea of a Jewish Messiah (Jesus) ruling the world for a thousand years? I remember the hymn “Jesus shall reign wherever the sun does his successive journeys run, his kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.” The hymn is based on Psalm 72 with ample support from other OT scriptures. “The Lord will be king over all the Earth at that time ... The survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles” (Zech 14:9, 16).

The reason why amillennial interpreters treat this chapter the way they do is because of the baggage they inherited from previous generations. One reason for rejecting an earthly Messianic reign is that Augustine embraced platonic thinking, believing that the spiritual is superior to the physical, and therefore the Earth is not seen as a suitable place for the resurrected Messiah to reign. In his book, *The City of God*, Augustine interpreted the Church as being the Kingdom of God and many Roman Catholics still believe it. In rejecting the literal interpretation, amillennialists are divided as to whether the Kingdom of God is now present, with Christ ruling the Earth from heaven, or whether the kingdom itself is in heaven. The Bible teaches neither. Jesus is on the throne with the Father, but neither he nor the Father is ruling directly over the Earth which is in Satan’s hands. Jesus calls Satan the ruler of this world (John 16:11). John said the whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19). To talk about the Messiah ruling the world when he is not even present is unscriptural and unconvincing. The Jewish prophecies imply his presence. The Messiah is the descendent of David and he is to reign on

David's throne in Jerusalem, not God's throne in heaven. God's throne in heaven has no relevance to his being anointed as the Christ (Messiah). He sits on the heavenly throne because he is God. The Davidic throne has to do with his humanity and his ruling over the house of Jacob. Gabriel's words to Mary are undoubtedly based on Isaiah 9:6-7, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. ... Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever." This does not sound like a reign in heaven and it doesn't sound like the present-day politics in this world. Postmillennialists believe that the world will eventually be comprised of explicitly Christian nations with the majority of people being saved. Amillennialists are not so optimistic, but they also believe that the Messianic rule is in force now. God said (prophetically) that he has set his King on Mount Zion, his holy hill (Ps 2:6), but we don't see the Messiah ruling from Mount Zion. The Kingdom of God is not something to be accepted by faith. One day Ezekiel 43:7 will come true, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever."

The status of Israel

One of the biggest issues is the status of Israel. Do they still have a future as God's nation, or not? The OT prophets say yes, as majored upon in this book.

Jesus did not reveal much about Israel's future because the OT prophets had already done that. When questioned about it by the disciples just before his ascension, he said it was not for them to know the times or seasons that the Father had fixed by his own authority. For the previous forty days, he had appeared to them and taught them about the Kingdom of God and they still expected him to fulfill his role as king of a restored Israel. His answer meant not yet; the evangelization of the world was to be their priority (Acts 1:6-7).

At the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples that he was assigning kingship (royal rule) to them, just as the Father had assigned kingship to him. They would one day eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, the Messianic banquet, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29-30). Matthew adds that this will happen in the *palingenesia*, the new or regenerated world. When Jesus spoke of the twelve tribes of Israel, the disciples would not have thought of the Church, they would be ruling over

their own nation, Israel. In Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, he told the crowds they would not see him again until they said, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Ps 118:26), a recognized welcome to the Messiah when he enters Jerusalem. Jesus also said that Jerusalem would be trampled on by the nations until their times were fulfilled, implying a significant future event. It was always believed by the Jews that the Messiah would come to reign in Jerusalem.

Anti-semitism

Paul opens Romans 11 with the question, "Has God rejected his people?" By no means! Jesus' disciples were all Jews as was a good percentage of the early Church, but that was just a remnant. Paul talks about their full inclusion and acceptance, and their being grafted in again as God's people: "How much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!" (Rom 11:24).

How can anyone deny that the Jewish nation has a glorious future? Paul said that as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. God's election of the Jewish nation requires the perpetuation of the Jewish nation, so that God's purposes in election may be carried out in the future Messianic kingdom.

Jesus is called "King of the Jews" or "King of Israel" over twenty times in the Gospels. Surely, he will be one day, but the amillennial position does not allow it. With their theology, the whole Messianic teaching falls flat. No future king of Israel, no Davidic throne, no rule over the nations, no glorious Jerusalem. For them, these events can't happen here in this present age because Jesus is not king here, and they can't happen in heaven because the nations don't exist there.

The following questions are relevant when thinking about who exactly are God's people:

1. When did the Church start?
2. Who will be resurrected when Jesus returns?
3. Who will rule with Christ during the millennium?
4. What about the OT saints?
5. Who are the elect?

6. What will be the status of “all Israel” when they are saved upon the return of Christ?
7. Who are the subjects of the Messianic kingdom?

The Church started at Pentecost and consists of people from all nations who have given their lives to Jesus from that time until Jesus returns when the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled. They will be resurrected at that time and reign with Christ during the millennium.

Jesus said that many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 8:11).

