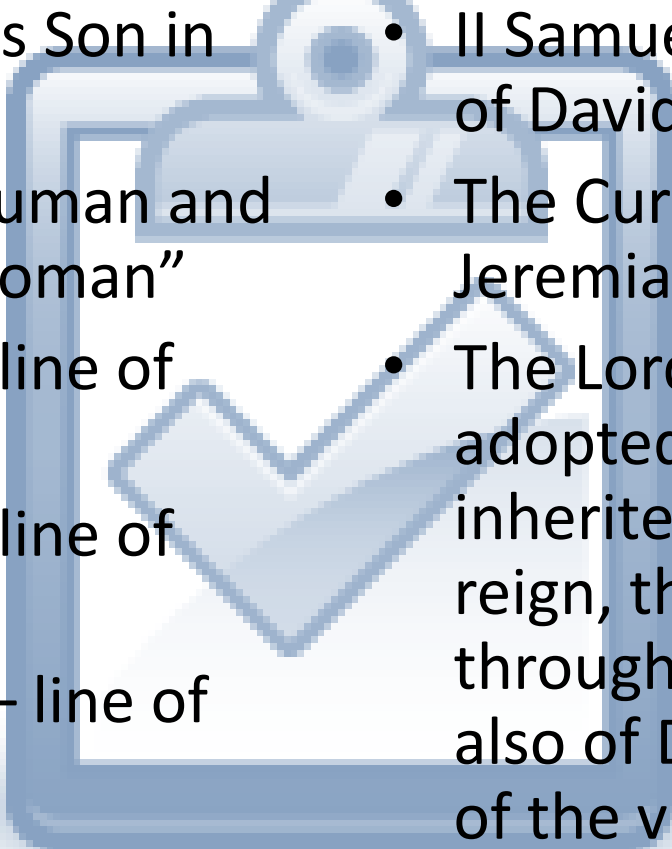




# Interpreting the Prophetic Word

“...Rightly Dividing the Word of  
Truth...”

# Amazing Prophetic Accuracy

- God's Goal – His Son in Flesh
  - Genesis 3:15 Human and “Seed of the Woman”
  - Genesis 12:3 – line of Abraham
  - Genesis 26:4 – line of Isaac
  - Genesis 49:10 – line of Judah
  - II Samuel 7:12-16 – Line of David
  - The Curse of Jehoiakim – Jeremiah 36:22-32
  - The Lord Jesus as the adopted Son of Joseph inherited the legal right to reign, the physical right through Mary who was also of David and because of the virgin birth
- 

# A Big Name Brought Down to Size



- The interpretation of the Bible is called the science of “Hermeneutics”.
- Hermes was the winged messenger “god” of Greek mythology and Mercury of Roman mythology.

# Paul mistaken for Hermes



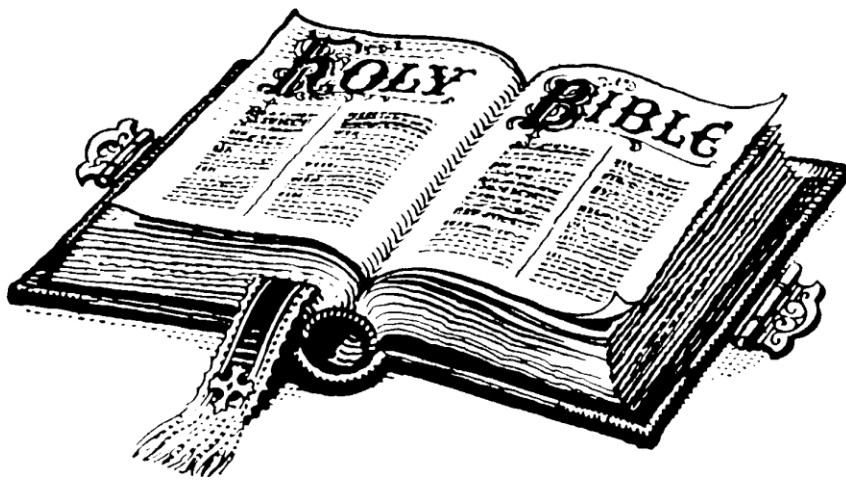
- It is interesting that since Paul was the chief speaker of the team of Paul and Barnabas, the pagan people of Lystra thought he was Mercury or Hermes: Acts 14:12 “And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.”
- The interpretation of any message is Hermeneutics.

