

YOUR HOPE

Eschatology

64 Days of Truth
Days 57-63
Heritage Bible Church

64 Days of Truth is designed to help Christians understand the great doctrines of the Bible. As you spend the rest of your life feasting on the word of God (the Bible), you should forever expand and deepen your knowledge of these things.

During the 64 Days, listen to the weekly messages with an open heart and an open Bible . . . Spend a few minutes each day to study on your own, using the devotional guides in this booklet . . . Spend an hour or so each week with a discussion group, talking about the importance of what you learn.

Most of all, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

DAY 57: Wednesday Message, "Your Hope"

If you can, take notes, and pay special attention to these key points. (When you get to your discussion group, compare notes to help each other get it all.)

Definition of eschatology

Premillennialism

Amillennialism

Postmillennialism

Passage on the only two groups to be resurrected

Rapture. What is it? What passages describe it?

Second Coming

The tribulation

The Antichrist

Memorize 1 John 3:2-3: *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

DAY 58: Thursday. The Next Event on God's Calendar

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and answer:

(13) Why did Paul write this section? What question does it appear he was answering?

(14) What is the promise in this verse?

(15) How do we know Paul believed this could happen at any time—even during his lifetime?¹

(16-17) What things will happen, in order?

(18) What's the command? How does this relate to what you observed in verse 13?

Fill in the blanks: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

¹The concept of **imminence** means that this could happen at any time, without any other event needing to occur first.

DAY 59: Friday. We Shall Not All Sleep!

Yesterday you began to study the event that could happen at any moment—the rapture of the church. Today, let's look at the other passage that deals with this *imminent* event.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-52² and answer:

What is the subject in the context of all of 1 Corinthians 15? How do these two verses relate to the context?

Put this together with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Write out the sum of what the two passages say will happen.

Did Paul believe this could happen in his life? How do you know?

Fill in: _____, _____, _____. *We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

²A mystery is something not previously revealed, and it could not be known unless God reveals it.

DAY 60: Saturday. Pre-written History (Part 1)

Read Daniel 9:24-27, one of the most amazing and detailed prophecies in the Bible.³ Observe what verse 24 says:

To what people and place does this prophecy apply?

List the six things promised. Three deal with sin (Jesus' first coming), and three deal with righteousness (His second coming).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

³These are "weeks" (literally "sevens") of *years*, so this prophecy covers 490 years. 7 weeks (49 years) leads to the end of Nehemiah's work; 62 more (434 more years) to Messiah's death. The final week (7 years) is yet future. This is part of how we know there is a future for Israel. God isn't finished with His promises to them.

Fill in: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____
_____, _____, _____, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this
hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

DAY 61: Sunday. Pre-written History (Part 2)

Back to Daniel 9:24-27. The "prince who is to come" is the future Antichrist. What does verse 26 say "his people" will do to the city and the temple? (It happened in A.D. 70, at the hands of the Roman army.)

What does verse 27 say the Antichrist will do? (We know this is future, because it has never happened.)

9:27 assures us that a temple will some day be rebuilt in Jerusalem, because sacrifices can't be stopped unless they are happening. Jesus' words tell us He knew this event was future. Read them in Matthew 24:15.

How did the Apostle Paul describe this abomination? See 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. What will the Antichrist do in the temple?

Fill in the blanks: _____
_____. *And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

DAY 62: Monday. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

It wouldn't be right to leave out Jesus' second coming from our study of prophecy. Prepare yourself for goose bumps, then read Matthew 24:29-31 and Revelation 19:11-21. List all that will happen when Jesus returns. Look for:

When this happens (after what?)

Heavenly phenomena

What angels will do

What Jesus will look like

Who comes with Him

What happens to His enemies

If you belong to Christ by grace through faith, you will be there for this event! Read Revelation 22:20-21. Thanks for devoting these nine weeks to Bible doctrine!

Fill in the blanks: _____, just as He is pure.

DAY 63: Tuesday. Review/Prepare

1. Write out the memory item for this week (as many times as you need to, until you know it by heart).
2. Tomorrow you will learn a new word: ***Doctrinology***. You can't find it in a dictionary, because it is just being invented. As you prepare for worship, write down at least one reason each of these is important.

Doctrine of the Bible

Doctrine of God

Doctrine of Christ

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Doctrine of Man and Sin

Doctrine of Salvation

Doctrine of The Church

Doctrine of Angels and Demons

Doctrine of Last Things

DOCTRINE OF ESCHATOLOGY
THINGS TO REMEMBER

Interpreting the Bible consistently leads to being *premillennial*, which means we believe Jesus Christ will return to earth bodily prior to reigning on earth for 1000 years.

Jesus' Second Coming is described in Matthew 24:29-31 and Revelation 19:11-21.

Millennium is Latin for "1000 years." The millennium and the Kingdom of Christ are the same thing. The period of 1000 years is mentioned six times in the beginning of Revelation 20.

The *Rapture* is the moment in the future when every living child of God will be taken instantaneously to be with the Lord forever, removed from earth "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Every person will be resurrected from the dead (except those taken in the rapture). Believers will be resurrected to eternal life; unbelievers will be resurrected to eternal judgment (John 5:24-29).

The Church and the nation of Israel are distinct. There is a specific future of Israel. There will come a time when all Israelites alive will be saved—just prior to Jesus' second coming (Romans 11:25-27).

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Your Hope

64 Days of Truth, Days 57-63: Eschatology

Discussion Guide

1. What is the definition of "eschatology?"
2. What key passage was used in the sermon as the starting point for understanding Bible prophecy? To whom is it addressed? Have all the things predicted happened? (If you haven't already, you will study this passage more thoroughly in your devotions this week.)
3. What two passages most clearly describe the rapture? According to them, what will happen?

4. Put these events in proper sequence on the time line below. Don't worry about it being to scale for the number of years between events; just put the events into the proper order by writing the numbers below the letters in the correct sequence.