These three patriarchs represent all the righteous mentioned in Hebrews 11, from Abel to the latter prophets. “None of them received what had been promised since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect (Heb 11:39-40). We are fellow citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and fellow heirs with Christ. So the OT faithful will be resurrected with the Church but they should not be described as the Church as old amillennial commentators did. “Church” in the NT is restricted to believers in Jesus who said he would build his Church and the powers of Hades would not overcome it.

The elect are the saved, those chosen by God before the foundation of the world, also known as the righteous or God’s servants. They are Christ’s community, who will be resurrected at the resurrection of the righteous at the second coming of Christ, comprising OT and NT saints, but not the future generation of Israel who will be saved after his return. Israel is beloved because of election (Rom 11:28) but they will not inherit the Messianic kingship and rule with Christ. Through unbelief, they forfeited that right, but during his reign, they will constitute his people on earth, and although not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, they will join the resurrected righteous after the last judgment, because they have been chosen and will be saved under the new covenant as prophesied in Jeremiah 31:33-37.

The survivors of the Great Tribulation will enter the Messianic era as subjects. The righteous were taken by rapture, the unbelievers were left having been judged as wicked (Matt 24:40). Compare this situation with the parable of the sheep and the goats. The destiny of the goats is the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Those who were not killed by the

pouring out of God's wrath, the earthquakes, or the battle of Armageddon, will be spared for a time and allowed to live as subjects of Christ's kingdom. They will come to know that Jesus the Messiah is ruling the world from his temple in Jerusalem. They will see a bright light coming from New Jerusalem in the sky above Israel and they will go there to worship the king. Any nation that does not submit to the Messiah's reign will receive no rain (Zech 14:16-17). As the millennium progresses, the lifespan of these unbelievers will expand into hundreds of years. They will bear children during this time and they eventually die. The Earth will be renewed and the curse removed. The Messiah will rule with a rod of iron, it is not an age of grace. "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the Lord Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him" (Zech 8:21-22). There will be justice and peace in Christ's kingdom but no mention of eternal salvation.

Israel, who are also subjects in Christ's kingdom, will dwell in their own land and the priests will organize worship at the temple in Jerusalem and receive the offerings brought by the nations.

During the millennium the saints, who now have resurrection bodies, will serve God and the Messiah as a kingdom of priests. They will reign over the Earth, but their home will be in the New Jerusalem in the sky. The dimensions of the Holy City are a 1380-mile cube and 12,000 stadia in Greek. The shape and dimensions are symbolic, and ample size to contain the redeemed. It is a heavenly, eternal city where there is no sin, pain, death, marriage, or crying. God and his Messiah will dwell there with redeemed humanity. The resurrection body is described in 1 Corinthians 15 as heavenly, glorious, imperishable, supernatural, powerful, and spiritual. Our bodies will be like Jesus' resurrection body, so the saints will appear on Earth as Jesus did after the resurrection, looking and acting like normal human beings, but being able to disappear at will. They will possess the kingdom for as long as it lasts and all dominions will serve and obey them (Da 7:27).

During the millennium, the devil will be securely imprisoned in the Abyss together with the kings and their armies who were killed at the battle of Armageddon. After many days (Isa 24:22) they will be punished. The Antichrist and the false prophet, on the other hand, will be thrown

immediately into hell. Heaven is absent from biblical predictions about the end times, it is not our destination. The new heavens and the new Earth that are spoken of several times in the NT build on Isaiah's prophecies (65:17-25, 66:18-24). The Earth is renewed and the heavens will be changed with the visible light of God's glory from New Jerusalem dominating the sky.

What happens after the millennium? The devil will be released from his prison (Rev 20:7) and will immediately go forth to deceive the nations, symbolically called God and Magog, once more. He gathers them for battle and they march across the Earth and surround God's people at Jerusalem. Fire comes down from heaven and destroys the armies and the devil is thrown into hell. The last judgment takes place before the great white throne and everyone is judged according to what they have done during their lives on Earth. The physical universe flees away and *no trace of them is found*. Compare the Greek of Revelation 20:11 with that of Daniel 2:35 in the Septuagint. Death and Hades are cast into hell. The Messiah delivers his kingship to God the Father, having destroyed all enemy rule, authority, and power (1 Cor 15:24). The kingdom is not eternal in our way of thinking. In Hebrew the word for eternal often means as long as someone lives or as long as something endures. The kingdom comes to an end after 1000 years and the Bible reveals nothing more than that. We are left with the New Jerusalem, the throne of God and the Lamb, and his servants who will reign forever and ever.

Amillennialism is not only a denial of the prophesized Messianic reign on Earth, it influences the whole system of theology. It encourages figurative interpretation of scripture whenever its doctrines don't agree with a literal interpretation, a very dangerous practice.