# The Art and Science of Interpretation



- Hermeneutics is both an art and a science.
- As an art it depends on the skill and dedication of the interpreter of the Scripture.
- Hermeneutics is also a science. There are certain rules that apply to it as much as there are specific rules that apply in chemistry, biology or physics! Some of these rules are simple and easy to understand. Others are complex and require much study.
- But one thing is clear: consistent application of hermeneutical principles leads to clear and consistent interpretation of the Scriptures

# A Good General Rule of Interpretation



“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.”

Dr. David Cooper

Some have shortened this to the following statement: “When the plain sense of the Scripture makes common sense then seek no other sense, lest it result in nonsense!”

# Four General Principles to Remember

- Interpret simply.
- Interpret contextually.
- Interpret grammatically.
- Interpret by comparing Scripture with Scripture.



# Interpret Simply

- The Scriptures were not given as a puzzle to unlock or a challenge to be surmounted by the best and brightest minds.
- God's intention is speak to us plainly, simply, and without confusion.
- We are flawed creatures because of sin, so God speaks to us in a language we can understand without secret codes to crack, hidden meanings to decipher, or wild, ecstatic utterances to unravel.
- When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, then seek no other sense!





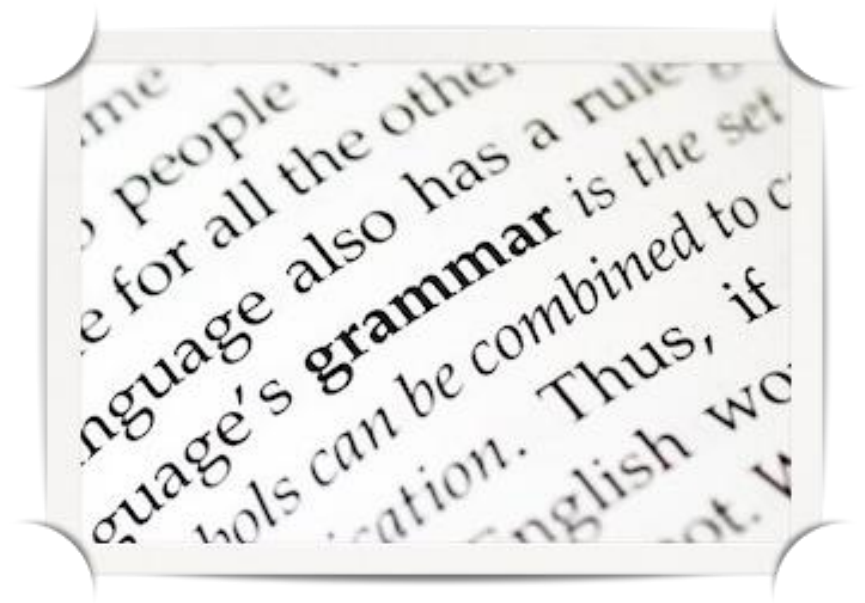
# Interpret Contextually

- The Bible is made up of sixty-six separate books divided into two Testaments but it is **ONE BOOK!**
- Verses must be interpreted according to their immediate context (surrounding verses) and in view of their wider context (i.e. the paragraph and the book).
- In order to truly understand and interpret the Scriptures correctly we must answer some basic questions:
  - What was the stated purpose of the author of the passage in writing his Epistle?
  - What is the general theme of his epistle?
  - Where does the passage fit into his argument?
  - What was he arguing in the previous passage?
  - What is he talking about?
  - Why is he talking about it?
  - To whom is he talking?
  - When is he writing these things?
  - What else does the Scripture say on this subject?



