

THE CHURCH IN THE END TIMES

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INTRODUCTION

“Eschatology” is the term used to describe that area of biblical teaching dealing with the final outcome of the present order. Biblical Eschatology is the capstone of Systematic Theology. Here as in no other field, except perhaps the doctrine of the person of Christ, are the important tools of exegesis, synthesis, hermeneutics and theological system displayed. The fine judgment necessary to discern that which is to be literally interpreted in contrast to spiritual and allegorical interpretation is demanded. The consistency of the entire revelation of God contained in the Old and the New Testament must be maintained. The intricate details of prophecy must be related without contradiction. A careful distinction must be observed between that which is certainly and plainly revealed and that which is still obscure.

The adoption of different methods of interpretation has produced the variant eschatological positions and accounts for the divergent views within a system that confront the student of prophecy. The basic issue between, premillennialists and amillennialists is clearly drawn by Allis, who writes:

“One of the most marked features of Premillennialism in all its forms is the emphasis which it places on the literal interpretation of Scripture. It is the insistent claim of its advocates that only denounce as “spiritualizers” or “allegorizers” those who do not interpret the Bible with the same degree of literalness as they do. None have made this charge more pointedly than the dispensationalists.”¹

When Allis acknowledges that “Literal interpretation has always been a marked feature of Premillennialism”²

¹Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, p.17.

² *Ibid.*, p.244. Cf. pp. 99, 116, 218,227, 242, 256 where further reference is made to literal interpretation as the basis of premillennialism.

“ . . . it can be shown that the reason the early Church was premillennial was traceable to its interpretation of the Word in a literal manner, whereas the cause of the departure from this view in later centuries of the history of the Church is directly attributable to a change in method of interpretation beginning with Origen in particular.”³

Hamilton says:

“Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures. That was the kind of a Messianic kingdom that the Jews of the time of Christ were looking for, on the basis of a literal interpretation of the Old Testament promises. That was the kind of a kingdom that the Sadducees were talking about when they ridiculed the idea of the resurrection of the body, drawing from our Lord the clearest statement of the characteristics of the future age that we have in the New Testament, when He told them that they erred “not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29) . . . the Jews were looking for just such a kingdom as that expected by those premillennialists who speak of the Jews holding a preeminent place in an earthly Jewish kingdom to be set up by the Messiah in Jerusalem.”⁴

He is thus acknowledging that the basic difference between himself, an amillennialist, and a premillennialist is not whether the Scriptures teach such an earthly kingdom as the premillennialist teaches, but how the Scriptures that teach just such an earthly kingdom are to be interpreted. Allis admits that “the Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been yet fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in this present age.”⁵

Therefore, the antecedent to any discussion of the prophetic Scriptures and the doctrines of the Eschatology is the establishment of the basic method of interpretation to be employed through.

This is well observed by Pieters, who writes:

³Charles L. Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism*.

⁴Floyd E. Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith*, pp. 38-39.

⁵Allis, *op. cit.*, p.238.

“The question whether the Old Testament prophecies concerning the people of God must be interpreted in their ordinary sense, as other Scriptures are interpreted, or can properly be applied to the Christian Church, is called the question of the spiritualization of prophecy. This is one of the major problems of biblical interpretation, and confronts everyone who makes a serious study of the Word of God. It is one of the chief keys to the difference of opinion between Premillenarians and the mass of Christian scholars. The former rejects such spiritualization, the later employ it; and *as long as there is no agreement on this point the debate is interminable and fruitless* [italics mine].⁶

We have a problem here. If Rutgers be correct when he says of the premillennialists: “I regard their interpretation of Scripture as the fundamental error,”⁷ and if the acknowledged difference between premillennialism and amillennialism rests on the basic proposition of the method to be used in interpreting scriptures, the fundamental problem to be studied at the outset of any consideration of Eschatology is that of the hermeneutics of prophecy. Our interest is to study to examine the important methods currently advocated as the proper way to interpret Scripture so as to have a clear understanding of the difference in the methods to their source, and to outline the rules to be employed in the interpretation so as to be able to apply correctly the established method of interpretation.

The primary need for a system of hermeneutics is to ascertain the meaning of the Word of God. It is obvious that such widely divergent views as premillennialism and amillennialism and pretribulation and posttribulation rapturism cannot all be right. Since the interpreter is not handling a book of human origin, but the word of God, he must be equipped with an accurate method of interpretation or error will be the necessary result of his study. The fact that the

⁶Albertus Pieters, *The Leader*, September 5, 1934, as cited by Gerrit H. Hospers, *The Principle of Spiritualization in Hermeneutics*, p.5.

⁷William H. Rutgers, *Premillennialism in America*, p.263.

Word of God cannot be correctly interpreted apart from a correct method of and sound rules for interpretation gives the study its supreme importance.

While many diverse methods of interpreting the Scriptures have been propounded during the course of the history of interpretation,⁸ today there are but two methods of interpretation which have a vital effect of eschatology: The allegorical and the grammatical-historical methods. The literal method is generally held to be synonymous with the grammatical-historical method and will be so used throughout this discussion. These two methods will be considered in detail.

⁸Cf, Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, pp. 163-74 where such methods as the Halachic, Hagadic, Alegorical, Mystical, Accommodation, Moral ,Naturalistic, Mythical, Apologetic, Dogmatic, and Grammatico-historical are traced.

I. METHODS AND RULES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

I. *The Allegorical Method.*

An ancient method of interpretation which has had a current revival is the allegorical method. Angus-Green define an allegory as:

“Any statement of supposed facts which admits of a literal interpretation, and yet requires or justly admits a moral or figurative one, is called an Allegory. It is to narrative or story what trope is to single words, adding to the literal meaning of the terms employed a moral or spiritual one. Sometimes the allegory is pure, that is, contains no direct reference to the application of it, as in the history of the Prodigal Son. Sometimes it is mixed, as in Ps. 80, where it is plainly intimated (verse 17) that the Jews are the people whom the vine is intended to represent.”⁹

Ramm defines the allegorical method thus: “Allegorism is the method of interpreting a literary text that regards the literal sense as the vehicle for a secondary, more spiritual and more profound sense.”¹⁰ In this method the historical import is either denied or ignored and the emphasis is placed entirely on a secondary sense so that the original words or events have little or no significance. Fritsch summarizes it thus:

“According to this method the literal and historical sense of Scripture is completely ignored, and every word and event is made an allegory of some kind either to escape theological difficulties or to maintain certain peculiar religious views. . .”¹¹

It would seem that the purpose of the allegorical method is not to interpret Scripture, but to pervert the true meaning of Scripture, albeit under the guise of seeking a deeper or more spiritual meaning.

⁹Joseph Angus and Samuel G. Green, *The Bible, Handbook*, p.220.

¹⁰Ramm, *op. cit.*, p.21.

¹¹Charles T. Fritsch, “Biblical Typology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 104:216, April, 1947.

1. *The dangers of the allegorical method.* The first great danger of the allegorical method is that it does not interpret Scripture. Terry says:

“ . . .it will be noticed at once that its habit is to disregard the common signification of words and give wing to all manner of fanciful speculation. It does not draw out the legitimate meaning of an author’s language, but foists into it whatever the whim or fancy of an interpreter may desire. As a system, therefore, it puts itself beyond all well-defined principles and laws.¹²

There is . . . unlimited scope for fancy, if once the principle be admitted, and the only basis of the exposition is found in the mind of the expositor. The scheme can yield no *interpretation*, properly so called, although possibly some valuable truths may be illustrated.

This suggests, also, a second great danger in the allegorical method: the basic authority in interpretation ceases to be the Scriptures, but the mind of the interpreter. The interpretation may then be twisted by the interpreter’s doctrinal positions, the authority of the Church to which the interpreter adheres, his social or educational background, or a host of other factors. Jerome

“ . . . complains that the faultiest style of teaching is to corrupt the meaning of Scripture, and to drag its reluctant utterance to our own will, making Scriptural mysteries out of our own imaginations.”¹³

“ . . . When once the principle of allegory is admitted, when once we start with the rule that whole passages and books of Scripture say one thing when they mean another, the reader is delivered bound hand and foot to the caprice of the interpreter.”¹⁴

Ramm adds:

¹²Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

¹³Cited by F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p.232.

¹⁴*Ibid.* p.238,

“. . . to state that the principal meaning of the Bible is a second-sense meaning, and that the principal method of interpreting is “spiritualizing,” is to open the door to almost uncontrolled speculation and imagination. For this reason we have insisted that the *control* in interpretation is the literal method.”¹⁵

That these dangers inherent in this system are that it takes away the authority of Scripture, leaves us without any basis on which interpretations may be tested, reduces Scripture to what seems reasonable to the interpreter, and, as a result, makes true interpretation of Scripture impossible.

