

## **Interpretation of Prophecy End Times Series**

Winston Churchill once described the former Soviet Union as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” Many Christians view the book of Revelation in much the same way. But we know that we will be blessed if we read & study this great book of the Bible so let’s proceed with looking at how some people interpret prophecy which will help us understand why some view the book of Revelation differently than others.

Among believers today there is hardly any subject more controversial than the end times. Most evangelical believers accept the great cardinal doctrines of the faith with some differences; however, the doctrine of the end times seems to elicit not only differences but also divisions. Dr. Robert Lightner says, “Great men of God do not all accept the same view of things to come.” <sup>1</sup>

The major views or interpretations of prophecy and the Bible include:

- Literal Interpretation
- Allegorizing or Spiritualizing Interpretation

### **Literal Interpretation**

Literal translation means interpretation that gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether used in writing, speaking or thinking. <sup>2</sup> The literal method of interpreting Scripture is also called the grammatical-historical method emphasizing that the meaning of Scripture is determined both by the grammatical and the historical considerations.

### **Allegorizing or Spiritualizing Interpretation**

Proponents of the allegorical or spiritualizing method believe that it is impossible to apply the literal method to all Scripture, especially in the prophetic portions. Some Scripture is interpreted literally while other Scripture is interpreted symbolically.

### **Comparison of Literal & Allegorizing Interpretations**

The early church recognized and used literal interpretation. In the third century, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, teachers in the Alexandrian school, taught a method that allegorized all Scripture. Augustine in the fifth century taught that only prophecy needs to be allegorized. Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers stressed the need for literal translation of the Scriptures, but did not apply this to all unfulfilled prophecy.

Perhaps the best argument for using literal translation is that Jesus used a literal method when interpreting the Old Testament. He also interpreted one passage of Scripture by appealing to another passage to add further clarification.

The allegorical or spiritualizing method arose out of a Greek Pagan period and not from a desire to understand the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> The basic authority ceases to be Scripture and becomes the mind of the interpreter with no means to test the conclusions of the interpreter. Oswald T. Allis, an amillennial proponent, in his book, *Prophecy and the Church*, said that “Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been yet fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in the present age.”<sup>1</sup>

Although there is agreement among evangelicals that Christ is coming a second time, there is disagreement on when Christ is coming, how He is coming, and what will take place.

The major evangelical views of the second coming of Christ include:

- Non-literal or Spiritualized
- Postmillennial
- Amillennial
- Premillennial

### **Non-literal or Spiritualized**

The non-literal or spiritualized view denies there will be a literal, bodily, personal, return of Christ to the earth. This view holds the second advent as being fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, or the day of Pentecost, or the death of the saint.

John MacArthur, reports in his book, *The Second Coming*, that there are an increasing number of people touting preterism views on the Internet and in other forms.<sup>3</sup>

Preterism holds that Christ’s second coming occurred in the destruction of Jerusalem, the new age was ushered in, and all Bible prophecy has been fulfilled.

### **Postmillennial**

The Postmillennial view holds that the world will be Christianized by the church resulting in a long period of peace and prosperity and then Christ will return. The church will build the kingdom through the spread of the gospel. Christ’s throne is in heaven where He is now reigning and ruling. Christ’s return closes the millennial age and is followed by the eternal state. The one thousand year period of Christ’s reign is viewed literally by some but symbolically by others. The controversy with this view and the other views is over who begins the millennial period, when does Christ come, and what is His relation to the millennium. This view is not widely held today.

### **Amillennial**

The amillennial view holds that there is no literal one thousand year period of Christ’s reign on the earth. Christ is viewed as presently reigning either in the hearts of men, heave, or the church. All prophecies are being fulfilled by the church.

The one thousand year period of Christ's reign is understood symbolically as representing an extended period of time. Amillennialism holds a unitary principle of one covenant, one people of God, one resurrection, and one judgement.

The area of disagreement with this view and the other views that we are discussing is over whether there will be a literal millennium for Israel or whether prophecies concerning the millennium are being fulfilled in the church, either on earth or in heaven.

### **Premillennial**

Premillennialism holds that the return of Christ will precede the establishment of His literal kingdom on earth. Christ and His saints with Him will reign on the earth in fulfillment of Old Testament and New Testament prophecy. The one thousand years is understood as predicting a literal future reign of peace and righteousness on the earth.

The premillennial view holds a distinction between God's plan, purposes, and programs for Israel and the church. The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are fulfilled literally during Christ's reign on earth. The millennial period is possible and necessary because all the promises given to Israel have not been fulfilled.

The area of disagreement with this view and the other views is whether the Scriptures will be fulfilled literally. Questions include:

- Is Israel and the church treated separately?
- Will Christ literally come to earth and reign for a period of time?
- Will the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants be fulfilled?
- Will Israel be restored as a nation?

The basic reason there is a difference of opinion among Evangelicals concerning Bible prophecy and specifically the second coming of Christ is the method used by each view in its interpretation of Scripture dealing with unfulfilled prophecy. Premillennialists use literal interpretation while the other views use spiritualizing or the allegorical method for some or all unfulfilled prophecy.

More than 300 prophecies were literally fulfilled at the first coming of Christ and there seems to be no compelling reason to believe that the prophecies concerning His second coming should not also be literally fulfilled. The test of any doctrine should be whether it is Scriptural. So let's examine the premillennial view in light of the Scriptures.