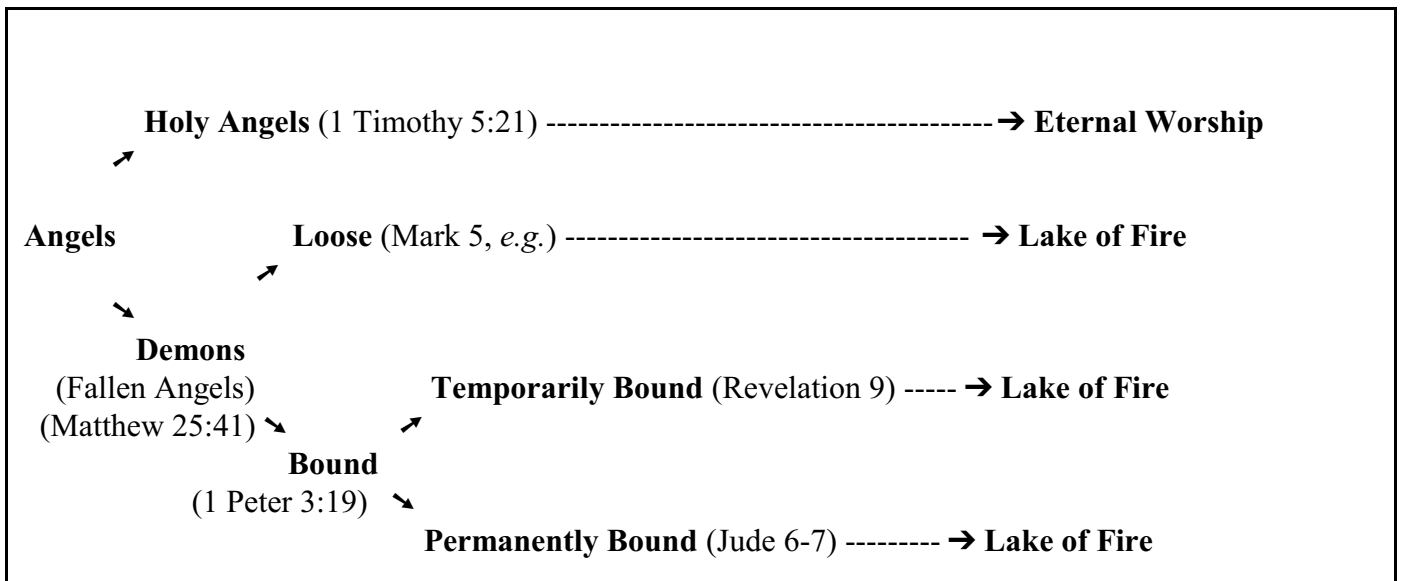
1 Christ Born	2 Exodus	3 Abraham	4 Flood	5 Rapture
6 Millennium	7 Adam's Fall	8 Heaven or Hell for All	9 Captives Return	10 Christ Ascends
11 Creation	12 Final Judgment	13 Captivity	14 Church Age	15 Second Coming
16 King David	17 Tribulation	18 Holy Spirit Comes	19 Tower of Babel	20 Law of Moses

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T

5. Review the memory verses from all nine weeks

Ministering Spirits
64 Days of Truth, Days 50-56: Angelology and Demonology
Discussion Guide

1. Review the summary of angels and demons by filling in the blanks in the chart:



God created a fixed number of angels before He created the heavens and earth. Approximately a third of them fell with Satan when he rebelled (Revelation 12:4). These are called **demons**. Some demons are **loose** (able to roam around). Some are **bound** (imprisoned). Some are bound **temporarily** and will be released during the Tribulation. Some are bound **permanently** and will be released only to be judged and sent to the **Lake of Fire**.

2. What verse most clearly states the purpose of angels? What is their purpose? Who do they serve, and why?

Hebrews 1:14. They serve God, and at least part of what they do is obey Him when He sends them out to "render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation."

3. Look up and discuss these other descriptions of angels and what they do:

Psalm 103:20 They are mighty in strength; they bless God; they perform His word, doing only His will, and never acting contrary to His word.

Psalm 91:11-13 When dispatched by God (Hebrews 1:14), they intervene to protect His people according to His will. If your group lacks enthusiasm, open the discussion of guardian angels—and don't be surprised how tenaciously some people believe in them.

4. **What is the primary work of demons? Give Scripture to support your answer.**
Following their leader Satan, their primary work is deception. 1 Timothy 4:1, John 8:44, 1 John 4:1-6, Colossians 2:18, 23.

5. **Memory verse . . . See 1 Peter 1:13 for loving stimulation.**

Sermon Title: Your Hope – Doctrine of Last Things
64 Days of Truth # 9 of 10

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Various

Date: 4-17-19

We begin "Eschatology"—or, the "Doctrine of Last Things", or, "Bible Prophecy." We're going to talk tonight about what I have called "Your Hope," because God's guarantees about the future are where our hope appropriately rests (see 1 Pet. 1:13).

People always want to know about the future. I mean, why is there something as utterly ridiculous and totally insane as "horoscopes" in your newspaper? There is *no validity* to *any* of that, *ever!* And people read them! Ouija Boards, psychics—who are frauds, false prophets... there is abundant, very sad testimony to the search for knowing the future.

The same is true about Christians; and sometimes, it can be a fascination with prophecy that even gets to the extent that it's out of balance. There are some Christian radio and TV programs that teach about nothing but prophecy. Why is that? Because there's a *market* for that; because there are people who want to study nothing but prophecy—and that's out of balance. Some believers that I know actually break fellowship with other Christians who don't share their views of certain portions of Bible prophecy. It's happened to me; I know someone who left Heritage Bible Church in the early days because of our "false teaching" about a Pretribulation Rapture. That's *way* out of balance!

