

Practical Helps in Understanding Prophetical Terms

by Al Troester

If you have never had a course in eschatology, you may feel lost when you hear certain words used with reference to end time things. A little explanation of some of these terms may be of help to you.

ARMAGEDDON: Armageddon refers to a place "called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16). It is the Valley of Megiddo, also called Jezreel, in north central Palestine. It is west of the Jordan River, about 10 miles south of Nazareth, 15 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea, and just east of Mt. Carmel. Armageddon is the place where the last great "battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14) will take place. It will be the showdown with Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet. These will gather all the nations of the world together in a mighty move against God when He shall send His Son back to the earth. The battle will most likely extend beyond Armageddon into the Valley of Jehoshaphat near Jerusalem and on down into Edom, the extreme southern part of the land. The destruction of all the forces of Satan and his armies will take place here at the coming of the Lord (Rev. 19:11-21). Blood will flow for 1,600 furlongs (Rev. 14:20) which covers the entire length of Palestine.

ANTICHRIST: (I John 2:18-22; 4:3). The antichrist spirit has always been in the world since the time of Christ showing animosity to Him. There have been "many antichrists." However, the antichrist spirit will be headed up in a person, known as the Antichrist who will be a world leader against Christ during the tribulation period. He will not be revealed until after the rapture of the church (II Thess. 2:7-12) so that speculation of his person is useless during these times. There have been many opinions. He will be a great deceiver and under the control and power of Satan. He is called, "that man of sin," "that wicked one," and "the beast" of Rev. 13.

BRIDE OF CHRIST: The church is so called and as such will be raptured at the coming of Christ in the air for believers. He is the bridegroom. The church will reign with Him for a thousand years and share in the delights of the millennium, and the New Jerusalem (II Cor. 11:2; I Thess. 4:13-18; Eph. 5:26-32; Rev. 19:7; 21:9). This picture of the church is made clear in the words used in Rev. 19:7 "the marriage of the Lamb," and "His wife hath made herself ready."

The Covenants with Israel Should be Understood

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT: (Genesis 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8). This is the covenant God made with Abraham. It is unconditional and in which God promises to Abraham a seed, a land, a people, a nation, and a personal blessing. In him all the families of the earth shall be blessed. It has never been revoked and will yet be fulfilled in its entirety because of Christ (Gal. 3:13-18).

MOSAIC COVENANT: (Exodus 19:5-24:18). This refers to the ten commandments given by God through Moses to His people Israel at Mt. Sinai when they came out of Egypt. It includes "the judgments" (Ex. 21:1-24:11) governing the everyday life of His people, and the "ordinances" (Ex. 24:12-31:18). These cover the ceremonies of their religious life. It is the law and the "Old Covenant" as mentioned in Jeremiah 31:32 that were broken by Israel. It is now termed "old" (Hebrews 8:13) in contrast to the New Covenant or the New Testament. Note that the Old Covenant is the Mosaic Covenant and not as some would teach that the Old Covenant goes back to the Garden of Eden.

DAVIDIC COVENANT: (II Samuel 7:10-16). This is the covenant made by God with King David for the benefit of all Israel. It is also unconditional so that God will fulfill it as He promised. He promised a "house," a "throne," a "kingdom," a "place," a "seed," and that "forever." It is the promise of God upon which the Kingdom of Christ yet to come is established. Therefore, He is referred to as the Seed of David and the one to sit on the "throne of David" (Rom. 1:3; Luke 1:32,33; Acts 2:30-36; 15:16). Christ is of the legal line of David and a direct descendant so that He has the right to sit on his throne. When disobedience came into David's family, chastisement fell as promised (vs. 14) but God's mercy was never to depart since His oath to David is unchangeable (Psalm 89:20-37).