The general agreement of the Premillennial view on the major events in Christ's second coming include:

### **Increase in Apostasy**

- There is an increase in apostasy as the age draws to a close.  
1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5

### **Resurrection of the Dead in Christ & Rapture**

- There is a resurrection of the dead in Christ, translation of the living saints, and the rapture or meeting the Lord in the air.
- The bodies of the living will be changed.
- The Restrainer, or Holy Spirit, is removed.  
1 Cor 15:20-24; 35-50; 1 Thes 4:13-18  
1 Cor 15:50-51; Phil 3:20  
Matt 5:13-16; Gen 6:3; 2 Thes 2:6-8

### **Tribulation Period Begins**

- The seven year Tribulation on the earth occurs.
- Those resurrected & translated earlier are with the Lord in heaven.
- The saints that were alive on the earth, the church, is spared the Tribulation which is the wrath of God.
- The nature of the testing in the 70th week is not to bring the believers to cleansing, but to reveal the degradation & need of the unregenerate hearts of those in the world. The marriage supper of the Lamb occurs in which Christ will present to Himself the Church, His bride, in all her glory
- Believers will be judged by Christ based on their works, use of their talents, & the opportunity that have been entrusted to them
- The Tribulation judgements are poured out on the earth.  
1 Thes 5:9; Joel 2:2; Zeph 1:14-18; Amos 5:18  
Rev 3:10  
2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:27; Rev 19:6-8; John 3:29  
John 5:24; Isa 53:5; 2 Cor 5:10,21; 1 Cor 3:11-15; 5:5; 11:32; Heb 12:7; Matt 6:20; 20:1-16; 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27; Jas 2:22-26

### **The Battle of Armageddon & the End of the Tribulation Period**

- The battle of Armageddon & the end of the Tribulation period take place.
- Christ comes with His own to earth
- Christ will judge the beast, the false prophet & their armies.
- Satan will be bound for 1000 years.
- Israel will be saved from her earthly enemies, regathered, & judged.
- The Old Testament saints will also be resurrected at this time to enter into the millennium.

- Those alive that are believers in Christ will enter into the millennial kingdom.
- The nations will be judged to determine if they enter into the millennial kingdom.
- The curse on the earth will be removed & the earth will be restored to it's former perfection & glory.

Rev 19:11-16

Heb 9:24-28; Joel 3:11; Zech 14:4-5; 1 Thes 3:13; Jude 14; Matt 24:30; Acts 1:11; Col 3:4

Psalm 2:3; 1 Thes 2:8; Rev 19:19,21; 2 Thes 1:7-10

Rev 20:1-3; Matt 8:29

Jer 30:7; 31:35-37; 33:14-22; Zech: 12:10-13; 14:1-3; Isa 11:11-14; 62:4; 66:8; Eze 37:18-25; Rom 11:25; Heb 8:8-12

Joel 3:11-17; Matt 25:31-46

Isa 2:2; 11:1-9; 35:1-10; Eze 47:1-12; Zech 14:4-8; Rom 8:19-22; Matt 19:28

### **Millennial Reign of Christ**

- The millennial reign of Christ begins & will be 1000 years in length.
- The promises in the Abrahamic covenant concerning the land & the seed are fulfilled.
- The promises of the Davidic covenant concerning the King, or Christ, David's throne, & the royal house are fulfilled.
- The promises of the Palestinian covenant concerning possession of the land are fulfilled.
- The day of the Lord the prophets spoke of will be ushered in.
- The promised Kingdom that will never be destroyed is established.
- Christ will be personally present on earth & sit on David's throne & will be characterized by righteousness, peace, holiness, & truth.
- The Church & Old Testament believers will reign with Christ.
- After 1000 years Satan will be loosed for a season or time.
- Satan will deceive the nations & lead a revolt against God, be defeated by Christ & then cast into the lake of fire where he remains forever.

Rev 20:1-6

Isa 10:21-22; 19:25; 43:1; 65:8-8; Jer 30:22; 32: 38; Eze 34:24, 30, 31; Mic 7:19-20; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:16-18

Isa 11:1-2; 55:3; 11; Jer 23:5-8; 33:20-26; Eze 34:23-25; 37; 23-24; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:7-8

Isa 11:11-12; 65(; Eze 16:60-63; 36; 28-29; 39:28; Hos 1:10-2:1; Mic 2:12; Zech 10:6

Dan 2:44; rev 11:15; Luke 1:32; Matt 19:28; 25:31-46; Luke 19:12-15; Rev 3:21; 10:11-20; 6

Psa 72:6-11; 2:8; Isa 2:2-4; 11:1-5; Jer 23:5; Zech 14:9; 17-19; Rev 2:27; 19:15

Luke 19:16-19; 1 Cor 6:2; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 2:27; 20:4-6; Rev 3:21; Rev 20:7;  
Rev 20:10

### **The Great White Throne Judgement, Final Judgement & Second Resurrection**

- The Great White Throne Judgement, the final judgement & second resurrection, occurs at which time all the unsaved of all ages appear, are judged based on their deeds, & are then cast into the lake of fire forever.

Rev 20:11-15

### **The Eternal State**

- The eternal state is ushered in.
- Christ will deliver His Kingdom to the Father now that death has been eliminated.
- Christ who was the ruler on earth for a period of time will take His eternal place.
- There will be a new heaven & a new earth & a New Jerusalem.
- The city has no need of a temple, “for the Lord God, Almighty, and the Lamb, are it’s temple.” (Rev 21:24)
- The saved nations are said to walk by its light & there is no night there, for the glory of the Lord illumines it. (Rev 21:23, 25) (9)

1 Cor 15:24; 26; 28

Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1

Rev 21:2-22:5

Rev 21:24

Rev 21:23, 25

## References & End Notes

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