Some of that interest in prophecy among Christians, I would call "Christianized Escapism." It's more fun to figure out prophecy puzzles than it is to deal with the nuts and bolts of righteous living, and to actually "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18; NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

But at the same time, it's also very important to know what the Bible says about the future, because you have to live your life *now*, realizing that there are implications for eternity. You have to balance your life now, understanding the history of what God has done and knowing what your "blessed hope" is (Titus 2:13). It has been said—and I haven't calculated this for myself—that approximately one third of all of the prophecies in the Bible relate to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; obviously, that's the *centerpiece* of Bible prophecy (e.g., Zech. 14:3-4; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; Jude 14-15). Jesus Himself referred to His return at least 21 times.

The fancy word for this portion of Bible doctrine is: "Eschatology." The word *eschatos* is the adjective that means: "last," so it's the "Doctrine of Last Things." So, here's where we're going to go. I'm slipping in an extra point; I've been doing three points in all of these, but I'm not calling it a point, I'm calling it an Introduction. So, in the Introduction, I want to give you the "big picture," and you that studied Revelation will say, "Oh, yeah! I remember that!" Then, we will ask: What Is Your Personal Hope? What Is God's Plan? and, What Can Go Wrong?

First, an Introduction. In introducing this, I'm going to call it the "Big Picture," because it's something I kind of *don't like doing*. I teach you that you don't use your theological conclusions to interpret a text—you *develop* your theological conclusions from the interpretation of all the relevant texts, and then putting it all together. So I'm going to break my rule a little bit—*not* in the sense that I'm going to interpret a passage *because of what our theology is*, but I want to tell you the "big picture" of the theological systems.

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If you follow consistent "hermeneutics"—that is, the principles of interpreting Scripture; go back to Message Number 1 of "64 Days of Truth"—if you take the natural, grammatical, historical interpretation of the Bible in every passage, including Prophecy, you are going to fall into the first group, otherwise known as "The Good Guys" around here. It is: "Premillennialism." What does that word mean? Well, "*mille*" is Latin for "a thousand; the "*enn*" is from the same word as "annual," or "years"; so, the "Millennium" is the thousand-year period, or "a thousand years." Premillennialism simply means: Christ will return *before* the Millennium—before the thousand years that He reigns on Earth. That "thousand years" is mentioned six times in Revelation Chapter 20, Verses 1 through 7.

It's interesting that even the people who hold to the other viewpoints on Prophecy, which I'll summarize for you in a minute, they agree that following a consistent, literal interpretation—taking the words naturally, as *they* do for the *rest* of the Bible—even people who aren't Premillennial admit: if you interpret it consistently, *you will be Premillennial!* I am, and Heritage Bible Church is, unapologetically and enthusiastically Premillennial; we're looking forward to reigning with Christ on Earth during the thousand-year Kingdom (see Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10). Now, that does *no justice* to Premillennialism, but that's just giving you a "big picture."

The second category is "Amillennialism." If you take a Latin word and put an "A" on the front of it, you negate it. "Amillennialism" literally means: "no thousand years." Amillennial interpreters believe that when God said "one thousand years," we know *absolutely for sure* that He *did not mean* "one thousand years." He may have meant *a whole bunch of other stuff*, but it *absolutely can't mean* "one thousand years"—*even though* the word is: "one thousand years," *even though* it occurs six times in seven verses having to do with Christ reigning on the earth.

So what *does* it mean, if it's not "a thousand years"? Well, it's "a long time." I don't mean to be too condescending there, but they believe it describes a long period—an undetermined number of years—but they claim to know for certain that "a thousand years" does not mean "a thousand years." Amillennialism, *generally speaking*—not everybody is in this category—Amillennialism generally equates the Church with spiritual Israel. And so, where we understand that God still has a future for the "nation" of "Israel" (Jer. 31:35-36), and many unfulfilled promises to Israel, Amillennialism usually spiritualizes many parts of Scripture regarding the future of the nation of Israel, and makes them apply to the Church, not to that specific nation, and applying *in general*, not specific kinds of ways.

Now, I must admit, there are many fine, godly, Bible-believing, Evangelical, Gospel-preaching, Jesus-loving people who are Amillennial. As strongly as I believe that their approach to interpreting the prophetic portions of Scripture is *wrong*, it's *also* wrong to assume that someone is not part of the Body of Christ because they hold to Amillennialism (see Ps. 5:4; 119:63; cf. Rom. 14:1).

The third group is "Postmillennialism." Premillennial—Jesus coming before the thousand years. Amillennial—no such thing as the thousand years. Postmillennial—"post" means "after"; they say that Jesus will come *after* the Millennium. They also know *absolutely for sure*

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that the *one thing* that the phrase "one thousand years" does *not* mean is: "one thousand years." What Postmillennial believers say is that, through the spread of the Gospel, the world is going to get better and better...How's that going? We'll talk about that. But, they say *eventually*, the effect of the Gospel will "Christianize" the governments of the nations, ushering in a golden era during which Jesus Christ will reign on Earth through His people; and then He will return *after* that golden era, which is yet to come.

I had a chance to sit in on a small study with one of the most prominent Postmillennialists of the last half-century, and hear him talk about it. And I asked him about things getting worse and worse, and all of that, and he said: "Give it a couple thousand years! It's probably going to all crash, before we build out of the ashes." So, there's the answer to: *We know* it's getting worse and worse, and Paul *said* it would get "worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13, NKJV), but—*it's going to get better!*" (contra Matt. 24:5-30; 2 Tim. 3:1-9)

Postmillennialism was *very popular* in Europe and in America in the 18th and 19th Centuries. The best I can tell—and I don't think it's hard to tell this—it was *apparently* the dominant view of the Christians who migrated to America. And it continued to flourish through the Industrial Revolution, as you can imagine. The world *seemed* to be getting better and better, and the general sense was that the world was, through technology and ways to spread the Gospel, seeing the Gospel spreading worldwide—there were great eras of missionary activity and taking the Gospel across borders and language groups and ethnic groups, and all of that.

