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Introduction to Prophecy

Opening words. Why don't Calvinists have prophecy conferences? Can we truly say we're preaching "the whole counsel of God" if we're avoiding such a big topic?

And it's okay to have differences of opinion. Eschatology is a topic we will all agree on the moment it all comes to pass.

I came to understand God's sovereignty through the study of prophecy.

Principle: Prophecy only works if the future is definite.

Why do we study Prophecy?

The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy, by J. Barton Payne, lists 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament, and 578 prophecies in the New Testament. That works out to a total of 1,817 prophecies. Those prophecies take up 8,352 of the Bible's verses. So, because there are 31,124 verses in the Bible, 8,352 verses equals about 27 percent (26.83) – meaning that roughly one-quarter of the Bible is prophetic.

Prophecy is a unique characteristic of the Bible. No other major religious literature contains prophecy on par with what the Bible declares.

First prophecy in the Bible: the *protoeuaggelion*. As soon as sin occurred, God prophesied the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent. The first telling of the gospel was also the first prophecy.

Let's start by defining some terms:

In Hebrew, the word נָבִיא (navi), "spokesperson", traditionally translates as "prophet".

The Old Testament (the Tanakh) is divided into three large sections. The Hebrew word "Tanakh" has three letters, TNK. Each letter stands for a section:

T is for Torah (instruction).

N is for Nevi'im (prophets).

K is for Ketuvim (writings).

---- The writings are sometimes referred to in Greek as the Hagiographa, meaning "the holy writings" (Holy Writ) ----

The prophets are an instrumental part of Israel's history and of the Bible's overall construction. God spoke to His people through prophets. And that process of speaking through selected individuals led to the ultimate prophet, Christ Himself. As God commanded Moses to tell Israel --

Deuteronomy 18:15-22 (NASB) -- "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' And the LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

The English word 'prophet' comes from the Greek word προφήτης (profétés). The Greek word is a combination of "pro" (in front of,

above, before – something forward) and “phemi” (to speak or say, to make one’s thought known). [Bad speaking is “blasphemy”]

So, to be a prophet it to speak words forward, to foretell, or to tell forth.

All these words essentially mean, “to speak under inspiration.”

(re: 1Cor. 14:5 -- Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.)

Rule: God’s word is always consistent with itself. God will never tell a prophet (genuine or self-styled) something that contradicts what He has already said in His word. So, test the Spirits, because they’re not all from God. And hold every prophet’s word against the Bible. If they disagree, one of them is wrong. In other words, claiming to be a prophet is not excuse for contradicting the Bible.

Some prophecy comes to its fruition or fulfillment quite quickly

Examples: Samuel speaking to Saul that God’s Spirit would leave him and the kingdom would be ripped from him and given to a man who would obey. Those prophecies were fulfilled in a matter of years.

Or, Matt. 21:2 – “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.”

That prophecy was fulfilled in a matter of minutes.

On the other hand, the Davidic Covenant stretches from the reign of David to the end of this age. So, that’s a long-term prophecy.

Prophecies may take 100’s or even 1000’s of years. But God is not bound by time. Just as it took a very long time for all of the prophecies concerning the Messiah to come true, it’s been at least 2000 years since the prophecies of His return. But, we expect Him nevertheless.

The Importance of the Prophets to Old Testament History

The appearance and silence of the prophets also determined the Old Testament canon.

The Old Testament is both historical narrative and insight into what God is doing through those various events. The books of the OT were added by prophets who not only wrote about what happened, but they provided additional information concerning the background and spiritual implications of what occurred.

1Samuel 10:25 -- Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home.

1Chron. 29:29 -- Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer,

2Chron. 20:34 -- Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first to last, behold, they are written in the annals of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

2Chron. 26:22 -- Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first to last, the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, has written.

Jeremiah 30:2 -- "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book.

Old Testament canon ended around 435 BC with the completion of Malachi (currently the last book in the OT).

The Jews continued keeping history, but they had no words from prophets. So, *the history* is recorded (collectively referred to as the apocrypha -- "hidden", "esoteric", "spurious", "of questionable authenticity", from the Greek ἀπόκρυφα, meaning "those hidden away"), but not counted as Scripture because they did not have imprimatur of prophets who heard from God.

1Maccabees 4:45-46 (@164 BC)

45 And a good counsel came into their minds, to pull it down: lest it should be a reproach to them, because the Gentiles had defiled it; so they threw it down. And they laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, till there should come a prophet, and give answer concerning them.”

1Mac. 9:27 (160 BC)

So there was great distress in Israel, the worst since the time when prophets ceased to appear among them.

14:41 - Therefore, the Jews and their priests are happy to have Simon and his descendants as their leaders and High Priests, until a true prophet appears.

Josephus (Jewish historian) 39-100 AD. *Against Apion* 1:38-42

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural (or, an instinct) to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem

these books to contain Divine doctrines (or “decrees of God”), and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them.

Flavius Josephus Against Apion, translated by William Whiston (University of Cambridge, 1736).

So, we see that around 95-100 AD Josephus states that the contents of the Old Testament were written between the time of Moses and the days of Artaxerxes I (king of Persia from 465 to 424 BC), which places it in the time of Esther (in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah).

All that to say: Prophecy is fundamental to the Old Testament, and the canon was closed when the prophets were silent.

Christ in Prophecy

Fulfilled prophecy is evidential proof of the God-breathed (2Tim. 3:16) character of the Bible.

For instance, the Bible contains many Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah to come. By some counts, there are over 400 prophecies in the Old Testament that point to the coming Messiah, His life, and His death. According to the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth perfectly fulfilled every one of them. The odds of someone doing are astronomical. And, if it’s true, it’s certainly evidence that the Bible is God’s word.

Prophecies About Jesus	Old Testament Scripture	OT Text	
1	Messiah would be born of a woman.	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:20 Galatians 4:4
2	Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1 Luke 2:4-6
3	Messiah would be born of a virgin.	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22-23 Luke 1:26-31
4	Messiah would come from the line of Abraham.	Genesis 12:3 Genesis 22:18	Matthew 1:1 Romans 9:5