NEW COVENANT: (Jeremiah 31:31-37; Hebrews 8:6-13; Romans 11:17). Israel broke the Old Covenant given at Mt. Sinai. It is called the "first" and the "old" covenant in contrast to the "second" and the "new" as seen in Hebrews 8:8-13. The New Covenant is yet to be made with Israel as a nation at the second coming of Christ when He as the Deliverer shall come to Sion (Rom. 11:26) and "all Israel shall be saved." It is based on the shed blood of Christ by which God will put His law in their mind and write it in their hearts. He will be their God, and they His people, all will know Him, and He will forgive all their sins according to His mercy. All who believe now of both Jew and Gentile are already under the New Covenant individually, but as a nation the Jew will not be included until Jesus returns in glory.

CHURCH: The word is used in the New Testament to refer to the body of Christ of which He is the Head (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). It includes all "born again" believers, both Jews and Gentiles, who through faith in the shed blood of Christ have been baptized into one body by the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). It also refers to the local church, or the geographical assembly who have likewise been called out of the world to faith in the shed blood of Christ. The body of Christ in the universal

sense may be seen as an organism. The local church is an organization, but yet a part of the body of Christ and made up of "born again" believers. It governs itself under Christ the Head, the power of the Holy Spirit Who indwells and fills the church, through divinely appointed officers of Pastor and Deacons, (servants of the church), and the Word of God.

DAY OF CHRIST: In prophecy, this refers to the rapture of the church at the coming of Christ to meet His saints in the air (I Thess. 4:13-18; Phil. 1:6,10; 2:16; I Cor. 1:8; 5:5; II Cor. 1:14).

DAY OF GOD: The term is used in II Peter 3:12. It refers to the end of the millennium when the heavens shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Then there will be new heavens and a new earth (vs. 13) (See also Rev. 21:1).

DAY OF THE LORD: The expression is used to refer to the tribulation period, the millennium or both together depending upon the context. It may refer to that particular day of judgment when Christ returns to the earth (Isaiah 2:12; Rev. 19: 11-21). It may be seen in such passages as Joel 1:15; 2:1,2; Zeph. 1:7,14-18; 2:2,3; Isaiah 2:12-21; 4:1-4; II Thess. 2:2 (where it should read day of the Lord); II Peter 3:10,11.

DISPENSATION: A dispensation refers to that economy of God by which He deals with man in some particular time period according as He may choose to unfold His overall ordered plan of redemption. The final dispensation is seen in Eph. 1:10 where "in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ." This is the climax of all dispensations when God brings to completion His program of redemption in the earth. The dispensational interpretation of the Scriptures holds to seven dispensations. They are: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and kingdom (the millennium or the fulness of times as seen above).

ELECT: The "term "elect" may refer to Israel (Is. 45:4), to the church (Col. 3:12; I Thess. 1:4; II Thess. 2:13,14; I Pet. 1:2), or to Christ (Is. 42:1; Mt. 12:18; I Pet. 2:6). The context reveals which one is meant. Note that II Thess. 2:13 explains the election of I Thess. 1:4. In other words, the Gospel of Christ is the key to election. God chooses those who choose Christ. The ones who elect Christ is the election which are called the elect according to God's foreknowledge (I Pet. 1:2).

ESCHATOLOGY: This is a word coined by theologians with reference to all the happenings and events of the end times. It speaks of final things including death, the resurrections, the judgments, and future things. It is not a Bible word, but denotes the future things that are attached to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

FALSE PROPHET: There are many false prophets, but the term "false prophet" refers to the second beast of Rev. 13:11-18; 19:20; 20:10. He shall head up the world religious system of the tribulation period and cause all to worship the first

beast. He will do great wonders to deceive all that dwell on the earth. He is one of the three final actors of the period along with Satan and the Beast. He has power to give life to the image of the beast and all who will not worship the beast will be killed. He will cause all to have a mark in their right hand, or on the foreheads so that none can buy or sell without it.

GENTILES: The Gentiles are the people or nations of the world outside Judaism. The term "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) refers to their historical limitations from the captivity of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when the Jews lost their sovereignty to the Gentile powers, to the end of the tribulation period. Then God shall destroy Gentile world dominion with the second coming of Christ and restore Israel to their rightful place as head of the nations and not the tail. The expression "fulness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25) refers to their salvation opportunity as a people in this age from Pentecost to the rapture of the church. The Gentiles have an immoral record, are materialistic, pleasure seekers, and vain in their manner of life (Mt. 6:31-33; Eph. 4:17-19). We were called Gentiles in the flesh before our salvation (Eph. 2:11), and are no longer to live like them (Eph. 4:17).