2. *The New Testament use of allegory.* In order to justify the use of the allegorical method it is often argued that the New Testament itself employs this method and thus it must be a justifiable method of interpretation.

In the first place, reference is frequently made to Galatians 4:21-31, where Paul himself is said to use the allegorical method. On this usage of allegory Farrar observes:

“. . . of allegories which in any way resemble those of Philo or of the Fathers and the Schoolmen, I can find in the New Testament but one [Gal. 4:21-31]. It may be merely intended as an *argumentum ad hominem*; it is not all essential to the general argument; it has not a particle of *demonstrative* force; in any case it leaves untouched the actual history. But whatever view we take of it, the occurrence of the such allegory in the Epistle of St. Paul no more sanctions the universal application of the method than a few New Testament allusions to the Haggada compel us to accept the accumulations of the Midrashim; or a few quotations from Greek poets prove the divine authority of all Pagan literature . . .”¹⁶

Gilbert, in the same vein, concludes:

“Since Paul explained one historical event of the Old Testament allegorically, it seems likely that he admitted the possibility of applying the principle of allegory elsewhere; but the fact that his letters show no other unmistakable illustration obviously suggests either that he did not feel himself competent to unfold the allegorical meaning of Scripture, or, what is more probable, that he was better satisfied on the whole to give his readers the plain primary sense of the text.”¹⁷

¹⁵Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁶Farrar. *op. cit.*, 23

¹⁷George H. Gilbert, *The interpretation of the Bible*, p.82.

It must be carefully observed that in Galatians 4:21-31 Paul is not using an allegorical method of interpreting the Old Testament, but was explaining an allegory. These are two entirely different things. Scripture abounds in allegories, whether types, symbols, or parables. These are accepted and legitimate media of communication of thought. They do not call for an allegorical method of interpretation, which would deny the literal or historical antecedent and use the allegory simply as a springboard for the interpreter's imagination. They do call for a special type of hermeneutics. But the use of allegories is not a justification for the allegorical method of interpretation. It would be concluded that the usage in Galatians of the Old Testament would be an example of interpretation of an allegory and would not justify the universal application of the allegorical method to all Scripture.

A second argument used to justify the allegorical method is the New Testament usage made of Types. It is recognized that the New Testament makes typical application of the Old. On this basis it is argued that the New Testament uses the allegorical method of interpretation, contending that the interpretation and application of types is an allegorical method of interpretation. Allis argues:

“While Dispensationalists are extreme literalists, they are very inconsistent ones. They are literalists in interpreting prophecy. But in the interpreting of history, they carry the principle of typical interpretation to an extreme which has rarely been exceeded even by the most ardent of allegorizers.”¹⁸

In reply to the accusation that one interprets types he is using the allegorical method, it must be emphasized that the interpretation of types is not the same as allegorical interpretation. The efficacy of the types depends on the literal interpretation. The efficacy of the type depends on the

¹⁸Allis, *op. cit.*, p.21.

literal interpretation of the literal antecedent. In order to convey truth concerning the spiritual realm, with which realm we are not familiar, there must be instruction in a realm with which we are familiar, so that, by a transference of what is literally true in the one realm, we may learn what is true in the other realm. There must be a literal parallelism between the type and the antitype for the type to be of any value. The individual who allegorizes a type will never arrive at a true interpretation. The only way to discern the meaning of the type is through a transference of literal ideas from the natural to the spiritual realm. Chafer writes:

“In the study of allegories of various kinds, namely, parables, types and symbol, the interpreter must be careful not to treat plain statements of Scripture as is demanded of language couched in figurative expressions. A truth already expressed will bear repetition at this point: there is all the difference possible in interpreting a Scripture allegory, on the one hand, and the allegorizing of a plain Scripture on the other hand.”¹⁹

It is Concluded, then, that the Scriptural use of types does not give sanction to the allegorical method of interpretation.

II. *The Literal Method.*

In direct opposition to the allegorical method of interpretation stands the literal grammatical-historical method. The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. It is called the grammatical-historical method to emphasize the fact that the meaning is to be determined by both grammatical and historical and historical considerations. Ramm defines the method thus:

“The customary, socially-acknowledged designation of a word is the literal meaning

¹⁹Rollin T. Chafer, *The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics*, p.80.

of that word.

The “literal” meaning of a word is the basic, customary, social designation of that word.. The spiritual, or mystical meaning of a word or expression is one that arises after the literal designation and is dependent upon it for its existence.

To interpret literally means nothing more or less than to interpret in terms of normal, usual, designation. When the manuscript alters its designation the interpreter immediately shifts his method of interpreting.”²⁰

Strong evidence can be presented to support the literal method of interpretation. Ramm gives a comprehensive summary. He says:

“In defense of the literal approach it may be argued:

- (a) That the literal meaning of sentences is the normal approach in all languages. .
- (b) That all secondary meanings of documents, parables, types, allegories, and symbols, depend for their very existence on the previous literal meaning of the terms . . .
- (c) That the greater part of the Bible makes adequate sense when interpreted literally.
- (d) That the literalistic approach does not blindly rule out figures of speech, symbols, allegories, and types; but if the nature of the sentence so demands, it readily yields to the second sense.
- (e) That this method is the only sane and safe check on the imaginations of man.
- (f) That this method is the only one consonant with the nature of inspiration. The plenary inspiration of the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit of God guided men into truth and away from error. In this process the Spirit of God used language, and the units of language (as meaning, not as sound) are words and thoughts. The thought is the thread that strings the words together. Therefore, our very exegesis must commence with a study of words and grammar, the two fundamentals of all meaningful speech.”²¹

Perhaps one of the strongest evidences for the literal method is the use the New Testament

²⁰Ramm, *op. cit.*,p.64.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 54 ff.

makes of the Old Testament. When the Old Testament is used in the New it is used only in a literal sense. One need only study the prophecies which were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ, in His life, His ministry, His death, to establish that fact. No prophecy which has been completely fulfilled has been fulfilled any way but literally. Though a prophecy may be cited in the New Testament to show that a certain event is a partial fulfilment of that prophecy (as was done in Acts 15), it does not necessitate a nonliteral fulfillment or deny a future complete fulfillment of it. A rule to guide us as to when to interpret literally and when figuratively has been carefully stated by Cooper. He says:

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”²²

1. *The advantage of the literal method.* There are certain advantages to this method in preference to the allegorical method. Ramm summarizes some of these by saying:

“(a) It grounds interpretation in fact. It seeks to establish itself in objective data-grammar, logic, etymology, history, geography, archaeology, theology. . . .

(b) It exercises a control over interpretation that experimentation does for the scientific method . . . *justification is the control on interpretations.* All that do not measure up to the canons of the literal-cultural-critical method are to be rejected or placed under suspect.

In addition to this the method offers the only reliable check on the constant threat to place double-sense interpretation upon the Scripture. . . .

(c) It has had the greatest success in opening up the Word of God. Exegesis did not start in earnest till the church was a millennium and a half old. With the literalism of Luther and Calvin the light of Scripture literally flamed up This method is the honored method of the highest scholastic tradition in conservative Protestantism. It is the method of Bruce, Lightfoot, Zahn, A.T.Robertson, Ellicot, Machen, Cremer, Moule, Perowne, Terry, Farrar, Lange, Green, Oehler, Schaff, Sampey, Wilson, Henderson Broadus, Stuart-to name but a few typical Exegets.”²³

²²David L. Cooper, *The God of Israel*, p.3.

²³Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp.62-63.

In addition to the above advantages it may be added that (d) it gives the authority by which interpretations may be tested. The allegorical method, which depends on the rationalistic approach of the interpreter, or conformity to a predetermined theological system, leaves one without a basic authoritative test. In the literal method Scripture may be compared with Scripture, which as the inspired Word of God, is authoritative and the standard by which all truth is to be tested, Related to this we may observe that (e) it delivers us from both reason and mysticism as the requisites to interpretation.