# Interpret grammatically

- When we interpret Scripture, we must determine the exact meaning of specific words according to their linguistic usage and connection with the other words around them.
- If we believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, then what we are after is not simply the thought conveyed, but the actual wording used by the human author of the Scriptures by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God

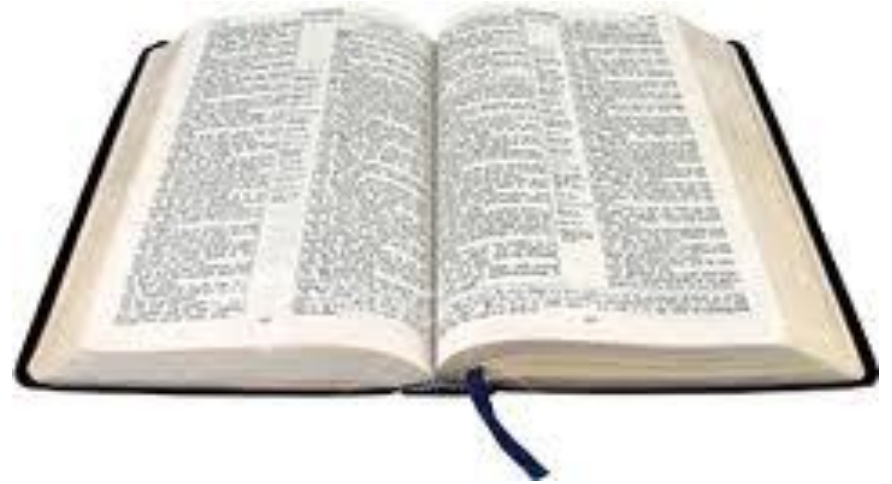
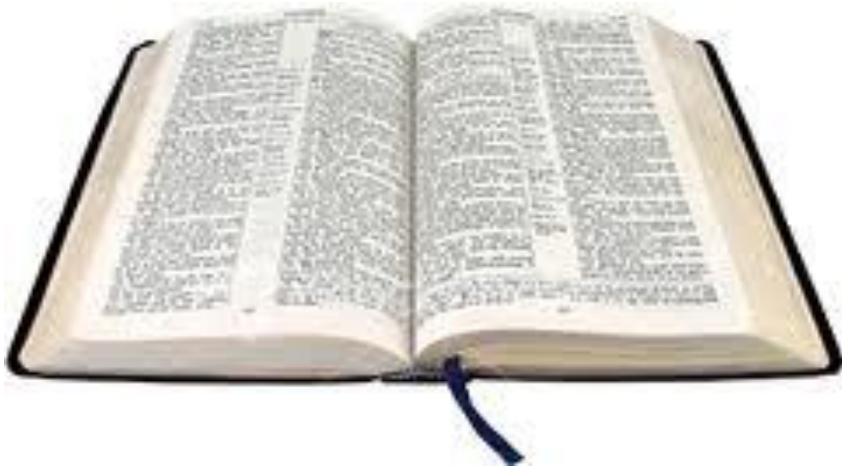


# God is the God of the Living



- Exodus 3:6 “Moreover he said, ***I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*** And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”
- Now note what Jesus does with it in Mark 12:26 “And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, ***I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?*** 27 ***He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living:*** ye therefore do greatly err.”
- The Lord Jesus Christ proves the doctrine of the existence of the soul after death with nothing more than the tense of the verb!
- Not God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but **IS** the God of these men. Though they are dead yet they live on.
- Grammar is most important!

# Interpret by comparing Scripture with Scripture



# Scripture Best Interprets Scripture

- 2 Peter 1:20 reminds us that: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”
- By that Peter means, that Scripture needs to be interpreted in the light of Scripture – it cannot be considered by itself or a “private interpretation.”
- The early church was very strong on comparing Scripture with Scripture. This method, however, became lost with the rise of the Roman Catholic Church and their allegorical interpretation of Scripture but was reinstated at the Protestant Reformation.
- Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”
- Luke 24:44 “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
- 1 Peter 1:10 “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 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.”