IMMINENT: To speak of the imminent return of Christ means that He may return at any time without any signs needed. No signs are necessary as far as the rapture of the church is concerned (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:33; Luke 21:36). Signs of His second coming have to do with His coming on the earth as King. There are many signs for that aspect of His coming.

JACOB'S TROUBLE: The expression is used in Jeremiah 30:7 with reference to the tribulation period, and the awful time of trouble that shall come upon Israel. It is spoken of as a time of travail for Israel and is described as birth pangs for Israel when Israel shall be born as a nation. As a mother goes through birth pangs before giving birth to a child so Israel will have to go through that seven year period of suffering of the tribulation when as a result the nation shall be born in one day when they return to Christ (Isaiah 66:8; Zech. 3:9).

JUDGMENTS: There are several judgments yet to come and not only one general judgment as some teach or suppose. The judgment for believer's sins has already taken place at the cross. There is the everyday self judgment of the believer when he examines himself, confesses and forsakes his sin (I Cor. 11:28-32; I John 1:9). There is the "judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10; I Cor. 3:12-15) when believers shall give an account of those things done in the body, or their works good or bad for the sake of rewards, but not to judge their salvation status. This will most likely take place after we meet the Lord in the air and during the tribulation period. There will be a judgment for Israel which is really the tribulation period when God shall purge out the rebels from among them (Ezekiel 20:38; Zechariah 13:8,9). The judgment of the nations will take place when Christ returns and separates the sheep from among the goats to determine which shall go into the kingdom (Mt. 25:31-46). The judgment of the Beast, Satan, and the False Prophet takes place at the second coming of Christ to the earth

(Rev. 19:20-20:3). The great white throne judgment for all unsaved will be at the end of the millennium. Those whose names are not written in the book of life because they have never received Christ as Savior will be cast into the Lake of Fire which is the second death (Rev. 20:11-15).

KINGDOM: "Kingdom" in prophetic language refers primarily to the visible kingdom to come upon the earth as a result of the promise made to David in II Samuel 7:13. It will be fulfilled in Christ, the Seed of David. This is the Messianic kingdom to come at the return of the Messiah and for which Israel has been looking for many centuries. It is that Kingdom that was announced to Mary the mother of Jesus by the angel Gabriel. It is the unfinished promise of Christmas that is yet to be fulfilled. It was the kingdom that was to come down from Heaven and announced as near by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:2), and likewise so spoken of by Christ at the beginning of His ministry (Mt. 4:17), and as "at hand". However, the Jews rejected the King so that the Kingdom is held in abeyance until the return of the King. In the meantime, the kingdom of heaven is here in mystery form as described by our Lord in Matthew 13. It presently encompasses professing Christendom and is composed of saved and unsaved as seen in the parable of the wheat and tares, Israel and the church as seen in the treasure hid in the field, and the pearl of great price are also included. The term "Kingdom of God" as used by Christ in John 3:3,5 refers to that spiritual kingdom to which all believers in Him belong and entered only by the new birth.

MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB: This is with reference to the gathering of the church as the "bride" of Christ, the "bridegroom" as He is called (Mt. 25:1-13). It seems to take place at some point during the tribulation period after the judgment seat of Christ. According to Rev. 19:7-10, the time seems to be just prior to the coming of Christ to the earth in judgment and to set up His kingdom. This seems to follow after the marriage supper as the chapter indicates.

MILLENNIUM: The word "millennium" is used to refer to the one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. The word comes from two Latin words "mille" meaning a thousand, and "annus" meaning a year, which means a thousand years. It is referred to 6 times in Rev. 20:1-8 and is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant promising a king and a kingdom. Those who believe that Christ will come before the millennium to set up His kingdom are termed. "premillennialists." Those who claim that Christ will come after the millennium are post-millennialists. Then there are those who do not believe in a millennium at all and are called amillennialists. Some believe that we are in the millennium now and call themselves "realized millennialists." They spiritualize it to say we are in it and the Devil is already bound. General conditions may be seen in Isaiah 11:1-9; 35; and 65:17-25. Christ will bring it to pass when He comes to reign as King of all the earth.