Well, World War 1 knocked Postmillennialism down for the count—it took a "mandatory eight-count." World War 2 essentially dealt Postmillennialism a knockout blow. I was in Seminary in the early 1970s, and I had to study all these things. I did not know one single person who believed the concept of Postmillennialism at that time. We studied it kind of as a "this is a historic migration that the Church has taken"; and it was considered an aberrant view that had been held by a lot of people for a long time, but it was *jettisoned* in light of more Bible study and reflecting on the *actual condition* of the world.

Suddenly, though, in about the last thirty years, Postmillennialism has made a *strong* resurgence. It has come with new labels, such as: "Dominion Theology"—the idea that God is going to take "dominion" through the Gospel. It has also been called "Christian Reconstructionism," in that by the principles of the Bible, we will "reconstruct" societal norms and bring in that golden era. *Many* of the people that you will find today who are most zealous about trying to change the political landscape in America—when you dig down, a lot of them are driven, at least in part, by some version of Postmillennialism.

Now, as I said about Amillennialism, there *are* godly and truly evangelistic people who are Postmillennial. The guy that I talked about, that I heard—he was honest and sincere in his beliefs. He died just a couple of years after that, and changed his view. R.C. Sproul was a Postmillennialist until about a year and a half ago, when he met the Lord and said, "Oh!" I strongly disagree with their handling of the prophetic portions of Scripture—*especially* the Book of Revelation—but I rejoice that they preached the true Gospel of the real Jesus Christ.

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So, those are the "big pictures"—Pre, A, and Post. There are wrinkles of different aspects of all of them.

"Premillennialism" means: The return of Christ is *prior* to a literal thousand-year Kingdom on Earth.

Amillennialism means: There is no such thing as a literal thousand-year Kingdom on Earth; and the reference to "a thousand years" is not to be taken literally, it's to be taken spiritually—it means "a long time," and *we know now* that it's much *longer* than a thousand years, because if it's equated with the Church Age, it's *already* almost *two* thousand. Then Christ is going to return, judgment is going to take place, and then we enter the eternal state.

Postmillennialism means: We're in this for the long haul. No matter how many governments rise and fall, and how many nations are disintegrated, *eventually* the nations of the world *will be* Christianized, bring in the golden era, and then Jesus comes.

There's a famous quote from W.A. Criswell. He was one of the giants among preachers of the 20th Century in America. He pastored the famous First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. If you brought that church to Idaho, it would be about the fifth largest *city*. He was there for over 40 years. He is famous for refusing advice that he got when he began his ministry as a relatively young man, and he chose to preach consecutively through book after book of the Bible. He was one of those great Southern Baptist booming-voice, big-man kind of guys; and I heard him announce that he was going to preach through whatever it was—maybe something like: "Romans in the morning, Daniel in the evening, and on Wednesday nights, we're going to study the Book of Psalms." Supposedly, one of the leaders of the church came and said, "Doctor Criswell, *please* reconsider—you're going to *empty* this place!" And he said: "In forty years in the ministry, the only problem we've ever had in our church was *where to put all those people!*" He was a Bible Expositor.

The way he tells the story, he was somewhere in Isaiah, preaching week in and week out, teaching what the Bible says. And he says, after church one day, a member came and said: "You're a *Premillennialist!*" Doctor Criswell apparently hadn't used that term. He simply defended himself by saying something like, "Well, I don't know what you mean by that. I only know what the Bible says!" That's the point of telling that story: If you teach it *naturally*, you're going to wind up being Premillennial.

So there are the major theological folders to put interpretation of prophecy in: Premillennial, Amillennial, Postmillennial. Now, in practical reality: in the pews of most churches, you will find a lot of people whose understanding of prophecy is quite limited. Some people have chosen to come to Heritage Bible Church from a different church that I won't name, where the pastor said: "Oh, we would *never* teach the Book of Revelation—that's too *controversial!*" Well, *I think* it's our *hope*. So there are a lot of people who have not been well-taught, and their attitudes fall into one or both of two other categories.

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There are people who are "*Panmillennialists*"—they have no clue what the Bible says, but they trust God it will all "pan out" according to His plan. And there are a lot of other people who are "*Promillennialists*"—they say: "I have no idea what it means, but when it comes to the Kingdom of Jesus, *I'm all for it!* I am *Promillennial*."

All of that is kind of a "big picture" of how this eventually all shakes out.

Now, I love charts, I love graphs, I love being able to line out the events and all of that; and if you've been around for the Book of Revelation study, you know that we've done that to try to help you understand what it all means. But, here's the most important thing about Biblical Eschatology. This probably should be the conclusion, but I'm putting it here: What Is Your *Personal* Hope? I know you're geared up for me to give you an overview of what the Bible says is going to happen, and *I'm going to do that*—just relax, I'll get there; and I'm going to give you the Cliff's Notes outline of the Reader's Digest version of all of what the Bible says. But before we look at God's plan for mankind and for this Earth, and all of that, I want you to think about *Personal* Eschatology. What is *your* eternal future? What a tragedy it would be if you could outline what the Bible says about the future of Israel, if you could outline what the Bible says about the future of the Church, if you could outline what God says about the future of the world and the Second Coming of Christ and how many warts are going to be on the Antichrist's nose, and all of that—but you don't take into account *your own* future.

I've done this with many of you before, but consider this, these words of Jesus in John 5:24—"Truly, truly, I say to you"—when He starts a sentence like that, *listen!* Even when He doesn't start it like that, *listen!* "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." In other words, He wants you to understand death and life—*eternal* life (Rev. 21:3-4) and *eternal* death (2 Thess. 1:9). Pay attention to the contrast there: You're either going to "come into judgment" and "eternal" death (Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10, 14-15)—*or*, you will pass "out of death into life" (Jn. 3:36; 11:25-26; Rom. 8:1-2).

Everyone enters this world, as you learned about on Week 5, with the "default setting" of *death*; you were born alive physically, and spiritually dead (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1). That's what you deserve, because that's "the wages of sin" (Rom. 6:23). What *changes* a person's eternal destiny is—what does He say there?—he "hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me." If you believe God completely, including the message that Jesus died for your sins (1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:18), you have eternal life.

