

# Preaching Prophecy with Consistent Hermeneutics: The Legacy and Practice

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# Introduction:

- Purposes
- Reasoning
- Full Disclosure
- Two Parts: The Legacy of Preaching Prophecy (History) and the Practice of Preaching Prophecy (Hermeneutics)

# PART 1: LEGACY (HISTORY)

# To provoke thought...

- Psalm 89:1-4, 18. 27—features a forever covenant with David, the throne of Israel located on the earth.
- A representative assertion of false facts about futuristic premillennialism (F.P.):
  - “The story of modern Dispensationalism begins around 1825 and is associated with an Irishman by the name of John Nelson Darby. He was a clergyman in the Church of England.”
    - Cornelius Venema, *Promise of the Future*

# Basic Features of F.P.

- God has always saved by faith but in different administrations or dispensations
- Scripture is to be taken literally with a historical-grammatical hermeneutic from Genesis to Revelation
- God's promises to Israel are irrevocable (Romans 11:29)

# F.P. in the 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

- Jewish Christian organizations
- 1800-1875—2,000 authors wrote about Israel, more in the 20<sup>th</sup> century:
  - Holocaust
  - 1948 Israel reestablishment

# F.P. in England, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- *Dispensationalism Before Darby*, Dr. William Watson
- John Birchensha, in 1660, wrote *The History of Scripture*
- William Alleine wrote *The State of the Church in Future Ages* in 1670's.
- Richard Hayter (1611-1684), 1675—*The Meaning of Revelation*

# F.P. in the American Colonies

- John Cotton (1585-1652)
- John Davenport (1597-1670)
- William Hooke (1600-1677)
- Increase Mather—1669 book, *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation*
- William Torrry—1687 book, *A Brief Discourse Concerning Futurities of Things to Come*
- Jonathan Edwards (1703-58)



# F.P. in Second Post-Reformation Generation in Europe

- For English Puritans, "Belief in a future conversion of the Jews became commonplace" (Iain Murray)
- Thomas Brightman (1552-1607)
- William Perkins (1558-1602)
- Dutch Reformed: William a' Brackel, Petrus Serrarius

# F.P. in PAUSE

- Pause in F.P. coincides with Middle Ages and rise of Roman Catholic Church
- During time of Augustine, other views of the future began infiltrating the church to a total takeover.
- The church "almost exclusively went the way of a strong replacement theology that left little place for a future restoration of Israel."  
(Michael Vlach)

# F.P. in PAUSE

- Martin Luther: "Listen, Jew, are you aware that Jerusalem and your sovereignty, together with your temple and priesthood, have been destroyed for over 1,460 years . . . For such ruthless wrath of God is sufficient evidence that they assuredly have erred and gone astray . . . Therefore this work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is He any longer their God."

# F.P. in AnteNicene Era (Pre AD 325)

- Adolf Harnack: “First in point of time came the faith in the nearness of Christ's second advent and the establishing of His reign of glory on the earth. Indeed, it appears so early that it might be questioned whether it ought not to be regarded as an essential part of the Christian religion . . . It must be admitted that this expectation was a prominent feature in the earliest proclamation of the gospel, and materially contributed to its success.”

# F.P. in AnteNicene Era (Pre AD 325)

- Barnabas
- Polycarp (ca. AD 69)
- Papias
- Justin Martyr (AD 114-165)
- Irenaeus (AD 120-202)
- Tertullian (ca 145/160 to ca. 220-240)
- Methodius—(AD 260-312)
- Lactantius (ca 240-325)

# F.P. in AnteNicene Era (Pre AD 325)

- Others: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Nepos, Victorinus, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Aristio, John the Presbyter (not the apostle), Pothinus, Melito, Hegesippus, Tatian, Apollinaris, and Commodian.