# The Beauty of Scripture Interpreting Scripture

- It recognizes the unity of the Scriptures and integrates all Scripture into a single, unified revelation from God. Therefore, a difficult or obscure passage must be interpreted in the light of entire revelation of God on the subject.



# Seven Sane and Specific Principles for Interpreting Scripture



- 1. Consistent Hermeneutics
- 2. Recognizing Progressive Revelation
- 3. Differentiating between Interpretation and Application
- 4. Handling Figurative Language Correctly
- 5. The Law of Fulfillment
- 6. The Law of Double Reference
- 7. The Principle of Time Relationship



# Consistent Hermeneutics



Prophecy should not be interpreted by a different set of Hermeneutical principles than we use for the rest of the Bible.

If we take the narrative or teaching passages literally (and we should unless we have a contextual reason not to), then we should also take the prophetic passages literally!

Luke 24:44 “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”



# Recognizing Progressive Revelation

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” 2 Peter 1:20



What this means is that no prophecy of the Scripture is to be interpreted without taking into consideration all that God has stated to be true on the subject.

We must recognize that the Bible is a **PROGRESSIVE REVELATION**. This means there is a gradual unfolding of a doctrine throughout the breadth and scope of the Bible itself. The Bible unpacks its truth a little at a time and each new facet adds to our ultimate understanding of the truth without contradicting itself.

Examples might be the **DAY of the LORD**, the **Seed of the WOMAN**, the **Kingdom**, the **advents of Messiah** etc.

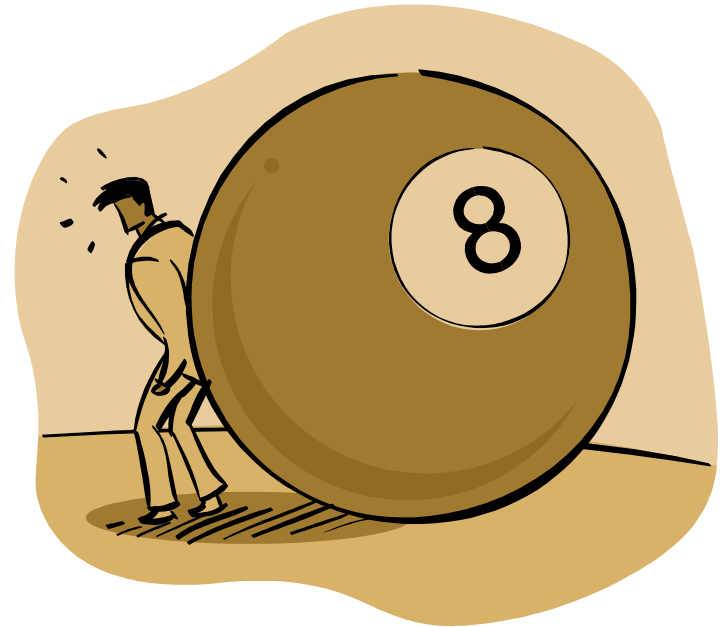
# Differentiating between Interpretation and Application

- There is one and only one interpretation of any given passage of Scripture, but there can be a host of legitimate applications.
- We strive for the correct interpretation, and having found it, we can make the resulting applications.
- For example, Psalm 122:6 “ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.”
- The proper interpretation is that Jerusalem, as the capital of the Jewish Nation, is a fit subject for the prayers of God’s people. When we pray for the peace of Jerusalem we are asking for the Jews to be delivered from their enemies and that the Prince of Peace might reign in their city.
- On the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant we know to bless this people is to be blessed of the Lord.
- However, we can make a great number of applications of this verse including the nature of believing prayer.