And He goes on from there. He explains that, regardless of what else is going to happen in the world, you are going to be resurrected from the dead, and you are going to fall into one of two groups. He says, in the next verse: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is"—what does He mean? "I'm coming, *but I'm here*, and there's going to be a future!" "An hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." How many of the dead? *All of them*. The dead will *all* be called forth from the grave—*every single person*. This is part of what the Father delegated to Jesus Christ.

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You will be included in that scenario. Keep reading: John 5:26 and 27—"For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man." "Son of Man" is a technical term from Daniel Chapter 7; He is the King of that Kingdom that is to come.

And then He got *very specific* about *everyone's* personal future, and how it's going to unfold. John 5, Verses 28 and 29—"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs"—all the dead—"will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."

Now, if you had *only* that verse, you might say it's salvation or judgment based solely on deeds, but those who do "good deeds" are those who are "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17), doing the deeds "which God prepared beforehand" for them to do (Eph. 2:10; cf. Jn. 3:21; Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:21).

That applies to "all who are in the tombs" (cf. Rev. 20:12-13). So, unless you are "alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:15-17), this applies to you (see Heb. 9:27); and the only two outcomes are: "resurrection of life" and "resurrection of judgment" (cf. Dan. 12:2). So, before we survey the big plan of God for the whole world, let's be honest with ourselves, and ask the question: What are your plans for *after* you die? (see Prov. 14:32; cf. Phil. 3:9) *Nail that down!* (see 2 Cor. 13:5; cf. 2 Pet. 1:10). There is *nothing more important!* Your plans for after you die will be determined for eternity *completely* by how you respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ *in this life* (see Jn. 3:18; Acts 17:30-31).

Alright, that's the Conclusion; now, let's start. The Big Picture: File Folders—Premillennialism, Amillennialism, Postmillennialism. What Is Your Personal Hope?—Are you fully trusting in Christ, and Christ alone?

Now: What Is God's Plan? How in the world do you do that in a half-hour or less? Well, this is just as impossible as the previous eight attempts to summarize a major category of Bible doctrine in one message, but I want to give you a quick trip through what the Bible says will happen. I really think, the more often you are exposed to this, if a little bit attaches to your brain every time, eventually you start to get the big picture. You can be as certain about the future which is prophesied in the Bible, as you are about the past which is recorded there (see Is. 46:10; cf. Ps. 90:2; Lam. 3:37). The future, according to what the Scripture says, is *prewritten history*. God guarantees it! It is going to happen.

I want to sneak up on the "Last Things" by starting with the *earlier* things. I'm going to give you just the bullet-point outline so you can get the overall impression; and then, like we've said about studying Systematic Theology in general: we're giving you the framework here; every passage you study for the rest of your life, you can fit it into the framework, and you can connect it to the other things that relate to that subject. I want to do that with the "Big Picture" of God's plan for the world.

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So let's start with the Old Testament Era—the first 77 percent of your Bible; it's pretty important. There is an order to the things that God has done. There is Creation—Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. Adam's Fall—Genesis Chapter 3. The Flood—Genesis 6 through 9. The Tower of Babel—Chapter 10. Abraham and the Patriarchs, which takes you from Chapter 12 through the end of the Book of Genesis. Then, there's the Exodus—that's God rescuing Israel from their bondage in Egypt. You have the Law of Moses in the Book of Exodus, and a whole lot in the Book of Deuteronomy.

You might skip forward a little bit to King David. You say, "Well, wait a minute! Don't the Judges get any time?" "Well, yeah..." "How about King Saul?" "Well, yeah..." But, if we're looking at the "big outline" of God's unfolding of the Plan, the promises that He made to King David about One who would eventually reign forever on the "throne of David" (Lk. 1:31-33; Ac. 13:22-23; cf. 2 Sam. 7:8-16; 23:5; 1 Chr. 17:7-14; Is. 9:6-7; Matt. 2:6)—*that's* a great big deal.

Another great big deal is Israel going into captivity—*exactly* as God said it would be if they didn't keep the Law that He gave them (Lev. 26:33-30). And He *always* keeps His promises. Then, you have the captives returning—the Historical Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the Prophetic Books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi fit the return of Israel from captivity, and the prophets that God used in that time when they rebuilt Jerusalem, they rebuilt the temple, and that's where the Israel come from that was the Israel that Jesus knew.

And then, we conclude the Old Testament era with Christ—Christ is born. He was a Jew: "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born *under the Law*" (Gal. 4:4). So that was the Old Testament time (cf. Matt. 11:11).

Now, the other fourth of your Bible: the New Testament Era and the future. So, let's overlap: Christ is born—Matthew Chapter 1, Luke Chapter 2. Christ ascends—"Well, wait a minute! You're skipping the whole life of Christ!" Well, hey, we have to finish in 20 minutes, right? He dies, He's buried, He rose again, He ascends to the Father. The Holy Spirit comes in Acts Chapter 2 (cf. Jn. 14:17), and something *brand new* has begun—the Church—Jew and Gentile together *on the same basis* (Eph. 2:11-22; 3:5-6; cf. Gal. 3:28)—that's a *huge* thing!

You have, then, the "Church Age," as we have often referred to it; that's from Acts Chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit came to indwell all believers; Peter's famous first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, when "three thousand" people believed and were "baptized" (Acts 2:41). And the Church Age continues until the Rapture. If you were here for the Book of Revelation, you know about the Rapture—not because it's *in* the Book of Revelation, but because we talked about it there: That's when God takes away every living believer "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52). That is the next event, best described in First Thessalonians 4:13-18, First Corinthians 15:51-52, and alluded to a few other places (e.g. Jn. 14:3; Rev. 3:10).

Then comes the Tribulation, a seven-year period of unprecedented tribulation on Earth, when God is pouring out judgments—described in the most detail in Matthew 24, and in the Book of Revelation, Chapters 6 through 19.