5	Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac.	Genesis 17:19 Genesis 21:12	Luke 3:34
6	Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.	Numbers 24:17	Matthew 1:2
7	Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.	Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:33 Hebrews 7:14
8	Messiah would be heir to King David's throne.	2 Samuel 7:12-13 Isaiah 9:7	Luke 1:32-33 Romans 1:3
9	Messiah's throne will be anointed and eternal.	Psalm 45:6-7 Daniel 2:44	Luke 1:33 Hebrews 1:8-12
10	Messiah would be called Immanuel.	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
11	Messiah would spend a season in Egypt.	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14-15
12	A massacre of children would happen at Messiah's birthplace.	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16-18
13	A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah	Isaiah 40:3-5	Luke 3:3-6
14	Messiah would be rejected by his own people.	Psalm 69:8 Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11 John 7:5
15	Messiah would be a prophet.	Deuteronomy 18:15	Acts 3:20-22
16	Messiah would be preceded by Elijah.	Malachi 4:5-6	Matthew 11:13-14
17	Messiah would be declared the Son of God.	Psalm 2:7	Matthew 3:16-17
18	Messiah would be called a Nazarene.	Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 2:23
19	Messiah would bring light to Galilee.	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:13-16
20	Messiah would speak in parables.	Psalm 78:2-4 Isaiah 6:9-10	Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35
21	Messiah would be sent to heal the brokenhearted.	Isaiah 61:1-2	Luke 4:18-19
22	Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.	Psalm 110:4	Hebrews 5:5-6
23	Messiah would be called King.	Psalm 2:6 Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 27:37 Mark 11:7-11

24	Messiah would be praised by little children.	Psalms 8:2	Matthew 21:16
25	Messiah would be betrayed.	Psalms 41:9 Zechariah 11:12-13	Luke 22:47-48 Matthew 26:14-16
26	Messiah's price money would be used to buy a potter's field.	Zechariah 11:12-13	Matthew 27:9-10
27	Messiah would be falsely accused.	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:57-58
28	Messiah would be silent before his accusers.	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4-5
29	Messiah would be spat upon and struck.	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67
30	Messiah would be hated without cause.	Psalms 35:19 Psalms 69:4	John 15:24-25
31	Messiah would be crucified with criminals.	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38 Mark 15:27-28
32	Messiah would be given vinegar to drink.	Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34 John 19:28-30
33	Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.	Psalms 22:16 Zechariah 12:10	John 20:25-27
34	Messiah would be mocked and ridiculed.	Psalms 22:7-8	Luke 23:35
35	Soldiers would gamble for Messiah's garments.	Psalms 22:18	Luke 23:34 Matthew 27:35-36
36	Messiah's bones would not be broken.	Exodus 12:46 Psalms 34:20	John 19:33-36
37	Messiah would be forsaken by God.	Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46
38	Messiah would pray for his enemies.	Psalms 109:4	Luke 23:34
39	Soldiers would pierce Messiah's side.	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
40	Messiah would be buried with the rich.	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
41	Messiah would resurrect from the dead.	Psalms 16:10 Psalms 49:15	Matthew 28:2-7 Acts 2:22-32
42	Messiah would ascend to heaven.	Psalms 24:7-10	Mark 16:19 Luke 24:51
43	Messiah would be seated at God's	Psalms 68:18	Mark 16:19

	right hand.	Psalm 110:1	Matthew 22:44
44	Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin.	Isaiah 53:5-12	Romans 5:6-8

Important: Christianity got its foothold in Jerusalem – the very place where people would know if any of it actually happened.

The God of Prophecy

God declares Himself to be the God of prophecy. This is definitional to whom God is.

Isaiah 42:9 -- "Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Isaiah 46:9-10 -- "Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure'."

John 13:19 -- "Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He."

Peter makes the point that accurate prophecy must come from God.

2Pet. 1:20-2:3 -- But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their agreed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

The Bible is 100% Accurate in Historic Fulfillment (4 examples)

The prophet Isaiah foretold that a conqueror named Cyrus would destroy seemingly impregnable Babylon and subdue Egypt along with most of the rest of the known world. This same man, said Isaiah, would decide to let the Jewish exiles in his territory go free without any payment of ransom (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; and 45:13). Isaiah made this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was born, 180 years before Cyrus performed any of these feats (and he did, eventually, perform them all), and 80 years before the Jews were taken into exile.

History tells us that in 538 BCE Cyrus ascended to power and signed the two edicts of restoration.

Now, either the authors of the Bible (if it's fake) got really lucky, or there is in fact divinity at the heart of this book.

Jeremiah predicted that despite its fertility and despite the accessibility of its water supply, the land of Edom (today a part of Jordan) would become a barren, uninhabited wasteland (Jeremiah 49:15-20; Ezekiel 25:12-14). His description accurately tells the history of that now bleak region.

How would he know something that specific about a region of the planet? Was he merely an early meteorologist, or did he have insider knowledge?

Daniel predicted the rise and fall of the nations that would follow Babylon, occupy that same territory, and oppress the children of Israel: Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. He likened Medo-Persia to a bear that rose up on one side, fulfilled as Cyrus the Persian became more powerful than Darius the Mede. Daniel likened the first king of Greece to a leopard with wings, describing the speed and ferocity of Alexander the Great. But, Daniel also accurately predicted that Alexander's power would not go to his progeny, but to four generals.

And that's exactly what happened.

The testimony of Josephus. The Jewish historian records that Alexander the Great was shown a copy of Daniel when he passed

through the Jewish realm. He was mightily impressed by the prophecy that referred to him and treated the Jews kindly - as evidenced both by Josephus and otherwise known histories of the period. Josephus also affirms the content of the book of Daniel as historical and authentic [Verm.JosDan].

Daniel, by the way, is widely criticized by the skeptics because of the amazing accuracy with which it foretold the future. But, Ezekiel testified to Daniel's authenticity as a prophet and living person.

Ezek. 14:12-20 -- Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it, and cut off from it both man and beast, even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD. "If I were to cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they depopulated it, and it became desolate so that no one would pass through it because of the beasts, *though* these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* sons or *their* daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the country would be desolate. Or *if* I should bring a sword on that country and say, 'Let the sword pass through the country and cut off man and beast from it,' even *though* these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* sons or *their* daughters, but they alone would be delivered. Or *if* I should send a plague against that country and pour out My wrath in blood on it, to cut off man and beast from it, even *though* Noah, Daniel, and Job were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* son or *their* daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."

In Ezek. 28:3 God said, rather mockingly, to the king of Tyre, "Behold, you are wiser than Daniel;"

And, of course, Jesus Himself calls Daniel a prophet in Matt. 24:15.

Critics attempted to late-date Daniel. They said it was written after the fact (during the time of the Maccabees, 169-165 BC) and then passed off as a book of prophecy.

But, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the Qumran

caves, along with early versions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other seminal books of prophecy, the late date theory essentially fell apart. And that means that Daniel was written before the succession of kingdoms took place, in the 6th Century BC, and that makes it legitimate prophecy.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 allowed us to compare the manuscripts composing the Hebrew Bible that were a thousand years older than those we had previously possessed, and we learned that the painstaking copying systems used by the Jewish scribes---such as the Talmudists and Massorettes---effectively preserved accuracy. Archaeologist William F. Albright comments that most of the Dead Sea Scrolls “scarcely differ at all from the consonantal text of our Massoretic Bible” (from which our modern English versions are translated). “This fact,” says Albright, “proves conclusively that we must treat the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible with the utmost respect and that the free emending of difficult passages in which modern critical scholars have indulged, cannot be tolerated any longer.” [William Foxwell Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1955), p. 136.]...