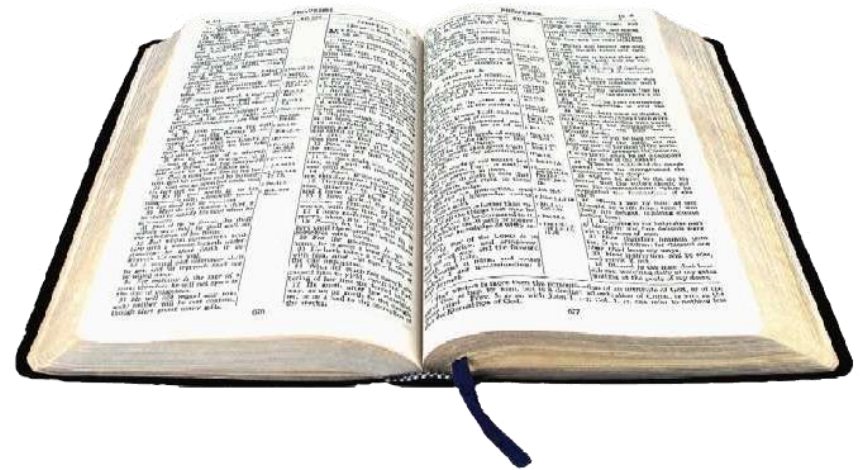
# Handling Figurative Language Correctly

- Figures of Speech are legitimate grammatical tools to express literal meanings.
- (For in depth look at the use of figurative language in the Bible see my Bible study on the “Figures of Speech in the Bible.”)
- Fine distinctions can and must be drawn. For example, there are times that Premillennialism teaches that Israel pictures the church, but the CHURCH never REPLACES Israel in the plan of God. (i.e. Israel in the wilderness cf. I Corinthians 10:1-11.)



# The Law of Fulfillment

- The logical and Scriptural way to discover how God will fulfill the Scripture in the future is to look at how He fulfilled it in the past.
- If the great number of prophecies concerning the first advent of Christ were all literally fulfilled, then how can we argue that the prophecies of His second advent should be spiritualized or allegorical?
- Luke 24:44 “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”



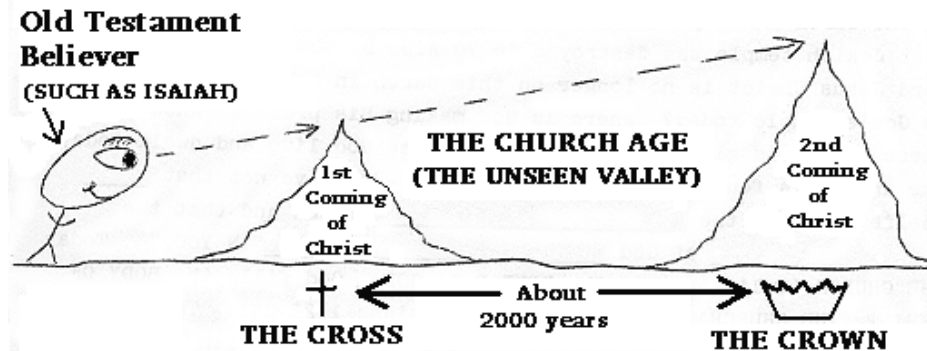
# The Law of Double Reference



- Often a prophecy of the Scripture will have a double fulfillment. One fulfillment is generally rather local and immediate while the other may be distant and long term. This is surely one of the marks of the true Scriptures and their divine inspiration.
- For example, at the conception of the Lord Jesus Christ, the angel announces in Luke 1:32: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:”
- Now we know that these things were true in the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they won’t be universally recognized until His Second Advent.
- The Psalms are filled with this kind of double reference. The full explanation cannot be found in the experience of David, but are later fulfilled completely in Christ ( i.e. Psalm 22).
- Let’s be clear about this point, double reference is clearly literal fulfillment and is thus completely consistent with the basic rules of Biblical interpretation.