Prophecy should be interpreted by intertextual comparison, especially considering OT terminology to interpret NT prophecies. Later prophets build on the prophecies of former prophets so that there is a progression throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Revelation is the important climax to it all and has suffered from abuse and misinterpretation ever since it was written. The literal futuristic interpretation of the book makes more sense and gives it more relevance than any other. The book itself forbids adding or taking away from its prophecies. A person who does this will have no share in the Tree of Life or the Holy City. Figurative, spiritual, or allegorical interpretations necessarily do this. The warning is a command to

not manipulate the text but to interpret it literally except for frequent symbolic words and idioms that are often explained.

Common mistakes made about future prophecy

1. Jesus is on the throne with the Father but is never pictured in Scripture as reigning over the Earth from heaven. We also are seated with him in the heavenly places but are not yet ruling the Earth. John says “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). You can’t have it both ways.
2. Israel has a key role in the future as taught by the OT prophets supported by God’s oaths and promises. Israel is beloved for the sake of the forefathers for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. Therefore it is wrong to spiritualize or allegorize prophecies of Israel’s glorification and transfer them to the Church.
3. Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God never suggests that it refers to God’s rule in our hearts or God’s rule over the universe.
4. Heaven is not portrayed in Scripture as the final destination of the saved. The New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God is our eternal home (Rev 21:2). It is in the heavenly realm but is not what we generally refer to as heaven. The saints will reign over the Earth from the Holy City.
5. Nothing is revealed about the so-called ‘eternal state’ apart from what is revealed about New Jerusalem.
6. There will be no new Earth, only a renewed one. The new heavens and new Earth prophesied by Isaiah describe the renewal of the present Earth in the millennium. It will pass away without leaving a trace at the final judgment 1000 years later. The new heaven and new Earth of Revelation 21:1 must be interpreted according to the prophecies in Isaiah 65:17-24, 66 22-24). The sea which is no longer, as often in Scripture, must refer to the rebellious nations as other millennial prophecies refer to its existence: “In that day people will come to you (Israel) from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea” (Mic 7:12). “May he rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the Earth” (Ps 72:8).

The Fall narrative teaches us something more than the unfriendliness between people and snakes. The enmity is between the sons of the evil one and the sons of God, the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats. God speaks these words to the crafty tempter, Satan, and if “offspring” is interpreted as singular, then the prophecy is Messianic. There will be two mortal attacks; Satan will strike the Messiah’s heel, and the Messiah will crush Satan’s head. This is the traditional interpretation of the passage which is called the *protevangelium. T.*

Prophecies that describe end-of-age events are often combined with similar prophesies about local events. It is not a question about which one is right. While in the Spirit, the prophet looks over the foothills to the mountains beyond. The foothills represent the more immediate local situation, the mountains take us to a similar but greater situation at the end of the age. For example, “the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place” is interpreted by Jesus as occurring at a future time of great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until then. These terrible end-of-age days are such, that if they had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. He was referring to the Antichrist who will take his seat in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God. But the more immediate application of Daniel’s prophecy was to Antiochus IV Epiphanes who set up the worship of idols in the Jewish temple in the second century BC. Both interpretations are true emanating from the same prophecy.

This is the nature of prophecy; there is ambiguity and double meaning, making the interpretation difficult, but by comparing Scripture with Scripyure the meaning becomes clearer, especially as the time prophesied draws near.

When physicists wanted to know what matter is made of, they had to experiment and do research until they discovered molecules, and then, without actually seeing them, they proved the existence of atoms and electrons, and finally nanoparticles called quarks. Messianic prophecy is like that. Minute details are scattered throughout the OT. The interpreter’s task is to compare and make an analysis of the building blocks of prophecy, to find out how all the units fit together, which necessarily involves their chronological order. Some Messianic prophecies refer to the birth, life, and death of Jesus, others to his return to Earth as the victorious Messiah.

“God, having spoken in former times in fragmentary and varied fashion to our forefathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed to be the heir of everything and through whom he also made the universe” (Heb 1:1-2).

These fragments of Messianic prophecies are gathered, compared, and put together like jigsaw puzzle pieces until the picture emerges. There are dozens of events that occur concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ: the Great Tribulation period, the Abomination of Desolation, Armageddon, Gog and Magog, the Antichrist, the resurrection and rapture, the millennium, New Jerusalem, the restoration and conversion of Israel, the Day of the Lord, the parousia, the Kingdom of God, the restoration of David’s throne, the new heavens and the new Earth, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the binding of Satan, the Last Judgment, the reign of the Saints, the end of the world, and the end of Death and Hades. The prophets spoke about all these things and they are all discussed in this book.

Eschatology for many Christians is just a blur, and for many who have studied it in detail, there is still at least some confusion. The secret behind understanding end-of-the-age events is not in trying to align them with present-day times and events, or names of people and places, but to bring them all into a harmonious, chronological order. Another reason for the difficulty in interpretation is that the Bible was written by so many different authors; prophets from different centuries speaking with different emphases from very different contexts and yet:

No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever originated through a human decision. Instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21).