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That lead up to the Second Coming of Christ, which is also in Matthew 24, Verses 29-31; and then in Revelation 19, when it's described in more detail. That is followed immediately by the Millennial Kingdom—and you know now for sure what "millennial" means: one thousand years He reigns on Earth (Rev. 20:4-6). That leads up to final judgment at the "Great White Throne" judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). And then, it's Heaven or Hell for all (Rev. 20:15; cf. Matt. 25:46)—what we just saw in John Chapter 5. Then, we read about the "new heaven" and the "new earth"—"the new Jerusalem" (Rev. 3:12)—in Revelation Chapters 21 and 22.

Now, if you'll remember that simple overview of the Bible, *anything you study* is going to fit in there somewhere; that's why I like *big pictures* and charts and graphs and lists and bullet points—it helps you process information and put it all together.

Now, let's back up and look at more detail of the things that are yet to come. A very well-titled book I have on my shelf is by J. Dwight Pentecost: "Things to Come." It's thicker than the Bible, but it's all about Revelation—the things which are to come (see Rev. 1:19).

There is a crucial passage that serves very well as the starting point for a study of Bible Prophecy. I'll bet there's at least a dozen people in the room that know *exactly* where I'm heading: it's Daniel Chapter 9, Verses 24 through 27. It's part of what Daniel received from God in response to prayers about the shame upon Israel in captivity. This came to Daniel *while* Israel was suffering in the Babylonian captivity because of her sin; so it's important you remember: this passage was made known *during* the Captivity, which you saw in the list of the sequence of events of the Old Testament. And by the way: this message was given to Daniel through the Angel Gabriel—remember: the "Western Union Man of Heaven"; he dispenses key messages from God (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Lk. 1:19, 26). And you happen to know *now*: He is one of only three angels whose names are revealed in the Bible.

I want you to get a look at Daniel 9:24-27. If I were to preach on this, it would probably be about a six-week series to deal with these four verses. Daniel, in captivity; God is responding, and giving him this information. "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city"—"Your people" is Israel, among the Babylonians; and "your holy city" is Jerusalem, which at that time was in ruins—"to finish the transgression"—wrap up the nasty stuff—"to make an end of sin"—well, that sounds like a Savior (Rom. 8:3)—"to make atonement for iniquity"—well, now you're *definitely* talking about what Jesus did (Heb. 2:17)—"to bring in everlasting righteousness"—*wow*, that sounds kind of like "kingdom" (Is. 9:7), and "new heavens and new earth" (2 Pet. 3:13)—"to seal up vision and prophecy"—to bring all of this to an end (Lk. 21:22)—"and to anoint the most holy place"—which was in ruins in Jerusalem.

Then he says this: "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem"—it's in ruins, they're in captivity; so he says: "You're going to be told, 'Alright, you can go back; you can restore Jerusalem, you can rebuild it.'"—"from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince"—that's in the future—"there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress." It wasn't just all sweetness and light when Ezra and Nehemiah led

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the captives back; remember, they had to hold a sword in one hand and a brick in the other hand (Neh. 4:17-18)...there will be "times of distress." "Then after the sixty-two weeks"—so he said there are going to be "seventy weeks" (vs. 24); then, he said there are going to be "seven" and then "sixty-two" (vs. 25); now, the last time I checked, that's still sixty-nine—"Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he"—"the prince who is to come"—"will make a firm covenant with the many for one week"—"seven weeks" plus "sixty-two weeks" is sixty-nine; he is going to make a covenant for the seventieth week—"but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." Do you think I could get through that in six weeks? I think I *could*; we'll see.

The "weeks" are groups of sevens—seven years each (see Gen. 29:27)—literally: seventy *sevens*. I'd like to get my hands on whoever it was that translated them "weeks." Yeah, there *are* seven days in a week, but the Hebrew says "seventy *sevens*." [Compare: The Antichrist "makes desolate" for half of "one week" (Dan. 9:27, "middle of the week"); "the beast...having ten horns" (Rev. 13:1) is given "authority to act for forty-two months" (Rev. 13:5)—or, three and a half years] Seventy times seven is 490. This is talking about 490 years of prophecy that would be fulfilled, and Christ would set up the Kingdom on Earth, and then for eternity.

So, the first question is: when does this period begin? Verse 25 says: "a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." That took place in 445 B.C. Artaxerxes of Persia—the Medes and Persians had knocked off the Babylonians, who had knocked off the Assyrians, who had taken the Northern Kingdom [Israel], and then the Babylonians had taken the Southern Kingdom [Judah] before the Medes and Persians had knocked off the Babylonians; so it's a Persian guy now—Artaxerxes of Persia decreed that Israel could return to Palestine and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:8). The first "seven weeks" (vs. 25)—or, the first 49 years—seems to mark the end of the work of Nehemiah, when the city of Jerusalem was rebuilt after the Captivity.

From 445 B.C. to the death of Jesus Christ—when "the Messiah" was "cut off" (vs. 26)—was 69 weeks, or, 483 years. People a lot smarter than I am have done all the calculations, *including* converting from the Jewish calendar to our calendar; and if we had more time, we could lay all that out, but that would be part of the six-week study that we won't do. That still leaves a 70th week which is *yet future*. As you saw in Daniel 9:24 and 27, even the grammar—the very way it's worded—implies a gap between the 69th week and the 70th week, between "Messiah" being "cut off" and this "prince who is to come." The rest of the Bible helps fill that in with an amazing amount of detail.

Jesus—"the Messiah"—*before* He was "cut off," while He was still on Earth, told the Jewish leaders of His day that they and their nation were going to be set aside from their chosen position because they rejected Him. Matthew 21, Verse 43 says it this way, where Jesus is saying: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a

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people, producing the fruit of it." That promise began to be fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts Chapter 2, and the Church was born. It was no longer God working *specifically*, uniquely through Israel; now, it's Jew and Gentile together in "one body" (Eph. 2:16). The Church is not Israel—it's this "mystery" unfolded: Jew and Gentile together *on equal footing* (Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 3:4-6), "saved...by grace...through faith in Jesus Christ," plus *nothing* (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; cf. Phil. 3:9).