# The Principle of Time Relationship

- The two or more events of prophecy are so co-mingled on the horizon of time as to appear closer together when they are in reality far away from each other in the plan of God. Examples might be cited such as Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 61:1-2 cf. Luke 4:16-21





# The “Schools” of Biblical Interpretation



❖ Really Three Ways of Approaching the Scripture centered around the Millennial Kingdom of Christ:

- Amillennialism – the kingdom has existed since Christ left
- Postmillennialism- we will gradually win the world and after we make the world right, Christ will come
- Premillennialism-The world will get worse, Christ returns and forcibly sets up a 1000 Year Kingdom

# Amillennialism – This is the Kingdom!



- Good and Evil grow together on a parallel track
- God's kingdom is not literal but a way of thinking that involves His Word, His Spirit, and His Church – which replaces Israel
- Held by many reformed theologians, the Roman Catholic Church, and men like Leon Morris, Louis Berkhof, and Anthony Hoekema.



# This is as Good as it Gets!

- Views the Abrahamic covenant as unconditional therefore Israel can be replaced by the Church
- Demands an allegorical interpretation of OT
- The OT and NT are bound together by God's Covenant of Grace
- History suggests that everything is moving toward universal redemption
- So called "Kingdom passages" should be interpreted as Christ ruling from Heaven as His saints exert Gospel authority on Earth.
- Expect nothing better – this is as good as it gets!



# Problems with this View

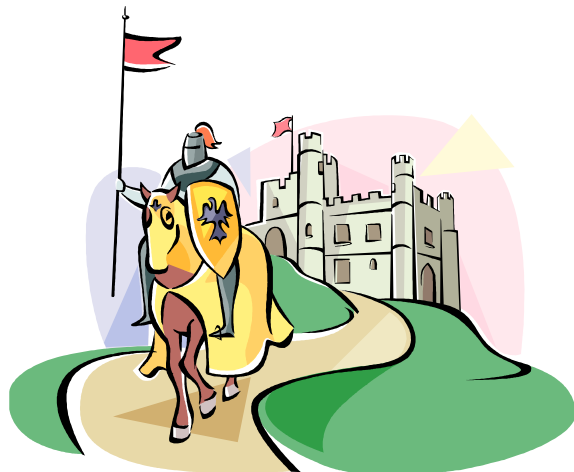
- The Abrahamic covenant is not conditional.
- Those who believe this are not hermeneutically consistent – accepting some prophecy literally but spiritualizing the parts they don't like
- Ignores the Chronological presentation in Revelation 19-20
- Imposes a universal covenant of grace
- Denies God has a place and purpose for Israel in the future
- Cannot explain Romans 11
- Denies literal resurrections in Revelation 20:4-5
- Gives the promises of God to Israel as transferred to the church – spiritual robbery!



# Postmillennialism-Bringing Back the King!

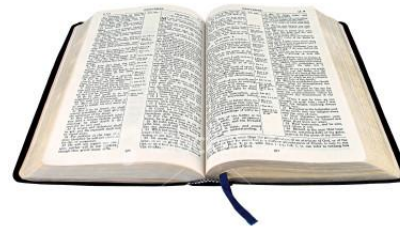


- The Gospel changes hearts of men, and by preaching it we will eventually convert the World
- The parable of the Mustard seed predicts a converted world
- The world is getting better and better
- Conditions will continue to improve
- The world will be Christianized and Christ will return to rule
- Held by the Christian Reconstructionists, Augustine, Loraine Boettner, Charles and Augustus Hodge



# Postmillennialism – Really???

- Misses the teaching of Chapter 20 of Revelation
- The World is in Spiritual decline not improvement!
- The Gospel is not an improvement of social conditions but a conversion of the soul
- Idealistic optimism is inconsistent with Scripture and Reality
- Adoption of allegorical interpretation is inconsistent with a literal interpretation of Scripture



# Premillennial Teaching

- Taught by Scofield, Chafer, Ryrie, Walvoord, Ironside
- Takes the Bible literally
- Preserves the integrity of God's Word
- Maintains strict separation from Israel and the church
- Predicts a decline spiritually to be followed by the rapture, and seven years later the kingdom of Christ
- Fulfills the OT prophecy given to Israel.
- The only logical and Scriptural system