MYSTERY: A "mystery" in the Bible is something that has been hidden or concealed in God throughout the Old Testament but is now revealed in the New Testament. The church is called a mystery that has been so hidden in God but is

now revealed (Eph. 3:1-7) through Christ who is also spoken of as "in you" (Col. 1:27) which has been hidden in ages past but is now made manifest to His saints. There are other mysteries in the New Testament such as the mystery of Israel's blindness (Rom. 11:25), the mystery of the rapture (I Cor. 15:51-54; I Thess. 4:13-18), the mystery of the church as made up of Jew and Gentile in one body (Eph. 3:1-11), the mystery of the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:32), the mystery of the fulness of God incarnate in Christ (Col. 2:2,3,9; I Cor. 2:7,8), the mystery of iniquity (II Thess. 2:7), the mystery of the seven stars that Christ holds in His hand (Rev. 1:20), the mystery of Babylon the false or counterfeit church (Rev. 17:5,7). There are also the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" spoken of by Christ in Mt. 13:11 that reveal the present state of the Kingdom now in mystery form because of the rejection of Christ and His Kingdom by the Jew. It explains the present form of the Kingdom from the cross to the end of the tribulation period when Christ comes to set up the literal visible form of the Kingdom. It is presently formed of both Jew and Gentile, wheat and tares, Israel and the church, good and bad fish, saved and unsaved, and is as extensive as Christendom.

NEW JERUSALEM: The term refers to the city of God that shall come down from Heaven and reign over the earth during the millennium (Rev. 21,22; Heb. 12:22). It is also called "the bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9,10) apparently indicating the dwelling place of the church, the bride of Christ. It is called "the holy city" (Rev. 21:2) and excludes all unbelievers (21:8). Revelation chapters 21 and 22 describe this glorious city. The throne of God and the Lamb shall be there (22:3). The city has no need of the light of the sun or moon as the glory of God and of the Lamb shall lighten it (21:23). Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will be allowed to enter into it (21:27).

RAPTURE: The Latin word "rapio" is the background of our English word "rapture" and the Greek "arpazo" which mean to seize on, or to seize, to carry off, or snatch out or away, catch away. It is used of the power of God to transfer a person marvelously from one place to another. I Thessalonians 4:17 speaks of the church being "caught up," "raptured" to meet Christ in the air when He comes to receive His own as He promised (John 14:1-3). The dead in Christ shall be raised from the grave, and the living believers shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and ever be with Him. Those who belong to Christ will be given a glorified body (I Cor. 15:52-57). Believers shall be like Christ when He shall appear (I John 3:2). It will be the fulfilling of that glorious hope even the redemption of our body for which we wait (Rom. 8:23). It is spoken of as being a comfort to the saints (I Thess. 4:18). The event is imminent so that Christ can come at any time. It is the next great event for believers in Christ for which the church has waited many centuries. It is that "blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13) for which we look.

REVELATION APPEARANCE: The term is used to refer to that appearance of Christ when He comes to the earth to reign as King. It distinguishes that event

from the rapture. In the rapture, He will come into the air to meet His saints. In the revelation appearance, He will come to the earth, even to the Mount of Olives from which He ascended (Acts 1:10-12; Luke 24:50-52; Zechariah 14:1-4,9). In the rapture appearance, Christ comes for His saints (I Thess. 4:13-17) and in the revelation appearance, he comes with His saints (I Thess. 3:13). In the rapture, Christ comes to take unto Himself His bride, the church, and in the revelation appearance, He will come with His bride and reign as King over all the earth (II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 19:6; 19:11-16; 20:4-6). See also II Thess. 1:7-10; I Peter 1:13).