Some 400 years before crucifixion was invented, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. Further, they said that the body would be pierced and that none of the bones would be broken, contrary to customary procedure in cases of crucifixion (Psalm 22 and 34:20; Zechariah 12:10). Again, historians and New Testament writers confirm the fulfillment: Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross, and his extraordinarily quick death eliminated the need for the usual breaking of bones. A spear was thrust into his side to verify that he was, indeed, dead.

Jesus did exist as a man, as a person. Tacitus, the Roman historian writing early in the 2nd century A.D., in his *Annals* 15.44, mentions Jesus and the Christians in his account of how the Emperor Nero went after Christians in order to draw attention away from himself after Rome's fire of 64 AD:

“But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the Bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements Which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero From the infamy of being believed to have ordered the Conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence to suppress the rumor, he Falsely charged with the guilt, and punished Christians, who were Hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was Put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign Of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time Broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief Originated, but through the city of Rome also, where all things Hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their Center and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first Made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an Immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of Firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.”

So, we study prophecy because:

It is evidence of God’s sovereign control over history.

It is proof that God has the future in His hands.

It is definitional of who God is.

It is part and parcel of the whole Bible.

It defines the canon of the Old Testament.

It tells us what is coming in the future – including the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Rev. 1:3 says,

“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”)

And that’s a good enough reason for me.

Bible Interpretation

Philosophical presuppositions.

Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation, especially texts in the area of literature (like poetry), religion, and law.

Biblical hermeneutics is perhaps summarized best by:

2Timothy 2:15 -- "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing (accurately handling) the word of truth."

The folk etymology places the origin (Greek: *hermeneutike*) with Hermes, the mythological Greek deity whose role is that of messenger of the gods. Besides being mediator between the gods themselves, and between the gods and humanity, he leads souls to the underworld upon death. He is also considered the inventor of language and speech, an interpreter, a liar, a thief and a trickster. These multiple roles make Hermes an ideal representative figure for hermeneutics. As Socrates notes, words have the power to reveal or conceal, thus promoting the message in an ambiguous way. The Greek view of language as consisting of signs that could lead to truth or falsehood is the very essence of Hermes, who is said to relish the uneasiness of the recipients.

The traditional etymology of hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word ἑρμηνεύω (*hermeneuō*, "translate", or "interpret"). It was introduced into philosophy mainly through the title of Aristotle's work Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας (*Peri Hermeneias*, 'On Interpretation', more commonly referred by its Latin title *De Interpretatione*). It is one of the earliest (c. 360 BC) extant philosophical works in the Western tradition to deal with the relationship between language and logic in a comprehensive, explicit, and formal way.

A proper hermeneutic engages in rigorous **exegesis**.

exegeomai = to tell, relate, explain, report, make known, reveal. This is the verb from which we get our English verb 'exegete.'

The noun "exegesis" migrated in the English language essentially unchanged. The Greek word is ἐξήγησις (*exegesis*) from ἐξηγεῖσθαι (*exēgeisthai*) 'to lead out.'

The definition is: A critical explanation or interpretation of the text.

Importantly, it designates drawing meaning from the text, as opposed to *eisegesis*, which designates forcing one's own meaning or presuppositions into a text. Eisegesis often occurs when someone is defending a particular system.

"No one has ever seen God; the only [or 'only begotten'] God, who is in the bosom of the Father, has explained (*exeGESato*) him." (John 1:18)

Jesus has exegeted the Father.

A Brief History of Exegesis

Medieval (5th to the 15th century) Christian interpretations of the Biblical text devised a form of exegesis that considered every text in a fourfold mode, emphasizing the distinction between the "letter" and the "spirit" of the text. This method – or scheme of interpretation -- was based on the various ways that the Patristic writers dealt with the Bible.

The literal sense understands the text based on what the text states or reports directly.

The allegorical sense explains the text in a way where each literal element has a symbolic meaning.

The moral application understands the text according to how it applies to and is understood by the individual reader or hearer.

The Analogical sense draws out of the text the implicit (implied, but not plainly stated) allusions it contains to secret metaphysical and eschatological knowledge, or gnosis.

All three interpretations that go beyond the literal sense are essentially "allegorical" or "spiritualized." The practical application of these three aspects of spiritual interpretation varied considerably. Most of the time, the fourfold sense of the Scriptures was used only partially, depending on the content of the text and the idea of the exegete....

It is really two-fold – the literal sense versus a spiritual or mystical sense.

Hermeneutics in the Middle Ages witnessed the proliferation of non-literal interpretations of the Bible. Christian commentators could read Old Testament narratives simultaneously as prefigurations of analogous New Testament episodes, as symbolic lessons about Church institutions and current teachings, and as personally applicable allegories of the Spirit. But these interpretive ideas were the result of religious tradition and creative theology. They are not suggested or instructed by a straightforward reading of the text.

After 1000 years of Catholic dominance (the dark ages), the Protestant Reformation ushered in a renewed interest in the interpretation of the Bible, which stepped away from the interpretive tradition developed during the Middle Ages, returning to a concentration on the texts themselves.

Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized "*scriptura sui ipsius interpres*" – or, "writing his own interpreter". It is the basis for concepts such as "sola Scriptura".

My Hermeneutic Approach

The Literal Method (or Face Value Method, sometimes called the "Natural Method")

The fallacy of “wooden literalism.” Face Value Hermeneutic – we recognize figures of speech – similes, metaphors, contrasts, symbols, parables, etc.

Words mean things. The authors used these words because they best conveyed the ideas they were attempting to communicate. Had they meant something else, they’d have said something else. If the words on the page do not mean what they say, if they do not conform to their standard definition and typical usage, then we have no idea what the authors were attempting to tell us. And any passage can mean anything at all, according to the interpreter, since we have idea what it originally meant.

Two people can look at the same text and see two different things based on the assumptions and presuppositions they carry to it. But, the best way to understand the apostolic message is to let the text speak without our opinions, systems, or assumptions coloring it.

Consistent hermeneutics

Consistency matters. We should not have one method for some portions of the Bible (like the passages on salvation) and another for other portions (like the prophetic or apocalyptic).

Eschatological Concepts

Eschaton – last things

eschatology (*eskhatos* “last, furthest, remote.”) – As a theological term it means the study of “last things,” i.e. death, judgment, heaven, and hell.

Since we will be addressing Revelation 20 this week, we need to know the word **Millennium** -- From *mille* “thousand” + *annus* “year,” hence a period of 1,000 years.

The basic dividing line in eschatology is between futurist or historicist.