2. *The literal method and figurative language.* It is recognized by all that the Bible abounds in figurative language. On this basis it is often argued that the use of figurative language demands a figurative interpretation. However, figures of speech are used as means of revealing literal truth. What is literally true in one realm , with which we are familiar, is brought over, literally, into another realm, with which we may not be familiar, in order to teach us truths in that unfamiliar realm. This relation between literal truth and the figurative language is well illustrated by Gigot:

“If the words are employed in their natural and primitive signification, the sense which they express is the proper literal sense; whereas, if they are used with a figurative and derived meaning, the sense, though still literal, is usually called the metaphorical or figurative sense. For example, when we read in St. John 1,6 “There was a man whose name was John,” it is plain that the terms employed here are taken properly and physically, for the writer speaks of a real man whose real name was John. On the contrary, when John the Baptist, pointing out Jesus, said, “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1,29), it is clear that he did not use word “lamb” in that same proper literal sense which would have excluded every trop or figure, and which would have denoted some real lamb: what he wished proximately and directly to express, that is, the literal sense of his words, was that in the derived and figurative sense Jesus could be called “the Lamb of God.” In the former case, the words are used in their proper literal sense; in the later, in their tropical or figurative sense. That the books of Holy writ have a literal sense (proper or metaphorical, as just explained), that is, a

meaning proximately and directly intended by the inspired writers, is a truth so clear in itself, and at the same time so universally granted, that it would be idle to insist on it here Has any passage of Holy Writ more than one literal sense? . . . all admit that since the sacred books were composed by men, and for men, their writers naturally conformed to that most elementary law of human intercourse, which requires that only one precise sense shall be proximately and directly intended by the words of the speaker or writer. . . .”²⁴

It will thus be observed that the literalist does not deny the existence of figurative language. The literalist does, however, deny that such figures must be interpreted so as to destroy the literal truth intended through the employment of the figures. Literal truth is to be learned through the symbols.

III. *Nine rules for the interpretation of prophecy.*

The interpretation of prophecy requires attention to the same considerations in regard to words, context, grammar, and historical situations that are the accepted principles in respect to any field of interpretation. Terry states this thus:

“ . . . it will be seen that, while duly appreciating the peculiarities of prophecy, we nevertheless must employ in its interpretation essentially the same great principles as in the interpretation of other ancient writings. First, we should ascertain the historical position of the prophet; next the scope and plan of his book; then the usage and import of his words and symbols; and, finally, ample and discriminating comparison of the parallel Scriptures should be made.”²⁵

There is no lack of lists of rules to guide us in the interpretation of prophecy.²⁶ Perhaps those suggested by Ramm are the most helpful:

²⁴Francis E. Gigot, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scriptures*, pp.386-87.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p.418.

²⁶Cf. Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp.157-162 for a summary of the rules by various writers on hermeneutics.

“(1) Determine the historical background of the prophet and the prophecy. (2) Determine the full meaning and significance of all proper names, events, geographical references, references to customs or material culture, and references to flora and fauna. (3) Determine if the passage is predictive or didactic. (4) If predictive determine if fulfilled, unfulfilled, or conditional. (5) Determine if the same theme or concept is also treated elsewhere. (6) As a reminder, keep vividly in mind the flow of the passage, i.e., pay attention to context. (7) Notice that element of the prophecy that is purely local or temporal. (8) Take the literal interpretation of prophecy as the limiting guide in prophetic interpretation.”²⁷

1. Interpret literally. Perhaps the primary consideration in relation to the interpretation of prophecy is that, like all other areas of Biblical interpretation, it must be interpreted literally.

Regardless of the form through which the prophetic revelation is made, through that form some literal truth is revealed. It is the problem of the interpreter to discover that truth. Davidson affirms:

“This I consider the first principle in prophetic interpretation-to read the prophet literally-to assume that the literal meaning is his meaning-that he is moving among realities, not symbols, among concrete things like peoples, not among abstractions like our Church, word, etc.”²⁸

The reason a non-literal method of interpretation is adopted is, almost without exception, because of a desire to avoid the obvious interpretation of the passage. The desire to bring the teaching of Scripture into harmony with some predetermined system of doctrine instead of bringing doctrine into harmony with the Scriptures has kept the method alive.

Without doubt the greatest confirmation of the literal method of interpreting prophecies comes from an observation of the method God has employed to fulfill the prophecies that have already been fulfilled, Masselink says:

“We can therefore derive our method of interpretation for the unfulfilled prophecy

²⁷Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-73.

²⁸A.B. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, p.167.

from the fulfilled, because we may safely deduce the guiding principles for the unfulfilled prophecy from the fulfilled predictions which are recorded in the New Testament.”²⁹ From our vantage point in time prophecy is divided into that which has been fulfilled and that which is unfulfilled. From God’s viewpoint prophecy is a unit, indivisible on the time basis. Since it is a unit, and therefore indivisible, that method used in those prophecies that are now fulfilled will also be the method used to fulfill those prophecies that await future fulfilment. In the field of fulfilled prophecy it is not possible to point to any prophecy that has been fulfilled in any way other than literally. The New Testament knows of no other method of fulfilling the Old. God has thus established His Divine Principle. Feinberg says:

²⁹William Masselink, *Why Thousand years?*, p. 36.

“ . . . in the interpretation of prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled , those prophecies which have been fulfilled are to form the pattern. The only way to know how God will fulfill prophecy in the future is to ascertain how He has done it in the past. All the prophecies of the suffering Messiah were literally fulfilled in the first advent of Christ. We have no reason to believe that the predictions of a glorified and reigning Messiah will be brought to pass in any other manner.”³⁰

The conclusion must be that the New Testament literal method of fulfillment establishes the literal method as God’s method in regard to unfulfilled prophecy.

2. *Interpret according to the harmony of prophecy.* The second rule is laid down in 2 Peter 1:2-21, where the author affirms that no prophecy is of “private interpretation.” Prophecy must be interpreted in harmony with the whole prophetic program. Feinberg says:

³⁰Feinberg, *op. cit.*, p.39

“There are several well-defined laws for the interpretation of prophecy. The Scripture itself lays down the first and the most essential of all. Peter tells us in his second letter that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” By this it is not meant that no private individual can interpret prophecy. The idea intended by the apostle is that no prophecy of the Word is to be interpreted solely with reference to itself . . . but all other portions of the prophetic revelation are to be taken into account and considered. Every prophecy is part of a wonderful scheme of revelation; for the true significance of any prophecy the whole prophetic scheme must be kept in mind and the interrelationship between the parts in the plan as well.”³¹

This will call for a careful study, not only of the general themes of prophecy, but also of all passages related to any given theme so a harmonized view be gained, for one prediction will often throw light upon another.

3. *Observe the perspective of prophecy.* Events which bear some relationship to one another and are parts of one program, or an event typical of another so that there is a double reference, may be brought together into one prophecy even though separated widely in fulfillment.

Feiberg states:

“. . . in the interpretation of prophecy . . . due attention must be paid to perspective. Certain events of the future are seen grouped together in one circumscribed area of vision, although they are really at different distances. This is particularly true of the predictions of the so-called major prophets where many times prophecies concerning the Babylonian captivity, the events of the day of the Lord, the return from Babylon, the world wide dispersion of Israel, and their future regathering from all the corners of the earth, are grouped together seemingly almost indiscriminately.”³²

Failure to observe this principle will result in confusion.

4. *Observe the time of relationship.* As has previously been pointed out, events that are

³¹*Ibid.*, p.37

³²*Ibid.*, p.38

widely separated as to the time of their fulfilment may be treated within one prophecy. This is particularly true in the prophecies concerning Christ, where events of the first and second advents are spoken of together as though taking place at the same time. In like manner the second and third dispersion of the Jews are viewed in prophecy as taking place without interruption. Feinberg refers to this principle by saying:

“Another rule of prophetic interpretation is what is known as foreshortening which, according to Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, may assume any one of several forms. Two or more events of a like character may be described by a common profile . . . Furthermore, a common and important example of foreshortening is evident where future events are placed side by side whereas in the fulfillment there is a great gap. . .”³³

It is important to observe that the prophet may view widely separated events as continuous, of future things as either past or present.

5. *Interpret prophecy Christologically.* The central theme of all prophecy is the Lord Jesus Christ. His person and His work is the grand theme of the prophetic story. Peter writes:

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow [1Pet. 1:10-11]”

John writes: “. . . the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). Both are emphasizing this very fact.

6. *Interpret historically.* It hardly need pointed out that before one can interpret he must know the historical background of the prophet and the prophecy. Ramm says:

³³*Ibid.*

“ . . . a study of history is the absolute first starting point in any study of prophecy, whether the prophecy be didactic or predictive.”³⁴ This historical background will include “. . . the full meaning and significance of all proper names, events, geographical references, references to customs or material culture, and references to flora and fauna.”³⁵

7. Interpret grammatically. Sufficient has been said earlier on this point to make it necessary to do no more here than remind the interpreter of prophecy that the strict rules that govern grammatical interpretation must be applied to this field of study with no less care.

8. Interpret according to the law of double reference. This has likewise been dealt with previously. It is sufficient to be reminded that oftentimes in a prophecy there may be a near view and far view. Of these near view may have been fulfilled and the far view await fulfillment, or both may be in the realm of fulfilled prophecy. Again there may have been a double reference to two events of similar character, both of which were in the distant future. The fact that part of the prophecy has been fulfilled without the fulfillment of the rest of it does not argue for a figurative or non-literal method of fulfillment of that unfulfilled portion, but such a partial fulfillment does promise a complete, literal, future fulfillment of the whole.