# F.P. in AnteNicene Era (Pre AD 325)

- “In 1681 Thomas Burnet, royal chaplain to King William III of England, wrote, ‘The historical evidence indicates that chiliasm [premillennialism, as it is called today] was the predominant belief of the church of the first three centuries . . . And to make few words of it . . . We will lay down this conclusion, that the Millennial kingdom of Christ was the general doctrine of the Primitive Church, from the times of the Apostles to the Nicene Council inclusively.’” (Wayne House)

# F.P. in the Apostolic Age

- Mary, mother of Jesus—Luke 1:32-33
- Christ—Matt 20:20-23; Luke 22:29-30; Acts 1:6-8
- Paul—Rom 11:1
- John--Revelation



# F.P. in the Apostolic Age

- “It is incredible that if the Jews and the early church were in such a serious error in their interpretation of the Old Testament and in their expectation of a righteous kingdom on earth following the second advent, that there should be no corrective, and that all the evidence should confirm rather than deny such an interpretation. The general context of the New Testament is entirely in favor of the premillennial viewpoint. The amillennial interpretation has not one verse of positive testimony in the New Testament and can be sustained only by spiritualizing the prophecies of the Old Testament as well as the teaching of the New Testament.” (John Walvoord)

# F.P. in Time Between Testaments

- Apocrypha and Pseudipigrapha
- Example: Book of Jubilees
  - God takes over His sanctuary in Jerusalem to dwell forever with Israel as the lead nation of the world
- Jewish eschatology in this time was consistently “F.P.” in their belief in a literal reign of Messiah on earth

# PART 2: PRACTICE (HERMENEUTICS)

# Introduction

- Must get the order of theology and hermeneutics correct—a theological viewpoint is NOT a hermeneutic.
- Covenant theologian Douglas Van Dorn:  
“Covenant theology . . . is a way of reading Scripture.”
  - Fallacy: That first you believe a theological system and THEN you study Scripture through that lens.

# Introduction

- "A theology is not a hermeneutic . . . Good hermeneutics (principles of interpreting literature) applied by skillful exegesis can lead to a theology, but not the reverse . . . When they [non-premillennialists] do not reach their preconceived theological end using normal hermeneutics (which has served them well in all other areas of theology), they change their hermeneutic to yield the predetermined conclusions they began with." (Richard Mayhue)

# The Slippery Slope of Separating God's People from God's Word

- If a theological system requires scholars and teachers to make it understandable, then it should be questioned.
- A legitimate interpretation can never be so far from the plain meaning that it absolutely cannot be understood without special insight or extra-biblical sources

# Four Principles for Studying Prophecy

- Interpret Grammatically
- Interpret Contextually
- Interpret Scripture with Scripture
- Interpret Progressively

# Principles More Specific to Prophecy

- Consistency (Hermeneutic stays the same)
- Comparison (No prophet received all revelation)
- Conformity (single interpretation, multiple applications)
- Correlation (figures of speech correlate to reality)
- Compliance (no arbitrary theologically-driven decisions)
- Co-Existence (near and far fulfillments)
- Caution (in typology)



# Interesting Observations by Theologians...

- "The Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in this age."
- "Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures."
- "It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom and ruling over other nations."

# Interesting Observations by Theologians...

- Those quotes were by O.T. Allis, Floyd E. Hamilton, and Loraine Boettner—all Amillennial—admitting that a CONSISTENT hermeneutic would yield a FUTURISTIC PREMILLENNIAL viewpoint of the end times

# My Plea to Bible Teachers

- Never teach in a way that your people could not possibly have ever understood this without your magisterium-like authority. That is cruel.
- Teach them in such a way that they can see the logical flow and choose to AGREE or DISAGREE.
- Teach in a way that shows them how to discern the word of God for themselves in ANY genre by taking God at His word.

# Don't "Reverse Engineer" a Process to Support Your Presuppositions

- This happens ALL THE TIME in non-F.P. writing and preaching.
- If the PROCESS is not usable in other portions of Scripture, it is a false process.