Futurist

The view that the prophecies of Revelation (and related passages) focus upon the end of the age (world), and that therefore the greater part of the book has yet to be fulfilled.

Historicist

The view that the prophecies of the Revelation (and related passages) provide a preview of history from the time of the writer to the end of the world, and therefore have been already fulfilled in part.

As W. Graham Scroggie summarizes: "In this view the Seals apply to the history of the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries; the sealing of the 144,000 tells of the revival of the saints subsequent to the revolution under Constantine, and under the leadership of Augustine; the trumpets tell of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire; the Little Books announce the Protestant Reformation under Luther; the beasts of ch. xiii. represent the Papacy; the outpourings of the vials predict the French Revolution and subsequent events; and in chs. xvii. and xviii. we learn of the yet future destruction of the Papacy, and the city of Rome."

Among the futurists you have:

Premillennialism

Belief in a literal coming of Christ before the thousand-year reign of world peace. Pre-millennialism is the belief that the Millennium lies in the future. Christ will come, bind Satan and his helpers, and rule over a peaceful earth for 1,000 years. At the end of that time Christ will release Satan and his angels who will raise an army that Jesus will destroy in the Battle of Armageddon. The Last Judgment will occur and a new heaven and new earth created.

It is the belief held by a largest percentage of Christians during the

first three centuries of Christianity. (NOTE: After Christianity became the official religion of Rome in the fourth century CE, this belief was declared a heresy and suppressed. The belief reappeared in the 19th century and, with several variations, has again become widespread.)

In the early church it was known as “Chiliasm” after the Greek “chiliad” or thousand. Modern Reformation Magazine (a publication of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals) asks –

“But how are we to view the Church’s earliest period up until the first decisive rejection of chiliasm in the Church? By most accounts this was the heyday of chiliastic belief in the Church. Many modern apologists for premillennialism allege that before the time of Augustine chiliasm was the dominant, if not the “universal” eschatology of the Church, preserving the faith of the apostles. Some form of chiliasm was certainly defended by such notable names as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyons in the second century and Terullian of Carthage in the third.” (*Volume 8, Number 1. Jan./Feb. 1999. P. 16*)

Pre-tribulationism

The belief that that Christ will return to gather (rapture / harpazo) Christians before the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Tribulation – a seven-year interval when a world religious-political leader called the Antichrist takes power. Rapture – from Medieval Latin raptura, “seizure, rape, kidnapping” from Latin raptus “a carrying off.” An eschatological event in which “true Christians” are caught up in the air to meet the returning Christ.

Historical Premillennialism

Historic premillennialism is the polemical designation (adopted by its adherents) which could be more objectively called post-tribulation premillennialism. The use of the term "historic" implies that this point of view is the historical view of premillennialists, while pre-tribulationism is a newer understanding. Post-tribulation premillennialism is the Christian eschatological view which teaches that the second coming of Jesus Christ will occur prior to a thousand-year reign of the saints, but subsequent to the great apostasy and the tribulation.

Historic premillennialism teaches that the church was in the fore-
vision of Old Testament prophecy, while dispensationalism teaches
that the church is hardly, if at all, mentioned by the Old Testament
prophets.

Among the **historicists** you have:

Amillennialism

The “a” is a negative. This is the teaching that there is no literal 1,000
year reign of Christ as referenced in Revelation 20. Instead, it
teaches that we are in the Millennium now. At the end of this
millennium Christ will return. The final judgment will take place and
the heavens and the earth will then be destroyed and remade.

Lewis and Demarest summarize it well:

The amillennial order of events is: Christ’s present, spiritual reign over
the church; increasing apostasy on earth; the Great Tribulation; Christ’s
second coming with deceased saints; the destruction of evil powers; the
general resurrection of believers and unbelievers; the Last Judgment;
and the eternal state. Amillennialism thus affirms that at the end of the
age there will be one return of Christ, one resurrection and one
judgment.

Thus it (i.e., in its varied forms) has simplicity as a commendable feature
and has been held down through the ages but such notable theologians
as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and present day thinkers such as Abraham
Kuyper, Hermann Bavinck, and Louis Berkhof.
(Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 372.)

Postmillennialism

Belief in the restoration of society, primarily through the influence of
the church, before the return of Christ. It is the return of Christ that is
post, i.e., after, the millennium. This view tends to equate the
“millennium” with “the church age.” Reconstructionism is a form of

postmillennialism. Post-millennialism is the belief that Jesus established the Kingdom of God in the first century and that we are already in the Millennium (not an exact 1,000 years, but “a very long time”). The Second Coming will occur after (post) this current Millennium.

Preterism

Preterists hold the view that the prophecies of the book of Revelation (along with the prophecies of Matthew 24, etc.) commented on events of John’s day and did not make predictions about the future end of the world. Full preterists contend that all Biblical prophecy has been fulfilled as of 70 AD, while partial-preterists do expect a future return of Christ.

So, those are the various eschatological positions. They are also dependent, obviously, on hermeneutics. How you understand the Bible will influence how you understand eschatology – and vice versa. Your eschatology cannot help but influence your overall theology.

Covenantalism vs. Dispensationism

The terms "Covenantal Theology" and "Dispensational Theology" refer to two different ways of interpreting the biblical record of salvation history. We don’t have time to delve into these deeply, but a basic familiarity is helpful in understanding why there are different eschatologies.

Covenantal Theology (Covenantalism, Federalism)

A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. Various covenant are found throughout the Bible. Covenant Theology views God's covenants as governing categories for understanding the entire bible.

The standard description of Covenant Theology views the history of God's dealings with mankind, from Creation to Fall to Redemption to

Consummation, under the framework of the three overarching theological covenants:

Redemption -- the eternal agreement within the Godhead in which the Father appointed the Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to redeem his elect people.

Works -- made in the Garden of Eden between God and Adam who represented all mankind as a federal head. (Romans 5:12-21) It promised life for obedience and death for disobedience. Adam, and all mankind in Adam, broke the covenant, thus standing condemned. The covenant of works continues to function after the fall as the moral law.

Grace -- promises eternal life for all people who receive forgiveness of sin through Christ. He is the substitutionary covenantal representative fulfilling the covenant of works on their behalf, in both the positive requirements of righteousness and its negative penal consequences {commonly described as his active and passive obedience}. It is the historical, real-time expression of the eternal covenant of redemption. Genesis 3:15, with the promise of a "seed" of the woman who would crush the serpent's head, is usually identified as the historical inauguration for the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace became the basis for all future covenants that God made with mankind such as with Noah, Abraham, David, and finally in the New Covenant founded and fulfilled in Christ. These individual covenants are called the *biblical covenants* because they are explicitly described in the Bible. They are usually described as the various "administrations" of the single covenant of grace.