9. Interpret consistently. It is impossible to mix the methods of interpretation in the field of prophecy. One method must be adopted and used consistently throughout. It may safely be stated that the problem in the interpretation of prophecy is this problem of consistency. To the degree we have been inconsistent in the application of sound hermeneutical principles we have been in error in our conclusions and interpretations. The observance of these sound rules of

³⁴Ramm , *op. cit.*, p.163

³⁵*Ibid.*, p.. 164.

prophetic interpretation will lead one into a correct interpretation of the scripture.

II. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is clearly taught in the Bible. Is also called in some places “The second Advent.” At the close of His public ministry Christ announced to His disciples in the upper room, “I will come again” (John 14:3). The writer of Hebrews took up these words and declared to believers, “Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time” (Heb.9:28). In a variety of ways this same thought is expressed over and over again throughout the New Testament.

Biblical interpreters are divided into a number of different schools on the questions of the doctrines of chiliasm. The chiliastic question, so long considered unimportant in the realm of Biblical studies and interpretation, has come to be considered one of the major doctrines because of its determinative effect on the whole realm of theology.

“*Chiliasm*, so named from . . . [chilioi]-meaning “one thousand”-refers in a general sense to the doctrine of the millennium, or kingdom age that is yet to be, and as stated in the Encyclopedia Britannica (14th ed., s.v.) is “the belief that Christ will return to reign for a thousand years . . .” The distinctive feature of this doctrine is that He will will return before the thousand years therefore will characterize those years by His personal presence and by the exercise of His rightful authority, securing and sustaining all the blessings on the earth which are ascribed to that period. The term chiliasm has been superseded by the designation premillennialism; and . . . more is implied in the term than a mere reference to a thousand years. It is a thousand years which is said to intervene between the first and second of humanity’s resurrections . . . In this thousand years . . . every earthly covenant with Israel will be fulfilled. . . . The entire Old Testament expectation is involved, with it’s earthly kingdom, the glory of Israel, and the promised Messiah seated on David’s throne in

Jerusalem.¹

I. *Various Theories of The Second Coming of Christ*

There are two general classes of theories concerning the second coming of Christ: the inadequate, and those that are wholly false. The inadequate theories are true up to a point, but they lack some one or more features that would make them correct. The false theories possess no features that can be regarded as correct.

1. *Inadequate Theories.* The inadequate theories of major significance are six in number.

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, IV, 264-65.

(a) *Spiritual theory*. The main argument of this theory is that Christ came in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.² Immediately following Christ's words "I will come again" (John 14:3), He declared that He would send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17), and in the coming of the Holy Spirit Christ would actually come to them (John 14:18). That there is an element of truth in this no one can deny. Christ did come in essential nature at the coming of the Holy Spirit. But it is also true that the Father came in the Spirit in the same sense (John 14:23). The mistake lies in confusing the spiritual presence of Christ with His personal physical, bodily, visible presence, in the same body in which He went away.

The best answer for such reasoning is found in the words of Peter spoken on the day of Pentecost and shortly thereafter. Peter declared that it was a risen, ascended Lord who sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:32-33). But this same Peter, a few days later, made it perfectly clear that the Lord "shall send Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:20), and act which he clearly distinguished from the divine coming on the day of Pentecost. The second coming of Christ is therefore yet future. Walvoord summarizes this view:

²James H. Snowden, *The Coming of the Lord*, pp. 133-35

“A common modern view of the Lord’s return is the so called spiritual view which identifies the coming of Christ as a perpetual advance of Christ in the Church that includes many particular events. William Newton Clarke, for instance, held that the promises of the second coming are fulfilled by “His spiritual presence with His people,” which is introduced by the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, accompanied by the overthrow of Jerusalem, and ultimately fulfilled by continual spiritual advance in the church. In other words it is not an event, but it includes all the events of the Christian era which are the work of Christ. [This view is] . . . held by many liberals of our day.”³

(b). **Judgment theory.** Christ’s second coming is identified with the destruction of Jerusalem in this theory. In the closing prophetic discourse of His public ministry Christ warned the disciples of what would happen to the temple. This led the disciples to ask the question “When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy Coming . . .? (Mat. 24:3). It is mistakenly assumed that the Olivet Discourse is designed to answer these questions. In the course of it, He says, “This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matt. 24:34). Upon another occasion in relation to the same general teaching Christ declared, “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:28).

The element of truth that runs through this theory is the fact that the destruction of Jerusalem was a providential judgment executed by Christ. Christ is the one and only judge (John 5:22), and in sense did come in judgment upon Jerusalem. But every such judgment is in a sense a coming of Christ in power. However, it is a mistake to confuse the providential demonstrations of His power with the personal, bodily, visible, immediate coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The generation that will see these things fulfilled will be the generation living at the time the events in question are initiated (Matt. 24:34). Those standing with Christ who were to see Him coming in His kingdom did so at the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-7; cf. II Peter 1:16-18).

³John F. Walvoord, “*The Millennial Issue in Modern Theology*,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 106:44, January, 1948.

The book of Revelation was written twenty to twenty-five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the second coming of Christ is still seen as future (Rev. 22:7,12,20). This leads one to examine again the prophecy of Christ from the Mount of Olives. In Luke's account it becomes quite apparent that future destruction of Jerusalem were in mind for as long as Gentile power was in the ascendancy. "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27; cf. Vv. 20,24).

(c) **Conversion theory.** This theory This theory maintains that Christ's second coming is to be understood as taking place when He comes into the believer's heart.⁴ This theory is based upon such passages as John 14:21,23 where Christ declares that He comes into the believer to abide forever. This happens when the Holy Spirit makes His entrance at the time of new birth. "If any man . . . open the door, I will come in to him" (Rev. 3:20) is a precious experience at the time of conversion and is to be understood as the spiritual coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it is a grave mistake to confuse this precious spiritual experience with the literal, bodily coming of the Lord Jesus Christ the second time. "Christ in you" is actually "the hope of Glory" (Col. 1:27). And "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). At the time of His second coming then the body of our humiliation will be "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21).

⁴James H.Snowden, *The Coming of The Lord*, pp. 138-40.

(d) *Death theory.* According to this theory, the only second coming of Christ occurs at the time a believer dies.⁵ Adherents to this view cite Psalm 23:4 as proof: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.” John 14:1-3 also is interpreted in this light. At death Christ comes for the soul of the believer and takes him to the Father’s house where he abides forever with the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is an element of truth in this theory. When Stephen was being stoned to death outside the walls of Jerusalem, he looked up and saw heaven opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. In this hour of martyrdom he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts. 7:59). And Christ did receive his spirit, and He receives the spirit of every believer at death, but He does not leave heaven to do it. Thus the mistake is that of confusing this gracious work of Christ with His bodily return to the earth.

The best answer to be given to this theory is I Thessalonians 4:13-17. In this passage it is declared that Christ will descend from heaven. He will resurrect the bodies of the saints and join them with their spirits. But He will also do something to the living saints. They will be changed, both living and transformed, as well as the resurrected, and will be caught away into the air to be with the Lord. This passage does deal with the second coming of Christ and clearly differentiates the experience from that which takes place at death.

(e) *Postmillennial theory.* Christ’s second coming is placed at the end of the millennium⁶ by this theory, which recognizes the coming to be literal, personal, bodily and immediate. The error

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 140-41.

⁶Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, pp. 3-105. Also see David Brown, *Christ’s Second Coming*.

centers in the time it is said to occur. It is supposed that there is a general resurrection and judgment of the saved and the unsaved following a gradual victory of the gospel which culminates with the second coming of Christ and the ushering in the final state. Such passages as John 5:28-29; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; II Peter 3:3-13 are cited in support.

The postmillennial view, popular among covenant theologians of the post-Reformation period, holds, according to Walvoord:

“. . . that through preaching the Gospel the whole world will be Christianized and brought to submission to the Gospel before the return of Christ. The name is derived from the fact that in this theory Christ returns after the millennium (hence, *post*-millennialism).⁷

Watchfulness constantly enjoined upon believers would be meaningless if the second coming occurred at the end of the millennium. But it comes to mean much to those who are hoping for participation in that great golden age of the future to be ushered in at the second coming of Christ (Matt. 24:42-44).

(f) *Amillennial theory.* The contention of this theory is that there will be no millennium, but good and evil will develop side by side until the end when Christ will come literally and visibly to consummate human affairs and usher in the eternal state.⁸ This view correctly recognizes that evil will increase until the coming of Christ. The parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:36-43) certainly supports this conclusion. But its grave mistake is to deny that there is any millennial reign of Christ.