That is the miracle of Bible prophecy and it gives us confidence that there is a central purpose and plan. All the prophetic details we have are from one Author, the Holy Spirit, and our challenge is to interpret them in such a way that eliminates contradictions, accounting for all the details in their right place. Study Bibles and Bible commentaries often bring confusion because they try and please everybody by mixing premillennial, postmillennial, and amillennial interpretations, which are by definition contradictory.

This book will not please everybody, that is not my aim. I aim to portray an accurate picture of future events. Both OT and NT prophecies have been

studied, and nothing has been deliberately neglected. I have pored over difficult verses, comparing verse with verse and passage with passage, and studied commentaries until a satisfactory solution is found. Sometimes when presented with a contradiction, I rejoice in the challenge, and I knuckle down and compare all the relevant verses until harmony is discovered.

The result of my research is premillennial, which means two things: Not only is Jesus coming back to Earth, he is returning to Earth to establish his Messianic reign, the Kingdom of God, about which he taught so often, and which according to Revelation 20, will continue for a thousand years. Many of the OT prophets said the kingdom would last forever. Paul said the Messiah must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, and then comes the end when he delivers the kingship to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24-25). I do not believe amillennialists and post-millennialists can build a consistent and comprehensive theology without ignoring many prophecies and misinterpreting others.

The rapture of the righteous is post-tribulation. The Church is destined to suffer under the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. All the righteous will be resurrected or raptured at the Messiah's coming. Our Christian beliefs are precious to us and we do not like change, but we need to re-evaluate some things from time to time. The pretribulation rapture is a modern-day doctrine that was unknown to the early Church. The chosen people of God form one olive tree: first, there was Israel, then the Church was grafted in, and finally, Israel will be grafted back in. However, the Church and Israel have separate roles to play during the millennium. The Church has not replaced Israel in God's eternal plan. This is a teaching that is so clear in scripture, but anti-Semitism displayed by many of the Reformers has resulted in false teaching in the area of eschatology.

While writing this book, the COVID-19 coronavirus arrived on the scene. In Australia, we had already had disastrous bushfires and several parts of the world were suffering from devastating locust and grasshopper plagues. Frogs and boils were mentioned by a news reporter. God told Pharaoh: "I'm sending all my plagues against you, your officials, and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the Earth" (Exod 9:14). When the Messiah returns, he will bring salvation to his people and judgment to the wicked. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty and strike down the rebellious nations. God is angry with all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of mankind, their idolatry, and insulting

secularism, and as a result, he has given them up to dishonorable passions. God's judgment will rightly fall on those who practice such things, but at the same time, he is patient, not wanting any to perish. The Day of the Lord will come like a thief and the Earth and everything done on it will be exposed.

Amillennialism

The theology of the OT, NT, and the early Church was premillennial. A literal interpretation of the OT prophets clearly shows that they believed in a righteous reign on Earth by the Jewish Messiah. Statements made by various characters in the Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls show that this was the universal hope of Israel at the time. Coming to the early Church, premillennialism was the general belief in the first two centuries. Justin Martyr (100-168) is quite outspoken. He wrote:

“But I and whatsoever Christians are orthodox in all things do know that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in the city of Jerusalem, built, adorned, and enlarged, according as Ezekiel, Isaiah, and other prophets have promised. For Isaiah saith of this thousand years (Isa 65:17), ‘Behold, I create new heavens and a new Earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind; but be ye glad and rejoice in those which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem to triumph, and my people to rejoice,’ etc. Moreover, a certain man among us, whose name is John, being one of the twelve apostles of Christ, in that revelation which was shown to him prophesied, that those who believe in our Christ shall fulfill a thousand years at Jerusalem; and after that the general, and in a word, the everlasting resurrection, and last judgment of all together. Whereof also our Lord spoke when He said, that therein they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal with the angels, being made the sons of the resurrection of God.”

There was no controversy about this premillennial or chiliastic stance until the third century when opposition to premillennial thought was voiced by Clement and others. Clement, engrossed and charmed by Greek philosophy, applied the erroneous allegorical method to the Holy Writ. It was a one-sided emphasis: opposed to the real, the visible, phenomenal, special, and temporal. His Platonic idealistic philosophy could not countenance carnal, sensual conceptions of the future as that advanced by some chiliasts. It shook

the very foundations on which chiliasm rested, what some regarded as a naïve literalism in the interpretation of Scripture.

Because of political and ecclesiastical developments of the time, chiliasm lost ground. The powerful Church of Rome saw itself as having political and ecclesiastical authority, due in part to the amillennial belief that the Church had replaced Israel. Chiliasm was centered on the Bible and promoted informal gatherings guided by the Holy Spirit and led by those who were gifted by the Holy Spirit. The NT gives no instructions on creating Church hierarchies, building churches, developing large institutions, or maintaining OT rituals or holy days, apart from meeting on the first day of the week. Once the Catholic Church was entrenched as the only way of salvation, amillennial beliefs were more subservient to their purpose than chiliasm, and so chiliasm was denigrated.