These three covenants are not explicitly presented as, nor called, covenants in the Bible. Covenant Theologians argue that they are implied in the Biblical data and are therefore referred to as "Theological Covenants."

Strengths:

It stresses that people have always been saved by grace through faith.

Weaknesses:

It lumps everything between the Fall and the Second Advent together and tends to minimize some of the important differences in the way God works within that period. For example, it refers to the church as beginning with the first believers in the Old Testament, rather than seeing it as a distinct phase of God's redemptive program beginning on the Day of Pentecost. This is why some churches feel the freedom to incorporate Old Testament practices like a liturgical worship service with an altar and priestly vestments.

Dispensational Theology (Dispensationalism)

A hermeneutic that stresses the differing ways that God works with mankind during various periods (or dispensations, Gr. "oikonomia") in salvation history. (see Eph. 1:10; 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:4). In the classic Dispensational scheme, each dispensation begins with an offer by God and ends with failure by man and a period of divine judgment.

In Classic Dispensationalism, there are seven dispensations:

- **Innocence** (Adam and Eve in the Garden)
- **Conscience** (from Eden to the Flood)
- **Human Government** (the Flood to Tower of Babel)
- **Promise** (Abraham to Moses)
- **Law** (Moses to Jesus)
- **Grace** (New Covenant or Church Age)
- **Millennium** (Rule of Christ on Earth)

Strengths:

Dispensationalism usually follows a more literal hermeneutic.

Dispensationalists emphasize that the primary application of an Old Testament passage is to the original audience.

Weaknesses:

Some of the early dispensations seem to be forced. Paul seems to lump everything from Adam to Moses together (Rom. 5:14). More recent Dispensationalists (Progressive Dispensationalism) have moved away from these rigid distinctions.

Some Dispensationalists have also given this view a bad name by getting overly dogmatic about how certain passages must be fulfilled (like Hall Lindsey saying Rev. 9:7-10 refers to military helicopters), date setting (like the booklet "88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be in 1988), etc. To say nothing of the Left Behind series.

It has been charged that Dispensationalism is negative because of the judgments ending each dispensation. But, in reality God is progressively accomplishing his redemptive plan.

(thanks to xenos.com for some of that info)

The two hermeneutics differ on how Old Testament promises to Israel will be fulfilled –

Dispensationalism says that they will be literally fulfilled with and for ethnic Israel

Covenantalism says with they are being figuratively fulfilled in the church, or they will be figuratively fulfilled in the eternal state (either in Heaven or in the New Jerusalem).

And that brings us to **Replacement Theology** -- A system of interpretation based on the idea that "the church" replaces national Israel as God's vehicle of redemption, appropriating for herself all the promises made to Israel and rendering the Jewish nation irrelevant eschatologically.

Kingdom Concepts

Kingdom: Territory or realm over which a king has dominion. It's a generic term for any realm with a king. And that is one way that the term "kingdom" is used in the Bible. For instance:

Psa. 22:28 -- For the kingdom is the LORD'S, and He rules over the nations.

Isa. 37:16 -- "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who art enthroned above the cherubim, Thou art the God, Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth.

However, the term is also used to designate a particular line of promises made to Israel nationally and exclusively.

One of the most pervasive promises in the OT is the prophecy of a kingdom belonging to Israel, in the geographic area of Canaan, which will last in perpetuity – a peaceful, permanent outcome for the nation of Israel collectively.

The kingdom concept begins with the Abrahamic Covenant. In Genesis 12:1-3, Abram is told by God to leave his father and relatives and go to a land that God would show him. Abram was promised --

Genesis 12:1-3 -- And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

In Genesis 15, starting at verse 5, we read --

Genesis 15:5-21 -- "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."⁶ Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.⁷ And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."⁸ He said, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?"⁹ So He said to him, "Bring Me a three

year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.¹¹ The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror *and* great darkness fell upon him.¹³ *God* said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.¹⁴ But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.¹⁶ Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

¹⁷ It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, *there appeared* a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,

“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:¹⁹ the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite²⁰ and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim²¹ and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.”

In Genesis 17 we read --

Genesis 17:1-8 -- Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.² “I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.”³ Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations.⁵ “No longer shall your name be called Abram (exalted father), but your name shall be Abraham (father of a multitude); For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you.⁷ I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.⁸ I

will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Later in that chapter, starting at verse 18 we read --

Genesis 18:18-19 -- And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!” ¹⁹ But God said, “No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

So, the promises contained in the Abrahamic Covenant proceeds from Abraham to Isaac.

In Genesis 22, starting at verse 15, we read –

Genesis 22:15-18 -- Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Then in Genesis 28, starting at verse 12, we read about Jacob, who had his name changed to Israel --

Genesis 28:12-15 -- He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Jacob had 12 sons who became the progenitors of the 12 tribes of national Israel. Through Joseph, just as God told Abraham, the family wound up in Egypt, and after a pharaoh arose who did not remember Joseph, the large and growing offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were placed in bondage and they served 400 years.

And that brings us to Moses. His assignment was to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and back into the land of Canaan. After 40 years in the wilderness, Joshua completed the task and in Joshua 21:43-45, we read --

Joshua 21:43-45 -- So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.

But that's not the end of the story.

Hebrews 4:7-8 -- He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.

The David Covenant

After being ruled by a succession of judges, Israel wanted a king. God gave them Saul. But Saul was a faithless king.

1Sam. 13:13-14 -- And Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

The “man after my (God’s) own heart,” (Acts 13:22) was King David.

2Samuel 7:4-17 -- But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle. Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"

"Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took [it] away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.'" In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

David was the only faithful king of Israel to rule over the united 12 tribes. During the reign of Solomon, due to his love for foreign women and their gods, (1Kings 11) God separated the northern 10. Solomon had a servant named Jeroboam --

1Kings 11:29-39 -- It came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and

tore it into twelve pieces. He said to Jeroboam, “Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David did. Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes; but I will take the kingdom from his son’s hand and give it to you, even ten tribes. But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name. I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel. Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always.”

So Israel was split between the northern and the southern kingdom.

The southern kingdom (Judah, Benjamin, and the Levites of the temple) became known as “the house of Judah.” Sometimes, they were collectively called “Jerusalem.”

The northern kingdom became known as “the house of Israel” or “the house of Ephraim” or “Mount Ephraim.” And sometimes “Samaria.”

Although, in Ezekiel 23, God speaks of the two nations as sisters all the way back to Egypt.

The northern tribes apostatized quickly as the their succession of kings set up foreign gods and foreign worship, fearing that if their people returned to YHWH, the kingdoms would unite. Israel rebelled, failed to observe God’s Sabbaths, and first Israel, then Judah, fell

under a succession of invasions and deportations:

Assyrians / Babylonians / Medo-Persians / Greeks / Romans

BUT – despite this situation, the prophets of Israel speak with a unified voice. To the man, they all predicted a time when God would reunite the 12 tribes, both houses, ruled by David's greater son.