The best answer for this view is the doctrine of the mediatorial kingdom (see chap. 80. An

⁷John F. Walvoord, "The Millennial Issue in Modern Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 106:44, January 1948.

⁸George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies*, pp.83-94.

unbiased approach to the breadth of this doctrine in the Scriptures provides an abundance of material that has no satisfactory explanation other than the coming of Christ and His ushering in and rule over a kingdom for a thousand years.⁹

The denial of an earthly, millennial kingdom is not only unbiblical but it is also unphilosophical. No provision is made for the transition from a sinful age to the sinless eternal state. In addition, a very low view is taken of life in the flesh here on the earth. It leaves the mind without an answer for God creating man as He did in the beginning. But the ushering in and pursuance of a thousand-year kingdom at the second coming of Christ with men living in flesh and enjoying the fulness of physical blessing in the earth provides a fully satisfying philosophy.

2. Absolutely False Theories.

There are three false theories of the second coming of Christ which are regarded as important.

(a) ***Never-went-away theory.*** Belonging entirely in the liberal area of professing Christendom, this theory grows out of the denial of the bodily resurrection of Christ. It insists that Christ lives today only as a pure spirit. And pure spirit, in the philosophic sense, is not subject to spatial relations. It is therefore utter folly to talk about a second coming of Christ. In reality, according to this theory, Christ never went away, and therefore could not be said to return.

Since the Word of God is utterly rejected as a source of valid information, there is little that can be said in refutation. Quoting the Scripture is useless. But if those who hold such a view will listen at all to the teaching of the Bible, then perhaps John 14:1-3 is the best passage that could be

⁹Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, pp. 2-6.

used. Here in unmistakable language Jesus declared that He will come back again to the earth.

(b) *Secret-coming theory.* The Jehovah Witnesses use this theory which states that Christ came back secretly in 1874. Since then Christ has been overthrowing the kingdoms of this world and is in the process of setting up His own. The chronological schemes of the late pastor Russell and his successors are not original with them, nor do they follow any well-defined or verifiable pattern. Implicit within the theological system is the denial of the physical resurrection of Christ. Death is annihilation, which makes the resurrection of Christ impossible, and therefore, in turn, makes the return of Christ in the body in which He once lived also impossible.

Since this system of eschatology thrives on the setting of dates, perhaps the best answer by way of refutation is to be found in that prophetic gap that exists between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week in Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24-27). The whole church age falls into this period, its length is not known, and the setting of dates is impossible. Moreover, the events predicted for the period immediately following the coming of Christ for the church have never yet been fulfilled (Matt. 24:21-27). Nor have the public manifestations of Christ's second coming been experienced (Matt. 24:27-29). Any teaching which would argue that the resurrection is past, is not only error but dangerous to the point of overthrowing the faith of some (II Tim. 2:17-18).

(c) *Esoteric-wisdom theory.* Such systems of religion of Theosophy and Christian science use this theory. These systems are merely the recrudescence of Gnosticism of the early centuries. Christ is turned into an idea or inside information. This sort of religion is always looking for a great teacher whom they identify with Christ reincarnated, and they call this reincarnation the second coming of Christ.

Such explanations strike at the very heart of Christian truth concerning the literal second coming of Christ in the flesh. Just as satanic opposition has been directed against Christ's first coming in the flesh (I John 4:1-3), so also the same diabolical attacks have been made on the second coming of Christ in flesh (II John 7, ASV; this ver can also be translated "is coming").

This survey of the various theories concerning the second coming of Christ provides a backdrop for an examination of the biblical doctrine of the second coming of Christ. Proliferated perversion gives one some idea of the importance of the doctrine at hand.

3. The premillennial view.

The premillennial view is the view that holds that Christ will return to earth, literally and bodily, before the millennial age begins and that, by His presence, a kingdom will be instituted over which He will reign. In this kingdom all of Israel's covenants will be literally fulfilled. It will continue for a thousand years, after which the kingdom will be given by the Son to the Father when it will merge with His eternal kingdom. The central issue in this position is whether the Scriptures are to be fulfilled literally or symbolically. In fact this is the essential heart of the entire question. Allis, an ardent amillennialist, admits: ". . . Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been yet fulfilled or as being capable of fulfilment in this present age."¹⁰ It is not too much to say that the issues dividing these theories can be solved only by settling the question concerning the method of interpretation to be employed.

II. The Doctrine of The Second Coming of Christ In The Early Church.

¹⁰Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, p.238.

It is generally agreed that the view of the Church for the centuries immediately following the Apostolic era was the premillennial view of the return of Christ. Allis, an ammillenarian says:

“[Premillennialism] was extensively held in the early Church, how extensively is not definitely known. But the stress which many of its advocates placed on earthly rewards and carnal delights aroused widespread opposition to it; and it was largely replaced by the “spiritual” view of Augustine. It reappeared in extravagant forms at the time of the Reformation, notably among the Anabaptists. Bengel and Mede were among the first modern scholars of distinction to advocate it. But it was not until early in the last century that it became at all widely influential in modern times. Since then it has become increasingly popular; and the claim is frequently made that most of the leaders in the Church today, who are evangelical, are Premillennialists.”¹¹

Whitby, generally held to be the founder of postmillennialism. Writes:

“The doctrine of the Millennium, or the reign of saints on earth for a thousand years, is now rejected by all Roman Catholics, and by the greatest part of Protestants; and yet it passed among the best Christians, for two hundred and fifty years, for a tradition apostolical; and, as such, is delivered by many Fathers of the second and third century, who speak of it as the tradition of our Lord and His apostles, and of all the ancients who lived before them; who tell us the very words in which it was delivered, the Scriptures which were then so interpreted; and say that it was held by all Christians that were exactly orthodox. It was received not only in the Eastern part of the Church, by Papias (in Phrygia), Justin (in Palestine), but by Irenaeus (in Gaul), Nepos (in Egypt), Apollinaries, Methodius (in the West and South), Cyprian, Victorinus (in Germany), by Tertulian (in Africa), Lactantius (in Italy), and Severus, and by the Council of Nice (about A.D. 323).¹²

That such concessions should be made by anti-premillenarians is only because history records the fact that such a premillennial belief was the universal belief of the Church for two hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ.¹³ Schaff writes:

“The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It

¹¹*Ibid.*, p.7

¹²Cited by G. N. H. Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, I, 482-83.

¹³Cf. *ibid.*, for a list of historians who concede the fact.

was indeed not the doctrine of the Church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers.”¹⁴

Harnack says:

¹⁴Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, II, 614.

“This doctrine of Christ’s second advent, and the kingdom, appears so early that it might be questioned whether it ought not to be regarded as an essential part of the Christian religion.”¹⁵

III. Exponents of Premillennialism.

Perhaps the most extensive compilation of premillennial advocates of the first centuries is that made by Peters. He lists as follows:

“1. Pre-Mill. Advocates of the 1st Century.

a (1) *Andrew*, (2) *Peter*, (3) *Philip*, (4) *Thomas*, (5) *James*, (6) *John*, (7) *Matthew*, (8) *Aristo*, (9) *John the Presbyter*- all these are cited by Papias, who, according to Irenaeus, was one of John’s hearers, and intimate with Polycarp. . . . Now this reference to the apostles agrees with the facts that we have proven: (a) that the disciples of Jesus did hold the Jewish views of the Messianic reign in the first part of this century, and (b) that, instead of discarding them, they linked them with Sec. Advent. Next (10) *Clement of Rome* (Phil. 4:3), who existed about A.D. 40-100 (11) *Barnabas*, about A.D. 40-100. . . . (12) *Hermas*, from A.D. 40 to 100. . . .(13) *Ignatius*, Bh. Of Antioch, died under Trajan, about A.D. 50-115. . . . (14) *Polycarp*, Bh. Of Smyrna, a disciple of Apostle John, who lived about A.D. 70-167. . . . (15) *Papias*, Bh. Of Hierapolis, lived between A.D. 80-163. . . .

b Now on the other side, not a single name can be presented, which (1) can be quoted as positively against us, or (2) which can be cited as teaching, in any shape or sense, the doctrine of our opponents.