The Apostle Paul got *more* information about all of this, and if you work your way over to Romans 11—I *did* do a series on Romans 9, 10, and 11, which has to do with the past, the present, and the future of Israel; I think that took about 12 weeks, if I remember right. In Romans 11:25-27, Paul says this: "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery"—remember from our studies in Revelation, a "mystery" is something not revealed in the Old Testament, now made known in the New (see Col. 1:26)—"I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation"—now, here's the mystery that's revealed—"that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.' "

Big-Picture stuff here now: this "hardening" of "Israel"—taking away their position, if you will—it's "partial." Why? Because there are, and there always have been, *many* individual Jews in every generation since Acts 2 who believe in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 11:1-5); they're part of the Body of Christ—the mystery of Jew and Gentile together on equal footing.

Also notice: this "hardening" is *temporary*, because it's only "until"—that's a time-word—"until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." This Church Age in which we live is also part of what the New Testament calls "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24)—because, frankly, we Gentile believers in Christ *outnumber* Jewish believers in Christ. Study your way through the Book of Zechariah and you'll get near the end, and you'll see how it is that "all Israel will be saved" (e.g., Zech. 12:10; 13:1).

Does that mean that every Jew who ever lived is going to be in Heaven? (Mic. 3:11; Matt. 3:9) No (see Is. 10:22; Ezek. 20:38; Zech. 13:8-9). What does it mean? It means there *will* come a point in time, *after* "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in," when "all Israel" *alive at that point in time* "will be saved." It's going to take place during the 70th week—the seven-year Tribulation—and it was revealed to Daniel that that was going to be when He would "make an end of sin" and deal with Israel in their "holy city," and all that (Dan. 9:24).

There's a lot more to the 70th week than *just* God's dealing with the nation of Israel, but as we studied through Revelation Chapters 6 through 19, you saw all the detail there. I invite you to listen to the recordings of the messages from that study that we just did on Wednesday nights; download our notes, if you want to work through it for yourself. But *during* that 70th week, God is going to pour out His wrath on Earth. The battle between God and Satan is going to be at its *most brazen*, hottest level (see Rev. 12:12).

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Satan is going to be working on Earth through his human instrument, whom we usually call by his title: "Antichrist" (1 Jn. 2:18). In Daniel 9, he is "the prince who is to come." In the Book of Revelation, he is also called "the beast" (13:4; cf. Dan. 7:19-22). In Second Thessalonians, he's called "the man of lawlessness" and "the son of destruction" (2:3).

The Book of Revelation describes that period in terms of two segments of three and a half years each. What a *coincidence* that Daniel mentioned the final seven years, and said the Antichrist was going to "make" a "covenant" and break it "in the middle of the week" (9:27), and he's going to bring some kind of *abominable desolation*—like Jesus mentions in Matthew 24:15—"the abomination of desolation"—you'll know that something is happening when *that* takes place (cf. Dan. 11:31; 12:11).

The *specificity* of all these things makes us realize that *there has to be* a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. Personally, I think that's part of what the Antichrist uses to ascend to power in the world. I think he's going to be the one who works out a deal for peace in the Middle East, and a specific peace that allows him to make a promise to the Jews that they can build their temple and reinstate sacrifices for the *first time* since the year A.D. 70.

That 70th week is described in Revelation as three series of judgments, each having seven parts. When you get to the seventh of the first series—the breaking of the seals—seven angels are revealed, each with a trumpet. They blow their trumpets; the seventh trumpet reveals seven more angels, each with a bowl, and they pour out their bowls of wrath on Earth.

That 70th week, in the grammar of Daniel 9, is set apart from the first 69 weeks. We know that the beginning of the 70th week is touched off by the Rapture of the Church, and it culminates with the Second Coming of Christ—Revelation 19. If you want to, you can look up sermons of ours in the archives on First Thessalonians 4:13-18; I did a three-part series on the Rapture.

Jesus defeats the Antichrist and the rest of His enemies; He dispatches them all into judgment; He establishes the Kingdom on Earth for a thousand years—the Millennium of Revelation 20:1-6—and at the end of the Millennium comes the final judgment of all the enemies of God; they're all dispatched to the Lake of Fire. And then, the glorious Revelation 21 and 22 tells us everything we need to know about our eternal home in Heaven.

I think I mentioned that I'd like to get my hands on the guy who decided to translate those "sevens" in Daniel as "weeks." When I was teaching in Israel, I asked about the Russian translation of that word, and I said, "How do I explain that translation issue?" And Anya said to me: "No issue. The Russian Bible says 'seventy sevens!'" *How literalist of them!* Why, they must be a pack of *Premillennialists!* And they *are*, interestingly.

The Introduction—The Big Picture: Premil, Amil, Postmil, three schools of thought concerning what the Bible teaches about the future. Interpreting things in their *natural* meaning, from beginning to end, leads to Premillennialism—the view that we strongly believe is correct.

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What Is Your Personal Hope? I guarantee, you *will* be resurrected—either to eternal life, or to judgment. You get to determine the outcome. How? Will you hear the Gospel? And, are you going to harden your heart, or are you going to believe? (2 Thess. 2:12) God grants faith to those who will repent (Is. 55:7; 2 Tim. 2:25-26). Salvation is God's work from beginning to end (Phil. 1:6; cf. Acts 16:14; Jer. 32:40). He will save *every single one* that He determined, "before the foundation of the world," that He is going to save (Eph. 1:4; cf. Jn. 6:37-39).