The regathering and uniting of Israel is a primary theme of Israel's prophets, probably best exemplified by Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones.

Read Ezekiel 37: 1-14

Then, Ezekiel 37: 15-28

Isaiah 9:6-7 -- For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Daniel

Daniel's succession of kingdoms, culminating in the return of Christ.

Daniel 2: 36-45 --

"This [was] the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, [or] the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given [them] into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

"After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these

in pieces. In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. [As] the toes of the feet [were] partly of iron and partly of pottery, [so] some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and [that] kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

This is a succession of provably earthly, physical kingdoms, all located in the Middle East, and all having a direct effect on national Israel.

Promises of Restoration

Micah 4:8 – “And as for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion, to you it will come — Even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

Psalms 2 – Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!" He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the [very] ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He

not become angry, and you perish [in] the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Zephaniah 3:11-13 -- On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel will do no wrong; they will speak no lies, nor will deceit be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid."

Zechariah 12:10 -- "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

Zechariah 14:16-19 -- Then 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. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus

Luke 1:26-33 -- Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He

will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.”

This language, spoken by Gabriel, is identical to the OT predications concerning the Messiah’s purpose – to establish the kingdom and reign over Israel specifically. Now, it’s not a fair hermeneutic to assume that references to Israel are somehow symbolic, based on allegorical conclusion about Paul’s much later writing. The context and the words are plain – and biblically consistent.

Against this background, it’s not surprising that when Jesus walked on the planet, the Jews attempted to make Him king. He was Messiah. And they wanted Him to establish the prophetic visions.

When He entered Jerusalem,

Mark 11:9 -- “The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!’”

They were anticipating Messiah as the direct descendent of David, to sit on David’s throne in Jerusalem and rule over a regathered, re-established 12-tribe nation.

But, He did not come to rule. He came to give His life and save His people from their sins. But, He’s returning to rule and to accomplish everything the prophets have foretold.

Consequently, in His Model Prayer (Lord’s Prayer), He included the petition, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.”

Matt. 6:31-33 -- “Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the Gentiles (ethnos/non-Jews) eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”

How would Jesus' original audience have understood those words? Given their Jewish heritage and promises, would have they been thinking about a physical kingdom, or a spiritual one?

Mark 15:43 -- Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

Was Joseph merely waiting to die? Or did He understand the kingdom of God to be a future, earthly, coming event?

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Matt. 4:23 -- And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Matt. 9:35 -- And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

The kingdom of Heaven

Matt. 3:2 -- Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matt. 4:17 -- From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Kingdom of Heaven Vs. Kingdom of God

Jesus uses the phrase repeatedly in the gospel of Matthew. Mark uses “kingdom of God.” Here is a comparison --

Matt. 19:23-24 -- And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom (*basileia*) of heaven (*ouranos*). And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom (*basileia*) of God (*theos*).”

So, the terms are interchangeable.

Jesus Anticipated the Arrival of the Kingdom

Matt. 26:29 -- “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

Luke 23:42 -- And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”

Luke 22:28-30 -- “You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

If nothing else, that verse convinces us that the twelve tribes of Israel will present in the kingdom, to be judged by the apostles.

And in the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21:10-14 –

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

It’s inescapable that the 12 tribes will be present and identifiable in the New Age – at the New Jerusalem. The full kingdom promises will come to their eternal fruition.

Now, By my count, the word “kingdom” appears 125 times in the synoptic gospels, but only three times in the gospel of John --

John 3:3 -- Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

John 3:5 -- Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 18:36 -- Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world (*kosmos*). If My kingdom were of this world (*kosmos*), then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm (*enteuthen*).”

The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 1:3, 6-8 -- To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. ... And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

So, the question at this moment in time is: What’s the deal with Israel? Has God replaced them? Is the church the “new Israel” or the “spiritual Israel” (language not found in Scripture)?

The **New Covenant** is repeated in both Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8. And it is made specifically to “the house of Judah and the house of Israel.” Then it refers to them collectively as Israel.

Jeremiah 31:31-37 -- 31“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and

on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: "If this fixed order departs from before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever." Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done," declares the LORD.

More References to the Kingdom of God

- In the book of Acts there are five different references to the disciples of Jesus preaching "the kingdom of God."
- Paul mentions the kingdom of God five times to the Corinthians.
- Once to the Romans and Galatians.
- "Kingdom of Christ and God" to the Ephesians.
- Once to the Colossians, as well as "the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13).
- "His kingdom and glory" in 1Thes. 2:12. And kingdom of God once.

It appears that Paul expected the kingdom to appear future to him --

Acts 14:19-22 -- But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

2Tim. 4:1 -- I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with 1great patience and instruction.

1Cor. 15:22-24 -- For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Heb. 12:28 -- Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

James 2:5 -- Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

And then Revelation --

Rev. 1:6 -- and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Rev. 1:9 -- I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Rev. 5:10 -- "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Rev. 11:15 -- And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

Rev. 12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night."

Revelation 20 and the Thousand Years

Since “God is not (the author) of confusion,” the Bible does not teach several different and varying views of the end times. One reason there’s still confusion and debate is simply because these things haven’t come to their conclusion and fulfillment yet. As soon as everything comes to pass, we’ll know exactly what the “correct” view is.

However, if we employ a consistent hermeneutic and apply basic rules of grammar and interpretation, one view makes better use of the available information, does the least damage to the text, and coincides with the progressive nature of Biblical revelation better than the others ... at least, in my opinion.

The fact that it’s taken thousands of years for Israel to be established fully and for all of the prophecies of the kingdom to come true, that’s not evidence that God will not bring it to pass. After all, Christ has been expected for 2000 years, but we still expect Him.

The Great Tribulation – according to Daniel, Jeremiah, and Jesus

Daniel 12:1-4 -- “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

Jeremiah 30:5-8 -- “For thus says the LORD, ‘I have heard a sound of terror, Of dread, and there is no peace. Ask now, and see if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in

childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress (KJV: Jacob's trouble), but he will be saved from it. It shall come about on that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.'"

Matt. 24:15-22 -- "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; for then there will be a great tribulation (*megas thlipsis*), such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short."

The Great Tribulation is not the same as:

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (*thlipsis*), but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Christ's return

parousia [pär'ū-sē'ə] - A Greek term that means "arrival" or "coming." It is usually used to mean the Second Coming of Christ.

(Some common arguments)

- How many "second comings" are there?
- Matthew 24:14, and states, "Verily (truly) I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."
- David's Throne

The triumphant hope woven throughout the New Testament rests on the facts that Christ rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and will certainly someday return. When he left, His apostles were present, watching Him rise bodily.