2. Pre-Mill. Advocates of the 2nd Cent.

a (1) *Pothius*, a martyr. . . . A.D. 87-177. . . (2) *Justyn Martyr*, about A.D. 100-168. . . (3) *Melito*, Bh. Of Sardis, about A.D. 100-170. . . . (4) *Hegisippus*, between A.D. 130-190. . . . (5) *Tatian*, between A.D. 130-190. . . . (6) *Irenaeus*, a martyr . . . about A.D. 140-202. (7) *The Churches of Vienne and Lyons*. . . (8) *Tertulian*, about A.D. 150-220. . . . (9) *Hippolitus*, between A.D. 160 -240.

b Now on the other side, not a single writer can be presented, not even a single name can be mentioned of any one cited, who opposed chiliasm in this century. . . . Now let the student reflect: here are two centuries. . . . in which positively no direct opposition whatever arises against our doctrine, but it is held by the very men, leading and most eminent, through whom we trace the Church. What must we conclude? (1) That the common faith of the

¹⁵*Cited by Chafer, op. cit., IV, 277.*

Church was Chiliastic, and (2) that such a generality and unity of belief could only have been introduced . . . by the founders of the Ch. Church and the Elders appointed by them.

3. Pre-Mill. Advocates of 3rd Cent.

a (1) *Cyprian*, about A.D. 200-258. . . (2) *Commodian*, between A.D. 200-70. . . (3) *Nepos*, Bh. Of Arsinoe, about A.D. 230-280. . . (4) *Coracion*, about A.D. 230-280. . . (5) *Victorinus*, about A.D. 240-303. . . (6) *Methodius*, Bh. Of Olympus, about A.D. 250-311. . . (7) *Lactantius* . . . between A.D. 240-330. . .”¹⁶

While the testimony of all the above men is not always equally clear, certain of them spoke unequivocally for the premillennial position. Clement of Rome wrote:

“Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished as the Scriptures also bear witness, saying, “Speedily will He come, and will not tarry:” and “The Lord shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look.”¹⁷

Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho, wrote:

“But I and whoever are on all points right-minded Christians know that there will be resurrection of the dead and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and the other declare. . . .

And, further, a certain man with us, named John, one of the Apostles of Christ, predicted by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in our Christ would spend a thousand years in Jerusalem, and thereafter the general, or to speak briefly, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.”¹⁸

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, gives a well developed Eschatology when he writes:

¹⁶Cited by Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p.20.

¹⁷Cited by Charles C, Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p.20.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p.22.

“But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusale; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that “many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. . . .”¹⁹

“The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead.”²⁰

Tertullian to Justin and Irenaeus there were

“. . . three classes of men: (1) The Heretics, denying the resurrection of the flesh and the Millennium. (2) The exactly orthodox, asserting both the resurrection and the Kingdom of Christ on the earth. (3) The believers, who consented with the just, and yet endeavored to allegorize and turn into a metaphor all those Scriptures produced for a proper reign of Christ, and who had sentiments rather agreeing with those heretics who denied, than those exactly orthodox who maintained, this reign of Christ on earth.”²¹

Justin evidently recognized premillennialism as “the criterion of a perfect orthodoxy.” In his Dialogue with Trypho, where he writes: “some who are called Christians but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish,”²² he shows he would include any who denied premillennialism in this category, since he included in it those that denied the resurrection, a companion teaching.

It would be safe to conclude with Peters:

“When surveying the historical ground . . . we are forced to the conclusion that those writers . . . who insist upon the great extent of Chiliasm in the Apostolic and Primitive Church are most certainly correct. We, therefore, cordially indorse those who express themselves as Muncher (C. His., vol. 2, p.415), that “it)Chiliasm) was universally received

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.22-23.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p.23.

²¹Daniel Whitby, *Treatise on the Millennium*, cited by Peters, *op. cit.*, I, 483.

²²Cited by D. H. Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church*, p. 45.

by almost all teachers,” and (pp. 450, 452) refers it, with Justin, to “the whole orthodox community. . . .”²³

IV. *Antagonists against the premillennial position.*

The third century gives rise to the first antagonism to the premillennial position that can be cited positively. Peters summarizes:

²³Peters, *op. cit.*, I, 498.

“In this century we for the first time come to opposers of our doctrine. Every writer, from the earliest period down to the present, who has entered the lists against us, has been able only to find these antagonists, and we present them in their chronological order, when they revealed themselves as adversaries. They number four, but three of them were powerful for mischief, and speedily gained adherents. . . . The first in order is (1) *Caius (or Gaius)*, . . . in the beginning of the third cent. . . (2) *Clemens Alexandrinus*, . . . preceptor in the Catechetical School of Alexandria, and exerted a powerful influence (on Origen and others) as teacher from A.D. 193-220. . . . 930 *Origen*, about A.D. 185-254. . . (4) *Dyonisius*, about A.D. 190-265. . . . these are the *champions* mentioned as directly hostile to Chiliasm.”²⁴

1. According to Allis this opposition arose because of “the stress which many of its advocates placed on earthly rewards and carnal delights [which] . . . aroused wide-spread opposition to it.”²⁵

It would seem to be more correct to affirm that this opposition arose, first, because of the basic tenets of the Alexandrian School, of which Origen became the chief exponent, that had such a wide effect on the theological world. Origen’s spiritualizing method of interpretation brought about the termination of the literal method of interpretation on which premillennialism rested. Mosheim has been cited in support of this influence of Origen.

²⁴*Ibid.*, I, 497.

²⁵Allis, *loc. cit.*

“Mosheism, after declaring: “that the Savior is to reign a thousand years among men, before the end of the world, had been believed by many in the preceding century, without offence to any,” adds, “in this century the Millenarian doctrine fell into disrepute, through the influence especially of Origen, who strenuously opposed openly professed and taught it. . . . But Origen assailed it fiercely; for it was repugnant to his philosophy; and by the system of biblical interpretation which he discovered, he gave a different turn to those texts of Scripture on which the patrons of this doctrine relied.” . . . In the third century the reputation of this doctrine declined; and the first in Egypt through the influence especially of Origen, , , And yet it could not be exterminated in a moment: it still had respectable advocates.” Mosheism proceeds in various places to show how, by philosophizing, most violent, system of interpretation, which began “most wretchedly to pervert and twist every part of those Divine oracles which opposed itself to their philosophical tenets or notions,” the literal interpretation was finally crushed. He thus contracts the interpretation adopted by the two systems: “He (Origen) wished to have the literal and obvious sense of the words disregarded, and an arcane sense, lying concealed in the envelope of the words, to be sought for. But the advocates of an earthly kingdom of Christ rested their cause solely on the natural and proper sense of certain expressions of the Bible.”²⁶

2. The opposition came because of the rise of false doctrines which changed theological thinking.

“Gnosticism . . . was early prevailing, and whilst nearly all the doctrines of Christianity suffered, more or less, under its molding influence, that of the Kingdom especially became, under its plastic manipulations, one widely different from the Scriptural and early church doctrine. . . . it struck a heavy blow at the promised kingship of the Son of Man as David’s Son. . . . Asceticism, the belief in the inherent corruption of matter . . . was antagonistic to it. . . . Docetism . . . denying, as it did the reality of the human body of Jesus, the Christ, effectually closed all access to an understanding of the Kingdom, spiritualizing not only the body, but everything else relating to Him as Messiah. . . . To reconcile these opposite tendencies, another and succeeding party arose, who assumed that reason occupied the position of umpire, and from the deductions of reason instituted a medium between the two, retaining something from both Gnosticism and Chiliasm., so far as interpretation was concerned, but also spiritualizing the Kingdom, applying it to the Church . . .”²⁷

3. The continuing Judaism, which began in the Apostolic period, gained strength, so that there was a rising enmity between Jewish and Gentile Christians. This antagonism ultimately led to

²⁶Peters, *op. cit.*, I, 500.

²⁷*Ibid.*, I, 501

the rejection of the millennium because it was “Jewish.”

“ . . . the Gentile Christians in their animosity to Judaism, which sought to impose its legality and ritualism, finally were carried to such an extreme that . . . everything that savored in their estimation of Judaism was cast aside, including of course the long-entertained Jewish nation of a Kingdom.”²⁸

4. The union of church and state under Constantine brought about the death of the millennial hope. Smith, after stating that “the interval between the apostolic age and that of Constantine had been called the Chiliastic period of Apocalyptic interpretation,” says:

“Immediately after the triumph of Constantine, the Christians, emancipated from oppression and persecution, and dominant and prosperous in their turn, began to lose their vivid expectation of our Lord’s speedy Advent and their spiritual conception of His Kingdom, and to look upon the temporal supremacy of Christianity as a fulfilment of the promised reign of Christ on earth. The Roman Empire, become Christian, was regarded no longer an object of prophetic denunciation, but as the scene of a Millennial development. This view, however, was soon met by the figurative interpretation of the Millennium, as the reign of Christ in the hearts of all true believers.”²⁹

5. The suppression of the writings of the church fathers by those antagonistic to their position to minimize their continuing influence de-emphasized this central teaching and tended to obliterate the place that the imminent hope had in their life and writings.