Interpret the Bible literally or lose the message

An obvious example of this is the creation story in the first chapter of Genesis. Interpreted literally, as Moses inspired by the Spirit of God wrote it, we have a world created by God in six days, who then rested on the seventh today, so giving us the origin of the week, six days to work and one day to rest. Begin to allegorize or spiritualize and you end up with a theory, the theory of evolution. Then you do away with a historical Adam and pave the way for liberal misinterpretation of the Bible. No longer is the Bible respected as the infallible word of God.

When we come to prophecy of end-time events, the clear message from the prophets is that these events will center around the appearance of the Jewish Messiah who will rule the world for a long period. He will be the king of God's people, Israel, who will be preeminent in the world. The Messiah will rule the whole world with a rod of iron from sea to sea. His coming will be preceded by a period of tribulation for Israel and indeed for the whole world, and it will be followed by a long period of world peace, characterized by peace, righteousness, and renewal. This is literally what the prophets predict.

A mighty angel appears in Revelation 10 and he swears by him who lives forever and ever saying that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

Enter Origen and Augustine and their Platonic way of thinking and their allegorical approach to Biblical prophecy. Plato placed the immaterial or spiritual above the physical, so the concept of a Messianic reign on planet Earth became objectionable. Some amillennialists go a step further and believe it is unspiritual to think of spending eternity in resurrected bodies, even though the resurrection of the righteous with immortal bodies is taught in Scripture.

So Amillennialism in this way discredits scripture and distorts the biblical view. Because of Augustine's allegorical approach to biblical prophecy, the Roman Church took upon itself the role of God's kingdom on Earth, exerting power through human government. It relied on human power to convert people rather than the gospel. The Church became the means of salvation and the dispenser of God's grace. Under chiliasm, Christ would have been central and God's kingdom on Earth would have remained as a future hope as it was portrayed by the prophets and Jesus himself.

Amillennialism leads to anti-Semitism as is well established in history. If the Church has replaced Israel as the people of God, Israel can be disregarded or worse, they can be persecuted as Christ-killers. Today, premillennialists generally respect Israel as God's chosen race and support them in their right to the promised land. They see God's hand in fulfilling prophecy and bringing seven million Jews home. Amillennialists will have different views, depending on whether they are Roman Catholics, modern liberals, or conservative evangelicals. Once you turn your back on what the Bible teaches, you will end up with a variety of alternatives. Amillennialist theology has many variations. Take the book of Revelation for example. Millennialists understand that a lot of the language is symbolic, but after the symbolic meaning is ascertained, they interpret the book literally as relating to the future. Amillennialists regard it as an allegory of the Church's struggle with evil in the first century. Preterists regard the prophecies to be in the past, describing struggles against Judaism. The Reformers, also Amillennialists, applied the struggles to the abuses of the Catholic Church. They all deny that the OT prophecies regarding Israel have relevance to Israel today. When Revelation is regarded as being in the past, it loses its dynamism, and as a result, many Christians believe it is highly unlikely that God will fulfill any biblical prophecy in their lifetime. This is all wrong. Three times in Revelation 22 Jesus says "I am coming soon". We are meant to understand that God will intervene in human history, bringing judgment to the wicked and salvation to the righteous.

Amillennialists negate God's eternal covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:7-8, 1 Ch 16:14-18) by saying that God has finished with Israel. They negate God's covenant with David by saying that the throne of David is in heaven (Lk 1:32-33). How can the throne of David be anywhere but in Jerusalem? They contradict many OT prophecies regarding Israel by applying the prophecies spiritually to the Church and ignoring the prophecies that promise Israel the land and the kingdom. They deny Psalm 2:8 where the Lord says to his anointed Son, saying: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the Earth your possession." This is not a spiritual statement regarding the salvation of the Church, it is followed by the words, "You will break them with a rod of iron, you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Amillennialists don't like going into detail and so things get generalized. There are at least thirty events that occur at the second coming of Christ, the tribulation that precedes it, and the Messianic reign that follows, but Amillennialists compress them all together. They marvel that premillennialists find more than one resurrection and more than one judgment, even though that is what the Bible teaches. Why would Paul talk about the resurrection of the righteous, if it was not different to that of the wicked? Why would John talk about the resurrection of the righteous and then say that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended? There are various end-time judgments. The battle of Armageddon in which the armies of the nations will be destroyed by the returning Messiah is a judgment on the nations. After the resurrection, there will be the judgment seat of Christ for believers, and after the millennium there will be the Last Judgment of the wicked where they are judged according to what they have done. Denying that there will be a future Messianic reign on Earth denies the word of God expressed in hundreds of prophecies by many OT prophets. "His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the Earth" (Zech 9:10). "I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed" (Isa 65:19-20). Those who don't interpret verses like this according to the natural, literal, meaning of the words do not respect the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. That is objective interpretation, understanding what the Scripture is saying. Once one starts to

spiritualize or allegorize, it becomes subjective, making Scripture say what your system of belief requires you to say.