Acts 1:9-11 -- And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

This return of Christ was the firm and widespread belief of the early Christians.

Paul taught, "The Lord himself would come down from heaven..."

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 -- For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Phillipians 4:5 -- Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

Heb. 9:28 -- ... so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

James 5:8 -- You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

1John 3:2 -- Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

In his great Olivet discourse, Christ announced -- in keeping with Daniel's vision of the Son of Man -- that he would most certainly return.

Matt. 24:29-30 --“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

John 14:1-3 -- “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

Rev. 1:7 -- BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.

These passages describe a literal, physical return to Earth. To claim that these passages are referring to a spiritual return simply does not square with the details described by Jesus and the apostles.

He's coming in like manner as He left – physically, literally, on clouds of glory. Acts 1:11 is most certainly envisioning a personal, bodily return. The fact that “every eye will see him” is given its most natural meaning if Jesus' return is thought of as bodily (Matt 24:30). Paul said the Lord himself will return (1 Thess 4:16). There will be no mistaking his coming, for just as “lightening that flashes in the east is visible as far away as the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt 24:27). Indeed, there will be signs of cosmic proportions associated with his coming (Matt 24:28).

And that brings us to the main passage: **Revelation 20**.

Revelation 20 / 1000 years

Read the text.

Are there any words in the text that are confusing? Are they understandable? Are the words clear?

No one knows more about what John saw than John does. He was told to write down what he saw and that's what he did. His words and his description are clear.

Interpreting according to the "clearest text."

Chapter 19 comes BEFORE Chapter 20

John's use of the word "kai" (and). No evidence of "Progressive Parallelism" at the beginning of the arbitrarily numbered chapter.

Progressive revelation

(Compare Jesus in temple to Isaiah prophecy)

Luke 4:16-21 -- And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Isaiah 61:1-2 -- The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn.

The same principle holds when reading the book of Revelation. The earlier accounts of judgment read as if the saved and condemned are judged all together.

John 5:25-29 - Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

But, in Revelation 20, Jesus gives John a prophecy with additional information that divides the two groups, just as He Himself divided the prophecy of Isaiah 61.

A Thousand Means A Thousand

A few years ago I had a little YouTube dust-up with Gary DeMar, who is a preterist. In a video, Gary said, "The use of the number thousand in Revelation 20 is interesting because of the way thousand is used elsewhere in Scripture." Then Gary provided three examples from the Old Testament where the word "thousand" is used less-than-literally. He concluded that, given such evidence, the number "thousand" in Revelation 20 is meant to be understood in a similar, non-literal way. But, I wondered -- and you should too -- why those three examples ought to have greater weight than the hundreds of other references to "thousand" in the Old Testament.

In actuality, the vast majority of times that the word "thousand" is used in the OT, it's used mathematically. Think of the book of

Numbers. It's an accounting of people and animals in Israel. And it uses the word "thousand" repeatedly And precisely.

Numbers 31:28-46 -- "Levy a tax for the LORD from the men of war who went out to battle, one in five hundred of the persons and of the cattle and of the donkeys and of the sheep; take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the LORD. From the sons of Israel's half, you shall take one drawn out of every fifty of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys and of the sheep, from all the animals, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD." Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the LORD had commanded Moses. Now the booty that remained from the spoil which the men of war had plundered was 675,000 sheep, and 72,000 cattle, and 61,000 donkeys, and of human beings, of the women who had not known man intimately, all the persons were 32,000. The half, the portion of those who went out to war, was as follows: the number of sheep was 337,500, and the LORD'S levy of the sheep was 675; and the cattle were 36,000, from which the LORD'S levy was 72; and the donkeys were 30,500, from which the LORD'S levy was 61; and the human beings were 16,000, from whom the LORD'S levy was 32 persons. Moses gave the levy which was the LORD'S offering to Eleazar the priest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. As for the sons of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who had gone to war-- now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep, and 36,000 cattle, and 30,500 donkeys, and the human beings were 16,000. (Numbers 31:28-46)

Notice that this passage is full of math. And it's accurate math. For instance, half of 32,000 is 16,000, 1/500th of which is 32. These people were skilled at counting and using numbers. But, pay attention to the math concerning the number 1000. Twice, in dividing 1000, the outcome is 500. Half of 675,000 sheep equals 337,500. And half of 61,000 donkeys is 30,500.

What's my point? This passage plainly tells us that 1000 equals 500 times 2. That's mathematic certainty concerning the common meaning of 1000 in the Old Testament.

Despite a small handful of verses where folk may argue that the term "a thousand" is symbolic, the overwhelming use of the term in the Bible is a literal/mathematic number that means exactly what you'd think one thousand means.

One day in the court of the lord Ps. 84:10 / cattle on a thousand hills
Ps. 50:10/ God faithful to thousand generations

Ps. 84:10 -- For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

In Psalm 50:10, “*Eleph*” (Hebrew) means either 1000 or means “oxen” (*Eluph*).

Young’s Literal translation renders it: Ps. 50:10 -- For Mine [is] every beast of the forest, The cattle on the hills of oxen.

Deuteronomy 7:9 - "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

But those passages are obviously not contextually the same as Rev. 20. Different context, different use of terminology. So, those verses do nothing to determine the relative literalism of Rev. 20. Example: just because a word is used once or twice non-specifically, that does not mean that the word is always used non-specifically in very context (TV store example)

Here are two non-specific uses of the word “thousand” where the definition of the word has not changed. The reason that we understand these passages is that we understand the word “thousand” in its normal meaning and usage. In other words, we can use a specific term in a non-specific way, but the definition of the word does not change.

Ps. 90:4 -- For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.

2Peter 3:8 -- But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

George Harrison on his 50th birthday clicked his fingers and said "50 years disappeared like that" do we allegorize the 50 years in his statement? No we don't. Similarly the Palmist says 1000 years for what it literally is and there is no need to allegorize it.

Q: So, was John using the specific term "thousand years" in a non-specific way?

Exegesis demands that we consider definition, context, word usage, historic word usage, and whether it makes sense in its context. Can you read the standard definition in the immediate context and have it still make sense? If so, there's no reason to assume for another definition.

Is 1000 understandable, does it fit the context, and does the meaning lead to a logical outcome?

The only reason to import a different meaning is to defend a system or predetermined outcome. And sometimes, the dogged defense of a system can become a denial of the perspicuity of the text of scripture. It either means what it says, or we don't know what it means.

The Math of John's Revelation

Math: 42 months = 1260 days = 3.5 years.

Revelation 11:2 -- "Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. (three and a half years) And I will grant *authority* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

How does John use the word "thousand" – symbolically or mathematically?

In Rev. 20, the Greek "*chillioi*" appears 6 times in the first 7 verses. And it only has one definition – it always means "thousand".