RESURRECTIONS: The Bible speaks of the first and the second resurrection. The first comes before the millennium, and the second comes after it (Rev. 20:5,6,12-15). The church and Israel are raised during the time of the first resurrection. This includes the raising of "believers in Christ" at the rapture, and the resurrection of the saved of Israel at the revelation appearance of Christ (Dan.12: 1-3). (See also John 5:28,29). Notice the order of the resurrections in I Cor. 15:20-23). Christ is first, then the believers at the rapture, then Israel, then all unsaved at the end of the millennium when they shall stand at the great white throne judgment. There is no general resurrection nor general judgment as some believe. The view is not scriptural, but is a traditional view that some hold because of their denominational teachings.

RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS: In Acts 3:21, Christ is spoken of as having been taken up into heaven "until the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Notice that the verse limits the meaning as that spoken by the prophets. What God has prophesied beforehand, He will fulfill. God reveals beforehand what He plans to do (Amos 3:7). It refers to the restoration of Israel to the land and the theocracy and the kingdom as promised to David. This is the question asked of Christ in Acts 1:6, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The restoration or restitution is still to come as promised by the prophets. It would be the same time period as that of the millennium and as described in Isaiah 11:1-12; 35; 65:17-25. It was spoken of by our Lord Jesus Christ in the expression, "in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory" (Mt. 19:28). The word is the same as used in regeneration as used in Titus 3:5 or to re-create, or to make new—born again. In the light of this, the time yet to come in the restitution of all things will be the re-creation of the social order and the renewal of the earth, possibly to paradise regained. There is a wonderful time to come when God makes all things new. We can hardly conceive of it. We know according to Romans 8:19-23 that, and especially verse 21, "the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Creation too was degraded when man fell in the Garden and it too shall be restored.

REMNANT: There will be a saved remnant of all Israel which refers to those of Israel who receive Christ as their Savior and King when He returns to restore them

to the promised land of blessing and especially to spiritual regeneration. God has always had His faithful remnant among His people. It will be the faithful remnant amongst Israel who will accept Christ that will constitute the "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). All Israel will be made up of believing Jews and not all the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh (Rom. 9:7-13; 11:1-6, 25-36). This agrees with Christ's teaching in Mt. 8:11-12. There the children of the kingdom refers to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh such as the unbelieving Pharisees and those Jews who refused to receive Him.

SPIRITUAL BODY: In the resurrection of believers at the rapture, the dead in Christ shall be raised. The living believers will be changed from this earthy type of body of flesh and blood, which is called the natural body, into a glorified body that is termed a "spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:42-58). The spiritual body is contrasted to the natural body, but still it is actual, real, and literal. It will be like Christ's glorified body with which He arose from the grave and ascended into Heaven. He was able to enter the room where the disciples were, the doors being shut. He ate with them. He invited them to handle Him and see for themselves that He truly had risen from the grave and had a glorified body. The spiritual body will not need for its existence since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50).

TRIBULATION: The "tribulation " is a seven year period of time at the end of this age and just prior to the millennium or 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth. It will be an awful time of trouble, wrath, judgments, famines, pestilences, natural convulsions, and desolations in the pouring out of God's indignation on all the earth for their sin, unbelief, rejection of Christ, and treatment of Israel. It will be a time of intense trouble for Israel, and is referred to as the "time of Jacob's trouble" or birth pangs for Israel (Jeremiah 30:7). Jesus said that then "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt. 24:21). The Prophet Daniel also speaks of those days as being a time of trouble (Dan. 12:1). The period is described by Christ in Mt. 24, Mk.13, Luke 21. The biggest part of the Book of Revelation describes it in its awful intensity (chapters 4-19). Moses spoke of it (Deut. 4:30). Isaiah spoke of it as a time when "The LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof (Isaiah 24:1). The rest of the chapter is a vivid description of it.

Believers in Christ are saved from the wrath to come (I Thess. 5:9; Romans 5:9). Those who believe that Christ will come and that the rapture takes place before the tribulation and that Christians will not pass through it are called pretribulationists, those who believe the rapture will come in the middle of it are called mid-tribulationists, and those who believe that the church will go through it are called post-tribulationists.