The millennium is very important in determining one's theology as it influences the whole system. Rejecting the millennium is not just a denial of a Messianic reign on Earth after the Messiah returns. Amillennialism rejects figurative interpretation of the Bible except in the area of prophecy, but in practice they use the figurative method whenever they don't agree with the literal meaning. That is a grave danger allowing them to interpret the Bible as something other than its plain, literal meaning. This is a denial of verbal inspiration and is seen most clearly in the first chapter of the Bible. Modern liberalism adherents are drawn almost entirely from amillennial ranks. Some say the Scripture is in error, others say that the meaning must be spiritualized. The result is the same – distortion. Millennialists, on the other hand, are identified as Bible-believing conservatives who have resisted this modern trend in theology. As a result, large areas of the OT, especially prophecy, are without any generally accepted meaning. Amillennialist interpretations of the Book of Revelation have no consistency. The literal approach which regards the bulk of Revelation as being future is the only consistent approach. Problems, as many see them, with amillennial theology are as follows.

1. **The incarnation.** Jesus was born to fulfill OT prophecy, the promises given to Abraham and David which resulted in the Jewish Messianic hope. Gabriel told Mary that the Lord God would give her son Jesus the throne of his ancestor David and he would reign over Israel forever, his kingdom would never end.
2. **The second coming.** Amillennialism has simplified the Messiah's coming to one event with one resurrection and one judgment. They ignore the resurrection of the righteous and the plain meaning of Revelation 20. They do a backflip and interpret the parable of the sheep and the goats literally.
3. **The Holy Spirit.** Amillennialists see his ministry as being the same in different dispensations. The Bible teaches that only in the NT Church are people born again, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. OT prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with the Spirit to carry out their ministries, but not the general populace. Jeremiah said the days are coming when God will make a new covenant with Israel. He will put his law within them and write it on their hearts. Jesus made this new covenant

available to us when he spoke of the new covenant in his blood. Israel as a nation will come under the new covenant at their conversion at the beginning of the millennium.

4. **Angels and Satan.** Because amillennialism comprises many liberals, their theology sometimes denies belief in spiritual beings. On the whole, they tend to minimize their significance as illustrated by their teaching on the binding of Satan. There are dozens of warnings about Satan's current activities in the NT and yet amillennarians regard him as being bound.
5. **Salvation.** Amillennialism teaches a general purpose in saving the elect throughout the ages. However, the law of Moses was not a way of eternal salvation as we know it, it was a way of life according to God's commandments. There was no heavenly hope or punishment in hell. Covenant theology began after 1600 AD and was not taught by the Reformers or mentioned in the creeds. It regards all covenants as being different phases of the one covenant of grace, but Moses' law is legal and non-gracious. The promises given to Abraham and Israel are now transferred to the Church. Jews are no longer regarded as God's special nation. Only individual Jews who become Christians are saved. There is no literal fulfillment of Israel's national and land promises. The people that God chose are abandoned by God forever. This leads to anti-Semitism and is not how I read the Bible or understand God's grace. Covenant theology limits the saving purpose of God to the saving of the soul and ignores the promise to Israel of a kingdom on Earth under the Messiah.
6. **Church.** The complicated religious rites and ceremonies for the most part came into the Church after Amillennialism became the dominant viewpoint. The Reformation restored the priesthood of all believers and justification as the direct work of God, not a work mediated through the Church. But they didn't extricate the Church from Roman eschatology. The Church didn't begin in the OT, it began at Pentecost. It didn't replace Israel as the people of God. Paul's olive tree example is the best way to understand it. The Jewish patriarchs are the root of the tree that represents God's people. They grew into the nation Israel, but because of disobedience, some branches were broken off, they were hardened, and God grafted in a wild olive shoot, the Church of all nations. God is able, and will, graft back the natural branches and in this way, all Israel will be saved (Rom 11:17-26).

Amillennialism teaches the essential unity of the elect of all dispensations. All are saved by the death of Christ and therefore all the saints of the OT and NT are the Church. They don't see any essential difference in how people are saved in the Old and New Testaments. Amillennialists have lost the significance of Jesus being the Jewish Messiah. He was born king of the Jews and the bulk of the OT Messianic prophecies concern his second coming as king. The great mass of Messianic prophecy from Isaiah to Malachi becomes meaningless to amillennialists. Whether Roman Catholic, Reformed, or Liberals, they all regard the Church as the Kingdom of God, and so it is present on the Earth now, or those who can't accept that will say it is in heaven. They misinterpret the plain literal teaching of Scripture that the Messiah is returning to the Earth to reign and that Jerusalem will be glorious. The OT Messianic prophecies are annulled by their misinterpretation, saying either that they were conditional and then canceled because of Israel's disobedience, or else that they are being fulfilled by the Church in the present age. They deny that Israel has a future as a nation. They deny the Lord's words: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ... After those days, I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I'll be their God and they will be my people. ... If the fixed order of the sun, moon, and stars departs from before me, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever (Jer 31:31-33, 36). Augustine taught that the promises given to Israel were transferred to the Church, the Church is the true Israel and inherits the promises Israel lost when it rejected Christ. So, there is no millennium, because there is no future for Israel as a nation. By contrast, premillennialism emphasizes the spiritual life of the believer, their secure position in the body of Christ, and grace as the ground for the believer's walk with God. Modern history vindicates what Paul said about the Jews in Romans 11:28 "As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable." Modern amillennialism claims that the promises to Israel of righteousness, peace, and security are poetic pictures of heaven and are fulfilled in heaven, not on Earth. What a far cry from what the Bible says. The amillennial Roman Catholic Church lays claim to the religious and political authority Israel had and calls itself the Kingdom of God. The NT Church was basically an invisible, unstructured, organism; the body of