“*Etos*” means years, hence the phrase “thousand years”.

New Testament “Thousand”

A thousand years is a chiliad, and during the earliest 200-250 years of the church, the primary view was Chiliasm.

Chillioi – 11 times in NT (twice in 2Peter 3:8, the rest in Revelation)

Often used with prefix like pentachilioi = five thousand.

Mark 8:19 - when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve."
'dischilioi' = "two thousand"

Mark 5:13 -- And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand and were choked in the sea.

'trischilioi' = "three thousand"

Acts 2:41 -- Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

'tetrakischilioi' = "four thousand"

Acts 21:38 -- “Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?”

'heptakischilioi' = "seven thousand"

Romans 11:4 -- But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

“Chilliois” appears 43 times in NT with prefixes, always as a mathematic count.

In Septuagint (270 BC), 504 times, always as 1000

Including, of course, in the book of Numbers, in census, in counts, various 1000's, used mathematically.

John's Thousands

How does John use the word “thousand” – symbolically or mathematically?

It's arithmetic – 144,000. Divided by 12 X 12,000 = 144,000

If John meant “large, uncountable number” he'd have used “*murios*.” Myriad. Did John know this word? Yes.

Revelation 5:11 -- And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads (*murios*), and thousands of thousands (*chilias* – plural of *chillioi*).

550 occurrences of “thousand” in the whole Bible, and it is overwhelmingly mathematic. John uses it mathematically and had the option of using a non-specific word. If in John 20 “*chillioi*” means anything else, you have to prove it from the text. Conjecture and assertions in defense of a system are not good enough.

More Math in Rev. 21

12 gates, 12 angels, 12 tribes, twelve foundations, 3 gates on 4 sides = 12. 12,000 (*dodekachiloi*), four-square, the length the same as the width. It's all math-specific.

The only eschatological system that allows the words on the page to say what they say is the **premillennial system**. If someone says it means something different, they have to prove it.

Common Argument: But, this is the only place 1000 years are mentioned!

Even if Revelation 20 were the only passage in the Bible that taught an earthly, thousand-year reign of Christ, that should be enough to convince us. The Bible need only affirm a doctrine in one place, so that when properly understood, it should be regarded as authoritative. The phrase “You must be born against” occurs only once – in John 3. But, it's still true.

Second, it is true that Revelation contains symbolism. But this fact does not preclude an earthly kingdom in Revelation 20 and a straightforward reading of this text. What is more important in this case is the immediate context and the actual words that are used in Revelation 20:4-6. And, it is here that the premillennial position is simpler, less strained and therefore more probable.

Is the binding of Satan literal?

Actually, many amillennialists argue that it is, but that it happened at the first advent with Messiah's ministry. Appeal is often made to texts such as Matthew 12:28-29 and Luke 10:18 and correspondences are forged between Rev 20 and these gospel passages. But it can be reasonably asked whether these texts should be regarded as referring to the same event. A straightforward reading of the context of Revelation 20 would argue that what happens in Revelation 20 follows chronologically what happened in Revelation 19, i.e., the return of Christ. Therefore, if this is true, the binding of Satan in Revelation 20 cannot be the same event as that referred to in the gospels during the earthly reign of the messiah.

There are other arguments to demonstrate that the binding in the gospels is not the same as that in Revelation. First, it is said in Revelation 20:1 that an angel did the binding, not Christ himself. Thus the portrait in the gospels is quite different, too disparate it would seem to be the same. Second, according to 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 6:10-18, and 1 John 4:4, Satan is quite free to roam and tempt whom he wills (cf. also 1 Pet 5:8). But the binding in Revelation is much more absolute than the gospels or epistles will grant. So it is more reasonable to conclude that Matthew 12 and Luke 10 do not refer to the same event as Revelation 20:2-3.

This does not mean they are not related, however. The earlier and "inaugural" binding during Christ's ministry and the church age anticipates the later binding in Revelation 20:2-3, which itself sets the stage for Satan's final overthrow and destruction in Revelation 20:10. This is all in keeping with the progressive realization of God's kingdom on earth.

Amillennialists generally argue that the first resurrection (20:4) is spiritual and the second is physical (20:5). One of the reasons they do this is to avoid bracketing the 1000 period off with two bodily resurrections (which would seem to point to an earthly reign after the return of Christ). But it is difficult to see how the two uses of the term in the same context, without any apparent contrary indication, can mean two different things. Further, a less strained reading of Revelation 20:4-6 suggests that physical resurrection is in view in v. 4 and therefore also in v. 5 (and the aorist is ingressive, i.e., “came to life”). Again, these are not the souls of the dead reigning with Christ in heaven, but dead saints physically resurrected to reign with him on the earth (see the promise in Rev 5:10).

Resurrection (*anastasis*) –

Paul’s treatise and definition of resurrection is in 1 Corinthians 15:20-58.

Physical death is described in scripture as the separation of the soul or spirit from the body; this seems to be the immediate result of the decay and termination of the physical body. James says that the body without the spirit is dead and the writer of Ecclesiastes, speaking of physical death in general, says that the body returns to the dust from which it came and the spirit to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7; cf. Gen 2:7; 3:19).

But the use of the term *death* in scripture is not confined simply to physical death. Rather, it is also used to describe the spiritual state of all people (except Christ) born into this world. The apostle Paul says that we are “spiritually dead in sin” until we are made alive with Christ (Eph 2:1-6). As a result of being spiritually dead, we produce works consistent with death, darkness, and profound ignorance of God (Eph. 4:17-19).

But those who die in this condition of spiritual death face yet another death. This one, however, is permanent, without hope of change or deliverance. It is referred to as the *second death* and results in a permanent state of separation from the gracious presence of God. It is eternal punishment for sin and rejecting God’s presence in Christ.

Here is what John says:

Revelation 21:8 -- But to the cowards, unbelievers, detestable persons, murderers, the sexually immoral, and those who practice magic spells, idol worshipers, and all those who lie, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. That is the second death.”

But, others will rise physically – *anastasis* (stand up again) so that they live evermore.

The word “anastasis” only has one meaning. It means “to stand up again.” Throughout the NT, it is only used of physically dead people who stand up again and are alive. This particular Greek word is found 42 times in the NT. 41 times it’s translated “resurrection.” One time as “rise”. But, it’s never used to describe the process of moving from spiritual deadness to spiritual awakening – that’s called regeneration or being “born again” or the new birth.

Anastasis – resurrected / stand up again . (Dying and going to heaven has nothing to do with anastasis)

Chapter 5 of Rev. says that the saints will reign ON the earth (used 67 times in the book Revelation) So Revelation is about what’s going to happen on earth.

Reply to two-age model. Revelation 20 is in this age.

Closing/ Q&A