6. The influence of Augustine, who contributed more to theological thinking than any other individual between Paul and the Reformation, through whom amillennialism was systematized and the Roman system got its Ecclesiology, was a vital factor in the cessation of premillennialism.

7. The rise of the power of the Roman Church, which taught that it was the kingdom of God on earth and its head the vicar of Christ on earth, was a major factor.

²⁸*Ibid.*, I, 504

²⁹Cited by Peters, *op. cit.*, I, 505

It is of extreme interest to note the methods used by the opponents of the premillennial view to counteract this teaching.

“(1) Gaius and Dionysius first cast doubt upon the genuineness and inspiration of the Apocalypse, it evidently being supposed that the appeals made to it . . . could not otherwise be set aside. (2) By rejecting the literal sense, and substituting a figurative or allegorical; this effectually modified covenant and prophecy. (3) Such portions of the Old Test. As literally taught the doctrine, had their prophetic inspiration discredited . . . (4) Accepting all the prophetic portions, and what could not be conveniently allegorized and applied to the church, was attributed to heaven for fulfillment. . . (5) Making promises directly given to the Jewish nation as such, either conditional in their nature or else merely typical of the blessings accruing to Gentiles.”³⁰

It must thus be observed that the opposition to premillennialism arose from those who were marked by their unbelief, whose doctrines in general were condemned by believing men down through the ages of church history, who opposed premillennialism, not because it was unscriptural, but because it contradicted their own philosophies and methods of interpretation.

V. Testimony of the New Testament to the Second Coming

The term “second coming” does not appear in the New Testament. It is first found in the writings of the Church Fathers. But the New Testament is full of the idea. Such synonymous expressions as “come again” (John 14:3) and “appear the second time” (Heb. 9:28) do appear in the New Testament.

There is some truth in the fact that Christ spoke of various comings. In relation to the Holy Spirit, Christ said, “I will come to you,” and “we will come unto him” (John 14:18, 23). In the sense of the providential, spiritual judgment Christ said to the church at Ephesus, “I will come unto thee quickly” (Rev. 2:5). But these “comings” are never confused with that grand and final

³⁰*Ibid.*, I, 502

eschatological event which is designated in theology as “the second coming.”

There are nine terms which must be defined at this point. Though the New Testament abounds in terms and expressions concerning the second coming of Christ, nine are cited here as helpful in preparing the student for the unfolding of the general nature of the second coming in the New Testament.

1. *Ho ercomenos*. (*Gk.*) This term means the one who is coming, or the coming one. This came to be a title of the Messiah. John the Baptist used it: “Art thou he that should come . . . ?” (Matt. 11:3). The exultant multitude used it on the day of His triumphal entry: “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 21:9). The writer of Hebrews used it specifically as referring to the second coming: “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come” (Heb. 10:37).³¹

2. *Ercomai*. (*Gk.*) Referring to the act of coming from one place to another, this word is used over and over again as referring to the second coming of Christ (see Matt. 24:30; Mark 14:62; Luke 21:27; John 14:3; I Cor. 4:5; II Thess. 1:10; II John 7; Jude 14; Rev. 1:7; 22:7,12,20).

3. *Katabano*. (*Gk.*) Used to mean to come down or to descend, this word lays emphasis upon the direction in the act of coming. This term is used of the first coming of Christ: “For I come down from heaven” (John 6:38). It is also used of the second coming of Christ: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” (I Thess. 4:16).

4. *Heko*. (*Gk.*) In meaning, this term marks the result in the act of coming. It means one has arrived. Christ used this word in relation to His first coming: “For I come forth and am come from

³¹“Who is to come” appears in the AV of Revelation (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17). The ASV omits it in 11:17. It does not appear in the Greek text of 16:5. Explanation for the omission in 11:17 and 16:5 may be that Christ has already come in that the rapture took place.

God” (John 8:42, ASV). Christ also used the same word in relation to His second coming: “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Rev. 3:3, ASV).

5. *Parousia*. (*Gk*) Denoting arrival and presence, this word occurs over and over in relation to the second coming of Christ. Paul used the word of himself in such a way as to indicate its meaning: “Not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence” (Phil. 2:12). Since the word came to be used of the arrival and presence of a ruler, it was very easy for the early Christians to use this word of the arrival and presence of Christ on the earth: “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (I Thess. 2:19).

6. *Apokalupsis*. (*Gk*) This is a compound word meaning to unveil or uncover and is usually translated by the word “revelation.” It is used in many connections, but also in relation to the second coming of Christ. This word is rendered “appearing” in I Peter 1:7 and “coming” in I Corinthians 1:7. But in Revelation 1:1, as in most other places, it is translated “revelation.” This word describes the nature of Christ’s arrival and presence in the earth. It will be an unveiling of His divine glory.

7. *Phaneroo*. (*Gk*) Sometimes translated “show” or “appear” (John 21:1; Col. 3:4), or “manifest” (I John 3:5), this word means to bring out into the open and make clear and plain that which hitherto existed but was not known. The word is used of Christ and believers in John 3:2 (ASV): Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.”

8. *Epiphaino*. (*Gk*) Meaning to bring to light or to full visibility, this word was used of Christ

at His first coming, when “by the *appearing* of our Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Tim. 3:10) life and immortality were brought to light. It is also used of the second coming to denote the “brightness” of His presence in the earth (II Thess. 2:8), that particular quality after which the saints yearn and which causes them to love His “appearing” (II Tim. 4:8).

9. *Harao. (Gk)* A word meaning to see with the eyes, it is used of the sight that will greet the seeing eyes of mankind at the second coming of Christ. It was used of Christ at His first coming: “But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not” (John 6:36). Following His resurrection it is said that he “appeared” to Simon (Luke 24:34). “And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time” (Heb. 9:28).

VI. *General Nature of the Second Coming of Christ.*

At this point in the discussion the second coming of Christ is presented as one great event. The treatment deals with the second coming in its entirety, without attempting to point out divisions, distinctions and details.

1. *Essential Reality.*

As to the essential reality of the second coming of Christ, these facts should be observed:

(a) ***Personal identity.*** The personal identity of Christ at His return is assured. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven” (I Thess. 4:16). The intensive pronoun “himself” means the Lord and no other. “This same Jesus” (Acts 1:11) is marked as the One who will return.

(b) ***Substantial literality.*** The substantial literality of Christ’s return is clearly expressed. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so in like manner as ye have seen

him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). The language can hardly admit of anything other than exactitude in pointing out the person.

(c) **Physical visibility.** Also affirmed is the physical visibility of Christ’s return. When Christ ascended, the disciples beheld until Christ disappeared from their eyes (Acts 1:9). As they saw Him go, so He shall be seen returning (Acts 1:11). When He returns, believers shall see Him as He is (I John 3:2). In fact “every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7). This takes the whole event out of the realm of the merely spiritual.

2. **Official Description.**

The official description of Christ’s return from heaven is unfolded in great detail, but here only three major features are listed.

(a) **External glory.** Christ will return in that external glory He laid aside when He became flesh (John 17:5). He will return “in the glory of His Father” (Matt. 16:27); “in his glory” (Matt. 25:31); “with . . . great glory” (Matt. 24:20). This glory is that external and visible glory of God. When transfigured “his face did shine as the sun” (Matt. 17:2) “and his raiment was white and glistening” (Luke 9:29; cf. Mark 9:3), and the disciples “saw his glory” (Luke 9:32). At His first coming Christ laid aside His external glory, so there was “no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa. 53:2), that is, there was no external kingly glory to proclaim Him as the heaven-sent Messiah. But now, at last, He will cover Himself with light as with a garment (Ps. 104:2).

(b) **Inherent power.** Christ will return with inherent power to produce the necessary results in establishing His Kingdom. The wicked will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (II Thess.1:9). The word for power used here

deals with inherent power which gives ability to produce results (cf. Matt. 24:30). During His earthly ministry Christ never once used this power in His own behalf. Therefore men still think of Him as a despairing, defeated, dying man. But at His second coming the entire picture will change. He will then be commissioned to exercise this power and also to employ angels of power (II Thess. 1:7). And at last the world will see a real exhibition of power.

(c) **Royal escort.** Christ's return will also be marked by a royal escort. His first coming was in humiliation and defeat, and it would almost appear as if at His ascension He were a fugitive from earth. But the tables will be turned at last, and Christ will return as a conquering Hero attended by the greatest creatures from His creative hand. "All the holy angels" will accompany Him (Matt. 25:31). The number will be so vast that it will be impossible to count them (Rev. 5:11). Among them will be angels of power (II Thess. 1:7). They will assist Him in harvesting the crop of the wicked and purging out every disturbing element from His kingdom (Matt. 13:41-43).