Christ. There was no church building and local churches were ministered to and organized by local elders and deacons. The present age, according to Paul, was hidden from the prophets, it was a new, unrevealed development in the plan of God (Eph 3:7-10, Col 1:24-27). Believers are from all nations. They are baptized into the body of Christ and justified on the basis of being “in Christ”. They are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit whose fruit and gifts transform them. Their hope is the return of their Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah who will rule the world with peace and righteousness and share his rule with all of his servants, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. None of these doctrines was true of God’s people in former dispensations.

7. **Eschatology.** Amillennialism embraces the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, and the eternal state, but they spiritualize many passages to make them conform to their pattern. For example, the sheep and goats’ parable is interpreted as the Last Judgment of all, disregarding the context. The Son of Man comes down to Earth in his glory with all the angels with him and sits on *his* glorious throne. He makes his judgment and tells the righteous to come and inherit the (Messianic) kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. This is not God’s sovereign reign in heaven. Humans can’t inherit that! Jesus’ return coincides with the battle of Armageddon, so “all the nations will be gathered before him.” This is a time for judgment on the nations, and also a time when the righteous are resurrected. They are invited to rule the world, while the wicked armies are judged and killed. The spirits of the wicked are shut up in a prison and punished after many days (at the Last Judgment), while the Messiah rules on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem with his elders in his glory (Isa 24:21-23). The second coming of Jesus is believed by all, but for Amillennialists it is only a brief visit to resurrect the dead and judge the wicked. For Millennialists, it is a return. In my book “The Kingdom from God,” I list 25 events in chronological order that paint a detailed picture of the rise of the last world empire and of the Antichrist, the tribulation period, the final battle between God and the nations at Armageddon, the Lord’s majestic return, the resurrection of the righteous, the descent of the Lord to the Mount of Olives, the great earthquake, the defeat of Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet, the descent of New Jerusalem from heaven, the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the conversion of Israel, the glorious renewal of Jerusalem and the renewal of all creation, the thousand-year rule by

the Messiah and his saints over the Earth, the priestly ministry of Israel, the submission of the nations to Christ, the reversal of the Edenic curse, the victory over all of God's enemies and finally of death, the resurrection of the wicked and their judgment, the dissolution of heaven and Earth, and the handing over of Christ's kingship to the Father. All these events are spoken about in the Bible and it is incumbent on us to compare scripture with scripture and to find a consistent way of fitting all the pieces of the jigsaw together without manipulation. My chronology may not be one hundred percent correct, but at least it gives a dramatic portrayal of all the events that are revealed to us and how they might be played out. Too many Christians have no idea of the hope that lies before them, due in part to Bible commentaries and study Bibles that are neither millennial nor amillennial, but an impossible mixture of both. The future is summarized as "heaven" and yet there is not a verse in the Bible that says that we are going to heaven or that heaven is our future home. The Bible says that the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven from God and that God will dwell there with man. It is within that community that we will worship God, see his face, and reign with him forever. 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28 has the final word: "Then comes the end when he (Christ) delivers the kingdom to God the Father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ... The Son will be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all." There is not much else to say about an eternal state; this is all that has been revealed to us. Nobody has discovered God's abode. He lives in a different time/space dimension to us and it is only by resurrection that we will meet him there.

The disciples will judge Israel - *Matthew 19:28*

I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus had been talking to the rich young man about eternal life. Then he tells his disciples that it is very difficult for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God. They respond by saying; Who then can be saved? Eternal life, the Kingdom of God, and salvation are all interconnected. Jesus said: "At the renewal of all things." The Greek word *palingenesia* means renewal or regeneration and must here refer to the new heavens and the new Earth, as prophesied by Isaiah. This is not a new planet, but a renewed Earth after the

terrible destruction caused by the Great Tribulation and God's wrath with its worldwide earthquakes. It is what Paul spoke about when he said that one day the creation will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:20). It is the Messianic reign, when Jesus, the Son of Man, sits on his glorious throne. He tells his twelve disciples that they will also sit on thrones and reign with him. This reign, of course, is on Earth, not in heaven. Peter calls it the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). They will reign over Israel. This is the plain literal meaning, but what is the explanation? Why should Jesus' disciples rule over Israel?