What Is God's Plan? Well, it's revealed in Scripture. It's going to take place exactly as promised. It's going to take place on God's timetable. From where we stand now, the Church *will be Raptured* (see Rev. 3:10). Seven horrible years of Tribulation will follow. Jesus is going to return and reign on Earth for a thousand years on the "throne of David" (Is. 9:6-7). We who are in Christ now will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10)—wow, *that's cool!* His enemies will be judged, and it's all going to end up with everyone in the Lake of Fire or in Heaven for eternity (Rev. 20:10, 14-15).

Now: What Can Go Wrong? There's so much detail—how could *anybody* possibly get anything wrong concerning Eschatology? Well, one thing that can go wrong, I would say, is what I would label: "Prophetic Hobbyism"—that's the attitude of being *overly* infatuated with prophecy and all of the details, but failing to let it affect you in the direction of holiness (see Matt. 24:45-51; 1 Jn. 2:28; Rev. 1:3). I think the thing that most often goes wrong concerning the Doctrine of Eschatology, even when you get it right, is that people don't let the *certainty* of the future affect them personally (2 Pet. 3:11-12). Eschatology *should* have the effect of making you want to purify your life *in light of* the glory that is yet to be unveiled (Col. 3:4-7).

Now, you're probably sitting there thinking: "He forgot to give us a memory verse this week!" No, he didn't! I'm going to give you something about Eschatology, in a backhanded kind of way: First John 3:2-3—"Beloved, now we are children of God"—isn't that *cool?* Even *right now*, I've been adopted into the family of God! He saved me by His grace! I *am* His child! "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be." There's going to be a glorified body; this is so amazing! "We know that when He appears"—because we'll be translated to be with Him, or we will have died and we'll be resurrected at that time—"we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." "Like Him?" Do you mean, I'm going to have omniscience and omnipotence? No, no, no—"like Him," in that, you're going to have a glorified body suited for your eternal life. Here's the key: "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

If you're studying Eschatology and not growing in holiness, you're not studying Eschatology *right*. You should, because of your hope, have an *ever greater desire* to be like Him morally. Between now and the time that you're with the Lord, you have to live out the rest of this life *in this sin-cursed world*. You have to cope with a mortal body that is not yet free from the ravages of sin and corruption (Rom. 7:21-25; Gal. 5:17)—but *don't let that get you down!* It could make you "groan" a little bit: Romans 8:22-23—"For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit"—that means there's more yet to come—"even we

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ourselves"—that's "we" who are the children of God—"even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons..." You say, "Wait a minute! I'm already adopted! You just told me to memorize the verse that says "now we are children of God"! I'm already adopted! Yeah, but you know what? There's another stage: "...the redemption of our body." You're going to get rid of this body, which knows so *well* how to sin (Matt. 26:41).

So, as you're groaning, don't "lose heart" (Gal. 6:9). Second Corinthians 4:16—"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." If you're studying the Bible right, your "inner man"—your inner person, the real you, that nonphysical part of you—*is* being renewed (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 2:13). Let prophecy motivate you to holiness!

What else can go wrong with Eschatology, besides being *overly* devoted to it? Well, one of the worst things is: date-setting. Anyone who claims to know the date of the Rapture, anyone who claims to know the date of the Second Coming, or the end of the world—they are a false prophet (see Matt. 24:36, 42, 44; cf. Jer. 14:14; 23:26; 1 Jn. 4:1).

A lot of people in and around the Christian world have unmasked themselves as false prophets. There was a *whole flock of them* 20 years ago. This is 2019—remember the year 1999? Remember what was blooming? A postmillennialist said, "This is what God is going to use to *bring the world to its knees*: Y2K!" The year 2000—"Everything's going to crash! The economy is going down! God showed us that!" You know what? 2000 came, the clocks rolled over, and a *whole bunch of people were exposed as false prophets!* I know people who, *in this region*, taught people: "Sell your house! Get rid of all your stuff! Go to the mountains and learn to live 'off the grid!'" I have friends who had family members who *did that!* That's how serious it is *not* to do what the Bible says: "Don't do!" "Of that day and hour no one knows" (Matt. 24:36).

History is *littered* with the theological and emotional wreckage of people who have set dates for the end of the world, or tried to interpret the Bible by reading the newspaper instead of the Bible. Run the other way from date-setting, speculating, so-called Bible Teachers. One of the most *famous* books in the era of my early years as a Christian was: "The Late Great Planet Earth"—written by a *false* prophet who *still has* a television program on Bible Prophecy! *When will we ever get it?*

Here's another one: Inconsistent hermeneutics. Prophetic Hobbyism, date-setting, inconsistent hermeneutics. This is the problem with all of the brothers and sisters who are Amillennial and Postmillennial, interpreting the Bible on end times. There's a good point and a bad point. The good point is: They interpret the *rest* of the Bible quite well—who Christ is, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the ultimate issues of salvation, all that stuff. But then, they come to Bible Prophecy and they *switch* their method of interpretation (see Lk. 24:25). One of the best-known Amillennial theologians in the world admits—and this is J. I. Packer, who I've heard say this—he admits that he views Amillennialism as a *hermeneutic*; Amillennialism is a *principle* of interpreting the Bible,

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meaning: he *starts* with the view that he *knows* "a thousand years" *can't* be "a thousand years," and then he interprets the text in light of that. Another Amillennialist I've read says openly: "Well, if I use the same principles of interpretation on Prophecy that I use on the rest of the texts, I'd wind up *Premillennial!*" *We can't have that!* (see Jer. 44:28b)

Another thing that can go wrong is: divisive dogmatism. I alluded to it earlier. I know people who won't have fellowship, who won't cooperate in evangelism, with people of other convictions concerning prophecy—even though they agree on the Gospel. That's so very sad.

So, memorize First John 3:2-3. And how about we conclude the way the Bible concludes? Revelation 22, starting at Verse 18—"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book (cf, Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Matt. 4:4; Acts 20:27). He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' " When Jesus comes, He's going to take the Church "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52); when the day of His Coming arrives, *nothing* is going to stop it (Rev. 19:19-21). "Yes, I am coming quickly." And then, John adds this: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

That's my closing prayer! *Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!* As you go, may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.