3. **Special Manner.**

The special manner of Christ's return is graphic, ominous and worthy of careful consideration.

(a) **Progressive.** It will be progressive in its approach (I Thess. 5:2). The word "cometh" is in present tense, marking the steady, uninterrupted movement of time in the direction of that important day. The writer of Hebrews aptly described this feature: "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

(b) **Stealthy.** The day of His return will be stealthy in its approach (I Thess. 5:2). It is coming like a thief. This does not mean that there are not signs. It merely means that there are no signs of the

immediate moment of arrival. At that moment when human calculations fall short, Christ will come upon an unsuspecting world.

(c) **Unexpected.** Christ's return is unexpected in its arrival (I Thess. 5:3). The rank and file of mankind will be saying "peace and safety." Christ will come when man "looketh not for him" (Matt. 24:50). "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:35). That day will not come upon true believers as a thief (I Thess. 5:40). It is the evil servant who will be saying, "My lord delayeth his coming" (Matt. 24:48).

(d) **Destructive.** It will be destructive in nature (I Thess. 5:30). It is then that sudden destruction will come upon the wicked. This destruction is not to be interpreted as annihilation. It means the ruination from the purpose which God originally intended. Of this, rather full description is given in Revelation 6-19.

(e) **Sudden.** The day will be sudden in arrival (I Thess. 5:3). The word "sudden" does not mean quick or swift in the sense of speed. The illustration clarifies its meaning. It is like travail upon a woman with child. This is an event which will come in its proper order and speed, but once it begins there is no way to escape it. Such is the case with the coming of the day of Christ's return. For those who spurn every warning, there will not even be the preparation that is born of expectance (Rev. 22:7, 12,20).

(f) **Inescapable.** His return will be inescapable in its wrath (I Thess. 5:3). "And they shall not escape" are words peculiarly appropriate for those who are saying "peace and safety." This negative statement makes it certain that once the movement of events in Christ's coming begins, there will be no way for men to extricate themselves from the sovereign and inflexible vengeance of God.

(g) **Spiritual darkness.** The day of Christ's return will arrive in the midst of spiritual

darkness (I Thess. 5:2-5). The thief comes in the night, but that day will come in the night of this world's deepest wickedness. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:12). But just before the day dawns, this world will have come into its deepest night. Insensitivity and indifference to sin will come as the result of a philosophy that assures men that this order of things is permanent and therefore there is no need for being fearful of peril. Men will be saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Peter. 3:3-4).

4. *General Time.*

The general time of Christ's return includes a number of details when viewing the entire event.

(a) *Future.* The second coming of Christ involves a program that is yet future. That is the significance of the statement by Christ: "And he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). This is further strengthened by words appearing in the opening verse of the Revelation: "To shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). More things are to come to pass than have yet come to pass. Creation had a beginning, but it will never come to an end, so an unlimited series of events belonging to the future will be ushered in by the arrival and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(b) *Unrevealed.* The second coming of Christ, as to the exact time of manifestation, is unrevealed. Upon two different occasions Christ made this fact clear: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32; cf. Matt. 24:36). Later Christ said in response to a question involving time, "It is not for you to know

the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7). In these two statements Christ used four words describing time. He used the word “hour,” marking a point of time; the word “day,” indicating a more extended period; the word “season,” specifying a still more extended period; and the word “times,” describing the broad expanse of time. He could not have used four words that would more adequately describe all aspects and details of time. And is using all of these He declared that the time was unrevealed.

The reason this is true lies in the fact that there is no possible way to ascertain chronologically the time, since the present age was unforeseen in appearance and unmeasured in length. It is an indefinite period that is contingent upon the calling out of the church and the response of the nation of Israel to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:14; 3:19-20). Paul’s statement in I Thessalonians 5:1 does not negate this fact: “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.” Here it is not exact dating or measuring of events that is under consideration, but rather the order of events. Therefore it follows that all attempts to set the date for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ have failed and will fail.

(c) *Next major movement.* The second coming of Christ is the next major movement in the unfolding of the plan of God. That is the intent of the word “shortly,” denoting speed or shortness of time, in the opening statements of Revelation: “To show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.” The arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to rapture His church, and His continued presence in relation to events in the earth, mark the next major movement in the unfolding of the plan of God for this world.

(d) *Near.* The second coming of Christ is near when viewed in relation to the movements of God. The assertion “for the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3; 22:10) in a more literal rendering reads, “For

the time is near.” When it is remembered that these words were uttered more than nineteen hundred years ago, and at that time the coming of Christ was considered near, then it is of high importance to realize that the event is nineteen hundred years nearer today.

(e) ***Imminent.*** The second coming of Christ is always set forth in Scriptures as an event that is imminent, that is, an event that is possible at any moment. In Jewish time calculations, the night was divided into four watches. So the Lord reminds His own that they could not tell in which watch He might come (Mark 13:32-37). It is therefore incumbent upon believers to “be . . . ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Luke 12:40). This explains why believers are constantly urged to look for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28; Titus 2:13; I Thess. 5:6).

Either the Lord deceived His own, or His coming is an imminent event. This means that there is no prophesied event that stands between the present moment and the coming of the Lord Jesus. Some may object and insist that the signs intervene. But the answer is simple. The second coming of Christ is a vast and complicated development when looking at the entire event. And signs have reference to the revelation of Christ in glory, not necessarily to the rapture. Whenever the roots of this signs appear before the rapture, they may be said to point to the rapture. But in reality they are intended to point to an event that occurs seven years later. Therefore, God’s people are always encouraged to look for the Lord and not for signs.

(f) ***Transitional.*** The second coming of Christ will be transitional in its effect. Today we live during the day of man, a day which was ushered in with Adam and will continue until Christ comes. But at His coming for the church, the day of the Lord will be ushered in (I Thess. 5:2). Then the whole scheme of things will change. God will no longer be dealing with men in long-suffering and

patience, but with sovereignty and power. Man's standard of values will change; those things which seemed to have intrinsic and lasting value will vanish as the new order of things is ushered in.

(g) *Premillennial.* The second coming of Christ will be premillennial. At this point the entire event of the coming of Christ is under consideration. Old Testament prophecy teaches that a period of judgment will usher in the kingdom (Ps. 2:1-9; Isa. 2:2-4; Dan.2:34-35). This is confirmed by the teaching in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:37-43). In addition, the scenes of Revelation 19:11-20:6 have no other explanation to an unprejudiced mind than that the second coming of Christ and the period of judgment precede the millennium.

(h) *Long delayed.* The second coming of Christ seems to be long delayed. Since Christ uttered His promise in the upper room, now almost two thousand years have gone by. During those early days there were some who were charging Christ with being "slack concerning his promise" (II Peter 3:9). The passing of almost two millenniums only serves to aggravate the situation and confirm the false charge.

But there are good reasons for this seeming delay. Men must remember that in the performance of God's gigantic plans one day with Him is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (II Peter 3:8). His plan calls for the salvation of men. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth" (James 5:7). He therefore holds back his wrath, thus extending the period of growth and productiveness (see II Peter 3:9). This long-suffering means salvation to millions (see II Peter 3:15). Even those who complain at the delay were saved because God gave them time to hear and respond to the message of salvation before sending His Son.

5. *Unusual Complexity.*

The unusual complexity of Christ's return is a feature too often overlooked by those who consider the second coming of Christ.

(a) *Vast period of time.* The second coming of Christ in its effects covers a vast period of time. It is therefore correct to say that it covers the period from the rapture of the church to the ushering in of the millennium. This extends over at least seven years. And it is very possible that the time involved may extend through the millennium, or perhaps beyond that. Some passages of Scripture certainly view the entire eschatological picture from its inception to its consummation (see John 14:3; Matt. 26:64; II Peter 3:12).

(b) *Two main phases.* The second coming of Christ consists of two main phases. There is the first phase, called the rapture, in which Christ comes into the air for His Church (I Thess. 4:13-17). This is private in view of the fact that it is the Bridegroom coming for His bride. The second phase is the revelation when Christ returns to the earth with His bride (I Thess. 3:13; II Thess. 1:7-10). This is public in that every eye shall see Him (Rev. 1:7). Both of these phases are set forth in II Thessalonians 2:1,8 and Titus 2:13.

(c) *Whole series of events.* The second coming of Christ comprises a whole series of events. The rapture ushers in whole series of events covering a period of at least seven years. These events take place in heaven and also upon the earth. Events in heaven have to do with the church and with angels (II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 12:7-12). Events in earth have to do with judgments upon men, the experiences of Israel, the Gentiles, Antichrist, evangelization, Armageddon (Rev. 4-19). The revelation of Christ ushers in all the events which comprise the millennium, setting up of the kingdom, removal of the curse, and the reign of Christ.