Two peoples of God?

If the Bible teaches that there will be two peoples of God after the Messiah returns, who are we to reject it? When Jesus said his disciples would rule over Israel during his reign, he implied that there would be two people of God on Earth at that time, Israel and the Church. Jesus' 12 disciples represent the Church. Everyone who has lived for Christ will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. They will be resurrected at Jesus' return, and they will reign on (or over the) Earth (Rev 5:10). As resurrected people they won't live on Earth, they will live in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven and remain in the sky over the earthly Jerusalem (Isa 60:5). The remnant of Israel that remains after the Great Tribulation will be converted (all Israel will be saved – Rom 11:26) and will live in Jerusalem and the promised land. During the millennium, the resurrected Church will receive their inheritance and rule the world with the Messiah, ruling over the survivors of Israel (Isa 59:20-21) and the survivors of the nations (Zech 14:16). Israel will also receive her inheritance under their king, the Messiah, who will rule the world.

The OT prophecies focus on God's people Israel

The NT prophecies focus on Jesus' community; the Church

All who are chosen by God are the elect, God's people,

also known as the saints, the righteous, or the servants of God

Jesus' prophecies concern all of God's people, as when he told his disciples that they (as the Church) would rule over Israel (Mat 19:28).

A rare example of an OT prophecy about the Church is Daniel's prophecies about "the saints of the Most High" who will inherit the kingdom. (See the exposition of Daniel 7). An alternative translation, as found in Darby's translation, is "saints of the most high (places)" or as expressed by Paul "those who are seated with Christ in the heavenly places" (Eph 2:6). When Israel rejected the Messiah, they forfeited their right to the Messianic monarchy (Mat 8:11-120). So this prophecy of Daniel about the saints of the high places must refer to the Church, the righteous sheep who are invited to take their inheritance, the kingdom prepared for them since the creation of the world (Mat 25:34).

THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

"Therefore, we regard the message of the prophets as confirmed beyond doubt, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp that is shining in a gloomy place, until the Day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19).

The Jewish belief in the coming Messiah

This chapter is important because one of the main issues involved in interpreting the future correctly is one's attitude toward the nation of Israel and the way one interprets Old Testament prophecies. Sam Storms, in his 2013 book 'Kingdom Come,' page 16, gives the amillennial alternative to a premillennial interpretation of eschatology or the last things. He says: "The central and controlling thesis that I believe is warranted by the biblical text is that the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic hope as portrayed in the OT documents is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the believing remnant, the Church which he established at his first coming" (page 16).

So make up your mind as you read these OT prophecies. Are they to be spiritualized, Christianized, and made to refer to Jesus and the Church when the OT prophets didn't know about the Church? Or are they to be taken literally? They predict a regathering of Israel to their historic land and this miracle has happened in our generation over the past 100 years. They also predict the coming of a Jewish Messiah as king of the world and the subsequent establishment of his kingdom based in Jerusalem in place of the empires of the nations who now rule. Jerusalem, the Holy City that God chose as his city, has been a constant source of contention between Jews and

Muslims, and this disagreement will not go away until Jesus returns. It is destined to be the focus of a rebellion of the nations against God, culminating in the battle of Armageddon. Jerusalem is the place where Jesus died and was resurrected, the place from where he ascended, to where he will return, and the place from where he will rule the world with his saints. The angel Gabriel told Mary concerning her son:

“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32b-33).

That can mean nothing but the Messiah reigning over Jerusalem and Israel. The prophecy is based on Isaiah 9:6-7:

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be upon his shoulder,
and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom,
establishing it and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

The OT prophecies were predicted by the prophets as they were led by God’s Spirit and the apostle Peter encourages us to take notice of them. According to Jewish scriptural tradition, the Messianic era will be one of global peace and harmony, an era free of strife and hardship, and one conducive to the propagation of the word of God. The following themes are common to these prophecies.

Antichrist

Israel’s return to their land

The Day of the Lord

The Battle of Armageddon in Israel

Destruction of the present world

The Messiah's return to Jerusalem

Israel's conversion

David's throne

The Messianic reign from Jerusalem

The Messianic temple on Mount Zion

Glorified Jerusalem

World renewal

A new heaven and a new Earth

The saints of the Most High who rule with the Messiah

The major OT prophecies are now presented in the order of that order. However, some prophecies cover more than one topic. It should be noted that these prophecies have never been fulfilled, except for those that predict details of the first coming of the Messiah and those that predict the regathering of Israel which has been happening before our very eyes. The selected verses relate to the Kingdom of God, although it is never called that in the OT. The Messiah's kingdom can be defined as God's rule on Earth through his Son Jesus as regent, and his co-heirs, the elect children of God. Many of these prophecies are guaranteed by the words, 'The Lord declares', 'The Lord has sworn,' or 'The Lord will make it happen.'